



Department of Marketing

**Rethinking Brand Management:
A Cultural Perspective on Brand Iconicity and
Identity Politics.**

by

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A Thesis Presented in Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

2016

“Research is to see what everybody else has seen, and to think what nobody else has thought”

- Albert Szent-Gyorgyi

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Signed: *Sudipta Das*

Date: 30th March 2016

Acknowledgments

Completing this research work has been an extremely demanding but an all times rewarding journey of self-discovery in my life. This was an education like no other! My deepest debt of gratitude for this accomplishment goes to Dr. Paul Hewer who not only guided me through the thick and thin of this process but also helped me to find my passion for research in consumer culture since the early days of my Masters degree in Strathclyde. He not only educated me to be the person that I am, but he also empowered me with certain values that I will carry for rest of my academic career. He made me to believe that this project has never been just a formality towards a degree accomplishment, but this was a stepping-stone towards building myself as an academic and a researcher. The next person who deserves my heartiest respect and regards is my second supervisor Kathy who relentlessly scrutinised my work and guided me throughout the process beside Paul. Both of your endurance and encouragement has helped me to come this far, words can't express my indebtedness to both of you.

I am also grateful to Douglas Holt and Julien Cayla who has helped me to stimulate my intellectual thoughts throughout this process. While Douglas gave me a piece of theoretical jigsaw puzzle to solve, Julien has been a great thought provoker during the early days of this research. Without his help this project would have never materialised. He gave me vital contacts and access to advertising agencies in India. On this note I would like to thank all my respondents who tried their best to accommodate my requests and shared valuable information by giving up their time. All the time spent in ad agencies and in some respondent's house is truly memorable and it helped me to open my eyes to a new world.

Finally, this accomplishment would never be possible without constant support, patience, and motivation from my wife. All the anxiety, stress, panic and other emotion she shared with me for all these years kept me motivated and determined. Her love, assurance, tolerance, and sacrifices make this accomplishment worthwhile. This work is dedicated to my wife.

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ABSTRACT

Although the idea of branding has seen multidisciplinary advancement within the late industrial economy (Bastos and Levy 2012; Aaker 1991; DeChernatony and Riley 1997; Kapferer 1992; Levy 1959), historic accounts of management literature suggest that the leading success stories of branding were predominantly understood and recorded as measures of economic and core management practice (Bastos and Levy 2012; Keller 2003; 1993; Kotler et al. 2002; DeChernatony and McDonald 2003; Davis 2000; Gordon 2002; Woodward 1996). Over the past four decades research in brand management has repeatedly advocated the importance of management and economic based ‘value innovation’ models, receiving wider popularity amongst managers, entrepreneurs and academics by capturing their imagination through innovation and technology led ‘Blue Oceans’ (see Kim & Mauborgne 2005). Amongst these dominant managerial and academic thoughts an insight that is often missing is how society and culture contribute towards the creation of extraordinary brand value, i.e., consumer’s active negotiation of meaning and the contextual effect of history, culture, and politics on brand management practice (Holt 2004; Holt and Cameron 2010; Cayla and Arnould 2008; Thompson and Arsel 2004; Kravets and Öрге 2010; McCracken, 2009).

The point of departure for this study was built upon Holt’s (2004) seminal cultural branding model. Building on data collected using multi-method qualitative data, analysis reveals what I like to present as a tale of two campaigns stemming out of the lifecycle of an iconic two-wheeler brand. The originality and value of the study is far reaching as it not only challenges the existing disciplinary dogma within brand management but it also solidifies an extra ordinary strategic solution for brand managers to thrive in today’s competitive marketplace.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction:

“Brands become iconic when they perform identity myths: simple fictions that address cultural anxieties from afar, from imaginary worlds...[that reflect the]...expression of...[consumers’]...aspired identities [within a nation]”

- Douglas Holt (2004, p.8)

The field of brand management is a developing area of marketing and management with increased endeavours from managers and academics searching for a unique combination of elements that can create extraordinary competitive values for an organisation and its products and/or services (Aaker, 1991; Heding et al., 2008; Keller, 2003a; 2003b; DeChernatony and McDonald, 2003). Therefore one of the most important questions concerning today’s brand managers is how to create the ‘*best in class brand*’ that can offer unprecedented competitive advantages by compelling consumers to form strong relationships with their products and services (Holt, 2004).

Although the idea of branding has seen multidisciplinary advancement within the late industrial economy (Bastos and Levy, 2012; Aaker, 1991; DeChernatony and Dall’Olmo, 1997; Kapferer, 1992; Levy, 1959), historic accounts of management literature suggest that the leading success stories of branding were predominantly understood and recorded as measures of economic and core management practice (Bastos and Levy, 2012; Keller, 2003b; 1993; Kotler et al., 2002; DeChernatony and

McDonald, 2003; Davis, 2000; Gordon, 2002). Over the past four decades research in brand management has repeatedly advocated the importance of management and economic based ‘value innovation’ models, receiving wider popularity amongst managers, entrepreneurs and academics by capturing their imagination through innovation and technology led ‘*Blue Oceans*’ (see Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). In contrast, post-hoc explanations in cogitative science presented innovative ‘*mindshare*’ models that have inspired many scholars and brand managers since the 1970s by justifying brands as visionaries of human minds attached to cognitive emotional factors (Fanning, 1999; Erdem and Swait, 1998; Lewis, 1996). Amongst these dominant managerial and academic thoughts an insight that is often missing is how society and culture contribute towards the creation of extraordinary brand value, i.e., consumer’s active negotiation of meaning and the contextual effect of history, culture, and politics on brand management practice (Holt, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Thompson et al., 2006; McCracken, 2009).

As cultural research has advanced the meaning of consumption beyond its production, acquisition, and economic roots, the emerging conjugation of brand management and consumer culture research has transformed the way we used to interpret the winning stories of some of the most powerful brand icons (Holt, 2004; 2006; Holt & Cameron, 2010; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Maclaran et al., 2008; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; McCracken, 2009). Unlike the positivists, pragmatists or the cognitivists, in this paradigm brands are conceptualised as socio-cultural (or ideological) subjects, offering “modes of connectivity” between consumers and producers where society and culture supply the necessary context for identity and/or

relationship development (Fournier, 1998; Fournier and Yao, 1997; Holt, 2002; 2004; 2006; Lury, 2004; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Muñiz and O'guinn, 2001; Muñiz and Schau, 2005). Over time, these relationships evolve with transforming social, political, and cultural environments, making individual brands a powerful representation of visible culture and socio-political dynamics (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; McCracken, 2009; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Cayla and Arnould, 2008).

Following this theoretical lead, in 2004 Douglas Holt studied the historic success of a number of iconic brands in North America that led him to compose a seminal model towards theorising How Brands Become Icons by following the *Principles of Cultural Branding* (Holt, 2004). In his pioneering literature Holt (2004) argued that conventional branding models typically misrepresented identity value as a means of status appeal or self-expression, instead brands that enjoy success emerge from their ability to inspire a nation through 'cultural briefs'. He believes targeting a nationwide ideological demand with an authentic story-telling (myth) capability supplies a material object with intensive and pervasive symbolic meanings leading to a powerful instillation of iconic values within a brand's image (Holt, 2004; 2006; Holt and Cameron, 2010; Kravets and Öрге, 2010).

In two subsequent instalments – *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding* (Holt, 2004) and *Cultural Strategy: Using Innovative Ideologies to Build Breakthrough Brands* (Holt and Cameron, 2010) - Holt (and Cameron) analysed the layers of cultural expressions hidden within a number of iconic brands in America, i.e., Nike, Marlboro, Jack Daniels, Harley-Davidson etc. Having studied the

genealogical evolution of these consumer brands he insisted that iconic brands compete with other products on the grounds of culture where commercial myths come to act as an authentic source for constructing alternative ideologies offering relief to widespread social anxieties.

In the marketplace, cultural myths are conceptualised as simple stories that offer authentic allegorical benefits and soothe personal anxieties or identity burdens at a wider scale (Barthes, [1957] 2000; Thompson, 2004). A number of cultural ingredients, inspired by alternative '*populist values*', compete to deliver the most compelling symbolic relief to a specific socio-political problem (Holt, 2004; Thompson, 2004). Consumers who rely on these symbolic values to reconstruct their identities, develop strong connections to the brand by regarding it as an icon to their life, for example, think about the historical fit between the populist world of outlaw biking and the counter-cultural texts of alternative American masculinities that supplied the raw materials for Harley Davidson's iconic constituencies (Holt, 2004; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995); or Starbucks' successful attainment in transforming the orthodoxy within the coffee category by borrowing dramatised cultural codes from the artisan elites (Holt and Cameron, 2010; Eden, 2007); or even Nike's vision of globalising the 'New American Dream' by selling the combative solo willpower – 'Just Do It' (Holt and Cameron, 2010; Mark and Pearson, 2001).

As the widespread demand for mythical stories and identities are products of a nation's socio-cultural and political expression at a given time and space, as societies move forward through their historic cultural and political contexts, demand for new cultural icons evolves in the form of 'better ideologies' (see Holt and Cameron,

2010). These societal and cultural shifts cause the long-term success of an iconic brand to rely on its adaptability to the changing historic and ideological contexts of a nation with transforming myth market strategies (Holt, 2004).

Therefore the art of iconic brand creation lies in two implicit factors: one, successful identification of collective anxieties within a nation at a given time, two, composing and delivering an authentic myth that supplies unique ideological resources to distressed consumers (Holt, 2004). In this process the nation remains a powerful structuring framework harbouring history, politics and ideological demands of various types, but due to time constraints and the complexities involved in deriving the principles of cultural branding from a cross-society and cross-cultural perspective, Holt's theoretical and analytical attributes were solely focused on popular American brands (see Holt 2004, p.224). As a result, Holt's proposed cultural branding model remains incomplete in describing the constructs of brand iconicity outside the advanced socio-economic and political boundaries of the western societies.

In this thesis I address this research gap with a view to contribute knowledge towards the development of a robust theoretical model of cultural branding for managers and academics. Following the global advancement of *Consumer Culture Theory* (CCT) my contribution to this emerging stream of brand management lies in complementing and extending Holt's seminal model by studying the applicability of his proposed principles within a developing economy. In my endeavour to examine and extend the principles of cultural branding I chose India; an emerging marketplace with a significant history of transforming socio-economic landscapes where consumption and ideological choices have confronted major cultural and political hurdles since

colonial times (Varman and Belk, 2009; Mankekar, 1999; Rajagopal, 2001; Derné, 2000; Varma, 2007; Fernandes, 2006). In doing so, this study will not only offer knowledge advancement towards building a robust theoretical model of cultural branding but the findings will reveal unforeseen consequences of cultural branding in the form of brand-mediated '*identity politics*' (Thompson, 2011; 2014).

1.2 Research Questions:

Considering the rationale for the research (see Chapter 1.3, Chapter 2, Chapter 3) I set the following research questions that will lead to knowledge advancement towards our understanding of cultural branding and subsequent brand-mediated identity politics in consumer culture research.

Question 1: What defined Bajaj's long iconic legacy within transforming India?

This question aims to investigate *Cultural Brand Innovation* within the transforming socio-political landscapes of India. A detailed genealogical study of an iconic brand like Bajaj will not only help to interpret the context-specific characteristics of iconic brands and the strategies used by the cultural industry for its iconic survival, but such an initiative will also provide opportunities to conceptualise the principles of cultural branding in comparison to Holt's (2003a; 2004) interpretation. In doing so I use a set of objectives as a progressive guideline for developing a consolidated answer for the primary research question (see Chapter 4.2).

In Chapter 5 I establish the answer to this question by studying the historic development of Bajaj in India. The main aim of this investigation remains focused on unpacking the context-specific divergence of cultural strategies that defined Bajaj's brand iconicity and how the findings compliment or contradict the principles laid out by Holt in his study.

Question 2: What are the Consequences of the Mythological Portrayal of Transforming Indian Masculinity in Building and Sustaining Cultural Iconicity of Brand Bajaj?

This section of the study recalls how the interdisciplinary field of cultural research (including CCT) has prioritised the investigation of consumers' identity exercises as a significant and developing field of enquiry under the label: *Politics of Consumer Identity work* (Thompson, 2011; 2014). Previous studies in this field have discussed how consumers place their ideological distinctions at the symbolic centre of their identity – often expressed through art, fashion, music, or consumption of material objects (Üstüner and Holt, 2012; Scaraboto and Fischer, 2013; Varman and Belk, 2009; Giesler, 2008; McNay, 2010), yet Thompson (2014, p. S155) believes that there is lack of solid argument against how the “strategic mobilization of marketplace resources [are] directed toward the identity politic goal...[for]...contesting...stigmatizing sociocultural status quo”.

Cultural brands are complex communicative objects carrying their own symbolic universes open to society and consumers for active negotiation towards delivering high moral, cultural and political values as symbolic reassurance (Holt, 2004; Levy,

1959; 1982; 1999; Holt, 2004; Lury, 2004; Lash and Urry, 1994; Schroeder and Salzer-Morling, 2006; Muniz and O’Guinn 2001; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995).

Although Bajaj marketers may conventionally be opposed to the idea of identity politics that have grown around the brand’s epicentre for over half a century, by claiming that the trajectory of post-colonial masculinity in India followed linear sets of transformations (from traditional orthodox to hybrid and modern cosmopolitan men), and hence their product range and mythological manifesto (see Das and Hewer, 2012). In reality theories of globalisation have increasingly indicated how the systematic relationships between social categories and consumers’ identity practices are breaking down in the age of postmodernisation (Appadurai, 1990; Featherstone, 1990; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). In Chapter 6 I revalidate this post-modernist claim by understanding the dynamics of brand-mediated ‘*identity politics*’ surrounding middleclass men and their Bajaj two-wheeler machines.

1.3 Rationale for the Research:

In managerial and academic literature experts often describe branding as a universal technique that is independent of society, history, and culture (Aaker and Joachimsthaler, 1999; Keller, 2003b). Such an idea endorses early definitions of marketing where the principles of brand management were predominantly explained through conventional thinking around emotion, identity, and mindshare (Keller, 2003a; DeChernatony and McDonald, 2003; Kapferer, 1992; Erdem and Joffre, 1998; Lewis, 1996). However, in reality, “marketplace has become a pre-eminent source of mythic and symbolic resources...” (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 871), turning brands into vehicles of essential societal and cultural forms that carry out fundamental

roles in constructing the narratives of consumers' lives (Fournier, 1998; Levy, and Rook, 1999). Although, with increased socio-cultural turmoil and the flow of culture and commodities across nations, today, brands are seen as a more and more integral part of the '*global sign economy*' (Lury, 2004; Dong and Tian, 2009; Schroeder, 2009; Fournier, 1998; Ger and Belk, 1996; Thompson and Arsel 2004), yet contemporary marketing literature fails to provide an adequate theoretical and practical explanation of managing brands on cultural premise (Holt, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; McCracken, 2009; Bastos and Levy, 2012).

For decades managers and scholars have advocated the importance of aspirational figures or straightforward status appeal in the creation and sustenance of '*best in class brands*', but Holt (2004) suggested brands that achieve extraordinary iconic appeal follow a different set of tacit principles – *The Principles of Cultural Branding* (Holt, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010). Understanding these principles requires conceptualising brands as symbols of post-industrial culture, economics and politics supplying extraordinary ideological values to everyday commodities (McCracken, 2009; Levy, 1959; 1999; Baudrillard, 1981; 1998). Here it is important to highlight the role of brand managers and the cultural industry as their creative exercises target a nation's ideological demand with an authentic storytelling technique known as '*Brand Mythologies*' (Holt, 2004; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Maclaran et al., 2008; Baudrillard, 1998). Brand mythologies are stories that not only supply desired symbolic resources within a society, but are 'imaginary fabrics' that help to soothe a nation's collective anxieties through cultural allegories (Barthes, [1957] 2000; Stern, 1995; Holt, 2004; Thompson, 2004).

The narratives of these commercial mythologies are drawn from archetypes or imaginary characters that are often grounded within the fundamental cultural and political values of a society (Barthes, [1957] 2000; Thompson, 2004; Johar et al., 2001). According to Holt:

“Consumers...grab hold of the myth as they use the product as a means to lessen their identity [burdens]”

- Holt (2004, p.8)

Over a decade Holt analysed the layers of cultural expressions hidden within a number of iconic consumer brands like ESPN, Mountain Dew, Starbucks, Nike, Marlboro, Jack Daniels, Snapple, Ben and Jerry's, Harley-Davidson etc., however despite presenting some revolutionary thoughts and challenges against the dominance of economic and management led dogmas, Holt's proposed principles fail to offer a robust theoretical infrastructure (see Chapter 2.8 and 2.9). The primary opposition comes from Holt's subjective and (mostly) non-empirical data driven analysis and interpretation of selected brand genealogies. Secondly, despite adopting an interpretative research philosophy, Holt demonstrated pragmatic tendencies towards combining his newly proposed principles into an 'all-inclusive' theoretical model. Finally, the context-specific nature of case studies used in Holt's analysis raises questions about the validity and applicability of his proposed principles beyond the socio-cultural boundaries of advanced Western societies. For decades research in cultural globalisation has insisted that context-specific studies cannot be used as an 'one-size-fits all' model across societies (Üstüner and Holt, 2010; 2007; Thompson and Tambyah, 1999; Wilk, 2006; Ger and Belk, 1996; Appadurai, 1996; Dong and

Tian, 2009; Arnould and Thompson, 2005), then how can a series of principles solely developed on the socio-historic and political characteristics of North America offer an exclusive theoretical model for this emerging concept of brand management. Therefore, the restrictive nature of Holt's methodological approach along with his overreliance on secondary archived information not only prevents us from achieving a greater understanding of how the fundamentals of cultural innovation lock into a commercial mechanism of marketplace mythology, it also restricts us from conceptualising how consumer life-stories become largely vested in brand-mediated cultural allegories. Lack of empirical data further makes it difficult to understand the role of brand managers and advertising agencies in this process, while it is also not clear whether this brand management practice existed as a systematic managerial pursuit but has gone largely unnoticed amongst the academics.

Although the *Principles of Cultural Branding* were successful in generating academic interests within *Consumer Culture Theory* and beyond (see Arnould and Thompson, 2007; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Maclaran et al., 2008; Luedicke et al., 2010; Heding et al., 2008), yet lack of steady stream of research in this pioneering field has seen minimal knowledge advancement for over ten years. Therefore, while mainstream research in brand management remains focused on adding more and more economic and management based models, following the call to drive global advancement in CCT I believe it is high time to challenge this existing dogma by reinvigorating the fundamentals of cultural brand management. My inspiration for such a debate comes from the desire to understand the applicability and validity of Holt's cultural branding model within the transforming socio-economic landscapes of India, explored through the optic of an iconic two-wheeler brand: Bajaj. As India moves from a restricted

post-colonial nation to an open modern society its transforming social, economic, and political landscapes offer an extensive context for studying the applicability of cultural branding (Varma, 2007; Desouza et al., 2009; Fernandes, 2006).

Brand-Mediated Identity Politics: The secondary objective of this study is to identify the consequences of cultural branding expressed in the form of brand-mediated '*identity politics*' (Thompson, 2011; 2014). As research in consumer's identity work gravitates towards understanding the "the very fabric of experience, meaning, and action" (Arnould and Thompson, 2005, p. 869), it has become increasingly important to conceptualise how consumers use brands to enact particular forms of identity politics conferring to their ideological desires (Thompson, 2011; 2014; Luedicke et al., 2010; Thompson, 2006; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Holt, 2002; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004).

The term '*identity politics*' found its legitimacy within the feminist movement of the 1960s that challenged the routine manifestation of conventional gender order in society (Thompson, 2011; 2014; McNay, 2010; Fraser, 1998). According to Thompson (2014), politics of identity or identity politics can also be understood as an organised movement against broader power structures that existed long before the feminist movement, where "consumers who had little resource through conventional political channels used consumption [and marketplace resources] as tools for socioeconomic [mobility]" (Thompson, 2014, p.S155). For decades consumption research has advocated the importance of material objects in facilitating ideological movements, when brands become increasingly associated with society, culture, class and the politics of a nation, they become popular targets for staging ideological and

social movements (Varman and Belk, 2009; Holt, 2002; Klein, 2000; Luedicke et al., 2010; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Brownlie and Hower, 2007; Hower and Brownlie, 2010; Thompson et al., 2006; Thompson and Arsel, 2004). As the creation and sustenance of cultural brands deeply rely on a nation's ideological crisis and its remedy through authentic marketplace mythologies, this process often triggers consumption-led conflicts in the form of brand-mediated '*identity politics*', for example, in their effort to understand the narratives of identity politics surrounding the over-consumption vs. under-consumption debate in contemporary American society, Luedicke, Giesler, and Thompson (2010) identified how the concept of being a 'technocrat' was politicised into 'true American frontier' values, used to defend moral conflicts against environmental damage caused by Hummer consumption.

Similarly, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) hinted at a progressive identity politics around Harley Davidson motorbikes as they embarked on studying the 'new bikers' riding philosophy by using ethnographic methods. In the authors' view, Harley as a brand became the centre ground for an intense identity politics when state-driven ideologies of middleclass men gained authenticity by excluding peripheral and unruly rugged masculinity (i.e., hillbillies, rednecks, gunfighters, cowboy western frontiers) from being a part of progressive mainstream society (also see Holt, 2004). To compensate for such ideological distress, outlaws turned to Harley and used it as a defensive force for safeguarding their patriotism and raw-masculinity against state-led bureaucracy, in contrast the 'buttoned up' middleclass (i.e. the 'Weekend Warriors') turned to Harley and used it as a symbol of personal freedom that helped them to lift the burdens of emasculation and institutional bureaucracy (Holt, 1997; 2004; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Although Schouten and McAlexander's (1995)

primary focus remained on understanding the dynamics of the subculture surrounding Harley Davidson motorbikes, their findings repeatedly pointed out how, throughout history, Harley as an ideological device supplied fertile ground for staging brand-mediated identity politics (also see Holt, 2004). As part of this consumption politics the unruly hard-core riders disputed the new bikers' claim to the brand and its authentic subculture, while the new bikers eliminated the hard-cores' claim on the brand and mainstream citizenship by convicting them as anti-social (see Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Holt, 1997; 2004; Kinsey, 1982).

Alongside Hummer and Harley, cultural research has documented an abundance of examples where automobiles served as symbolic sites for harbouring and facilitating ideological movements and identity politics, i.e., Vespa as the centre of the Italian youth movement or fashion-led Mod identity politics in post-war Britain (Arvidsson, 2001; Hebdige, 1979), but in Thompson's (2014) opinion the concept of '*identity politics*' has not been explicitly studied or developed as part of the consumer culture research stream. Following this conceptual oversight, in 2011 (and 2014) Thompson called for increased investigation into understanding the dominant cultural and political ideologies within a nation and how these diverse ideological forms get translated into consumption-mediated identity politics when consumers grab hold of marketplace mythologies to exercise dramatic narratives of consumption (Thompson, 2004; Holt, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010; Arvidsson, 2001).

Therefore, with the growing importance of '*identity politics*' in consumer culture research (see Thompson, 2011; 2014) as CCT scholars embark on conceptualising brands as important pillars of socio-political and economic constitutions, the story of

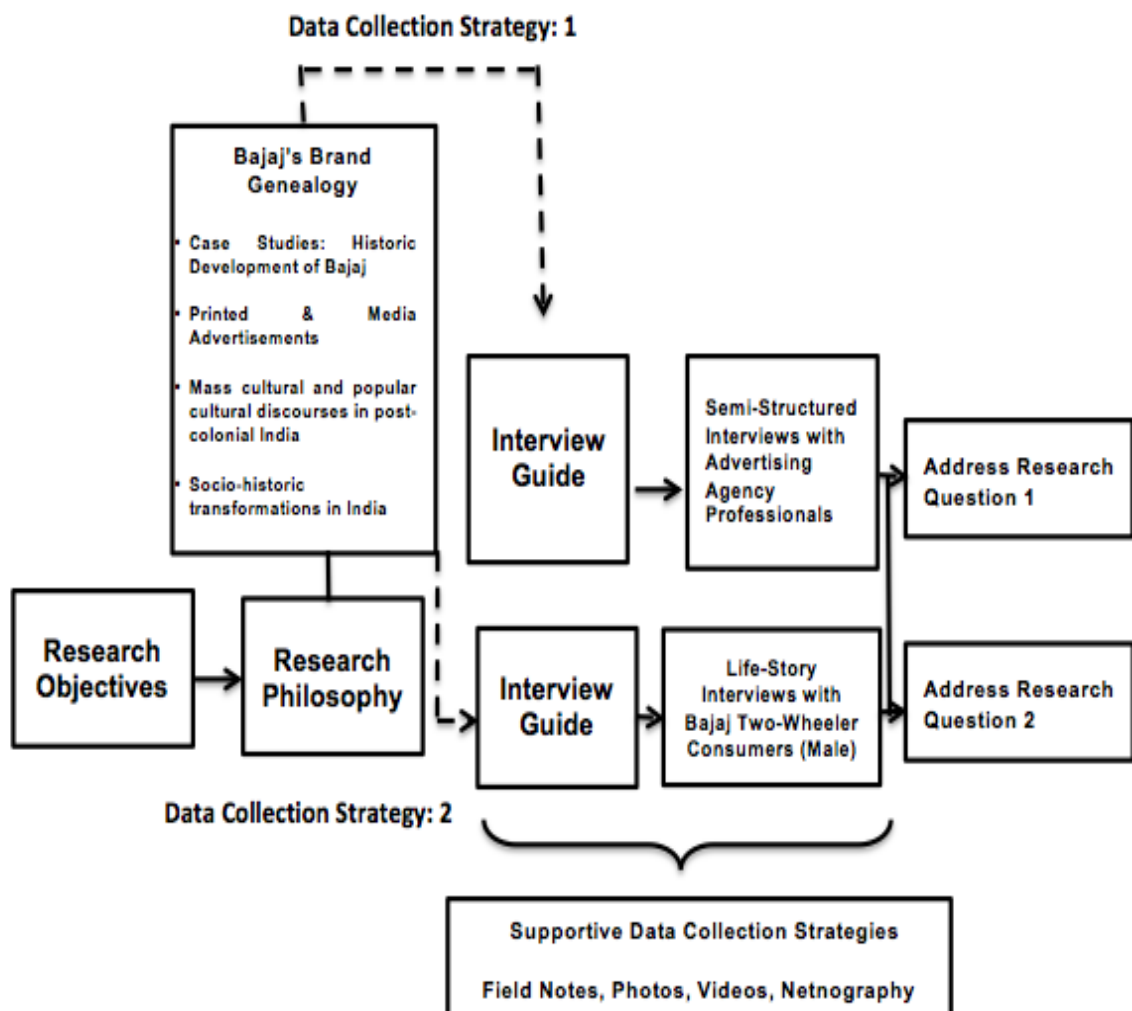
Bajaj's cultural innovation makes a compelling case for investigating the dynamics of brand-mediated identity politics within the transforming socio-cultural landscapes of the Indian nation. In the following section I build upon these knowledge gaps to design and explain research questions relevant to this study.

1.4 Research Approach:

Considering the nature of research questions and objectives (also see Chapter 4.2) set for this study I adopt a multi-method qualitative research approach with a view to generating optimum knowledge contribution for this thesis. According to Holt (2004) the methodological building blocks for analysing cultural strategy require tracking and documenting historic changes within a nation and the marketers' response to such changes with innovative 'cultural expressions'. Following this theoretical lead, during the first phase of data collection, I followed the *Principles of Comparative Case Theory Building* (Holt, 2004; Eisenhardt, 1989) and collected a number of case studies on Bajaj in addition to print and television advertisements of the brand dating back to the 1980s (see Chapter 4). Similarly, on the other hand, I charted the ideological development of the middleclass in India since colonial times, in doing so I paid special attention to the ideological distress surrounding men and their everyday consumption posed by society, politics, and culture. I chose middleclass men as the unit for analysis as it not only served as Bajaj's primary target market, but also because the transforming politics of identity and consumption in India can be best captured in the fragmenting notion of masculinity (Derné, 1995; 2000; Osella and Osella, 2006; Sinha, 1995). Initially I used this data set and followed the principles of *Comparative Case Theory Building* to compose Bajaj's brand genealogy (see Chapter 4.8). During the second phrase of data collection I reflect on this genealogical history

along with relevant data collected, in order to select respondents and design interview guides, for conducting semi-structured and life-story interviews with ad agency executives and Bajaj two-wheeler owners respectively. During this stage of data collection the ad agency executives helped me to gain valuable insights into the creative inspirations behind Bajaj’s brand iconicity, while the consumers provided deep insight into their motivation for consuming Bajaj and its brand mythologies.

Figure 1.1: Research Approach



1.5 Thesis Structure:

The following section outlines a narrative summary of individual chapters presented as part of this thesis.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

In this chapter I build the foundations for this research by discussing the importance of understanding and developing brand management from a cultural perspective. In doing so, I present a brief narrative of the emerging principles of cultural innovation strategy as proposed by Holt (2004) by criticising the mainstream dogma of mindshare, emotion, and identity branding. In my effort to rationalise the potential and prospects of this study I question the validity and applicability of Holt's proposed model in a wider context. Here I further describe how more robust theoretical explanations are required for cultural branding to become a systematic theoretical or managerial pursuit. In the following section I further rationalise the importance of studying the consequences of managing brands as part of wider culture that can often lead to the development of brand-mediated identity politics, making the survival and revalidation of cultural brands more complicated than anticipated. Following these conceptual gaps in cultural brand management research I design and describe two research questions that lie at the very foundation of this research. Finally I conclude this chapter by summarising my research approach along with a summary of all the chapters.

CHAPTER TWO: CONSUMER CULTURE THEORY AND THE PRICIPLES OF CULTURAL BRANDING

As researchers must be aware of developments, criticisms, and breakthroughs in their field of research, I use this chapter as a prologue to discuss and position this study within the interdisciplinary ‘theoretical vernaculars’ of Consumer Culture Theory (or CCT) research. Following Arnould and Thompson (2005; 2007) I conceptualise Consumer Culture Theory as an emerging interdisciplinary field, in social science and marketing, and review the past twenty years of developments, breakthroughs, and future directions in this research stream. I summarise this section by highlighting the proposed knowledge contributions of this study captured within the ‘*Common Structure of Theoretical Interests*’ (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) leading to the advancement of *Consumer Culture Theory*.

The second part of this chapter lies at the epicentre of this dissertation as I unpack and question the *Principles of Cultural Branding* (Holt, 2004) as my chosen *focal theory* for this dissertation (Phillips and Pugh, 2010). I begin the chapter by reviewing the chronological development of mainstream brand management research within the marketing discipline, followed by a detailed review of the principles of cultural branding with a special emphasis on what makes this approach different from our understanding of identity or emotional branding approach. In the following section I pose questions concerning the robustness and global applicability of Holt’s model and critically rationalise why it is time to rethink the principles of cultural branding once again.

CHAPTER THREE: CULTURE, CONSUMPTION AND THE TRANSFORMING INDIAN NATION

In this chapter I unpack the concept of culture, consumption, and automobility with an aim to understand, throughout history, how automobiles were used as an ideological platform for cultural practice and identity exercises, and the purpose of an individual's engagement with such agencies in the age of postmodernisation. As understanding social, cultural, and political dimensions of a nation lies at the very foundation of cultural branding practice, these brands can often become the centre ground for demonstrating identity politics. I finish the chapter by presenting a brief historic overview of state-driven ideologies and politics in India and their impact on middleclass masculinity since colonial times. Here I highlight the socio-economic and political bureaucracies that created widespread ideological anxieties from time to time and subjected middleclass men to be a victim of India's transforming socio-political history (Varma, 2007; Fernandes, 2006). Such ideological distresses later became strategic opportunities for cultural industry to build Bajaj's iconic brand value.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY AND DATA ANALYSIS

In this section I detail my methodological approach for this study inspired and guided by some of the pioneers in advertising and brand management research within CCT (Cayla and Arnould, 2008; 2013; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Hackley and Kover, 2007; Thompson, 2004; Hirschman and Thompson, 1997; Ger and Belk, 1996; Fournier, 1998; Miller, 1998; 2013; Scott, 1994a; Scott, 1994b; Schroder, 2002; Luedicke et al., 2010; Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001). Here it is important to register that although the philosophical and methodological principles adopted for this research was widely inspired by CCT, yet my '*worldview*' as a researcher was not exclusively guided by

this discipline. Hence, I present broad comparative arguments from different philosophical and methodological paradigms in order to justify my ‘worldview’ and methodological standpoint.

I begin this chapter by justifying the philosophical underpinnings of this research - *Interpretivism*. In the next section I justify the suitability and applicability of multi-method qualitative techniques in generating optimum knowledge insight for the selected research questions. In doing so I discuss individual qualitative methods (Semi-Structured Interviews, Life-Story Interviews, Observation Research, Netnography etc.) used as part of this research in addition to the analytical measures applied to triangulate and codify collected data with a view to deriving thematic results. I conclude the chapter by highlighting the ethical guidelines followed along with limitations of my research approach.

CHAPTER FIVE: BAJAJ – A STORY OF CULTURAL INNOVATION

This chapter remains at the heart of the progressive cultural brand management research stream, as following the chronological development of Bajaj in India I present a unique story of cultural brand innovation and its sustainability. By analysing the empirical evidence gathered as part of this study, I criticise the post-hoc managerial explanations (Plunkett, 2009; Hiscock, 2008; Herdeck and Piramal, 1985) and argue that Bajaj became a quintessential icon of the nation by embodying pure and profound culture-led mythical expressions borrowed from mass and popular culture. As I embark on understanding the compelling myth market appeals resonating around the social and political authority of the Indian nation since colonial times, my analytical attention remains focused on the role of advertising agencies in

identifying, assimilating, and composing the fundamental factors for fabricating Bajaj into a cultural innovation. The findings in this chapter present new knowledge insights into the concept of cultural brand management, both complementing and criticising Holt's (2004) prescribed model.

CHAPTER SIX: BRAND MEDIATED IDENTITY POLITICS – THE CONSEQUENCE OF CULTURAL BRANDING

In this chapter I sought to understand the consequences of cultural branding in generating brand-mediated *identity politics*. The findings in this chapter suggest that today men in India have become a social and symbolic site of destabilisation as a result of contesting ideologies imposed by globalisation, modernity and market transformation against the conservative post-colonial ideologies of manhood. Following this socio-political transformation, as Bajaj's brand mythology, crafted on the archetype of a benevolent picture of Indian manhood, gradually transformed into an aggressive version of raw manhood, the transforming series of mythical allures presented a resilient ground for staging identity politics across the nation. To elaborate, I present two central components of middleclass manhood in contemporary India as identified through their subscription to specific Bajaj two-wheeler machines and their underlying consumption politics. This chapter presents an important lesson for understanding how marketplace activities encourage social fragmentation by supplying consumers with a medium for exercising various cultural and political ideologies (Thompson 2014). As cultural brands get intensely involved in the social and political affiliations of a country they become primary battlegrounds for staging moral conflicts (see Luedicke et al., 2010; Arvidsson, 2001; Hebdige, 1979). Such an ideological war has great consequences for Bajaj and its future and it is high time for

managers and academics to conceptualise “Why do brands cause trouble” in an increasingly postmodern world (Holt, 2002).

CHAPTER SEVEN: THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION, IMPLICATIONS, AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

In this chapter I reflect back on my findings and analysis to illustrate the theoretical knowledge contributions made to the area of *Cultural Brand Management* and *Politics of Consumer Identity Work*. Developing on the analytical insights gathered from Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 this chapter compliments and criticise Holt’s cultural innovation model suggesting why it the high time for CCT researchers to invest organised and collective efforts in transforming this theoretical field into an important academic and managerial pursuit.

The Chapter further focuses on highlighting the role of cultural brands in creating wider fragmentation and identity politics and its implication for understanding brand management in the age of postmodernity.

These contributions were further combined to offer knowledge advancements in *Consumer Culture Theory*.

1.6 Conclusion:

In conclusion, this chapter establishes the foundations for this study by highlighting the importance of progressive knowledge contribution within the emerging field of cultural branding. The chapter begins with a brief introduction to the theoretical foundations for this study and indicates why after being dictated by a decade-long monopoly of economic and management agendas it is high time for cultural researchers to validate a robust theoretical model of branding that acknowledges culture, history, and politics as important contributing factors in brand management practice. In 2004 Douglas Holt pioneered the concept of cultural branding by suggesting a set of tacit principles, whilst Holt's proposed model remains limited and contextual, little work has gone into progressing this potential field of research. Building on these conceptual limitations this study aims to examine the applicability of Holt's cultural branding model within an emerging socio-economic context - India. The main aim of this study remains focused on validating Holt's model beyond the advanced socio-economic boundaries of North America, while generating further knowledge towards the advancement of the cultural brand innovation. Secondly, as cultural brands are products of a nation's socio-political affairs, this study addresses Thompson's (2011; 2014) call by aiming to understand the notion of brand-mediated identity politics surrounding Bajaj two-wheelers. Overall the chapter rationalises the key conceptual gaps that led to the development of research questions along with the strategic approach adopted to generate further knowledge.

CHAPTER TWO: CONSUMER CULTURE THEORY AND THE PRICIPLES OF CULTURAL BRANDING

2.1 Introduction:

This chapter is divided into two fundamental sections. I begin the literature review by presenting a brief overview of consumer culture research in the marketing discipline. In doing so I discuss the emergence of CCT as an institutionalised theoretical vernacular in consumer culture research and its thematic developments in the past thirty years. As researchers must be well aware of any developments, controversies, and breakthroughs in their chosen field of theory (Phillips and Pugh, 2010), in the following section I present a brief historical account of developments in branding and advertising research, while using the distinctive and systematically linked body of ‘*common structures of theoretical interests*’ to position this study within the thematic vernacular of CCT (see Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007).

As the field of brand management is a developing area of marketing and management, this section lies at the epicentre as I unpack and question the *Principles of Cultural Branding* (Holt, 2004) as my chosen focal theory (Phillips and Pugh, 2010). I begin this section by reviewing the chronological development of mainstream brand management research within the marketing discipline, followed by a detailed review of the principles of cultural branding, with a special emphasis on what makes this approach different from our understanding of identity or emotional branding. In doing so, I identify the fundamental factors (marketplace myth, culture, ideology, identity, lifestyle etc.) and try to establish how these factors assimilate together to generate ideal conditions for crafting ‘*Cultural Innovation Strategy*’. With the progress of the

literature review, it will become evident that the fundamental constructs of iconic brands are built upon underlying socio-cultural meanings stemming from a nation's ideological politics (Holt, 2003a; 2004). As I propose to extend our knowledge of cultural paradigm in brand management, I criticise the macro-dimensional and context-specific nature of this emerging branding model with an intention to identify knowledge gaps and justify the selected research questions. I finish the chapter by reviewing the historic development of some important micro dimensional theoretical constructs of cultural innovation in CCT and other socio-anthropological research, i.e., *Marketplace Mythology* and *Role Transformation*.

2.2 A Brief History of Consumer Culture Research in the Marketing Discipline:

According to Sidney Levy the field of marketing received its academic credentials in the early twentieth century, however, the history of marketing practice dates back to the time of the ancient Pharaohs and their trading activities (Levy, 2007). For decades the traditional school of thought has always viewed marketing as an exchange process involving a chain of activities leading to customer satisfaction and profit making, despite the socio-anthropological commonalities, culture and consumption based qualitative approaches in marketing research were largely undermined by the dominant paradigms of the discipline (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006; Bagozzi, 1974; McCracken, 1988). During the early and mid-twentieth century cultural studies were more popular amongst scholars in the humanities and other subject areas (historians, economists, anthropologists, sociologists etc.) as they applied various qualitative techniques (personal interviews, focus group interviews, projective techniques, participant observation, ethnography, story telling etc.) to understand the

consequences of human action on culture, consumption and society (Cohen, 1972; Levy, 2007; 1981), for example, historian Daniel Horowitz (1985) detailed an ethnographic picture of transforming consumer society in America between 1875 and 1940, while sociologist Nelson Foote (1954) used a combination of qualitative work to describe how “The Autonomy of [middleclass suburban] Consumers” grew with wider economic changes in post-war American society.

Eventually the increased validation of consumption as a socio-cultural phenomenon outside the marketing discipline resulted in growing dissatisfaction against the restrictive views of the mainstream. The qualitative-interpretative domain repeatedly critiqued the positivist mainstream for failing to understand consumption as a social interplay, where consumers engage in defining and destroying the rules of consumption as they use material objects to supply meanings to their life, identity, and other practices (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006; Holbrook, 1995; Sherry, 1991; Hirschman, 1989). As dissatisfaction with polling and surveys became increasingly imminent, marketing scholars turned to more descriptive versions of data sets for exploratory research (Levy, 2007). As the dominant paradigms of marketing kept resisting qualitative cultural studies by accusing it of being a “social disorder...distorting the definition of marketing” (Laczniak and Michie 1979), increased influence from the *Social Research Inc.* (SRI.) made culture and consumption research orientations more and more popular under Levy’s supervision (see Levy, 2007). As the researchers at SRI engaged in accumulating cultural insights in consumption through interviews, life stories, photographs and word association, numerous exploratory concepts in consumer culture such as: ‘brand image’ or ‘symbolic significance of commodity’, started to arise broadening the

concepts of marketing beyond traditional thoughts (Baudrillard, 1981; Boyd and Levy, 1963; 1981; 2007; Firat, 1978; Levy and Kotler, 1979). In the meantime major waves of theoretical contribution in cultural research also started to pour in from European scholars, namely; Roland Barthes (1957), Michel Foucault (1984; 1988), Jean Baudrillard (1981) and Pierre Bourdieu (1984; 1991). As by using various interpretative techniques these scholars challenged the existing status quo of knowledge creation on the socio-cultural dimensions of consumption (Levy, 2007).

Consumer Behaviour Odyssey and CCT: The late twentieth century revolution of consumer culture research practice saw further support from establishments like the Association for Consumer Research (ACR in 1970) and the Journal of Consumer Research (JCR in 1974), that led to a sharp rise in consumer culture research work documentation over the following four decades. As more and more scholars recognised the importance of cultural paradigm the idea of marketing as a function of consumers' actions and their consumption activities, rather than an imposed choice, became more and more obvious (Moisander and Valtonen, 2006). As scholars like Zaltman, McCracken, Calder, Belk, Sherry, Mick, Holbrook, Arnould, Thompson, Ger, Firat, Holt, and Hirschman showed interest in consumer culture work the paradigm gained more credibility with the emergence of more interpretative work on consumption and culture (Levy, 2007; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006).

According to Moisander and Valtonen (2006) in the past twenty years consolidation of culture led consumption research, to understand marketing and consumer behaviour, have reached the peak of its popularity amongst a 'radical' group of scholars who competed against the constitutive values of mainstream through critical,

experimental, interpretative, post-positivist, post-structural and postmodern approaches under the label of *The Odyssey of Consumer Behaviour*¹ (Belk, 1991; Sherry, 1991; Hirschman, 1989; Beckman and Elliot, 2000). Belk is considered to be one of the pioneers of this ‘radical’ discipline as his leadership led to the establishment of an important milestone: The Consumer Culture Theory (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007). As Levy (2007) described – “Belk is an industry in himself”. Following Belk’s consumer culture research trail a number of distinctive contributions emerged within the cultural and socio-anthropological juncture of marketing. Scholars like Sherry, Arnould, Thompson, Brown, Price, Joy etc. dedicated their career in investigating the macro social foundations of culture and consumption. Similarly Firat and Venkatesh (later joined by Dholakia) took the agenda to the next level by igniting postmodern debate within consumer culture research (also see Brown, 1993; 1997).

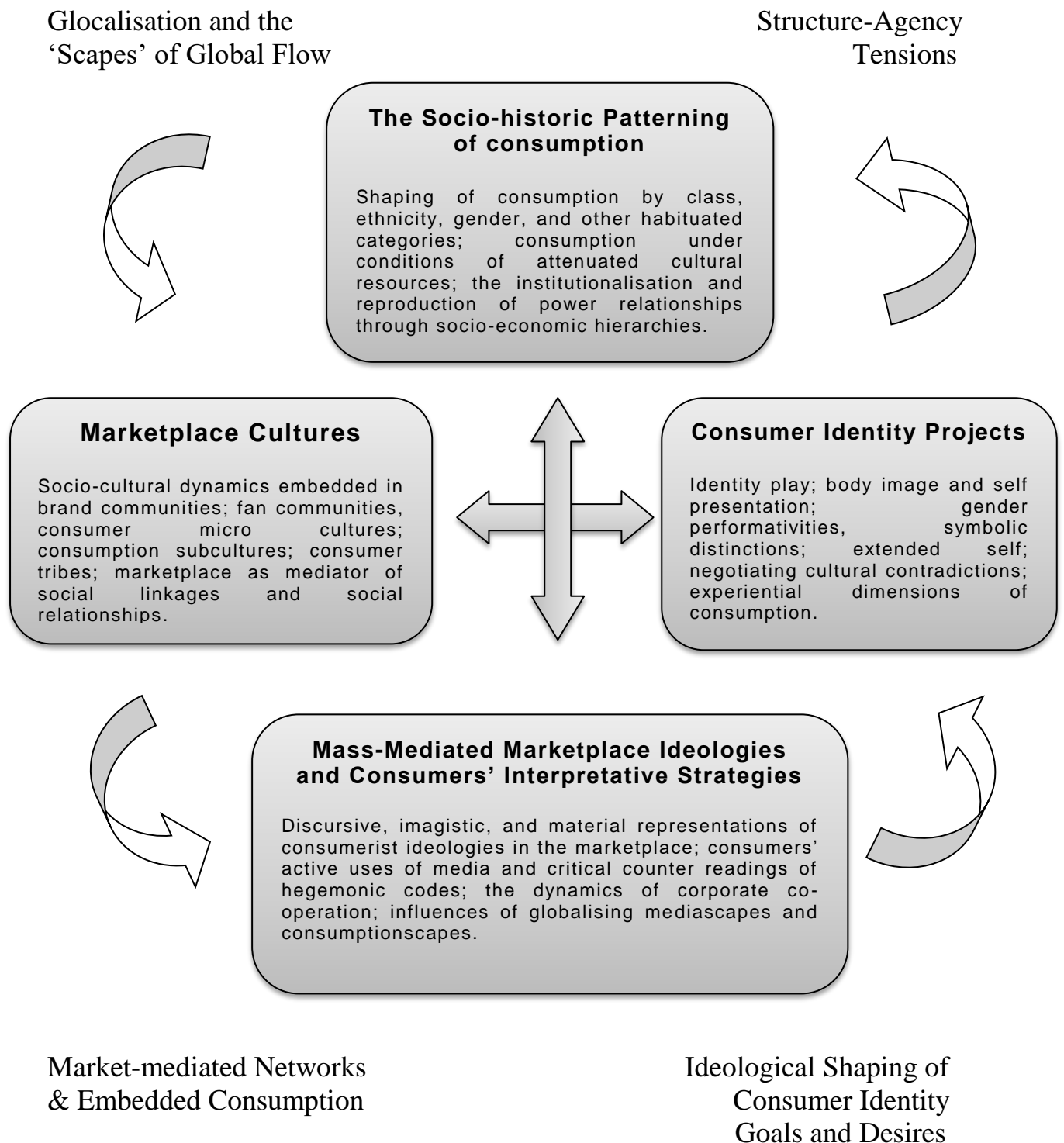
Besides Belk, Holbrook (1981, 1995), together with Hirschman, also stand out for their systematic qualitative approach towards understanding the symbolic dimensions of branding and communications. As the enigma of cultural studies gained further momentum, scholars like Cova, Schouten, Thompson, Holt, Peñaloza, Kozinets brought their individual interpretative perspectives by unpacking the logics of branding, advertising, identity and community practices in this emerging research stream (Cova and Cova, 2002; Kozinets, 2002a; Holt, 2004; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). While the majority of CCT researchers share a common theoretical orientation towards studying the ‘distributive meanings of consumption’, the historical roots for the tradition lie in the broad initiative for investigating the

¹ Actual title – “Highways and Buyways: Naturalists Research for the Consumer Behaviour Odyssey” (Belk 1991).

‘neglected’ spheres of socio-cultural and experiential consumption (Belk, 1987a; 1987b; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982; Holt, 2002). This study builds upon one of such ‘neglected’ spheres of socio-cultural research stream known as: ‘The Cultural Branding’.

The CCT stream of research remained obscured and disorganised until 2005 when a consolidated version of this research stream became institutionalised through a ‘reactionary reflection’ of qualitative research endorsing the ‘dynamic relationship’ between the marketplace, consumer’s actions, and culture over twenty years. Today, this institutionalised practice has gained wider momentum under the disciplinary brand name: *Consumer Culture Theory* (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007). In the following section, I describe the theoretical advancement of branding and advertising research in CCT with the intention of positioning this study within the thematic vernaculars of ‘*common structures of theoretical interest*’ [see Figure 2.1].

Figure 2.1: CCT: Common Structures of Theoretical Interest



Source: Arnould and Thompson (2007, p.10)

2.3 The CCT School of Thought: Advancement in Branding and Advertisement Research

The idea of branding in CCT emerged as cultural symbols deeply connected to consumers' identities, ideologies, and life history, as depending on a brand's level of social, political, and cultural engagement these symbolic tropes can become extraordinary assets in consumers' life (Hirschman, 1986; Levy, 1999; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Fournier, 1998; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; Kozinets, 2001; Kates, 2004; Holt, 2002; 2004; Luedicke et al., 2010). While much of the existing literature on brand management is focused on a normative framework of strategy building, guiding managers with a prescribed way on how to maintain their brand and its equity (Aaker, 1991; 1996; Kapferer, 2004), research in brand management within CCT was laid out across the vernaculars of four macro-theoretical perspectives. While a group of CCT scholars dedicated their efforts to understand the influence of brands in socio-historic patterning of consumption or consumer identity practice (Fournier and Yao, 1997; Fournier, 1998; Holt, 1997; 1998; 2002; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Murray, 2002), another group dedicated their work towards understanding the tribal aspects of brand subcultures and communities (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Kozinets, 2002a; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). In addition, the dynamics of caring and sharing (Cova and Pace, 2006; Cova, 1997), intense non-geographical relationships (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001), and new forms of 'consumer empowerments' (Brownlie and Hower, 2007; Hower and Brownlie, 2010; Luedicke et al., 2010) were also identified as part of this research stream. Besides primary empirical evidence, CCT scholars have also used a collection of reflatory thoughts or secondary evidence to describe the diversity of meanings acquired by brands in different cultural contexts (Ger and Belk, 1996; Miller, 1998a; 2013).

According to Scott (2007), the interpretative and rhetoric dimensions of branding and advertising research became further solidified and established in CCT when Douglas Holt cultivated the idea of cultural brands as a nation's collective ideology. One of the important initiations in this research stream was developed by investigating brand iconicity as consequences of socio-historic, cultural, and political activities (Holt, 2003a; 2004). According to Holt, iconic brands as cultural projects are mainly commanded by hidden commercial mythologies presented in the form of lucrative commercial rhetoric, that finds inspirations in socio-cultural and political distresses within a country (ibid). In his efforts to unravel the ideological complexities hidden within iconic brand advertisements, Holt (2004) followed Scott's (1994a; 1994b) perspective on visual and textual analysis methods to unravel the multiple social-political agendas that gave advertising agencies creative grounds to battle against widespread socio-political turmoil.

As one of the key requirements of culture led brand management research is to understand advertising as a culturally informed meaning-based activity (Scott, 1994a; 1994b; Schroder, 2005; Stern, 1988; 1989). Following this conceptual lead, since the 1980s' a number of pioneering scholars dedicated their career to learn and understand advertising *as* visual and textual rhetoric, for example, Linda Scott (1994b) investigated how visual messages were converted into a symbolic system of negotiation as consumers made rhetoric interpretations of fashion accessories and the visual imagery offered by high street fashion accessory brands; similarly, McCracken's (1986) pioneer model advocates how advertising act as an 'instrument of meaning-transfer' in consumer society.

Following this line of enquiry, a stream of CCT research has tried to establish the direct and indirect impact of advertisements in consumers' life (Zhao and Belk, 2008; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Thompson, 2004; Holt, 2003a; 2004; 2006; Schroeder 2000; Johar et al. 2001; Hirschman and Solomon, 1984), and the outcome of these studies largely indicated that the new face of consumer-advertisement interaction is not confined within passive cognitive responses. Instead, today's consumers are drawn towards accepting the challenges of interpreting the hidden visual/textual forms within advertisements and associating them with their life experiences, or even using them as ideological forces to endow new meanings and socio-political consequences (Thompson, 2004; Scott, 1994a; Scott, 1994b; Varman and Belk, 2009; Thompson et al., 2006). Therefore, in the twenty-first century, research into branding and advertising has gone well beyond understanding viewers' evaluation of brands and their ads as passive recipients, the new 'logical jump' is to understand how brands and their advertisements empower consumers and their everyday social-cultural activities (Soctt, 1994a; 1994b; 2007; Thompson, 2004; Holt, 2002; 2006; Zhao and Belk, 2008). Today brands and their advertisements are something consumers consume to live, and not live to consume.

Following this paradigmatic development in branding and advertising, in the following section, I position this research within the theoretical vernacular of CCT with a view to contribute towards the 'continuation of theorisation' in this research discipline (Arnould and Thompson, 2007; Thompson et al., 2013).

Positioning the Study within CCT: In this section, I outline the foundations of this research and its potential contribution to the ‘common structures of theoretical interests’ in CCT [see Figure 2.1 and 2.2]. My aim here is to summarise the scope of the study and its potential contribution towards the advancement of dialectic knowledge in CCT. Considering the research objectives Figure 2.2 summarises how individual thematic domains of CCT have provided a systematic framework for literature search and knowledge contribution for this project. The set of ‘background theories’ that helped me to conceptualise the meaning and advancement of branding, advertising, and identity research were selected from the four foundational pillars of CCT’s thematic vernacular: ‘*Mass Mediated Marketplace Ideologies and Consumers Interpretative Strategies*’, ‘*Socio-historic Patterning of Consumption*’, ‘*Consumer Identity Projects*’ and ‘*Marketplace Cultures*’. However to build a detailed conceptual understanding of the subject area I looked beyond CCT for other pioneering socio-cultural theories on Mythology (Barthes, [1957] 2000), Culture (Williams, 1976; Featherstone, 1989; 1990), Automobility (Miller, 2001), and Identity Transformation (Turner, 1969).

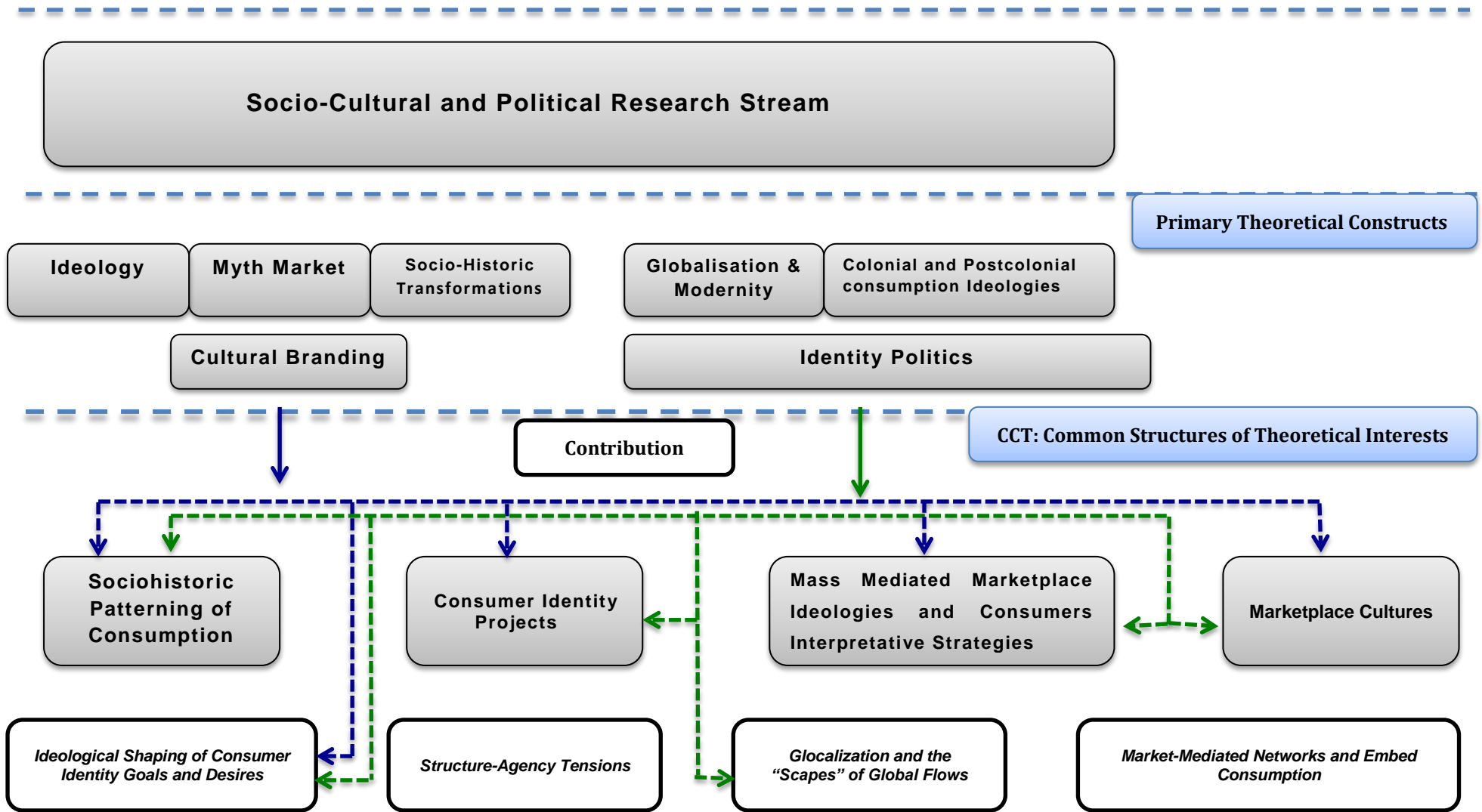
Here it is important to highlight that although CCT came to existence as an ‘improvised discipline’ sending open ended calls to build an assembled hermeneutic framework of interpretative studies in consumer culture research, today its “obsession with natural science-style mode of abstract theory-building” has started to become a disciplinary dogma in itself (Holt, forthcoming). As building theories in CCT demands an ‘idiosyncratic’ focus on academic contribution independent of managerial problem solving models, it seems like a high time for an ‘intellectual awakening’ (ibid). In order to mobilise this intellectual movement Holt (forthcoming) proposed

introduction of '*Consumer Culture Strategy*' (CCS) as a new sub discipline of CCT. The aim of this sub-discipline is to remain a perfect thematic fit to CCT but deviate from the mainstream by becoming adept to managerial thinking (ibid). Although following Holt (forthcoming) I do not aspire to add a distinct 'strategic or managerial lens' to this study, yet my objectives remains largely grounded within the newly proposed CCS sub-discipline. I expand on this topic further within the Discussion and Contribution chapter (Chapter 7) in order to initiate a new theoretical and managerial direction for this emerging area of brand management.

In terms of contribution, the primary interest of this study lies in advancing brand management research from a cultural perspective, however the study equally aims to address Thompson's (2011; 2014) call for increased research into identity politics within developing economies (also see Ger et al., 1993; Üstüner and Holt, 2010). Here India as a context not only supplied excellent grounds for the advancement of branding and advertising research within developing economies, it also supplied a contrasting ground for analysing the historic trajectory of consumption and identity practice amongst middleclass Indian men shaped by a series of transforming socio-economic forces within a post-globalised society. Considering the nature of CCT's heuristic mapping, the contributions of this study naturally diffuse into all four major theoretical domains in addition to the connecting theoretical frames. Figure 2.2 presents a brief conceptual mapping of this study positioned within the theoretical vernacular of *Consumer Culture Theory*. Here each of the research objectives highlights a set of theoretical constructs that fit into the broad thematic agenda(s) within the 'research family'.

On the endnote it is important to register that this study does not regard CCT as a unified theory, and my aim here is not to create global advancement of *Consumer Culture Theory* (or any of its individual theoretical domains). Rather, the study regards CCT as an orientating device and utilises it as a comprehensive guideline to understand existing research themes within selected dimensions of theoretical, epistemological, and ontological traditions in consumer culture theory. In other words, CCT acted as a ‘beginners framework’ (Arnould and Thompson, 2005) where the theoretical subsets supplied clear line of questions, arguments, and findings presented through a number of compulsive research ideologies. In the following section, I review the principles of cultural branding along with a brief historic review of developments in brand management research beyond CCT.

Figure 2.2: Positioning the Study within Consumer Culture Theory



2.4 Research in Brand Management:

The idea of branding can be traced back to the early civilisation trading or to the times of Pharaohs and their exchange practice (Levy, 2007), however, the organised use and application of this term became more appropriate during the industrial revolution when trade expansion and increased demand for scale of economy called for a systematic approach towards building consumer-commodity relationships (Wilk, 2006; Kotler and Keller, 2006; Wengrow, 2008; Rappaport, 2006). Historically, scholars have tried to describe the idea of branding from multiple perspectives, however, it was not until 1985 that the concept started to capture wider academic and scientific interest leading to the composition of a new philosophy of business and management practice: Brand Management (Aaker, 1991; Kotler and Pfoertsch, 2006; Heding et al., 2008).

According to the principles of brand management, initially brands were introduced as a 'product-plus' concept to assign symbols of authenticity, promise of quality, and expected values to a physical product or a service (Hanby, 1999; Styles and Ambler, 1995; Lewis, 1996), but with the increase in marketplace competition, branding as a specialised marketing practice has become more and more popular amongst managers relentlessly looking to incorporate augmented values to their products or services (Keller, 2003a; 2003b; Gobe, 2001; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Fournier, 1998). Today branding has emerged as an important science or paradigm of marketing and an essential management tool for a firm to create its most valuable assets, while for consumers it has become a means for supplementing relationships or to acquire status or identity through symbolic benefits (Keller & Lehmann, 2006; Wilk, 2006; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Levy, 1999; Fournier, 1998).

Taxonomy of Brand Management: A descriptive and evolutionary picture of brand management can be identified within Heding et al.'s (2008) '*Kuhn-based taxonomy of brand management*'. This evolutionary model presents a chronological articulation of how branding as a concept has gradually shifted from a commodity centric idea to a consumer centric culture plea (Heding et al., 2008; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Levy, 1999; Mick et al., 2004; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). The taxonomy also presents a clear picture of competitive paradigms in brand management, separated by the ideological fragmentation of individual research domains. According to Heding et al. (2008) research in brand management emerged from the related fields of marketing, advertising, strategy, and management that negotiated a number of pragmatic models and value creation processes by applying quantitative measures or qualitative narratives (also see Keller and Lehmann, 2006). For example, the positivist school defined branding as a one-way process where 'equity' is produced as result of "manipulative lifeless artefacts (product plus that is created by its owners/managers and that can be positioned, segmented and used to create an image)" (Hanby, 1999, p.12). These scholars further believe that brands are organisers, as they insist on aggregating a number of business strategies, tactics, and marketing mixes to align the inside and outside of a company's planning process (DeChernatony and McDonald, 2003; Earls, 2003). In contrast to positivist thinking, the cognitive school has always judged brands in terms of their psychological offerings, both, tangible and intangible, arguing that a brand's performance depends on its ability to sustain these values in facing consumers and marketplace rivalry (Bloemer and Kasper, 1995; Lewis, 1996; Maheswaran et al., 1992). Hence, psychological experiments like brand association and other image representations have received priorities within this research domain over other analytical categories (DeChernatony and McDonald, 2003; Kapferer, 2004;

Hanby, 1999). Beyond positivist and cognitive thinking, the interpretive school has seen branding as metaphorical projects that sustain on enduring and mutually exclusive relationships between consumers and consumables (Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Levy, 1999; Fournier, 1998; Hanby, 1999). For example, the consumer culture research domain has conceptualised brands as ideas or symbols that reside in consumers' minds turning them into co-producers of image, equity and value, while by using systematic or 'asystematic' rules consumers regularly engage with brands in a self or community based interaction (Wilk, 2006; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Fournier, 1998; Schroeder, 2008; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling, 2006; Belk and Ger, 1996).

Brands as Cultural Artefacts: The interpretative school of research has not only educated us about the importance of brands within culture and society but it has also appealed for wider investigations into macro (and micro) cultural agendas to be considered as part of future research in this discipline (Holt, 2004; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Lury, 2004; Schroeder, 2005; Bently et al., 2008; Koehn, 2001). Unlike the traditional concepts, cultural paradigm believes that brands interact with culture in two predominant ways, primarily, through the metaphoric assimilation of meanings drawn from the society and culture we live in, secondly, through a theoretical or strategic space between managerial planning and consumers' desire for interpreting brands as cultural artefacts (Holt, 2004; Lury, 2004; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling, 2006). It is the search for meaning that consumers ascribe to a brand, not only by subscribing to their pre-planted identity values, but through the process of negotiation that takes place between marketers, consumers and society, transforming brands into symbols of cultural value (Cayla and

Eckhardt, 2008; Askegaard, 2006; Cayla and Arnould, 2008). Such a representation is a product of both receptive and deceptive symbolic barriers originating from broad social, cultural, political, and historic activities within a nation; understanding brands from this perspective demands researchers investigate 'image', 'value', and 'identity' as products of societal, political, and cultural expressions (Holt, 2004; Lury, 2004; Cayla and Eckhardt, 2008; Schroeder, 2005; Askegaard, 2006; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Heilbrunn, 2006).

Cultural Branding: Since the rise of contention between traditional brand management and the cultural concept scholars across various academic disciplines have shown an interest in understanding the cultural authority and symbolic power of brands (Klein, 2000; Lury, 2004; Arvidsson, 2001; 2005; 2006; Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Schroeder, 2005; Wilk, 2006; Ger and Belk, 1996; Coombe, 1998; Foster, 2008; Miller, 1998; 2008). To name a few, Miller (1998b) presented an allegoric interpretation of nostalgia and relationship values being sold as part of Campbell's Soup, Ger and Belk's (1996) investigation into how cultural values of a global brand (Coke) encourage local 'consumptionscapes' when they insist on shaping unique consumption patterns within less affluent nations, or even Wilk's (2006) exploration into how commercialised commodity values can be hidden under rich cultural meanings to settle consumers' moral claim over everyday necessities like bottled water. Out of all these investigations, Holt's (2004) *Cultural Innovation Model* presents a unique mechanism of value proposition and competitiveness for conceptualising brands as moral, cultural, and politically valued assets of an organisation. This mechanism explains the historic role of brands as 'cultural activists' as their 'unprecedented competitiveness' is built upon much

demanded cultural and ideological aspirations of a nation state (Holt, 2004; 2006; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Maclaran et al., 2008). Therefore, inspired by the discourse of society, politics, culture, and economy, the newly proposed *Cultural Innovation Model* has largely challenged conventional branding on the grounds of misinterpreted identity values as cognitive resources (Holt and Cameron, 2010). Citing Max Weber's ([1905] 1947) criticism on 'knowledge bureaucracy', Holt and Cameron (2010) described how the commercial assimilation of "calculable rules, rationalised 'scientific' management, and hierarchical chain of commands" has created an innovation led 'sluggish' brand management culture that receives immense support from a chain of corporate infrastructures, i.e., Market Research Agencies, Designing Agencies, Consultancies etc. Today with increased marketplace competition as brands are turning into highly valuable contested managerial assets for big companies, traditional post-hoc factors (utilitarian value, pricing, packaging, distribution channel management, service delivery etc.) are becoming increasingly popular measures to champion the idea of brand equity by stripping cultural influences from the beginning. Instead, Holt (2004) believes, brands that enjoy iconic success emerge from their ability to inspire identity values as products of a nation's wider anxieties and desires through cultural briefs – a concept he theorised as *The Principles of Cultural Branding*. For example, Coke and Pepsi, two cola giants, invested millions of dollars in creating a wide range of products over half a century - Pepsi Blue, OK Cola, Coke Blak etc. – but despite having an organised chain of marketing and management activities these new product lines became a mass failure as they failed to capture consumers' imagination at the level of a nation's ideology and culture (Holt and Cameron 2010). Rather companies with flexible entrepreneurial origin (Snapple, Starbucks, Red Bull etc.), that freely exercised their branding ideologies within

'cultural studios' (see Chapter 3.2) flourished through the 'cracks and crevices' of management bureaucracy (Holt and Cameron, 2010, p.284).

2.5 Principles of Cultural Branding:

Literature in socio-anthropology defines cultural icons as compelling symbols or ideas that deem societal values as they continuously circulate and anchor meanings through media, entertainment, or other popular channels (Holt, 2004; Levy, 1959; 1963; 1999). As subliminal concepts, icons rely on storylines, characters, and symbolic metaphors that ignite people's imagination through a system of symbolic representations (Holt, 2004; Levy, 1999; 1981; 1963; Barthes, [1957] 2000). Whilst in ancient civilisation cultural icons were produced as 'valued ideas' and diffused into society through storytelling, in the modern (or postmodern) world the production of cultural icons is mostly perpetuated via 'cultural anecdotes': imaginary stories that supply 'extraordinary ideological value' with intensive and pervasive societal and cultural meanings as they circulate in society through magazine, newspaper, film, popular culture, or other mass communication manifestations (Holt, 2004; Thompson, 2004; Wright, 2001). Following this theoretical lead, in 2004, Holt noted:

"Brands become iconic when they perform identity myths: simple fictions that addresses cultural anxieties from afar, from imaginary worlds...[that reflect] expression of [consumers'] aspired identities [within a nation]"

- Holt (2004, p. 8)

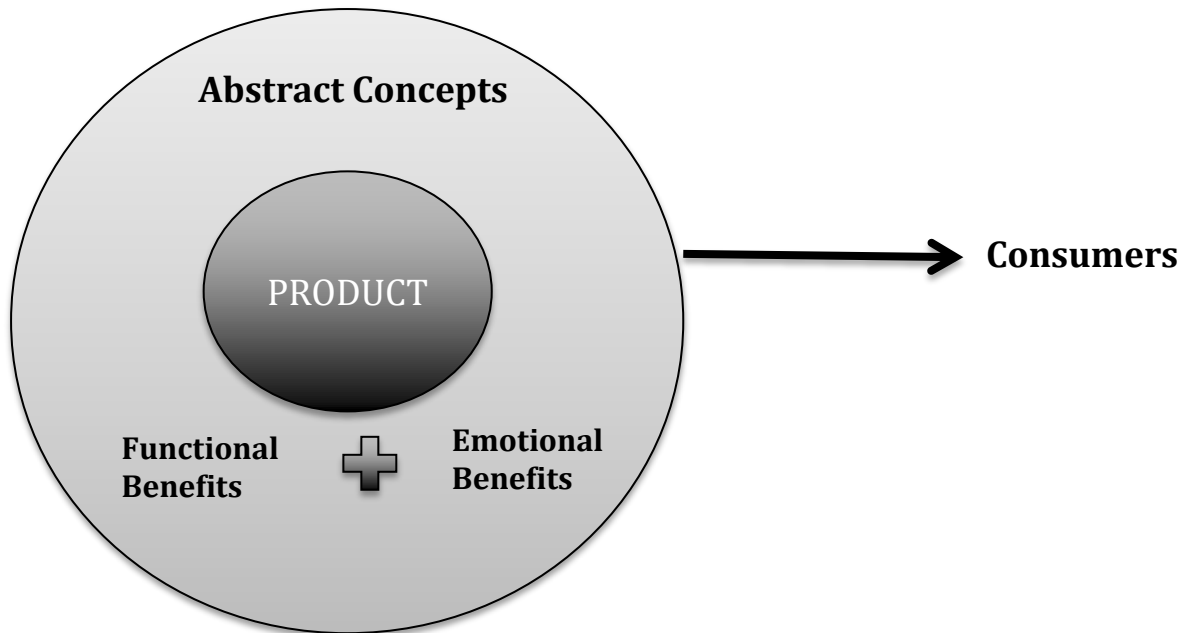
While the positivist and pragmatist theories of branding are majorly concentrated on presenting an ambitious one-size-fit universal model that rarely moves beyond the

vague economic relics or the hegemony of aspiration, emotion or innovation [See Figure: 2.3] (Jobber, 2004; Keller, 2003a; 2003b; DeChernatony and McDonald, 2003; Gobe, 2001; Doyal, 2001; Feldwick, 1996), other dominant paradigms such as consumer psychology conceptualised branding as a cognitive decision making process that assures exclusivity through the association of image or cognitive information as currency for value (Kapferer, 2004; Wood, 2000; Lewis, 1996). In comparison, Holt (2004) argued that brands that become cultural icons harbour appropriate historic ideals and cultural myths by becoming vessels of meanings, ideals and values related to a nation's inherent ideologies. These cultural myths in turn offer symbolic relief to a group of citizen consumers when existing cultural and political ideologies become potential sources of distress to them. In other words, cultural brands offer imaginary '*fabrics*' that reinforce a sense of aspired unity, belonging, and life project continuity within a distressed society when managers infuse desired cultural codes to transform brands into symbolic vehicles of '*relief*' [See Figure: 2.4] (Holt 2004). As the distance between 'desired' and 'actual' widens within a nation space, demands for ideological relief intensify with more and more opportunities becoming available to the brand managers for creating and reinforcing culturally fuelled brand images.

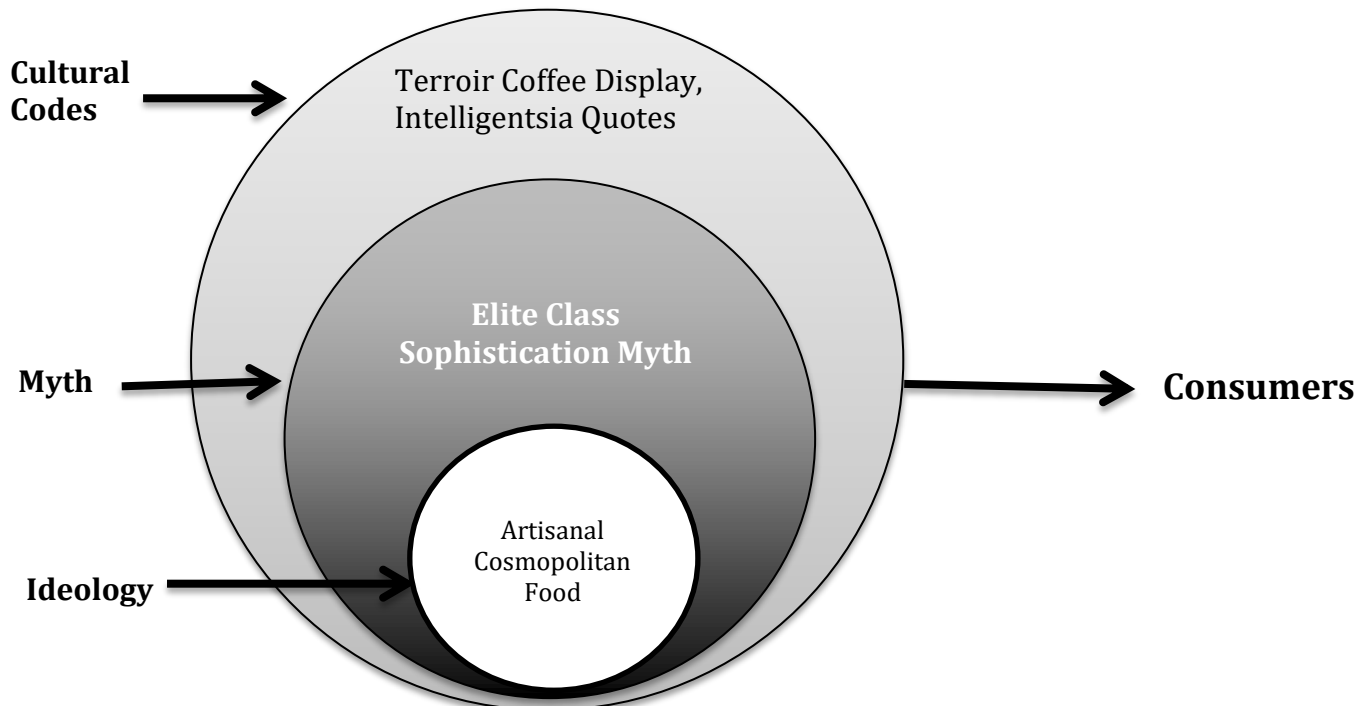
In two separate instalments, Holt presented an assembled model of cultural brand iconicity through a series of historic and analytical vignettes that he called *brand genealogies*. These analytical stories claim how some of the most powerful iconic brands in North America accrued and sustained extraordinary cultural values through historic "ubiquity and repetition, [that] transform[ed] emergent culture into" unique element of tacit brand management principles: *The Principles of Cultural Branding* (Holt, 2006, p.355; Holt, 2003a; 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010).

Figure 2.3: Comparative Illustration between Traditional & Cultural Branding Models

Traditional *Mindshare* Branding Model:



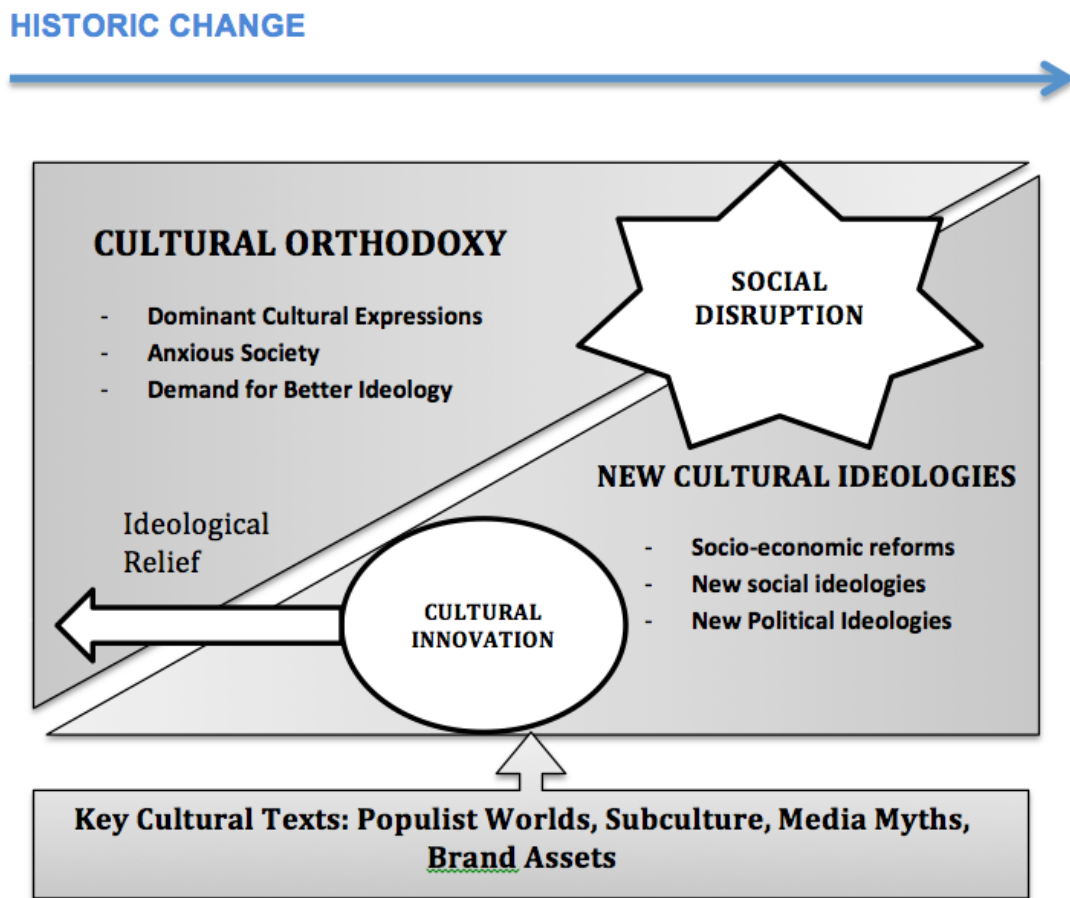
Emerging Cultural Branding Model (Starbucks):



Source: Adapted from Holt and Cameron (2010, p. 180 - 181)

The Principles of Cultural Branding (Holt, 2004) states brands that become icons target ideological demand within a nation with an 'authentic' storytelling technique known as Identity Myth. Such stories not only supply outstanding symbolic values to a society, but they also help to soothe a nation's collective anxieties by satisfy its desires within a given time frame (Barthes, [1957] 2000; Levy, 1981). As the circulation of cultural icons are becoming central to contemporary social and economic activities, the underlying mythologies and identity resources are increasingly drawn from a nation's socio-cultural and political activities [See Figure: 2.3 & 2.4] (Barthes, [1957] 2000; Levy, 1981). When societies move forward through its historic, cultural, and political contexts, desire for new cultural icons is generated in the form of '*better ideologies*' [See Figure: 2.4] (see Holt and Cameron, 2010). These societal and cultural shifts cause the long-term success of an iconic brand to rely on its adaptability to the changing historic and ideological context of a nation through a transforming myth-market strategy [See Figure: 2.3 & 2.4]. For example, Holt demonstrated how the historic fit between the populist world of outlaw biking and the transforming counter-cultural texts of alternative American masculinities provided the raw materials for Harley Davidson's iconic constituencies (Holt, 2004; Schouten & McAlexander, 1995), or even how Starbucks transformed the orthodoxy within the coffee category by borrowing dramatised cultural codes from elite and artisanal coffee connoisseur communities (Holt and Cameron, 2010; Clark, 2009).

Figure 2.4: Cultural Branding Model



Source: Adapted from Holt and Cameron (2010)

Such stories of iconic emergence and survival, narrated by Holt, educate us about how cultural brands capitalise on social tensions and anxieties sustained within a nation. The selected iconic brands [Marlboro, ESPN, Harley-Davidson, Mountain Dew, Jack Daniels, Ben & Jerry's, Starbucks etc.] presented in Holt's writings are exclusively known for their powerful symbolic values reflecting some of the dominant ideological constructs within the United States (Holt, 2004; 2006; Holt and Cameron, 2010).

In the following sections I review and summarise three selected brand genealogies based on Holt's narration, i.e., Harley-Davidson, Mountain Dew, and Starbucks, and compare them to identify the process of cultural brand creation and the fundamental factors responsible for transforming brands into cultural icons. During this review I pay special attention to Harley-Davidson case as it resembles to Bajaj in many ways being a motorcycle brand. Throughout the review I focus on identifying how managers compose cultural briefs out of ideological fractures to out-innovate their competitors on strategic grounds and how brand mythologies supply 'inherent cultural expressions' for consumers to compensate their identity (or ideological) drawbacks.

2.5.1 Harley Davidson: A Cultural Legacy of Ruggedness, Outlaw Biking, and the Man of Action Heroes

The historic turnaround of the iconic Harley-Davidson (HDC) brand is a prime example of how brands become icons when they supply inherent cultural expressions to a nation or a community. Founded in 1903, by three young experimental minds (William S. Harley; Arthur Davidson; Walter Davidson and later joined by William A. Davidson), this legendary motorcycle manufacturer has a strategic survival story that "no one on earth could replicate" (Harley-Davidson Company, 2010). Today, the company has become one of the iconic heavyweight (over 750 cc) motorcycle manufacturing brands in the US and beyond (Fournier and Lee, 2009).

The historic journey of Harley-Davidson began with William Harley's idea of transforming bicycles into 3-1/2 inch stroke racers. In sustaining and developing the idea for a century, Harley marketers adopted some phenomenal marketing strategies, regarded as one of the most influential corporate stories in the history of marketing

(Holt, 2004). Harley's unique American value and productivity has always helped the brand to create a monopoly within the pre and post-war American market (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). The unique selling points of second generation Harley motorcycles, such as distinct engine performance over 100,000 miles, distinct sound of the engine, and designs for cruising highways, made Harley Davidson one of the two unique American motorcycle manufacturers that survived the great depression of 1930s (Holt, 2004). Despite surviving the financial perils of the great depression, the HDC faced their biggest challenge, in 1960, from rapidly invading Japanese manufacturers and their small and dynamic two-wheelers (Holt, 2004). Such fierce competition destroyed Harley's biggest American rival Indian, but using fresh marketing efforts through cultural legacies, the company turned its fortune over next half a decade making it one of the top 50 brands in the world (Fournier and Lee, 2009). By early 1990, the hype for riding a Harley was so intense that Harley aspirants were happy to spend a year on the company's waiting list to make a \$20,000 single purchase and a further \$5000 to make it a custom made consumption object (Holt, 2004).

Since the 1990s, managers have repeatedly interpreted Harley's success factors as result of revolutionary branding practice, while research in consumer culture (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Schouten et al., 2012; Holt, 2004) indicates that the key factors involved in the strategic turnaround of HDC can be divided into three elements – a) restoration of product quality (Holt, 2004), b) cultural association of the motorbikes to the American nation and a commitment to get closer to customer lifestyles through myth market strategy (Holt, 2004; Schouten and McAlexander,

1995), c) supporting subcultural activities to extract brand loyalty (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Schouten et al., 2007).

Therefore, Harley-Davidson's success was rejuvenated by the Harley marketers' endeavour to transform the brand into an effective ground for culture and identity negotiation (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Holt, 2004). The story begins within the post-war context where urban and rural American men were struggling to find a place within state dictated 'scientific bureaucracy'. As the Harley marketers realised that their consumers' core consumption interest lay within the inspirations and aspirations for cultural authorities and lifestyle appeals hidden within the post WWII outlaw biking communities, the company changed its early gentleman type motorcycle designs into symbols of rebellion (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Willis, 1978). This was done in collaboration with the cultural industry that produced a wave of cultural texts glamorising outlaw biking and its ethos as the core image of Harley (Holt, 2004).

Such an endorsement of counterculture biking offered an alternative social world to America's working class white men who felt emasculated by deindustrialisation along with middleclass solemnity and rising 'scientific bureaucracy' measures. As post-war America insisted on renouncing the existing 'patriarchal model of manhood', working class Americans looked for alternative spaces to experiment their 'progressive ideology' of raw manhood. Here, the idea of owning and riding a Harley offered a space of aggression that stood against the 'gentle' middle-class values along with a promise to protect their virility through 'frontier' outlaw principles. Gradually, the Harley culture grew into an extensive network of bikers' associations across the

nation and Harley became a cultural icon through its mythical quintessential Americanism (Holt, 2004; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995).

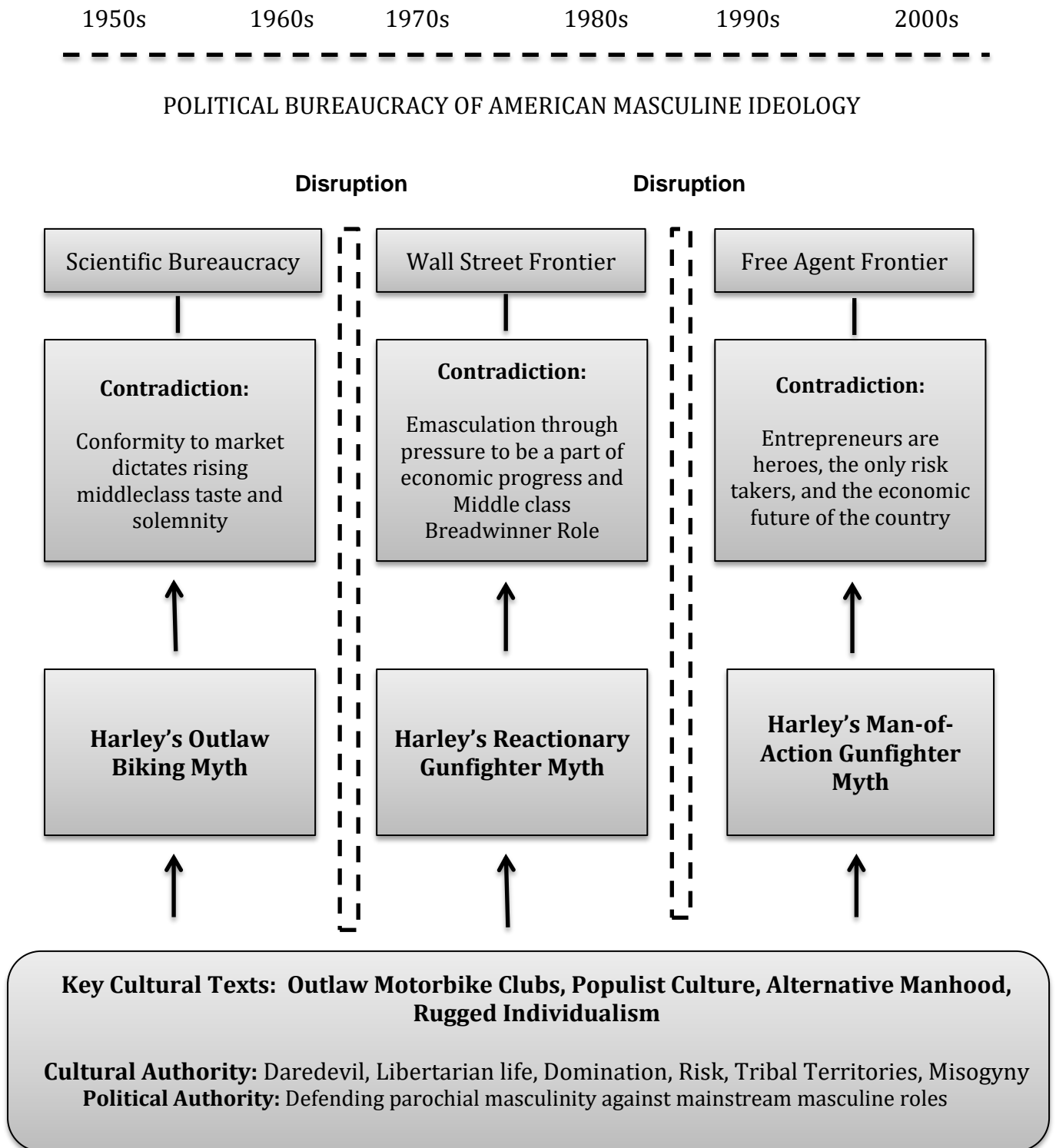
Historic changes in the late 1960s dictated that the early state driven 'scientific bureaucracy' to be replaced by 'Wall-Street frontiers' where the principle state ideology remained focused on encouraging the managerial and breadwinner archetypes to be presented at the forefront of progressive America. During this period Harley's outlaw biking myth became increasingly old and threatened to be flagged as 'anti-social' within the emerging social norms (Yates, 1999). Distressed by wider social un-acceptance the Harley consumers wanted a 'better ideology' to counteract the 'Wall-Street frontier' orthodoxy in the States. In response the Harley marketers sent out a second wave of cultural texts transforming the outlaw ethos into a reactionary 'gunfighter myth'. This new gunfighter myth transformed America's comprehension of the fugitive, amoral image of Harley riders into reformed 'nationalist gunfighters' – uncivilised, but with a view to become a tough soldier committed to preserve the integrity and values of the nation (Holt, 2004; also see Holt, 2006).

Finally, during late 1980s with the crash of Wall Street, the state ideology of 'Wall-Street frontier' and the dream of global domination shredded into 'Free agent entrepreneurial heroes' (Holt, 2004; Holt, 2006), as Ronald Regan's government insisted, the 'subversive entrepreneurs' were the real American heroes who could save the nation by thriving in a competitive world with death-defying risks. This new political vision not only undermined the working-class, once again, it also erased the middle-class breadwinners who dreamed of global domination through deluded

political promises (ibid). With the rise of symbolic individualism Harley's gunfighter myth became insensitive until the cultural industry re-crafted the old archetype into a 'Man-of-Action' model. This new breed of 'gunfighters' emulated the figure of 'Man-of-Action' stereotypes such as Stallone, Eastwood, or even Arnold Schwarzenegger and these rhetoric figures of the American 'warrior frontier' went beyond Harley's original fandom. With the launch of Harley riders as representatives of 'Man-of-Action Heroes', even the middle-class bought into the libertarian appeal of the brand – hence the sudden high demand and the extensive waiting list (Holt, 2004). This rhetoric 'action hero' warrior myth became so powerful in catching the imagination of the nation at a time when the middle-class was thriving to overcome the demolition of corporate wall-street dream, searching for a new model of capitalism to fight against the rival economies. Here, the new myth assured re-instillation of virility to dispute capitalism while reinvigorating society with libertarian values.

As the short genealogy states, Harley's extraordinary iconic legacy started with its convincing mythical trope of parochial and rugged manhood as the cultural industry was successful in identifying and addressing widespread anxieties experienced by a particular group of men who failed to adapt to post-war economic restructuring. Since then the series of Harley myths became authentic and compelling sources of identity reconstruction as the raw materials for its cultural texts strongly intersected with 'patriot movement', 'right-wing counter culture', 'militia movement' etc. that vowed to save the nation against the unsanctified dynamics of forced capitalism (Holt, 2004).

Figure 2.5: Harley-Davidson's Iconic Survival through Cultural Legacy



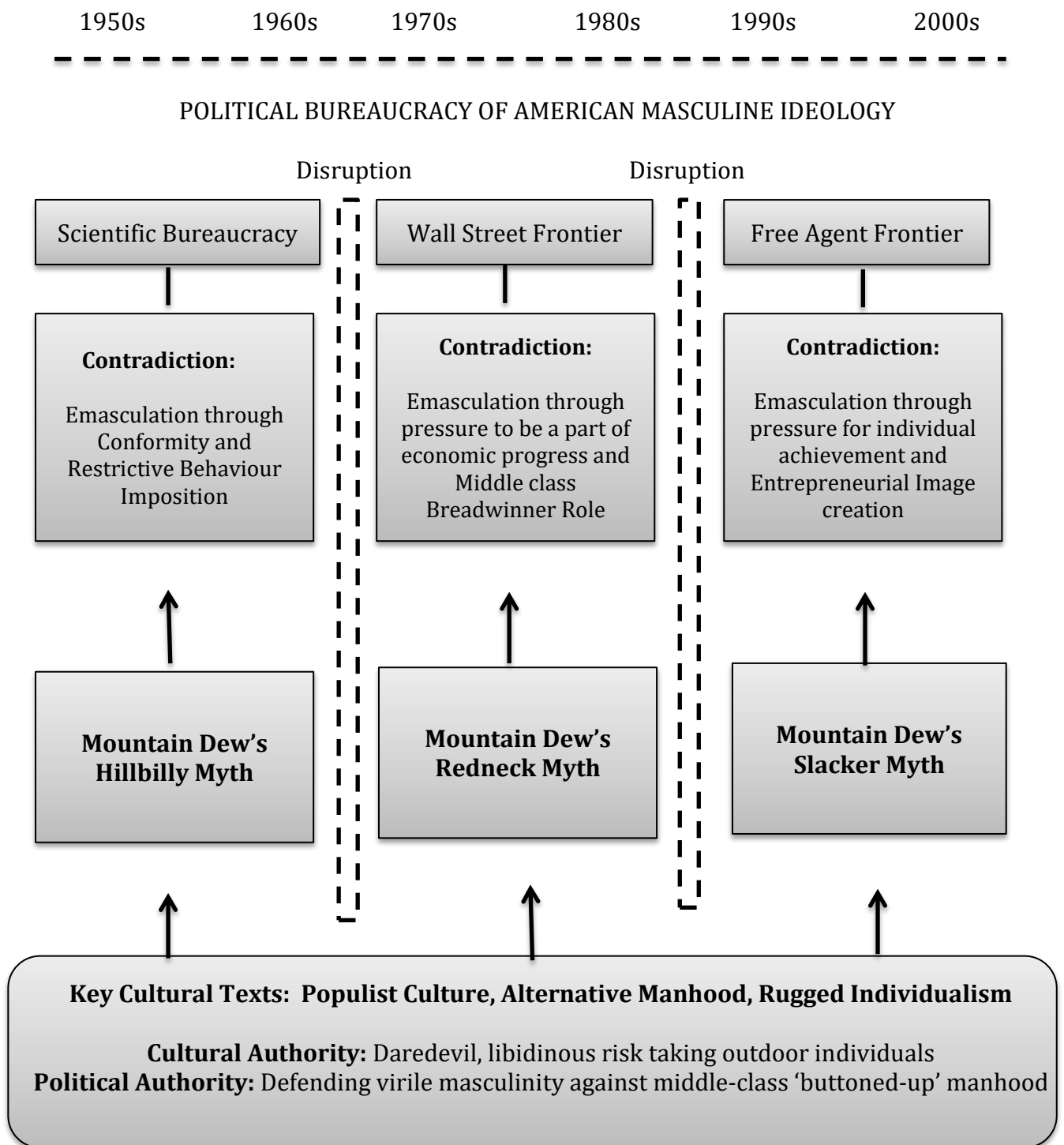
Source: Adapted from Holt (2004)

2.5.2 Mountain Dew: Composing Culture to Challenge the Mainstream

Introduced in the 1940s, Mountain Dew is a classic example of cultural innovation that went for a head on head collision with cola giants Coke and Pepsi within the carbonated drinks market. The secret of this unprecedented success of a small Tennessee based soft drink company lies in its creative positioning strategy applied through experimental culture briefs (Holt, 2004).

The iconic constituencies of Mountain Dew came from a consistent mythical storyline drawn from the populist worlds of unruly rugged individualism that persisted within the ‘cracks’ of mainstream society (rock and roll, beats bohemia, cowboy western frontiers etc.) and constantly fought against the moral consequences of mainstream institutions and their progressive capitalist ideology. Over the past seventy years Mountain Dew has (re)invented and delivered a number of allegorical promises, that supplied imaginary ideological spaces for experimenting with alternative lifestyles, for people who felt being suffocated by the mainstream society (ibid). Therefore, like Harley Davidson, Mountain Dew, as we know it today, has targeted and delivered a series of mythical stories, between the 1950s and 2000, drawing inspiration from three distinct subcultural archetypes - Hillbillies, Rednecks, and Slackers - within post-war United States. Figure 2.6 summarises the innovative cultural expressions hidden within Mountain Dew’s progressive brand mythology.

Figure 2.6: Cultural Iconicity and Survival Strategy of Mountain Dew



Source: Adapted from Holt (2004)

2.5.3 Starbucks: Culturally Sophisticated Coffee from the Artisanal Cosmopolitans

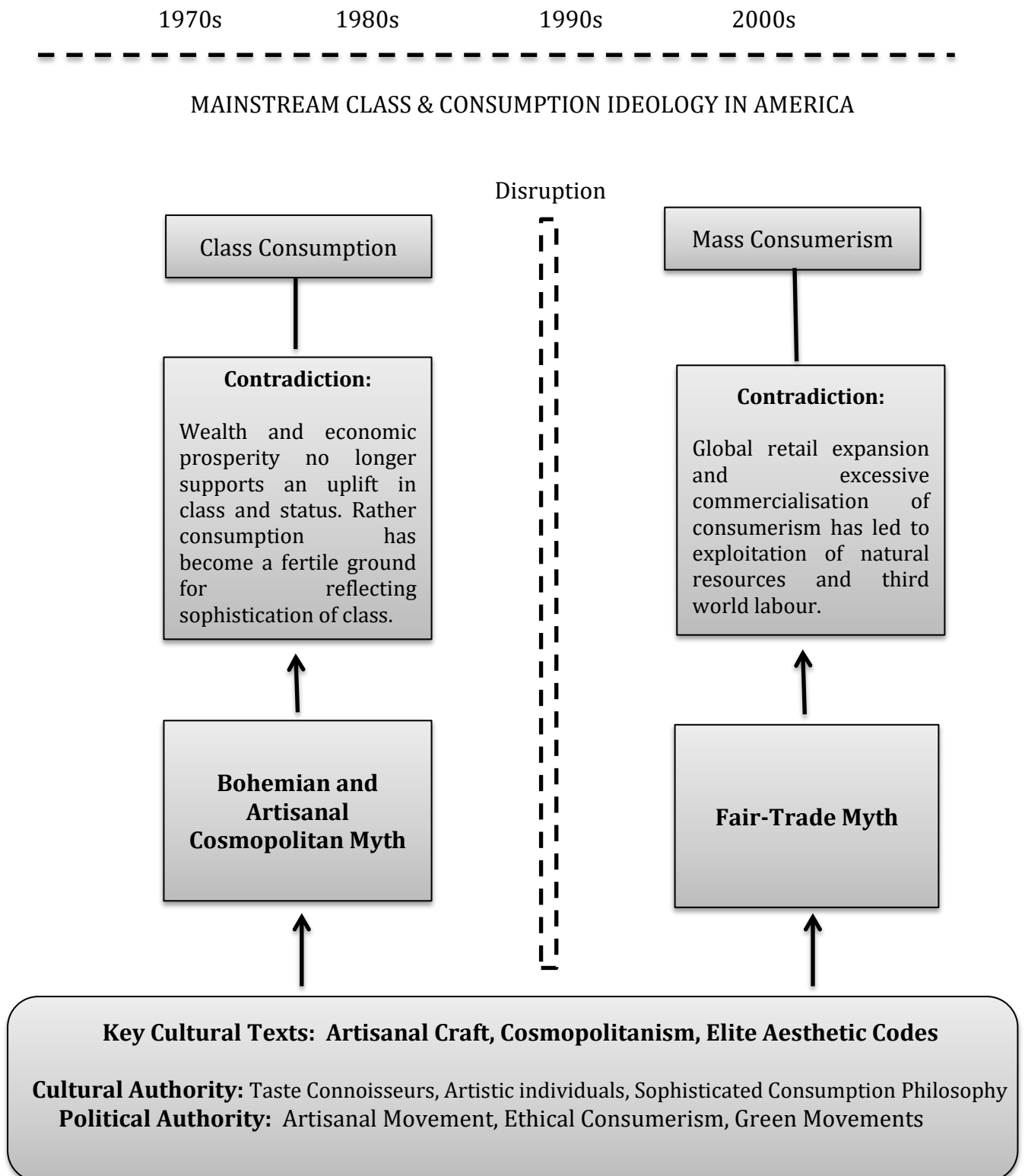
In the last two decades Starbucks has achieved a market capital of \$18 billion with 16,000 stores worldwide, yet Holt and Cameron (2010) believe that the conventional management model has been largely unsuccessful in explaining why any other ‘mass-luxury’ coffee shop offering a ‘third space’ for socialisation has failed to replicate similar iconic success. If the service based experience alchemy or a story of ‘accessible social sophistication’ is the ultimate strategic key to replicate Starbucks’ brand iconicity then questions arise as to why Starbucks’ immediate competitors - Torrefazione, New Orleans’ Café du Monde, or even Denver’s Peaberry Coffee - failed to achieve an equivalent level of success with a similar product range and similar financial resources (Holt and Cameron, 2010; Simon, 2009).

The reason for this, as Holt and Cameron (2010) described, is an over reliance on functional and emotional benefit models amongst competitors along with a ‘mind-share’ logic of ‘commodity emotion trap’ (See Holt, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010; Pendergrast, 1999; Brown, 2007). As the managerial and cognitive understanding of Starbucks’ functional and emotional territories remain rooted within sensual and psychological elements, i.e., music, smell, atmosphere etc., a huge gap in knowledge remains apparent (Holt and Cameron, 2010). In addressing this gap the cultural innovation model visualised the iconic constructs of Starbucks as interplays of popular ‘culture expressions’ created through the appropriation of alternative cultural codes, such as, ‘artistic’, ‘intellectual’, ‘connoisseur’, and ‘sophisticated’ within an everyday staple (Holt and Cameron, 2004; Simon, 2009; Thompson and Arsel, 2004; Brown, 2007). In other words, the iconic constituencies of Starbucks derived from a

conjugation between ‘cultural capital’ and the ‘social trickle-down’ concept where the social codes of sophistication were borrowed from ‘artistic-cosmopolitan tastes’. Such an unique taste sophistication practice was borrowed from the elite American coffee subculture that supplied ‘new meanings’ to the product and the brand beyond its everyday interpretation, i.e., coffee as a middle-class staple (Holt and Cameron, 2010; Pendergrast, 1999; Thompson and Arsel, 2004).

At the dawn of twenty-first century as American mass consumption ideology moved with historic changes the meaning of artisanal craft and cosmopolitan expression changed dramatically following this trend. Starbucks had never shown any interest in the ethical wellbeing of society or third world farmers until the idea of sophistication transformed from taste culture into ethical consumerism (see Holt and Cameron, 2010). Therefore with the growing disempowerment of their existing ideological appeal the brand became a forefront activist of sustainable coffee production by adopting and promoting Fair-Trade ideologies in modern world.

Figure 2.7: Starbucks – Leadership through Cultural Trickle-Down



Source: Adapted from Holt and Cameron (2010)

2.6 Turning Brands into Cultural Activists: The Six-Stage Model

The universal innovation and profit driven models of brand management have forced us to conceptualise brand value as a product of increased innovation lines, used for micromanaging brand expressions as stereotypes of new products or technological aspirations (see Kim & Mauborgne, 2005). However, in reviewing the chronicles of brand genealogies, it can be claimed that managing brands culturally demands managing ideological stories that supply meanings to consumers' lives and derive iconic values for a brand through marketplace mythologies (Holt, 2003a; 2004; 2006; Holt and Cameron, 2010). The unique competitive advantage of these iconic brands comes from their ability to compete on the grounds of culture and ideology where commercial myths come to act as an authentic source for constructing alternative consensus through symbolic meanings. These commercial myths offer strong emotional recovery to acute and widespread cultural and ideological anxieties that normal identity brands cannot compete [See Figure 2.3; 2.4; 2.5; 2.6; 2.7]. In Holt's (2004) words these are - 'cultural fabrics' – imaginary resources that consumers collectively use to break free from existing social tensions while searching to assign meanings to their existence within a society or a nation.

Therefore the *Cultural Innovation Strategy* is all about identifying specific historic opportunities and responding to those opportunities with tailor-made allegories. The foundational factors that contribute towards the creation and sustenance of cultural brands can be identified as: 'Cultural Knowledge', 'Red Oceans of Orthodoxy', 'Blue Oceans of Opportunity', 'Socio-Historic Transformations', 'Cultural Authorities', 'Political Authorities', 'Commercial Mythologies', 'Populist Worlds', and 'Loyalty'.

A six-stage model (Holt and Cameron, 2010) combines all the factors together to supply a 'blue-print' of brand iconicity:

- I. **Mapping Cultural Orthodoxies:** Conceiving brands as a social, cultural, and political phenomenon means that opportunities for value creation lie in the successful identification of greater socio-historic orthodoxies and changes rather than functional or emotional values. Cultural orthodoxies are 'cultural expressions' consisting of ideologies and cultural codes (Holt and Cameron, 2010) that create 'red oceans' within individual ideological categories resulting in widespread socio-political sufferings. A systematic approach towards building cultural brands requires a greater understanding and historic mapping of cultural 'red oceans' within respective social, cultural, or political categories.

- II. **Identifying Social Disruptions:** The second stage of cultural innovation involves identification of social disruptions. Social disruptions are wider transitional periods that induce huge cultural, political, and economic changes within a society during a given time period. These social shifts eventually unsettle conventional ideological agendas dominating social structure and social norms, while encouraging consumers to demand new ideological inspirations. These social transformations can be triggered by various economic, demographic, cultural, social, mass-media, or technological movements. The cultural branding stories discussed earlier highlight how cultural brands lose their iconic appeal and rejuvenate through alternative

appeals following transitions in economic, demographic, and cultural discourses.

III. **Discovering Ideological Opportunities:** Once a social disruption starts to onset, consumers increasingly look for alternative identity/ideological projects to overcome collective ideological distresses. Therefore during the third stage of cultural innovation project managers should focus on identifying the '*blue oceans*' as 'latent ideologies' or 'alternative social spaces' instead of looking for innovating new technology or better functionality as competitive strategy. These ideological opportunities arise from major socio-historic disruptions that shake up conventional ideas dominating as 'orthodoxies'. During this stage managers should repeatedly ask what are the emerging cultural expressions and ideological agendas consumers are gravitating towards, what is the most appropriate ideological opportunity that could turn a brand into a cultural icon. In the long run ideological opportunities that provide fertile grounds for iconic brand innovation are unique to a specific society. For example, within similar socio-historic frameworks whilst the rise of entrepreneur ideology and emasculation of American men served as an ideological opportunity for Mountain Dew's iconicity, Volkswagen found ideological opportunities within the Bohemian struggles of artisanal creativity.

IV. **Identifying Appropriate Cultural Resources:** With the identification of ideological opportunities brand managers should focus on creating cultural briefs that offer mythical relief to wider tensions within a society. The cultural resources used to design these cultural briefs (mythical stories) are strictly not

a product of managerial ‘brainstorming’ activities, rather the core archetypes of such expressions can be found hidden within the subliminal layers of social or subcultural movements, media driven myths, or even within a brand’s own heritage and history (Holt, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010).

The identified ideological opportunities should ideally indicate the appropriate cultural resources for composing a cultural brief or commercial myth market, but sometimes a product itself can become part of a subcultural movement, i.e., Volkswagen became the symbolic expression of Bohemian and Indie movements between 1959 – 1971 and 1995 - 2004 respectively (see Holt 2004, p. 130), as their cultural brief followed the existing (or transforming) lead of the movement ideologies.

- V. **Composing Cultural Briefs:** With the identification of appropriate ideological opportunities and related cultural resources a brand manager should focus on composing mythological treatments: a combination of imaginary appeals that can resolve targeted social anxieties. During the process managers should be certain of ‘*populist worlds*’ where a brand could find its cultural legitimacy. Such legitimacy should be maintained through *insider* (controlling the ‘*populist worlds*’) and ‘outsider’ (the *followers*) briefs transforming a brand’s mythology into an authentic ideological belief. When commercial mythologies appear to be authentic, consumers immediately buy into their imaginary ideological values in order to compensate for their everyday identity crises. As long as the myth remains relevant to their identity crisis consumers remain extremely loyal to the brand regarding it as an icon of

prosperity. Therefore, in order to maintain its iconicity a brand must periodically revise its myth treatment in line with emerging populist worlds. Here, Holt and Cameron (2010) prescribed six tactical approaches [see table 2.1] for blending ideological opportunities and cultural resources into authentic cultural expressions.

Table 2.1: Classification of Cultural Tactics

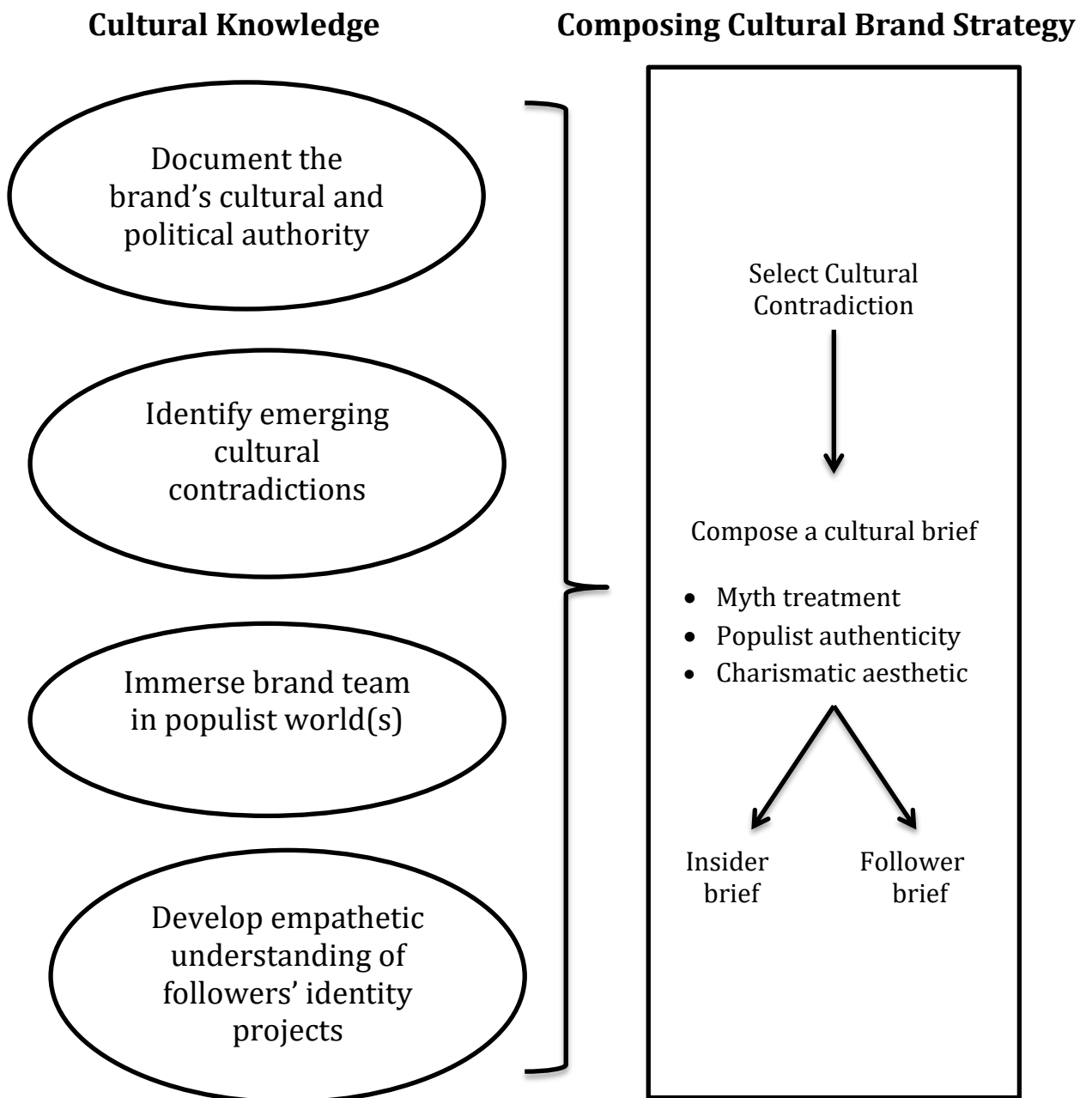
Cultural Tactics	Description
<p>Provoking Ideological Conflicts</p>	<p>Where brands provoke cultural expressions that serve as an alternative space for battling dominant mass-market ideologies.</p> <p>Example: Mountain Dew</p>
<p>Mythologise the Company</p>	<p>Where mythical elements are articulated to install desired ‘frontier’ ideologies and images within a company’s symbolic expression, i.e., Jack Daniel’s aligned their symbolic expressions (old fashioned distillation process in wood vats) with the mythical emblems of post-war ‘gunfighter’ ideology.</p> <p>Example: Jack Daniel’s</p>

<p>Restructure Reactionary Ideologies</p>	<p>Where a brand’s mythical compositions are repackaged or (re)structured in reaction to social transformations or sudden changes in consumer reactions to mainstream ideologies.</p> <p>Example: Marlboro</p>
<p>Cultural Capital Trickle-Down</p>	<p>Where demand for new cultural codes or taste sophistication supplies ideological resources for brand managers to create extraordinary competitive benefits.</p> <p>Example: Starbucks</p>
<p>Crossing the Cultural Chasm</p>	<p>Where mythical briefs supply powerful motivating metaphors to overcome socio-cultural barriers or chasms.</p> <p>Example: Nike – Just do it!</p>
<p>Cultural Jujitsu</p>	<p>Where a small or an entrepreneurial brand gains the ability to directly challenge an established or dominant competitor by aligning it’s ethos with subliminal social or cultural movements.</p> <p>Example: Ben & Jerry’s</p>

Source: Adapted from Holt and Cameron (2010)

Vi. Crafting Cultural Strategy: During the final stage it is important to realise that the components of a cultural brief should represent a specific cultural expression with directive meanings helping the underlying stories to gain ‘authenticity’. With transforming socio-historic beliefs even the most compelling myth diminishes in value and appeal but in revitalising those values the underlying cultural brief should remain static. Therefore, a ‘promising cultural expression’ is crucial in terms of detailing the direction, concealed meanings, and cultural codes to be used across the loyalty model; otherwise a vague multidirectional strategy could result in ‘*cultural deadlock*’ permanently killing the authenticity of an iconic brand. As Holt (2004) suggested, some of the most influential brands in history have failed to conceptualise either the importance of having a consistent cultural expression or they have failed to reshape their mythical appeal with a consistent cultural code and died out eventually by falling into deep cultural chasms.

Figure 2.8: The Cultural Brand Management Process



Source: Holt (2004, p. 210)

2.7 Co-production of Value and Equity as Brand Loyalty:

According to traditional brand management, an individual brand's success or equity is a direct measure of its loyalty and other intangible values (Oliver, 1999; Holbrook, 1999; Aaker, 1991; Kumar, 2002; Zeithaml, 1988). Loyalty, as traditional brand management theories suggests, is a product of complex analysis of consumers' 'satisfaction' and 'repeat purchasing' behaviour, where brands achieve higher equity and success depending on consumers' satisfaction and loyalty score (Taylor et al., 2004; Bandalos and Finney, 2001; Kumar, 1999; Chaudhuri and Holbrook, 2001, Baldinger and Rubinson, 1996; Bloemer and Casper, 1995; Hallowell, 1996).

The principles of cultural branding support the same idea by conceptualising iconicity as a product of intense consumer loyalty and ideological satisfaction (not utilitarian satisfaction). However, while traditional models see loyalty as a 'repetitive purchase behaviour', within the cultural paradigm the idea rests on strong consumer-brand relationships and communal circles of networks (Fournier, 1998; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Muñiz and O'guinn, 2001; Cova, 2006; Maffesoli, 1996). Therefore, from a loyalty perspective brands become icons when consumers take up a 'co-authorship role' and assign extraordinary relationship values to their consumption (Holt, 2004; 2006; Holt and Cameron, 2010; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Fournier, 1998; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Schouten et al., 2007; Collin-Lachaud and Kjeldgaard, 2013).

What separates an iconic brand from a normal everyday brand is the degree of loyalty from its customers, and unlike traditional models within cultural paradigm the driver for loyalty and the variables of commitment are not based on simple 'consumer

satisfaction', rather the degree and nature of each loyalty cohort is directly related to the extent consumers immerse their identity projects within a brand's mythological appeal. As Holt described, the measure of brand loyalty is exceptionally high amongst iconic brands where consumers become 'locked within a social network' of greater commitments offering greater status, capital (socio-cultural) and relationship as oppose to emotional or utilitarian satisfaction. Depending on the level of commitment, iconic brands are usually co-authored and sustained by three interdependent but distinct constituents of loyalty: the 'Followers', the 'Insiders', and the 'Feeders' (see Holt, 2004). Figure 2.9 illustrates how loyalty is sustained as "a product of...social networking" within the cultural paradigm as different loyalty cohorts act individually and/or in combination to create institutional legitimacy and moral hierarchies surrounding the brand (Holt, 2004, p.140).

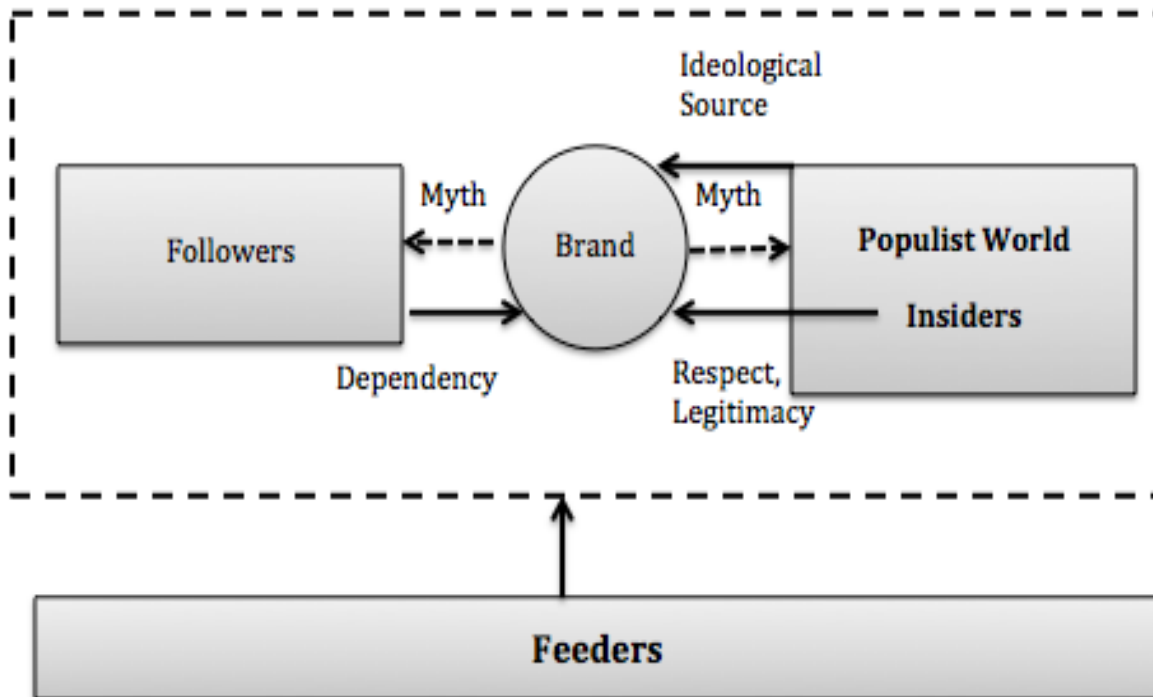
The Insiders: the '*Insiders*' regard an iconic brand with less esteem than a '*Follower*' as their ideological values are already developed within counter culture, sub culture, or alternative populist values where an iconic brand grounds it's mythical foundations. These consumers are highly knowledgeable about the norms and values of populist worlds they ground their ideological beliefs in, and being experts they act as 'gatekeepers' for legitimising the extent of a brand's ideological and mythical claims. These people are opinion leaders, with the power to make authoritative judgments, resisting commercial influences within their protected cultural and ideological arenas, i.e., the core or the outlaw bikers of Harley-Davidson (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). Due to the nature of their intense involvement these people consider themselves 'participants' rather than 'consumers', hence a brand that wants

to create iconicity through cultural myth must focus on authenticating their appeal through the legitimacy of an '*insiders brief*'.

The Followers: the '*Followers*' strongly align their identity and lifestyle with a brand's myth utilising it as the 'greatest cure' for their anxieties. Their practice and ritualistic involvements around the brand makes them a great devotee, as they become hard-core followers of the illusionary ideological values hidden within the brand's mythical appeal. The followers see commitment as tangible proof of their loyalty and continuously renew their commitment in order to assign higher relationship values with the brand.

The Feeders: the '*Feeders*' are 'parasitic' consumers who form superficial relationships with the brand in an attempt to replicate the identity values and lifestyles projected by the '*Insiders*' or the '*Followers*'. These consumers use mythical appeals as symbols of status or tokens of membership for selected social groups. These consumers make little attempt to establish a long-term relationship with the brand as they only look for a quick gloss of social admiration. Their opportunistic association with the brand draws wider attention encouraging the non-subscribers to become a part of the loyalty model.

Figure 2.9: Co-production of Equity as Brand Loyalty



Source: Holt (2004, p. 140)

Therefore, a brand's cultural and iconic survival depends on its ability to create and authenticate mythical appeals that maintain the ecology of loyalty as a process of three tier model of social networking [see Figure 2.9]. The most effective way to sustain a brand's iconicity is to increase its relationship with the core customers as the feeders will follow their lead. Due to the interdependent nature of this loyalty network it is important for managers to maintain a relationship between individual cohorts through consistent cultural briefs (see the Harley-Rider's brief: Holt 2004, p.151-152). As myths mature within a transforming society, over time, the loyalty model becomes increasingly less effective. With the onset of value depletion, the 'Followers' find it difficult to relate to the old ideological appeals and reduce their commitment to the brand, forcing the 'Feeders' to follow their lead. At this stage of

the life-cycle a brand's iconic status can only be sustained by re-inventing the myth market and re-educating the '*Insiders*' and '*Followers*' to the new ideological appeals.

2.8 Why is it the Time to Re-Think the Principles of Cultural Branding?

Holt's macro-social explanation of brand iconicity presented some pioneering thoughts for considering brands as cultural expressions; but while Holt (2006, p.355) claimed brand iconicity as the "coat-tails of...powerful cultural forms...[that use] market power to proselytize [brand value]", Miller (1995b; 1998b; 1998c) described the micro-social roots of cultural strategy by analysing the objectified family relationship concealed within brand iconicity (Campbell's soup). Miller's (1995b; 1998a; 1998b) analysis was majorly foregrounded within the materiality of signs and symbolic relationships in consumer society, as conceptualising brands as a production-consumption representational system he argued how everyday common brands like Campbell's soup acquire effective iconic values beyond their material significance. Such extraordinary value comes from the brand's ability to supply market defined imagined social and cultural relationships that transcend the product's actual utilitarian characteristics (Arvidsson, 2001; Merkel, 2006). With time these imagined relationships come to objectify real socio-cultural meanings such as family nostalgia, emotion, and values held together within an inherent constellation of symbolic system, i.e. the product and its label evoke personal and passionate responses to the consensus of past and family, an acute sense of authenticity, aesthetic faithfulness, and preserved history.

The allegorical undertone of Miller's (1995b; 1998a; 1998b) analysis defined brand iconicity as 'cultural heritage', 'people's wealth', or even as a time capsule filled with memories of love, life, and joy. What is interesting about Miller's analysis is how iconic brands refer to consumer's lived experiences, as such, how they work as a reservoir for keeping memories vivid and how these symbolic metaphors of lived experiences enter mass culture enhancing the brand's allegorical appeal. On balance, Holt's (2004) analysis is not far from it. In both cases brands emerge as cultural artefacts offering a sense of authentic plea, like a folktale, they offer nostalgic pleasures or imaginary solutions to incomplete, ambiguous, and heterogeneous tensions collectively shared by the consumers within a society. However, unlike Miller, Holt's explanation does not clarify how brands engage with specific memories or relationships at an individual level, instead, he describes brand iconicity as a product of collective national desire in response to common historic anxieties.

On reflection it is clear that despite presenting some pioneering thoughts, the nature of research and methodological approach (case study based secondary research) adopted in Holt's approach fails to address the micro social connections between culture, consumption and identity within cultural branding practice (see Chapter 3.2, 3.3, and 3.4). Although Holt asserted that brands become iconic when consumers are drawn to their consumption field under the influence of illusionary marketplace stories, from a critical perspective his arguments appear to be broad and focused on the macro-dimensions of society (i.e., culture and politics). The principles of cultural branding fails to present primary consumption stories that could justify how consumers' ideological projects relate to their inherent and acquired socio-cultural capital and how exercising these beliefs determines wider consequences of cultural

brand consumption. It is further unclear from Holt's explanation how cultural mythologies are composed and released by the creative industry and why particular groups of consumer identities become largely vested within these fields of commercial allegories.

Therefore, it seems appropriate to question Holt's proposed model by asking how cultural or ideological opportunities are spotted within the fragments of a distressed society? How are these opportunities idealised for creating extra-ordinary values for brand iconicity? What are the fundamental constructs of iconic brand myths and how are they commercially crafted by drawing inspiration from emerging ideological opportunities? What is the role of marketing managers and advertising agencies in this process? Where do they draw their symbolic inspiration for constructing powerful brand mythologies? What determines a brand's likelihood of becoming iconic? Why can't every brand compose commercial mythologies to acquire cultural superiority? And finally, how do consumers align brands' illusionary cultural fabrics into their existing cultural and ideological systems to achieve a sense of 'relief'?

The lack of primary data in Holt's research makes it difficult to conceptualise the proposed principles from a managerial as well as consumers' point of view while trying to legitimise a comparative picture of cultural strategy as an emerging brand management discipline. In addition, from the cultural industry's point of view Holt does not make clear how fundamental factors (cultural capital, ideology, red-oceans, lifestyle, identity, practices etc.) of cultural innovation lock into a commercial mechanism in the form of marketplace mythologies and the role of marketing managers and cultural industry in this initiative. From the consumers' point of view it

is also unclear how consumers negotiate and build a preference for brand mythologies and align them with their existing identity project to achieve a sense of '*relief*'.

The principles of cultural branding were most vividly observed within the radical socio-political boundaries of advanced American society, but as I argue later in Chapter 2.9 these principles cannot be applied to other countries homogenously (see Üstüner and Holt, 2007; 2010; Zhao and Belk, 2008; Dong and Tian, 2009; Ger and Belk, 1996). In contrast to the principles identified within the affluent and liberal socio-political boundaries, societies where individual and collective sense of nationalism and consumption preferences are intensely defined through state politics (post-colonial and post globalisation) present a unique socio-economic context to examine and extend our understanding of cultural branding (see Varman and Belk, 2009; Derné, 2008; Fernandes, 2006; Lakha, 1999; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Merkel, 2006; Manning and Uplisashvili, 2007; Manning, 2009).

Here it is important to clarify that due to the nature of this research and time constraints associated with this project I do not aim to present the above set of questions as my primary research questions, rather I use them as small objectives to address the knowledge gaps left by Holt, with a view to consolidate the principals of cultural branding.

2.9 Re-Thinking the Principles of Cultural Branding

In the previous section I raised a number of questions concerning the fundamentals of cultural branding as described by Holt (2003a; 2004; 2006), within the following sections I further expand on these areas of criticism to identify and establish prominent research gaps and objectives for this dissertation.

Firstly, from a cultural capital and consumption perspective it is evident that the theory of cultural branding was largely developed within the socio-cultural and political boundaries of North America (USA). The reason for this limitation, as Holt (2004, p.224) described, was to focus on a standard cultural and socio-historic context for comparing brands and their developments that offered him the opportunity for deeper immersion. Using multiple contexts for such comparison would have made the project more complex and time consuming (see *ibid*).

Here, it is important to remember that research on globalisation has repeatedly educated us about the complex constructs of class, consumption and identity within developing countries where consumption models from an advanced Western economy cannot be emulated as ‘one size fits all model’ (Cayla and Arnould, 2008; Üstüner and Holt, 2007; 2010; Üstüner and Thompson, 2012; Ger and Belk, 1996; Varman and Belk, 2009; Zhao and Belk, 2008; Dong and Tian, 2009). As context-specific culture, history, economy and politics act as fundamental building blocks for brand iconicity, Holt’s selective description of brand genealogies and his characterisation of post-war socio-economic traits in America followed a significantly different trajectory compared to India’s turmoil, sluggish, and poverty ridden post-colonial history (Varman and Belk, 2009; Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995; Breckenridge, 1995;

Fernandes, 2006; Lakha, 1999). Therefore, before investigating Bajaj's cultural roots it is essential to conceptualise a historical account of Indian consumers and their transforming affiliation of class, politics, and culture since colonial times (see Chapter 3.5). Secondly, the constructs of cultural innovation strategy is very much a 'top down model' offering brand managers valuable strategic insights for developing iconic cultural meanings for their brands, however the lack of consumer centric empirical evidence in Holt's narration weakens the theoretical foundations of this model by failing to detail how commercial metaphors (and their meanings) find authentic identity appeal within individual consumer's life-world. Necessity for such debate further arises from Hackley and Kover's (2007) characterisation of the creative industry (or advertising industry) as a 'social splitter'. Building on Nixon and Crewe's (2004) idea, Hackley and Kover (2007) suggested that an advertising creative's job is to juggle the tension between art and aesthetic value in one hand, and commercial reality on the other. As a mediator of dualism, advertising creatives become cultural intermediaries assimilating cultural knowledge into 'technical' commodity symbols (ibid). Their inspiration for negotiating consumer identities derives from a 'problem-solving process model' that treats social, cultural, political, and economic knowledge as 'technical inputs' for composing marketplace mythologies (ibid). Cayla and Elson (2012) extended this line of argument by discussing how advertising agencies influence remain paramount in drawing cultural authorship and commercially improvised characterisation of consumers, as the creatives' inner knowledge and regulatory power determines the formulation of 'class based grammar' for Indian advertising. This knowledge based authority and characterisation leads to the generation of agency-crafted commercial minded mythologies (Zhao and Belk, 2008; Richins, 1991; Belk and Pollay, 1985). But with the cultural paradigm increasingly

claiming consumption as a production process, questions arise regarding how the agency driven commercial storylines fit into consumers' existing life projects and how consumers use brand mythologies to challenge stigmatised social problems.

To address this consumer-centric, under-theorised area of cultural branding I put middleclass Indian men and their structured and perceived encounters with modernity (two fold: post-colonial state centric Nehruvian modernity and post-globalisation market centric modernity) under the focal point, believing that the emerging dynamics between colonial, nationalist, and global ideology based politics in India can be best captured within the transforming logic of middleclass masculinity (see Sinha, 1995; Derné, 1995; 2000; Osella and Osella, 2000a; 2000b). I approach modernity as Giddens (1991, p.20) described it, "a post-traditional order. The transformation of time and space, coupled with the disembedding mechanisms, propel social life away from the hold of pre-established precepts or practises.", a rhetoric that unfolds through a series of representational and material culture practises (Appadurai, 1996), however I deviate from mainstream identity research by conceptualising it as a project susceptible to organised identity politics in response to dominant ideological policies induced by a nation state (Thompson, 2014; Fernandes, 2006; Zhao and Belk, 2008; Appadurai, 1994). This study resembles Fernandes' (1997) enquiry into identity politics within the jute mill industry in postcolonial Calcutta, as I propose to capture the reproduction of class, consumption and gender ideologies around brand Bajaj. In doing so I scrutinise the historic interconnection between state-defined dominant ideological forces and perceived consumption behaviour amongst Indian men. Such an investigation into the production and reproduction of class and consumption ideologies present an opportunity to rethink the old conceptual categories of class,

cultural, economic, and gender ideologies against the newly emerging ones (Liechty, 2003).

In Chapter 5 and 6 I put emphasis on addressing the following factors with a view to subdue the gaps left by Holt’s context specific macro model.

Table 2.2: Fundamental Factors for Investigation

Fundamental Factors	Reason for Investigation
I. Red Oceans of Cultural Orthodoxy	<i>Red oceans</i> are fertile grounds for cultural innovation as they displace consumers’ motivation for constructing identity and practices guided by dominant socio-political orthodoxies. In this thesis I propose to understand context specific (India) cultural orthodoxies that impacted ideological make over of middle-class Indian men since colonial times. After reviewing the history of consumerism in postcolonial India (see Chapter 3.6) I focus my search for red oceans on two specific timeframes: pre-globalisation state controlled society and post-globalisation liberal society.
II. Blue Oceans of Ideological Opportunities	From the cultural perspective <i>Blue oceans</i> are opportunities that lie dormant within the ideological fractures of a society. These opportunities are not dependent on functional or technological models of innovation, rather they are ideological demands induced by <i>red oceans</i> and transforming socio-historic beliefs. In this thesis I propose to investigate the nature of the <i>blue oceans</i> that supplied historic opportunities for Bajaj to become a

	<p>brand icon. In doing so I further propose to scrutinise how advertising agencies identify and conceptualise culture led <i>blue oceans</i> as extraordinary ideological resources.</p>
<p>III. Myth Composition</p>	<p>Myths are elements of everyday language. They signify objects by supplying layers of symbolic meaning to existing language. Commercial or marketplace myths are imaginary stories with authentic symbolic imprints that promise to offer ideological healing to widespread cultural anxieties. As part of my analysis I propose to examine the constructs of Bajaj’s marketplace myths (released as a series of advertisements) and their ‘strategic fit’ to the ideological <i>blue oceans</i>. In doing so, I also track the historic development of mythical plots and characters and the related ‘populist worlds’ to verify whether a constant culture code is essential for maintaining brand iconicity or whether it could change depending on a nation’s socio-economic history.</p>
<p>IV. Role of Brand Managers and Advertising Agencies</p>	<p>In line with the analytical agenda above, this study also proposes to understand the role of brand managers and/or advertising agencies in the identification of social and ideological crises within a nation. In doing so, the study will focus on identifying what inspires advertising agencies to identify and work on widespread ideological crises and how they derive symbolic meanings for commercial products that create and sustain a brand’s cultural iconicity.</p>

<p>V. Iconicity as a Product of Loyalty</p>	<p>Loyalty is the ultimate marker of cultural branding as it keeps a brand's iconicity alive by forming strong interdependent relationships (Holt 2004). As consumers increasingly adopt a brand's myth it becomes a part of their everyday life and long-term cultural ideology. Iconic brands create three interdependent constituencies of loyalties, i.e., <i>Insiders</i>, <i>Followers</i>, and <i>Feeders</i>. As part of this research I propose to understand how/whether these interdependent constituencies of loyalties are formed around Bajaj based on a consumer's level of ideological immersion.</p>
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As myth markets supply the lifeblood to a brand's cultural iconicity I begin the following section by exploring the concept of marketplace mythology and its symbolic signification in commercial branding. In doing so, I pay attention to prior consumer research on commercial mythology and describe how marketer's linguistic sophistication of cultural archetypes can signify a brand's ideological appeal (Thompson, 2004). When consumers subscribe to these cultural archetypes, to glorify their identity projects, or to escape the hegemony of socio-political and/or marketplace bourgeois, they regard marketplace mythology as fabrics for ideological remedy (Holt, 2004; Thompson, 2004). While digging deep into the relationship and interdependence of these factors it was inevitable that culture and mythologies are interconnected by conscious or unconscious threads of archetypes (Barthes, ([1957] 2000).

2.10 Branding as Commercial Mythology:

“What is myth, today? I shall give at the outset a first, very simple answer, which is perfectly consistent with etymology: myth is a type of speech”

- Barthes ([1957] 2000; p.109)

In ancient Greek the term *Myth* (Mūthos) was used to denote ‘fiction’ (Oxford English Etymology, [1992] 2003), however, the concept can be identified within a number of ethnological texts describing it as a ‘distributed cultural phenomenon’ (Johnson 2004). In 1957 Barthes ([1957] 2000) explicitly theorised the linguistic and structuralist nature of the concept by presenting it as natural, timeless, expressions of historically specific ideologies within a society (Johnson, 2004; Stivel, 2002). This theoretical movement initiated by Barthes’ work gave explicit meanings to the idea of ‘*Myth*’ or ‘*Mythology*’ in semiological studies (Levy, 1981).

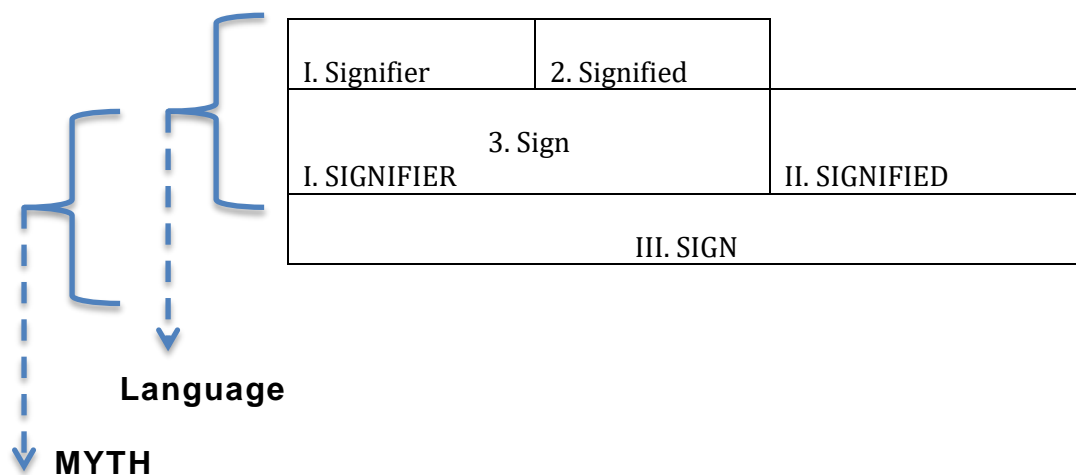
As Barthes ([1957] 2000) puts it: “myth is a peculiar system”, constructed from linguistic chains transformed into second order systems of semiology. These are verbal expressions that are not characterised by the object of the message, rather they are oral appropriations of salient existence that supply discourse specific illusory meanings to an object (ibid). Hence, myths are foundational stories or a series of related stories believed to be encoded in time, imposing a sense and order to various experiences within a society or a nation (Levy, 1981; Georges, 1968; Leach, 1967). These are anonymous and must be shared and continuously re-appropriated over time amongst different social groups to keep the vibe alive (Levy, 1981).

A great deal of Barthes' idea was inspired by Saussure's (1915) work on semiology or the study of the sign systems and in his view what separates mythologies from common everyday expressions can be expressed through a 'tri-dimensional' semiological chain model consist of 'the signifier', 'the signified', and 'the sign' system [see Figure 2.10]. In *Myth Today*, Barthes argued that 'sign', is a combination of 'signified' and 'signifier', and it does not generate meaning without forming relationship with a concept or a material. Mythologies are formed by transforming 'signs' into 'signifier' with a view to generate a 'signified' as first order linguistic meanings are transformed into second order symbolic meanings through a process called 'signification' (also see Levy, 1963; Baudrillard, 1998). For example, roses are 'signs' of romance because they are mostly presented in combination with an expression of love ('signifier') to be 'signified' as passion for someone [see Figure 2.10]. In a series of analyses Barthes took common images from everyday life and demonstrated how myths are generated from unconscious social, cultural, and ideological concepts hidden within people's minds. From the tacit conventions of amateur wrestling through to the love of wine amongst the French, from the language of advertising to the image of Citroën D.S., Barthes' mythological analysis of organised consumption at the semiological level presented a compelling picture of French society and its culture in the late 1950s (Lewi, 2003). He argued that culture constantly compels societies to compose artificial objectives or values that appear to be natural or indisputable. A vital component of this process is 'ideology': a process of representing a culture specific historic ideal (object, figure, or phenomenon) that becomes timeless, natural, and universal (Barthes, [1957] 2000; Lewi, 2003). For example, appropriation of Cinderella as a fairy-tale princess searching for

empowerment through freedom and recognition represented in various forms by twentieth century media and popular culture (Lewi, 2003).

According to Barthes the concept of ‘*tri-dimensional*’ semiological system is essential for understanding the constructs of social myths as they are differentiated from dominant bourgeois language through the socio-symbolic values of ‘*signifier*’ and ‘*signified*’. For example, the semiological model in Figure 2.10 describes how cultural myths are made up of two parallel systems. First, a language system that signifies a mythical idea or an object, second, the myth itself that originates from a social archetype of culture and knowledge (Barthes, [1957] 2000). Together, they create a signification or value system that transforms culture into a form of ideological stature (also see Levy, 1981; Baudrillard, 1998).

Figure 2.10: The Semiological System of Myth Production



Source: Barthes ([1957] 2000, p. 115)

At an objective level this interwoven network of '*sign*', '*signifier*', and '*signified*' calls for the story of the iconic Paris-Match advertisement, one of Barthes' pioneering applications of the '*tri-dimensional*' system that still remains a powerful and controversial lesson of semiology to the world (see Johnson, 2004).

Once a copy of Paris-Match was offered to Barthes, at a barbershop, pictured a young black man in French military uniform paying tribute to his nation with "his eyes uplifted, probably fixed on a fold of the tricolor" (Barthes, [1957] 2000, Johnson, 2004; Stivale, 2002). Here, the reality (or the real language) of the picture appears to be undeniable – a French soldier caught in a moment of reality, but the ideological implication of the picture goes far beyond its original portrayal. The mythical element added to the photo, as Barthes ([1957] 2000) described, signified "that France is a great Empire, that all her sons, without any colour discrimination, faithfully serve under her flag" (ibid, p.116). But the black soldier and his social and racial status carried great symbolic significance representing a typical archetype of hatred and exclusion in French society, while his patriotism created the storyline for his mythic relationship to the nation and the wider world. Such an ideological interplay between '*sign*' (patriotism), '*signifier*' (exclusion, hatred, non-ethnic - a black soldier offering a salute to the French nation), and '*signified*' (multi-ethnic or multi-cultural nation) presented an illusionary indisputable idea of French society that even the most sceptical person could not deny (Johnson, 2004).

As Barthes described, the ideological meaning of these images does not need to be created from scratch, these are archetypes; ideologies that rest in society's mind. The job of a mythologist is to simply 'demystify' or remind society about the origin and

the nature of such figures (also see Levy, 1981; Baudrillard, 1998). For example, at one level the picture of black French soldier is simply an image, yet at the mythic level it is an ideology – French patriotism, unified French society – deeply rooted within the nation’s belief. Although the semiological analyses of mythologies are mostly focused on social phenomenon, some of the best examples of Barthes’ work came from the subtle world of advertising. These classic examples of commercial mythologies can be identified within Barthes’ structuralist narration of consumer goods where he described how myths in consumer societies are generated by semiological interplays between society, history, culture and consumer commodities. As an example, he cited the mythological categorisation of Unilever’s family hygiene products Persil and Omo. Despite being in the same category of commercial goods produced by Unilever, marketplace mythology depicted Omo as a more powerful and purifying detergent because it contained corrosive chemicals like chlorine, ammonia etc. In contrast, Unilever created a separate category by forcing consumers to perceive Persil (also a detergent) as more ‘delicate’ and ‘soft’ because of its smooth and creamy appearance, irrespective of its chemical nature (see Barthes, [1957] 2000).

Therefore, reviewing Barthes it is clear that the interaction between fundamental human interests and the inherent ideological properties of an individual creates archetypes that remain dormant (Campbell, 1991; Baudrillard, 1998; Mark and Pearson, 2001). As consumers engage with marketplace mythologies to understand and represent their complex cultural existence, they rely on their inherent knowledge of archetypes, expressed through a mythical storyline, appropriating meanings for overcoming ideological burdens (Goulding and Shankar, 2004; Arnould et al, 1998; Johar et al., 2001). For example, Nike as a symbol of sport heroism drew archetypal

meanings from historic warriors (Mark and Pearson, 2001; Thompson, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010), while the imaginary storyline of ‘Just Do It’ structured a mythical storyline for dissolving and overcoming socio-cultural hurdles like a champion (Thompson, 2004; Levy, 1981; Slotkin, 1973; Holt and Cameron, 2010).

In consumer culture theory, commercial mythologies have offered distinct ways for investigating consumption stemming from ideological variations across societies and nations (Arnould, 2008; Arnould and Thompson, 2005). From the rebellious affinity for the open road (Harley riders) to the utopian ethos of over consumption (Hummer owners), consumer culture research has extensively investigated how the interplay of culture, consumption, and identity are interconnected with marketplace myth and commercial ideologies of brands (Cayla and Eckhardt, 2008; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Holt, 2006; Kozinets, 2001; McCracken, 2005; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Luedicke et al., 2010; Thompson, 2004; Thompson and Tian, 2008). Individually, these studies have analysed how commercially mediated marketplace myth supplies meaning to consumers’ personal or shared identity projects, and their findings commonly demonstrated that marketplace mythologies play a significant role in organising consumers lives that go beyond the material context of consumer commodities (Holt, 2002; 2004; 2006; Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995).

CCT has broadly classified the concept marketplace mythology into four categories: ‘Gnostic Myth’ (Thompson, 2004; Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2008), ‘Romantic Myth’ (Schouten, 1991; Thompson, 2004); ‘Dystopian Myth’ (Holt, 2002; Kozinets, 1997), and ‘Utopian Myth’ (Holt, 2004; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Kozinets, 2001).

Gnostic myths are a legacy of early non-conformist ideas that were kept alive and later re-interpreted by many European culture elites between the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries (Thompson, 2004). During the transition between the medieval period and the Enlightenment, many of the leading thinkers in science, art and philosophy facilitated the “ideological wedding of technology and transcendence” to shape the industrial revolution and modern Western cultural history (Nobel, 1999, p.22). In CCT examples of Gnostic embodiments are abundant, for example, investigating one of the most fundamental mythical allures of contemporary consumer culture: The Myth of Self-Actualisation, Askegaard and Kjeldgaard (2008) noted that ‘self-actualisation’ is an emerging ideology within post-industrial economies that insists on individualism and self-development. As modernity demolishes rigid social structures, the notion of ‘self’ becomes an individual institution with a combination of romantic and gnostic mythical features (see Thompson, 2004). That is why commercialisation of the self-actualisation myth evokes a ‘heroic monadic self’ trying to become liberated from society through an instrumental relationship with brands or other consumer artefacts. The authors further emphasise how the traditional and cultural practice of Yoga saw a sharp decrease in modernising Nepal until the myth of global celebrity culture (Madonna) portrayed Yoga as a symbol of modernity and a self-actualising practice from the West amongst the new Nepalese generation.

Equally, a series of CCT studies have also explained how the allegoric or utopian tone of Romantic or Utopian myths supplied imagined ‘authenticity’ to overcome the burdens and restrictions posed by modern technology, industrialisation, and the dehumanisation initiatives (Berman, 1988; Campbell, 1987; Thompson, 2004; Kozinets, 2001). For example, Luedicke, Thompson, and Giesler (2010) described

how the Hummer owners in America justify their overconsumption habits through the mythical ideology of 'American exceptionalism'. While confronted by the antagonistic demands to reduce environmental damage, Hummer enthusiasts play on American national values to present themselves as technocrats, hidden within the archetype of a true American frontier, leading the progress of the American nation through 'true citizenship ideologies'. Similarly, Kozinets' (2001) exploration into consumers' stigmatised cultural association with marketplace mythologies can be identified within Star Trek fans' negotiation of social tensions resulting from their devotion to utopian values (Kozinets, 2001). Building on Goffman's (1963) narrative of 'symbolic transformation', Kozinets (2001) argued that the fans reinterpret the social-stigma (utopian obsession) thrown at them as tokens of appreciation that encourages them to become deeply involved in the fan community and achieve greater self-acceptance into the Star Trek world.

The writers of utopian mythologies also endorse cultural orientations of the pre-mechanical and industrialised conception of self-beliefs and expressions based on egalitarian society and human-nature relationships. For example, Thompson (2004) explained how in twenty-first century America the constraints of the nature-technology relationship are tactically exploited by herbal medicine marketers for the creation and sustenance of distinct commercial mythologies. These mythologies supply extraordinary competitive advantages to herbal medicine, over conventional medicines, by offering alternative medical identities far from the ideological influences exerted by the mainstream capitalism (Thompson, 2004).

Beside everyday consumption, the idea of mythology has received increased scholarly attention from the area of branding and advertising within CCT as scholars have tried to explore how brands become potential mythical resources for consumers' 'imagined identities' (Holt, 2004; 2006; Thompson, 2004; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Wilk, 2006; Appadurai, 1988; Levy, 1981; Arvidsson, 2001; 2005; 2006; Lury, 2004; Manning, 2009; Moore, 2007). For example, Maclaran, Otnes, and Fischer's (2008) exploration into the British Royal Family myth illustrates how media and commercial events adopted narratives of secular myth transformed the British Royal Family into a brand through its sanctioned merchandises. The '*Myth of Monarchy*', as described by these scholars, was conceptually compared to a commercial brand that has its values deeply rooted within the archetypes of wealthy kings and queens along with fairy stories of castles, princes, and princesses that collectively fuel consumers' sense of mystery, allure, and imagination far beyond its actual political legitimacy (ibid). The Myth of Monarchy keeps British history alive by fostering a shared sense of nationalism and togetherness based on tradition and culture (ibid). Further these myths are made accessible to the public for consumption, offering a co-ownership of Royal myth through access to palaces, venues, films, ceramics and other merchandise. Therefore in various ways marketers build, circulate, update, and recirculate the narrative of the Royals to represent and reinforce the nation and the monarchy's 'quasi-sacred' properties, but such a process contradicts Holt's (2004) theoretical model by not 'resolving' an ideological tension within a given society. The reason for such contradiction, as the authors hinted, may arise from the mythical legitimisation of the Royal concept by divine and not by consumer desire.

In 2008 Arnould expressed his dissatisfaction by pointing out that the existing studies on marketplace mythology, within the CCT discipline, fail to provide a clear definition of the subject area. He believes that the term is more ‘fluid’ than what’s been described in CCT studies and further conceptual development of this construct is essential to enhance our understanding of marketplace mythology (see Arnould, 2008). Reflecting on Arnould’s (2008) criticism, it can be claimed that Holt (2004) or even Thompson’s (2004), exploration into the idea of marketplace mythology is incomplete from a semiological or even structuralist point of view. Studies have identified, not all consumers invest their identity and consumption in marketplace mythology (Holt, 2002; Thompson, 2004; Luedicke et al., 2010). A section of society interprets marketplace mythologies as an unwanted ideological imposition to their everyday life and consumption activities (Holt, 2002; 1997; 1998; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Kozinets, 2002a; Klein, 2000; Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Murray and Ozanne, 1991). For example, Schouten and McAlexander (1995) discuss how core members of the Harley-Davidson community subscribe to the resonance of patriotism and rugged individualism, but they engage in various ‘hard-core’ ritualistic practices to separate themselves from the cultural commonalities posed by the company to other mainstream riders, i.e., Weekend Warriors, Mom-and-Pop Bikers. Although the connection between a nation and brand iconicity has started to escalate from within consumption and culture research (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Luedicke et al., 2010), there is a clear need for more fundamental explanations as to how myths are designed to become part of an iconic brand’s wider cultural perception. In the following section I discuss the fundamental factors responsible for triggering social anxieties, and how marketplace mythologies induce imaginary relief by offering desired identities.

Mythology and Transformation: Studies have claimed that consumers prefer to spend the majority of their life in non-liminal states because it offers a stable life structure with definite social roles and status (Markus and Nurius, 1986; Turner, 1969). However triggered by some external factors or internal urges, role transitions can often initiate an identity ‘*transformation*’ process (McCracken, 2008). Primary subjective forces that are believed to trigger role transitions are security, control, and psychological needs, while the secondary triggering factors are believed to be society, ego, status and consumption practice (McCracken, 2008; Levinson, 1978). In addition to situational influences, motivational factors also play a major role in this process (Markus and Nurius, 1986). For example, Markus and Nurius (1986) noted that the process of transformation is a diverse and complex phenomenon and it has wide variations across society and culture. The process works by targeting status, ideas, everyday activity, lifestyle, and most importantly desire for acquiring higher cultural capitals (McCracken, 2008; Schouten, 1991).

Van Gennep (1960) described transformation as a game generally played in three distinct phases. Primarily, consumers engage in a process of ‘separation’ from existing role or social status. Secondly, consumers play within the passage of personal freedom and try to integrate loose ideologies: ‘transition’. And finally, consumers ‘integrate’ and upgrade their identity to become a new social character. In doing so, influenced by motivational factors, consumers design “self-schemas”: sets of symbols, where existing culture and ideological beliefs majorly influence how people construct pictures of their positive and negative hypothetical images and align them with their aspired identity practices (Levy, 1963; 1981).

Turner (1969) described the 'transition' phase as a 'limbo' where people face ambiguities and suffer from "non-status" or "unanchored identity" problem. Positioned within a liminal state when people's sense of self-efficacy becomes salient they fail to transform their wills into action giving rise to a state of ideological anxiety within the self. These ideological anxieties are similar to Holt's description as he suggested societies suffer from distress when 'red oceans' of orthodoxies become a limbo. To overcome such anxieties and to get a better control over life, people start to rely on popular ideals of material and mass culture that offers fabrics of 'relief' to individuals (Holt, 2004; 2006; 1997; McCracken, 2008). Although consumers sensibly understand the difference between utopian appeal and reality, they tend to strongly rely on fantasies and myths because myth supply a smooth ground for constructing their desired status and identity. Relying on utopian desires assures strategic avoidance of 'disappointment' acquired due to unachieved personal goals, while helping people to steer their life towards a desired direction (Holt, 2004; 1997; Schouten, 1991; Kozinets, 2001). With the progression of time, over reliance on fantasies compels people to manipulate symbolic meanings within marketplace commodities, as they start to see consumption as a medium for role play that can help them to attain unachieved social roles and desired fantasies (Kozinets, 2001; 2002a; Kozinets et al., 2004; Levy, 1963; 1981; Goffman, 1963; Schlenker, 1980; Solomon, 1983). In an extended sense, consumers start to see the possession of goods (Tuan 1984) or performance of consumption rituals (extreme fasting: see Bell, 1985) as a reward to themselves, a reward that helps them to achieve control and express power in their relationship with society and marketplace (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Kozinets, 2001; Luedicke et al., 2010).

McCracken (2008, p. 41) summarised the relationship between mythology and transformation by suggesting that consumers as social entities often encounter an urge for *self-reconstruction* (or *self-transformation*), emerging from a deeply grounded “sense of incompleteness”. In order to address this emptiness, social entities view consumption as a way to experiment with alternative dimensions of ‘*possible selves*’. While engaging in consumption as part of an identity game, consumers frequently utilise marketplace mythologies (rather than actual commodities) as a resource to attain the ‘desired’ or ‘better self’ (Schouten, 1991). As a result today’s marketers and brand managers insist on prescribing commercial fantasies or culturally prescribed metaphors within their brands (Holt, 2004; Kozinets, 2001). Metaphors that address widely shared psychological thoughts become a major means of supplying desired experiences to a consumer class (Van Gennep, 1960); on the other hand, metaphors that fail to do so become ‘dead’ and extinct by falling into deep cultural chasms.

2.11 Conclusion:

In conclusion, this chapter has summarised the background and focal theories constructing the very foundation of this dissertation. I began the chapter by presenting a brief historic overview of qualitative and interpretive research and their emergence within the marketing discipline. In doing so, I highlighted contributions made by some of the leading lights in the discipline such as Belk, Levy, Sherry, and disciplinary intuitions like SRI and ACR, in establishing the odyssey of consumer culture research. In 2005, Arnould and Thompson took the agenda further by assembling twenty years of research contribution in this field under the institutionalised brand name: Consumer Culture Theory. As part of this chapter I reviewed the historic advancement of advertising and branding research in CCT and

beyond and critically positioned the study within the thematic vernacular of ‘common structures of theoretical interests’.

In the following section, I reviewed the development of brand management research in economic, management, and cognitive disciplines and used the emerging principles of cultural branding (Holt, 2004) to argue why it is high time for cultural researchers to develop a robust theoretical model of cultural branding. As part of the review I highlighted the conceptual gaps left by Holt in his study and used them to rationalise the objectives for this study. In the final section I unpacked the concept of mythology following Barthes and his semiological studies and demonstrated how these concepts rest in society as cultural archetypes and brought to life for active meaning negotiation by the cultural industry. In doing so I further reviewed the development of the concept within CCT and finished the chapter by presenting socio-anthropological insights into the idea of *identity transformation*.

CHAPTER THREE: CULTURE, CONSUMPTION, AND THE TRANSFORMING INDIAN NATION

3.1 Introduction:

In this chapter I present the next set of literature review by scrutinising the idea of identity, ideology, culture and their relation to the field of branding, advertising and identity practice. In doing so I focus on the very idea of culture and its applied role in defining identity, lifestyle, and consumption preferences, while trying to understand the theoretical interconnections between these essential elements adding up to the commercial alchemy of cultural branding.

In the following section I review the concept of automobility with an aim to understand, throughout history, how automobiles were used as ideological platforms for identity exercise and cultural practice, and the purpose of individual self's engagement with these material objects to form man-and-machine 'agencies' in the age of postmodernity. As understanding social, cultural, and political dimensions of a nation lies at the very foundation of cultural innovation strategy, I finish the chapter by presenting a brief historic overview of state driven ideologies and politics in India and its impact on middleclass consumption and identity practice. In doing so I pay special attention to charting the transforming identity and consumption practices amongst middle class Indian men, as it was the most effected class that suffered the consequences of India's transformation since colonial times (Varma, 2007; Fernandes, 2006). The final section will set the ground for understanding the broad implications of Indian's transforming cultural and political landscapes on consumers' identity practice and its effect on Bajaj's brand iconicity. In doing so the section will

aim to establish the grounds for understanding Bajaj's cultural relationship with India's transforming middleclass masculinity. I choose middleclass men as the unit for analysis as it not only remained Bajaj's target market since post-colonial times, but also because the transforming politics of identity and consumption in India can be best captured in the fragmenting notion of masculinity and consumption (Derné, 1995; 2000; Osella and Osella, 2006).

3.2 Defining Culture:

“‘Culture’ is said to be one of the two or three most complex words in English language...sometimes considered to be its opposite...being the most complex of all”

- Eagleton (2000, p. 1)

Culture is an ambiguous term and in many ways it could be interpreted with multiple meanings (De Mooij, 1997). The Latin etymological root of the word - ‘*cultura animi*’ (cultivation of the soul) – suggests that historically this word was used to express the “material process” for “worshipping and protecting affairs of spirits” (Eagleton, 2000). During the 18th and 19th centuries the word attracted more intellectual application by finding more and more common use in society and human activities (De Mooij, 2010). In the post industrialised society, culture has become the central concept of anthropology, where it is interpreted as patterns of thoughts, feelings, and reactions developed around historically derived ideologies and values (Crane, 1992; Featherstone, 1987; Sherry, 1986). Besides anthropology, the word carries great significance for sociologists who believe culture is an interconnected “web of signification” that lies within the very foundations of human society (Geertz,

1973), while from a cognitive perspective, culture can also be understood as a ‘mental programme’ that collectively helps to establish desired values within a society (Hofstede, 2001).

Amongst these dominant schools of thoughts a more descriptive explanation of the word can be found within the historic account of Raymond Williams’ (1976) “vocabulary of culture and society”. In this pioneering work Williams noted that the idea of culture has gone through a number of philosophical interpretations to finally evolve in its simplest form - “form of life”. According to Williams (1976) the course of culture in modern society has passed through three distinct and mutually shared meanings for comprehension. Primarily, in the eighteenth century the meaning of culture was developed from a distant root to its etymological origin that more or less represented culture as material processes (intellectual and spiritual) within ‘civility’ (ibid). In the next stage, during the nineteenth century, society interpreted culture as a “distinctive way of life” giving birth to specific ‘life-forms’ with diversified laws of evolution (Hartman, 1997, p.211). However, in contemporary society the early universal view of culture has more or less transformed into shared practices of micro communities (Maffesoli, 1996; Cova, 1996; 1997; Featherstone, 2007).

Beside the interdisciplinary meaning negotiation surrounding the concept of culture in consumer behaviour research, the term was also described as a ‘*lens*’ that determines the perspective of a consumption phenomenon, or a ‘*blueprint*’ that coordinates consumers’ social actions (McCracken, 1986, p. 72; 1990). Being the blue print of society, culture has long been seen as an interesting field for exploring the micro and macro social constructs of consumer activities (Belk, 1991; Arnould and Thompson,

2005; 2007). As a result in the past thirty years research into '*Consumer Culture Theory*' has questioned the role of culture in the context of consumption through various modes of interpretative enquires (Thompson et al., 2013). Whether it was about investigating how "consumption has, throughout history, served as a consequential site for the social boundaries" (Holt, 1998, p.1; Bourdieu, 1984; Ger and Belk, 1996; Belk et al., 1989; Üstüner and Holt, 2010; Üstüner and Thompson, 2012; Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Schouten, 1991; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Cova and Cova, 2002; Kozinets, 2001), or unpacking how "the massive proliferation of cultural meanings and the fragmentation of unitary identities, two primary traits of postmodernism, have shattered straightforward correspondence between social categories and consumption patterns" (Holt, 1998, p.1; 1997; Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2002; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Cova, 1996; Cova and Pace, 2006; Brown, 1993; 1995), together the findings suggest - culture in consumption is mostly bound by sets of regulations that are neither rigidly determined nor randomly organised (Eagleton, 2000). On one hand, culture can set aesthetic and disciplinary regulations for individual social entities (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; Hewer and Brownlie, 2010; McCracken, 1990; Üstüner and Holt, 2010), giving new meanings to their identity and world (Schouten, 1991; Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Thompson, 1996; Holt, 2004; 2006; Üstüner and Holt, 2007). On the other hand, culture can encourage consumers to form deeper relationships with marketplace commodities (Fournier, 1998; Miller, 1998b), while offering to abolish individual or collective struggle(s) at a utopian level by supplying imaginary space to celebrate one's desired selves (Kozinets, 2001; 2002a; Kozinets et al., 2002; Holt, 2004; Thompson, 2004; Schouten, 1991). In contrast, culture can also pose 'ideological tensions', in the form of resistance or restrictions, in people's

everyday life and turn their interpretation of society and consumption with negative propositions (Holt, 2002; Varman and Belk, 2009; Luedicke et al., 2010; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004).

Therefore, the scope of culture in consumer society can be seen as twofold: on one hand it promotes “self-division” (by filtering out ethical, intellectual, spiritual and political pedagogy), on the other hand culture promotes ‘self-healing’ (by “liberating the ideal or collective sense buried within each of us”) (Eagleton, 2000, p.7). It is an ‘orientating device’ that facilitates development of value, orientation, and status at individual or collective level (Eagleton, 2000, Arnould and Thompson, 2005; Firsiroti and Venkatesh, 1995; Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2002).

According to Holt (2004), within the cultural branding context, recipes for extraordinary identity values in the form of brand mythologies are composed within ‘cultural studios’. The etymology of the phrase – ‘cultural studios’ - can be found within cognitive anthropological studies that define it as a space for gathering specific forms of tacit knowledge from a group of practitioners for resolving particular social problems (Day, 1994). It’s a ‘community of practice’ that offers complex, nuanced, and dynamic cultural solutions to challenging socio-cultural problems (Day, 1994). In this context, creative studios are the advertising agencies that imply market-learning processes – “a mode of orienting experience and consulting reality” – to gather cultural knowledge as the raw ingredients for designing brand iconicity (Day, 1994, p. 10; Holt, 2003b; 2004).

In order to turn brands into '*cultural activists*' the authors (brand managers or agency executives) must understand and deeply immerse themselves within society with a view to chart a detailed map of dominant and dormant '*cultural knowledge*' (Holt, 2004).

Cultural Knowledge A: Knowledge of major socio-cultural changes within a nation affecting everyone or a specific group of individuals.

Cultural Knowledge B: Knowledge used to examine major social categories, i.e., class, gender etc. and to understand what supplies meanings to consumers life instead of utilitarian benefits.

Cultural Knowledge C: Knowledge to help understand brands as socio-cultural and historic entities.

Cultural Knowledge D: Knowledge to understand circulating identity values within mass and popular cultural texts rather than obscuring it as a source of entertainment.

These sets of cultural knowledge are critical in identifying the subtle characteristics of targeted consumers and the emerging cultural (or ideological) opportunities that can be harnessed for creating illusionary marketplace stories (Holt, 2004; Thompson, 2004).

3.3 Culture and Consumption:

Calls to understand the role of culture in consumption context places the limelight on Pierre Bourdieu's (1984) theory of '*cultural capital*' and the social patterning of consumption where the idea of consumption as a 'field' structured by the derivatives of the social and cultural milieu became the major theme of discussion. In *Distinction* Bourdieu (1984) offered an advanced, comprehensive, theoretical framework that helped us to conceptualise how culture and consumption are interdependent and together how they determine social patterning of consumption and identity practices. Prior to Bourdieu, some of the pioneering thoughts on culture, identity and social class in western context (North America and Europe) can also be located within the study of the leisure class by Veblen ([1899] 1970), the study of status imitation by Simmel (1957), or even the study of modern American culture by Lynd and Lynd (1956). These authors criticised Marxian [1867 (1946)] ideologies of economy based class structure to claim that societies not only congregate and organise according to economic resources, but social interaction (or social capital) is one of the vital non-economic criteria that determines how social entities organise themselves (also see Weber, [1922] 1978).

However looking at the history of consumption research, a series of ethnographic interviews, published by Warner (1952) and colleagues (1949), on post World War II class and consumption within small American cities, presented a critical account of how culture plays key role in the formation of class, status, power, and ideology within a nation (Coleman and Rainwater, 1978). Studying the status building events of the small American town of Jonesville, Warner et al. (1949) described how status groups are formed around cultural commonalities, like societies in microcosm, which

grow on collective understandings of consumption, reputation, and lifestyles. Their discussion emphasised how consumption acts as a primary factor in the ‘status game’ and how the field of consumption acts as a ground for (self) selecting values and norms in order to create and reinforce class and affiliation within a society (ibid).

Despite offering foundational thoughts on the production of class and status through consumption and lifestyle criticism against Warner et al.’s (1949) work is paramount. The most significant drawback of their study is that they failed to see ‘culture in transit’ and did not justify how consumer goods develop significance over their material and economic value or how they are classified into various cultural categories that either increase or decrease their consumption led social value (Collins, 1981; Di Maggio, 1987; Di Maggio and Mohr, 1985). They also overlooked how factors other than income shape consumption patterns, or how consumer commodities and an individual’s experience shape their ‘taste’ mechanism (Di Maggio and Mohr, 1985; Hannerz, 1992).

Together these overlooked areas fail to clarify how culture determines inherent or acquired taste, and how these individual traits are exercised through social status, identity projects, and consumption practices (Lamont, 1992; Di Maggio, 1987; Hannerz, 1992; Holt, 1997; 1998). Here, it seems legitimate to recall the Bourdieuan line of argument, once again, that stipulated consumption as an unique socio-cultural ‘*field*’ that helps individual consumers to display their achieved status and class ‘*distinctions*’ through symbolic artefacts (Bourdieu, 1984; Allen, 2004). Developing on a series of studies, articulated over a period of thirty years, Pierre Bourdieu (1977, 1984), constructed a concept of social formation influenced by the traditional

Weberian, Marxian, and Durkheimian ideologies of ‘social class’ and ‘social strata’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992). In doing so Bourdieu supported the fundamentals of Warnerian view and advocated that people perceive social existence as part of a multidimensional game where they regularly engage and compete to achieve desired ‘symbolic capitals’ to define their existence. He characterised consumption as a ‘playing field’ structured by the rules and regulations (cultural norms and values) that guide the players’ (consumers) strategic thinking (Bourdieu, 1990). Here, individual consumer’s ‘cultural capital’ governs their claim to ‘taste’ and ‘status’, amongst other competing consumers, by legitimising the nature of consumption and degree of status appropriate to individual class (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1992).

“[Consumption as a] field... simultaneously [act as] a space of conflict and competition...in which participants vie to establish monopoly over the species of capital effective in it-cultural authority in the artistic field, sacerdotal authority in the religious field, and so forth – and the power to decree hierarchy and all forms of conversation rates in the field of power”

- Bourdieu and Wacquant (1992, p.16-17)

From Bourdieu and Wacquant’s (1992) point of view an individual consumer’s degree of success in the consumption game is a direct function of their inherent and acquired social, and cultural capital (also see Bourdieu, 1984; 1990). Although like Warner and colleagues, Bourdieu (1984) saw culture as a vital status resource, yet he contradicted Warnerian views by describing how cultural capital shapes consumption (leisure, clothing, sports, food etc.) through a distinctive ‘taste’ mechanism. In

Distinction, Bourdieu (1984) further manifested that the key elements of 'taste' are made up of unique or shared 'habitus'; culture oriented experiences that subjectively intervene in ways of thinking and acting of an individual. Therefore central to the sociological account of 'taste' lies Bourdieu's (1984) concept of 'habitus' as it creates social 'distinction' through the inherence of structured attitudes and preferences matched to its corresponding social class (ibid). As the diversity of cultural capital encourages the development of multiple habitus, this indeed translates into distinct sets of 'tastes' and their expressions through a range of lifestyles and consumption patterns (Holt, 1997). In Bourdieu's view, 'habitus' [similar to McCracken's (1986) 'lens'], rather than status widely determines how social actors classify the world of consumption through their desire for marketplace commodities and object signification.

Overall Warner and Bourdieu, both, agreed that different mediums of social and cultural interaction work as a platform for identity and status representation. But, Warner offered a theory of social class that tried to highlight the importance of formal organisations, e.g., religious groups, leisure clubs etc., as medium for social interaction and reproduction of status. In contrast, Bourdieu's (1984) theory underpinned how identity and consumption is claimed as consequence of cultural expressions.

Despite offering significant advancement on how cultural capital shapes lifestyle and consumption patterns, the validity of Bourdieu's theory, especially within the contemporary N. American social system confronted numerous criticisms (see Holt, 1998). During the last two decades a number of influential studies (see Lamont, 1992,

Erickson, 1996, Halle, 1992 etc.) have tried to examine factors affecting the social reproduction of cultural capital in the United States, and their outcomes repeatedly challenged² Bourdieu's (1984) cultural patterning of consumption under specific circumstances. The concept of 'taste' as a rigid and static class affair was primarily challenged with the idea of it as a reflexive mechanism (or a reflexive object-person relationship) that is continually achieved and controlled by socially and culturally constituted practices (Shove, 2003). In addition, scholars also argued that the Bourdieuan line of assumption strictly falls into the structuralist category undermining the emerging libertarian post-modernist views where dominant cultural forms overplay social hierarchies as consumers become liberated from dominant institutional rules (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Featherstone, 1991). Therefore, today as globalisation and postmodern arguments have started to pose reflexive consumption rules resulting from open societies, open markets, and technological advancements, self-signification through inherent cultural capital is transforming into a weak mechanism for describing contemporary patterning of consumption (Appadurai, 1990; 1996; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Lash and Lury, 2007; Holt, 1997). Under postmodern influences consumers are prone to blurring class hierarchies by relying more on overlapping culture and consumption categories, and hence we see the increased emergence of independent and established subcultures (or high cultures) separating out of mass culture in contemporary society (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995; Holt, 1997; 1998; Hebdige, 1979). With the emergence of Pomo thoughts, the Bourdieuan line of argument has confronted a number of theoretical oppositions with an increasing number of studies claiming consumer culture as an amalgamation of small consumption-oriented subcultures, each characterised by its

² Although Holt (1998) demonstrated that even in modern society Bourdieu's cultural patterning of consumption theory is still applicable.

own discourse, practice, status, and value system³ (Thornton, 1996; Cova et al., 2007; Kates, 2002; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Muñiz and Schau, 2005; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001). These scholars have further emphasised that cultural capital no longer shapes straightforward consumption patterns (individualistic/communal/or hierarchical), and with the emergence of a wide number of high cultural forms, Bourdieu's cultural capital and taste mechanisms are becoming subliminal (Thompson and Troester, 2002; Lamont, 1992).

Therefore, although the standard Bourdieuan approach remains effective in understanding the role of general cultural capital in consumer's status interplay within the broad social hierarchy, in today's society subcultural capitals are a more appropriate way to understand consumption and identity practice. For example, Thornton (1996) described how the knowledge (contextualised subcultural capital) of contemporary trends, music, fashion, and dance moves rather than family or social background, defined the competition for subcultural status amongst '90s British youth. Similarly, Kates (2002) argued that gay consumers seek subcultural knowledge to create a strategic social distinction away from the conventional gay norms. Therefore, while consumption as a field may contain its own inherent context, specific cultural capitals do not exist as self-generated or autonomous entities. Rather, such values are deeply grounded within broad socio-cultural domains and their meanings are interpreted by their relationship to the practices of class, consumption, and identity (Holt, 1997; 1998).

³ This is a flawed argument as following Firat and Venkatesh (1995), in Chapter 3.5, I justify that Bourdieu's analysis was equally inspired by Poststructuralist philosophy and his concept of cultural capital, taste, and habitus mechanism can be equally applied to Postmodernity (also see Holt, 1997).

The importance of this discussion in a cultural branding context can be seen as twofold. Firstly, marketplace myths create links between culture, consumption, and identity through a complex corporate controlled system that aligns commercial appeal with consumers' desired reality (Thompson, 2004). Such a connection propagates ideologies that help individual consumers to achieve satisfaction by escaping everyday reality (the everyday burden posed by consumption 'fields' or society). Although specific cultural ideologies vary, commercial mythologies mainly derive from subcultural or counter cultural sentiments that endorse the idea of self-expression by seeking autonomous lifestyles or freedom from institutional bureaucracy (Holt, 2004; 2006). Once a subcultural or countercultural ideology proves to gain authenticity and wider identity value amongst a large number of population, the mythical elements of an iconic brand's commercial representation tend to proliferate into mass culture and consumption practice as a prolonged desired cultural or ideological asset (Levy, 1981; Thompson and Tian, 2008; Holt, 2003b). That is why marketers, advertising agencies and brand managers are constantly looking for subcultural inspirations (Hard-Rock, Skateboard, Rave, Hip-hop, Bohemian, Goth, Rock, Punk, Ghetto etc.) that could potentially be transformed into innovative branding ideas, but it is unclear how these subcultural capitals get translated into powerful marketplace mythologies by brand managers and advertising professionals (Holt, 2004; Thompson and Tian, 2008; Holt, 2004; Thompson, 2004; Kozinets, 2001; Levy, 1981).

Secondly, the narratives of marketplace mythologies are drawn from archetypes or imaginary characters that are grounded within the fundamental values of society and individuals (Arnould et al., 1998; Johar et al., 2001; Levy, 1981). As I propose to

evaluate Bajaj's brand iconicity using automobiles as material objects for identity and ideological exercise, this discussion calls for greater understanding of the relationship between the cultural categories of men and their automobiles. Automobiles as a consumption object have a long history of image co-production around the archetype of men. Since James Flink's (1988) *The Automobile Age* a number of scholars have investigated how two wheelers as material objects refer to the idea of 'liberated', 'self-directed', and 'unfettered' mobility while signifying consumers' power in creating and exercising authority in the field of consumption (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Pirsig, 1999; Murphy and Patterson, 2011; Natalier, 2001; Haigh and Crowther, 2005; Holt, 2004). In addition to the material object (scooters, motorbikes) meanings in two-wheeler consumption are also determined by mass media and popular culture, giving rise to a process of creating and shaping consumers through collaborative negotiations between society and culture (Murphy and Patterson, 2011; Natalier, 2001; Stone, 1966; Richins, 1994). Here, the worldviews of advertising agencies and the parent company are likely to determine the visual representation of such narratives, however studies suggested that the cultural production of commercial myths are a complicated negotiation process embedded within the socio-cultural mechanism of 'cultural capital' and 'taste' (Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Thompson, 2004; Holt, 2004; 2006; Cayla and Elson, 2012). In the following section I present an overview of cultural affiliations of automobiles in consumer research and their relationship to humanity and identity practice.

3.4 Automobility and Identity Exercise:

“The motor-bike both reflected and generated many of the central meanings of the bike culture. It must be understood as one of the main elements of its stylistic make-up”

– Willis (1978, p.52)

One of the powerful organising forces in modern life is the collection of material objects that people select to assign meanings to their lives (Miller, 2001; 2005). The term ‘*automobility*’ is not new to consumption and culture research (see Belk, 2004; Miller, 2001; Urry, 2004; Arvidsson, 2001). Throughout the twentieth century scholars have tried to define the term as ‘movement’ or ‘autonomous possibilities’ of an agency made up of an individual (or groups) and their technology driven automobile(s) [mainly two wheelers and four wheelers], i.e. *Men and their Machines* (Belk, 2004) or *Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance* (Pirsig, 1999). In Featherstone et al.’s (2005) view the underlying meaning of the term - *Auto-Mobile* - denotes a ‘self-propelled’ motor vehicle that is liberated from the restrictions of being attached to a track – the freedom of movement that enables the rider to become liberated from institutional rules and convention (Miller, 2001). Following Featherstone’s lead, John Urry (2004; 2011) further added a humanist notion to the term by describing ‘*automobility*’ as a process where the ‘self [is] in the making’ under autonomous motion. In other words, automobility represents the idea of an autonomous-self linked to an automatic machine through a network of society, self, technology, culture and roads that Urry (2011; 2004) collectively described as the ‘*auto-poetic network*’.

In culture and consumption research '*automobility*' has presented a great deal of ideas and thoughts for building cultural vocabularies of 'self' (Belk, 2004; Urry, 2004), 'identity' (Hebdige, 1991; Willis, 1978), 'community' (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995), 'practice' (Murphy and Patterson, 2011), 'transformation' (Pirsig, 1999) or even 'aficionados' (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; Hewer and Brownlie, 2010). Some of the early insights into the cultural significance of two wheelers can be identified within the Birmingham School's work, for example, Hebdige (1979) studied and described automobiles (scooters) as a mode of group mobility and a medium for establishing symbolic solidarity or a statement of '*style*'. Similarly, to Willis (1978) two-wheelers appeared as a medium for creativity and the production of cultural politics. Despite the fundamental difference in Hebdige and Willis' work, i.e., Mods as the representative of elegant middleclass 'femininity' and the Rockers as representatives of working class aggressive and 'notorious masculinity', both of them agreed that automobiles are material objects that allow human beings to experiment and legitimise their identity, affiliation, consumption, and class. A similar line of argument can be identified within Brownlie and Hewer's (2007) justification of the 'debadging' practice as a reflection of consumers' efforts to redefine symbolic boundaries through customisation work, although the authors focused on presenting how debadging was 'cherished' as a process of bricolage that offered the 'aficionados' a shared sense of production, the underlying significance of their discussion majorly symbolised automobiles as inherent social objects for reinforcing personal or collective movements of ideals (also see Hewer and Brownlie, 2010).

Therefore cultural studies have long asserted that automobiles are not mere vehicles or technical systems, rather, they are agencies of ideological constructs tied to the

concept of autonomy – an abstract rooted within the philosophy of the Enlightenment (Miller, 2001; Slater, 1999). As Enlightenment transformed individuals into their philosophical centres, a sense of liberalism emerged transforming selves into moral and political centres (Slater, 1999). Here liberalism should be understood as a ‘broad political project’, as its fundamental goal is reflected as individual’s desire to gain freedom from social institutions and interfaces (ibid). Due to the self-rule, self-knowledge, independence, and free will logic attached to the concept, consumption of automobiles supplies both desirable and attainable meanings to riders (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Murphy and Patterson, 2011; Willis, 1978).

“...it was clear that the motor-bike was one of the main interests of the motor-bike boys. Most of their activities were based on this interest. A large part of conversation was devoted to the motor-cycle.”

- Willis (1978, p.52)

Therefore, two-wheelers are famous discourses for structuring and reflecting alternative ideologies of power, aggression, and pace (Willis, 1978; Pirsig, 1999; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). As Appadurai (1988) stated commodities embody values that go much beyond ‘the philosophy of money’ or its economic comprehension, it’s the material comprehension of the term that supplies a sense of belonging. Therefore circulation of two-wheelers within a developing context like India can generate volumes of social, cultural and political meanings ranging from a “leading object of modernity” to “a sovereign symbol of capitalist society” where gender ideology (especially masculinity) is fundamental to understanding power, authority, compliance, and the notion of Indian nationalism as defined through the

consumption of Bajaj two-wheeler machines (also see Appadurai, 1994; Miller, 2001; 2013).

At this point in the debate it seems appropriate to recall Arvidsson's (2001) outstanding work on Vespa and Italian youth counterculture. In the post-war era as motor scooters struggled to hold their market across the world (Dregni, 1995), Arvidsson described how Vespa became a central component of modernity in Italy by incorporating new values, practices, and moral visions of youth counterculture. Although "Vespa had a central place –at least in England, where middle-class youth, in the form of 'mods', made it a central element of their highly particular style...With the increasing international reputation of 'swinging London' – and alongside Twiggy-style models...and the Rolling Stones – the Vespa became something of an international countercultural fetish.", to young Italians Mods were simply 'curious exotic elements' who did not realise the possibilities of achieving unprecedented virility or hedonism through Vespa (Arvidsson, 2001, p.51). Therefore, while to the Mods Vespa was a claim to the authentication of style and subculture, in post—Fordist Italy Vespa became a 'critique of mass society' offering unprecedented freedom and fantasy for the youth to exercise libertarian politics and rebellious counterculture (Arvidsson, 2001; Dregni, 1995).

Here Arvidsson (2001) understated the Mods' association with Vespa by claiming them to be peripheral, while to him, Vespa established a new subjectivity that deeply intertwined with the idea of modernity and mobility amongst young Italians. What Arvidsson (2001) failed to realise here is that by using motor scooters Mods not only claimed 'style' and 'mobility' but it was indeed their way of politicising class,

identity, and citizenship during the post-war era (see Hebdige, 1974; 1979). Therefore, in both cases, Mods and Italian youths, automobiles became sites for “everyday practices by means of which consumers participate in displays of localized cultural capital...in pursuit of ways to “anchor’” politics of identity and culture (Brownlie and Hower, 2007 p. 106). The idea of culture here represents meanings associated with riding practice and riders’ lives that encourage conceivable action, feelings, and thoughts connected to identity (see Murphy and Patterson, 2011), nationalism (see Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Holt, 2004), and status (Belk, 2004).

Automobility and the Postmodern-Self: The self-concept theory described the process of ‘self-construction’ as a highly sensitive and complex process influenced by the social, cultural, and economic capital of an individual (Schouten, 1991; Markus and Nurius, 1986). Consumers construct their identities through the evaluation of possible selves as they embark on a journey of ‘transformation’ (McCracken, 2008; Turner, 1987). Being an important macro-foundation of society, culture and consumption plays essential role in this process of self-establishment (Schouten, 1991; Askegaard and Kjeldgaard, 2002). For example, a range of cultural studies have indicated how consumption as a context has historically supplied a medium for constructing and reconstructing identity projects, i.e., self-expression through tattooing (Blanchard, 1991), compensating emasculated identity values through high risk leisure consumption (Celsi et al., 1993; Holt and Thompson, 2004), identity reconstruction through painful plastic surgery (Schouten, 1991), or even ritualistic scarification of body (Polhemus, 1978).

Thinking of automobiles as ‘ideological regimes’ it is important to recall how the interdisciplinary field of culture research (including CCT) has prioritised consumers’ identity exercises as a significant and developing field of enquiry under the label of ‘*politics of identity*’ (Thompson, 2011; 2014). Previous studies in this field have discussed how consumers place their social distinctions at the symbolic centre of their identity – often expressed through art, fashion, music etc. – to pursue recognition or legitimisation from wider society (Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1978; Üstüner and Holt, 2007; 2010; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006; Thompson and Haytko, 1997; Murray, 2002; Murray and Ozanne, 1991). On the other hand, it is also true that marginalised groups fight for cultural and economic opportunities restricted by discriminatory institutional barriers using material objects and consumption as mediums for opposing institutional bureaucracy (Holt, 2002; Arsel and Thompson, 2011; Peñaloza, 1994; Üstüner and Holt, 2010; Üstüner and Thompson, 2012).

In an automobile context, the discourse of technology driven machines puts the ‘self’ at the epicenter of consumption treating identity exercises as a “high degree of expressive functionality, [focused on] foregrounding the journey rather than the destination” (Murphy and Patterson, 2011, p.1325), In pursuing the ‘journey’ riders often push their machines, especially motorcycles, to the threshold of performance and practice inviting potential ‘risk’ (Murphy and Patterson, 2011). Inspiration for such ‘risk’-led consumption comes from the rider’s desire to create alternative identities while experiencing ideological supremacy (Celsi et al., 1993). Therefore, although it is believed that consumers become liberated through automobile consumption, in reality they become dependent on both, the machine and the social context that creates and perceives the meaning of their consumption (Urry, 2011;

2004). That is why we see throughout history scooters or motorcycles as material objects presented major consumption-led platforms for identity exercises leading to notable social actions (Murphy and Patterson, 2011).

Therefore automobiles are 'ideological regimes' rather than a medium for mere transport or 'self-actualisation' (also see Miller, 2001), it is not a smooth 'auto-poetic network' rather, it is a complex platform for fabricating antagonism where perceived individual movements become parts of collective ideological mobility (Hebdige, 1974; Willis, 1978; Dant, 1999; Dregni, 1995; Arvidsson, 2001; Urry, 2004; 2011). As riders become mature by developing their knowledge of riding they put their experience and understanding (speeding, clothing) into practice to reject bourgeois society (Willis, 1978; Natalier, 2001). For example, the 'new riders' of Harley never subscribed to the 'original outlaw ethos' of Harley Davidson, rather, Harley was a medium for identity experimentation that helped them to create a satisfactory sense of self outside their everyday social roles (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). These are the self-proclaimed 'weekend warriors' who exercise their 'desired self' over their 'institutionalised self' either by emulating hard-core masculinity or by creating self-directed consumption and lifestyle practices (i.e. Urban Rich Bikers, Sub-Urban Weekend Riders). Equally, for the Mods and the Rockers style was an 'intention of communication', through complex articulation of codes and practices surrounding their automobiles, that helped them to distinguish from the mainstream middleclass (Willis, 1978; Hebdige, 1974). Such self-experimentation through the consumption of material objects reminds Eric Hoffer who rightly claimed:

“Nature attains perfection, but man never does. There is a perfect ant, a perfect bee, but man is perpetually unfinished. . . . It is this incurable unfinishedness which sets man apart from other living things. For, in the attempt to finish himself, man becomes a creator.”

- Eric Hoffer (1973, p. 3)

This statement not only justifies the ‘new Harley riders’ or the Mods and the Rockers desire for becoming active agents of co-creation, but it also applies to the ‘car aficionados’ who regularly immerse themselves in a search for sign-value signification to ease their ‘aesthetic anxieties’ deriving from marketplace (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; Hewer and Brownlie, 2010). The increased emergence of automobiles as ideological regimes, and the riders’ desire to become ‘citizen-artists’ recalls the notion of post-modernism - “Something everyone has heard of, but no-one can quite explain what it is” (Brown, 1995, p.387) – to be considered in automobile consumption (Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; Arvidsson, 2001; Urry, 2004). It seems high time to conceptualise the idea of postmodernism beyond its reputation of being obscure, inaccessible, intellectual fads created by French philosophers as central to this postmodern debate lies culture, aesthetics, narratives, expression, and meanings (Cova, 1996; Ogilvy, 1990; Baudrillard, 1988; 1998; Brown, 1993; Lash, 1991).

3.5 Modernity vs. Postmodernity:

Today, the concept of postmodernism has started to dominate society and scholarship within the Western world, however, within an emerging context like India debate on postmodernity has received very little food for thought (Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995; Breckenridge, 1995). Perhaps the reason for this is that scholars conceptualised the traits of postmodernism as '*Late Modernity*' (see Giddens, 1991) or '*Liquid Modernity*' (see Bauman, 2000) - a 'post-traditional order' that forces social life away from the pre-established time and space and what is perceived to be traditional within a nation state (Giddens, 1991; Appadurai, 1996). The term *modernity* usually refers to a time period, while the idea of 'modernism' reflects the sociocultural and philosophical evolutions during that period. In contrast, postmodernity "refers to the time period overlapping with late modernity", and the idea of postmodernism refers to "cultural conditions" associated with it (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995, p.240). The idea of modernity dictates that individuals or societies become modern by evolving under the guidance of particular historic forces like technology, science, rationalism etc., but the postmodernists feel that the modernist philosophy is too 'rigid' and 'narrow' that fails to capture the 'richness of human experience' as part of culture, symbolism, and aesthetics (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995; Lash, 1991; Brown, 1993).

Therefore while the logic of modernity is 'standard', 'harmonious', 'continuous', and 'stable', postmodernity builds on the logic of 'illusionary', 'fictional', 'plural', 'discontinuous', and 'micro-practices' where consumers become production agents by rejecting intuitional barriers through consumption (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995; Lash, 1991; Brown, 1993). While modernity advocates the creation of cognitive agents, postmodernity celebrates separation and liberation through 'taste'

and 'sub-cultural capital' (Thornton, 1996; Cova et al., 2007; Kates, 2002; Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995). Despite the fundamental differences in worldview, ideas of late modernity 'carry some common themes' to postmodernity (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995, p.420). For example, according to Firat and Venkatesh (1995, p.255) – "The postmodern conditions that best describe the consumer are fragmentation and decenteredness", what post-modernity literature conceptualised as *'fragmentation'*, late modernity literature described as a 'disease' (Appadurai 1998) or 'liquid' social forms (Bauman, 2000; Giddens, 1991), affecting the cultural consolidation of a society or a nation.

Post-Modernity, Nation State, and Fragmentation: According to Appadurai (1998) nations are not mere geographic boundaries, rather, they are social spaces constructed by the ideologies and practices undertaken by citizens. The narratives of identity often exist in duality where one part teaches the citizens how to be a part of a collective community and the other part creates a sense of belonging (Bhabha, 1994). That is why in literature addressing late modernity nation-states are often described as 'agents', rather than geographic spaces, that induce social change by breaking down straightforward correspondence between society, class, culture, and citizenship (Appadurai, 1996; Holt, 1997). These social changes emerge as societies or nations become more and more susceptible to the external forces of global '-scapes' (Appadurai, 1991; 1996; 2011).

In a country like India the effect of contemporary modernisation and social change puts the limelight on globalisation debate that strictly advocates: "Globalization does not necessarily or even frequently imply homogenization or Americanization" where

geographical boundaries, cultural barriers or the sense of nationalism become isomorphic (Appadurai, 1998, p.17; also see Mish, 2007; Varman and Belk, 2009; Varma, 2007; Desouza et al., 2010; Fernandes, 2006). Rather “Globalization...itself [is] a deeply historical, uneven, and localising process” that creates ideological fractures within a nation state (Appadurai, 1998, p.17). Such emergence of fracture or fragmentation in automobile consumption can be conceptualised in two different ways: first, the pessimistic image of social alienation where consumers aggressively seek signs and symbols as resources for self-creation of an ‘individualistic self’ trying to become liberated from the forces of society and marketplace (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995; Holt, 2002; Baudrillard, 1988; Lash, 1991; Brown, 1993). Second, the optimistic image of liberatory consumption forces, where consumers as ‘citizen artists’ produce collages of self-representation and circulates them within society as consumables (Firat et al., 1995; Brown, 1993). This ‘double logic’ is becoming increasingly prominent within the automobile consumption context by extending riders’ liberal rights through speeding, clothing, customisation etc., whilst reinforcement of such rebellious elements alienate the rider from institutionalised society as a law breaking ‘outsider’ (Arvidsson, 2001; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995).

Beck (1992) and Bauman (1990) described that the issue of social fragmentation or multiple identity exercises emerge from traits like intense “insecurity”. Such insecurities are developed when social entities fail to accept society designated norms and traditions, and start to rely on “secondary agencies” (commodities, popular culture, mass media etc.) that are deliberately designed to offer desired relief (Beck, 1992, p.128-131). Consumer culture theory has repeatedly highlighted emergence of

these stigmatised struggles within transforming economies (Varman and Belk, 2009; Coskuner-Balli and Thompson, 2013). For example, Izberk-Bilgin (2012) described how the historic amalgamation of political and religious ideologies fuels low income Turkish consumers to forcefully reject western brands. The underlying political project behind this consumption jeremiad is directed against the construction, legitimisation, and promotion of new cultural identities by middle-class consumers. Similarly, Üstüner and Holt (2012) noted that the identity politics, grounded within the socioeconomic disruptions of globalisation poses positional struggles between two social groups in Turkey with distinctive cultural capitals. While possessors of *high cultural capital* (HCC) orient their identities around Western consumption practices, possessors of *low cultural capital* (LCC) endorse indigenous consumption to proclaim authentic citizenship (ibid). Each social group proclaims their taste to be superior but underneath this fictional dispute the forces of globalisation continue to diminish social structure and the patterns of consumption (ibid).

Therefore, *fragmentation* does not necessarily mean a sceptical rejection of society to differ from an individual or inferior personal space, rather it is an urge for emancipation generated against the totalising narratives of society and marketplace (Gergen, 1991). In Patricia Waugh's (1992, p.123) words this is an "onslaught on the bondage of thought to regulative ideas such as 'unity' and 'truth'" that attempts to restructure identities in response to subduing institutional forces. While modernity perceives this emancipation as 'uniform', 'linear' and 'progressive' (Nancy, 1991; Lacoue-Labarthe, 1990), the postmodernity or late modernity debate claims that, as consumers engage in non-linear thoughts and practices, society fragments under the forces of '*liberatory postmodernism*' (Holt, 1997; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et

al., 1995). Such *fragmentation* in real life unfolds through consumption, identity, and lifestyle and: “Structured by historical changes in the symbolic-expressive characteristics of consumption, the social patterning of consumption has become increasingly subtle and complexly intertwined” (Holt, 1997, p.343). According to Holt (1997, p.343) these emerging social fragmentations require a ‘sensitive approach’ to re-describe contemporary class and consumption patterns. As consumers invest their identity more and more into multiple consumption experiences, ‘taste’ and ‘lifestyle’ become determinants of contemporary class structure rather than economic conditions (see Holt, 1997). This is indeed true in a context like India where cultural globalisation has not led to a process of homogenisation (Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995; Breckenridge, 1995), because the restructuring of public space (urban middleclass) after market liberalisation followed an uneven political trajectory favouring commodity consumption [see Chapter 3.6] (Fernandes, 2006; Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995; Breckenridge, 1995; Appadurai, 1996). As a result the rhetoric of globalisation in India generated a commodity-centric idea of ‘new-ness’ in class consumption and lifestyle standards, causing a sharp historic divide in the way the middleclass had organised its identity and class structure during the post-colonial period (Fernandes, 2006; Lakha, 1999). Like Turkish consumers segments of the Indian middleclass that prefer these historic changes engage in a dynamic continuity of accruing ‘new taste’ and ‘new cultural capital’ and the segments that do not remain resistant to the historic patterning of this social reproduction, causing fragmentation and ideological battle across identity, culture, lifestyle, class, and consumption. Beck (1992) and Bauman (1990) labelled these tensions as signs of ‘*reflexive modernity*’, where identity construction is an endless process through a recurrent need for

subjectivity, disrupting the continuation of established traditions while causing accelerated social diversity (also see McCracken, 2008, p.113-141).

This argument is not contrary to Bourdieu's claim as he frequently adopted poststructuralist perspectives in his analysis (see Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 1997; 1998). Although Bourdieu's analysis demonstrated that social class is the key to the formation of 'taste' and 'habitus', and these classes are as much a product of consumption as of economic conditions. In reality, rather than economy or demographics dictating such class logic, symbolic power shapes Distinctions in contemporary society (Holt, 1997; 1998; Thompson, 2004; Thompson and Troester, 2002; Luedicke et al., 2010). Here it seems appropriate to remember how Holt (1997; 1998) applied the Bourdieuan construct of cultural capital to describe contemporary American society as a collection of parallel 'fields', i.e., field of consumption, field of politics, field of religion etc.; although together these fields form a uniform playing ground, they present individual challenges, status competitions, and material consideration for achieving success or satisfaction (Holt, 1998). This is indeed true in an emerging context like India where the fraction of society who uses economic and political privilege in accessing the global marketplace started to claim ideological distinctions (in terms of class mobility and cosmopolitanism) against traditional ideologies (Derné, 2008; Fernandes, 2006; Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995; Breckenridge, 1995).

Therefore, from a conventional standpoint it may appear to the Bajaj marketers that the trajectory of post-colonial masculinity in India followed a linear set of transformation [and hence their product range and mythological manifesto], in reality

the theories of globalisation and postmodernity contradict such a view by advocating how the systematic relationships between social categories and consumers' identity practices are increasingly breaking down (Üstüner and Holt, 2010). What it means to be an Indian in a post globalised marketplace is largely invested within the social, political, and cultural movements of colonial and post-colonial projects (Fernandes, 2000; 2006; Lakha, 1999; Appadurai, 2011; Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995; Breckenridge, 1995; Varman and Belk, 2009). In Chapter 6 I revalidate this post-modernist claim by showing how globalisation in India has led to ideological and symbolic territorialisation amongst middleclass Indian men and how these territorial anxieties determine broader consequences for the politics of brand consumption and identity exercise. By examining the cultural construct of ideology and self-representation, my goal is to present a clear construct of Indian men and their transforming identity politics as reflected in their consumption practice surrounding Bajaj two-wheelers. Like Arvidsson (2001) asserted Vespa as a cultural icon that stood at the heart of post-war transformation in Italy, my aim here is to investigate how Bajaj maintained its iconicity by adapting to the transforming picture of masculinity at the junctures of globalisation and the post-colonial modernity. During the analysis I further aspire to determine the extent to which Bajaj marketers recognise such identity politics and use it as a vital resource for their cultural innovation strategy.

3.6 India: Cultural Politics within a Transforming Nation

In the previous sections I presented a theoretical overview of micro-dimensional factors governing cultural branding beyond Holt's explanations. In doing so, I paid special attention in characterising how cultural and social capital determines consumers' taste or preference for ideological exercises through consumption choices and how these fundamental factors transform with historic changes. In the following sections I set the groundwork for analysing Bajaj's 'cultural fit' with middleclass masculinity by presenting a comprehensive review of dominant state ideologies and their impact on middleclass consumption choices since post-colonial times. Here I aim to highlight the role of the state in defining and redefining the idea of nationalism and its impact on transforming middleclass representation, identity politics and consumption choices, as implied through a series of contradictory ideological agendas under the name of Post-Independence (*Nehruvianism*) and Post-Liberalisation modernity (see Nilekani, 2009; Varma, 2007; Guha, 2007; Lakha, 1999; Jenkins, 1999).

As the political ideologies of the government in India played significant roles in defining and regulating the idea of class, consumption and identity practices since colonial times (Fernandes, 2006; Rajagopal, 2001; Jenkins, 1999; Guha, 2003; Varma, 2007), the idea of nationalism and the role of the state over the marketplace or other macro social forces acted as a major force of construct for class structure and wider ideological developments (see Varma, 2007; Fernandes, 2006). Contemporary middleclass in India is comparatively more consumption-centric and market-oriented than ever, and they have an interesting correlation with the transforming socio-economic landscape that dates back to historic times in India (Jenkins, 1999;

Nilekani, 2009). Therefore, achieving adequate understanding of post-independence political ideologies and their impact on India's middleclass men is essential for understanding the historic survival of Bajaj and its brand iconicity in India (Holt, 2003a; 2004; 2006). The reason I put middleclass men and their identity politics under investigation, not only because it remained Bajaj's primary target market from the beginning, but also because the aspirations of men and their identity is a central construct of Indian society (see Varma, 2007; Derné, 1995; 2000; Rajagopal, 1994; Mish, 2007; Osella and Osella, 2006).

Many scholars (Fernandes, 2006; Frankel, 1991; Varma, 2007; Derné, 2008) described the difficulty of defining and classifying the Indian middle-class lies in its transforming and diverse characters. While the distinction between the lower and upper class in India remains colossal not only in terms of income level but also on the basis of education and other basic rights, the middleclass occupies an ambiguous spatial status category as the bourgeoisie 'inbetweeners' (Varma, 2007). During colonial times the Indian middleclass was made up of traditional administrative workers in government or non-government organisations working under colonial rule, their political affiliation was diverse depending on cast, origin, and religion (Sinha, 1995). Between the 1950s and the 1990s the image of the middleclass became synonymous with 'struggle', 'poverty', and 'frustration', however in post-globalised India this burgeoning class transformed into a symbol of 'status', 'affluence', 'opportunity', 'progression', and 'consumption' (Fernandes, 2006; Varma, 2007; 2011; Sinha, 1995; Nilekani, 2009; Lakha, 1999; Guha, 2007). Research and media speculation on the impact of globalisation has repeatedly undermined the historic links and developments of the middleclass, remaining largely focused on how market

liberalisation had encouraged the forces of globalisation to impose global commodities and capitals. Such embracement of Western lifestyles and consumption choices en-mass depicted cosmopolitanism as the new popular choice of self-representation framework (Mish, 2007; Venkatesh, 1994; Deshpande, 2003).

That is why celebration of the Indian middleclass in contemporary globalisation literature is largely geared towards prevalent assumptions like increased affluence and consumption power identical to other so called emerging economies (see Üstüner and Holt, 2010; Belk, 2000; Burke, 1996; Davis, 2004), but in reality, despite this contemporary market-led hype around the “great Indian middle-class” (Varma, 2007), it has been claimed that our understanding of these consumers remains incomplete (Varma, 2007; Fernandes and Heller, 2006; Bhan, 2009; Harris, 2007). The reason being that mainstream research has over simplified the concept of middleclass and the ideological sentiments shaping broad characteristics of them (Varma, 2007; Fernandes, 2006; Gupta, 2000; Bardhan, 1999). Here, it is important to recall how Corbridge and Harris (2000, p.123) criticised popular economic and consumption-centric explanations of the Indian middleclass by claiming “It has become fashionable, not least in the popular imagination, [to define the Indian middleclass] by income and its correlates, mainly a variety of branded private consumer goods”, in reality this concept is fundamentally flawed as it overlooks the historic boundaries and ideological patterning of this class as reflected in their previous and contemporary consumption behaviour (also see Derné, 2008; Varma, 2007; Beteille, 2001; Gupta, 2000). In the following sections I overcome this barrier by charting the historic and ideological shaping of Indian middleclass, under the forces of state politics and marketplace liberalisation, relevant to the cultural branding.

3.6.1 Middle-class in Post-Colonial India & The Failure of Nehruvian Modernity

Nations, as we know, are politically created; they are not just mere territorial boundaries of civilisation (Offe, 1999; Appadurai, 1998; Ger, 1999; Goswami, 1998; Trivedi, 2003). Therefore nationalism and wider class politics are not inevitably an expression of territorial behaviour; rather they are the historic development of collective ideologies deriving from a mixture of inherent and acquired social and cultural capital (Holt, 1997; 1998; Allen, 2002). As Hoffmann (1992) noted there could be any number of competing ideologies at a given time trying to establish themselves as dominant principles but what turns these distinctive principles into dominant ideologies is their political appropriation (see Hoffman, 1992; Huntington, 1981; Zizek, 1989, Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004). Since the rise of Indian national movements, three competing factors – territory, culture, and religion – have collided with each other for their political dominance (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000; Nilekani, 2009; Jenkins, 1999; Bardhan, 1998; 1999), and their ideological equivalents received different levels of political appropriation in post-colonial India, generating three distinct nationalist political movements: the socialist movement, the religious nationalist movement, and the liberal secularist movement (Kohli, 1989; Khilnani, 1997; Hansen, 1999; Jaffrelot, 1996; 2000; Jenkins, 1999). These multiple strains of nationalists had their own political ideologies and socio-cultural ideals, and historically whenever India leaned towards adopting one of these nationalist beliefs the consequences were reflected through culture, identity, consumption, and other socio-economic indicators (see Guha, 2003; Rajagopal, 1994; 1999; Hansen, 1999). For example, Mahatma Gandhi, the so-called father of the Indian nation, used consumption as a dominant ideology to mobilise national movements against the

colonial power (Varman and Belk, 2009; Guha, 2007; Bayley, 1986). His tolerant non-violent ideologies generated indigenous pride and belief that shook the colonial power, but his deep religious foundations led to communal violence and extreme social divides within post-colonial India (Guha, 2007; Hansen, 1999; Chatterjee, 1986; Jenkins, 1999). After India gained independence in 1947, a socialist government was formed under Nehru who did not want to directly carry forward Gandhian ideologies (Guha, 2007). Rather Nehru's socialist vision prioritised development of education, national infrastructures (large dams, highways etc.), and industrial revolution as a symbol of rising India presented to the nation under the label of post-independence modernity (*Nehruvianism* or *Nehruvian modernity*) (Guha, 2007; Bardhan, 1998; 1999; Nilekani, 2009; Jenkins, 1999). The beneficiaries of these developments largely included businessmen, industrialists, entrepreneurs, and professionals who remained subordinate to the interests of colonial power, while the middle-class was conceptualised as a 'dependant class' to benefit secondarily from the progress of the nation (Varma, 2007; Dubey, 1992; Frankel, 1991).

Starting in 1951, the plans for early '*Nehruvian modernity*' were developed and rolled out as three five-year development ambitions (Guha, 2007; Lakha, 1999; Nilekani, 2009). Although this planning privileged the role of the state in regulating the country's socio-economic developments and cultural barriers, the middleclass largely favoured the idea of '*Nehruvianism*' as they saw opportunities for education, employment and prosperity by conceptualising the state as a 'dynamic entrepreneur' (Varma, 2007; Frankel, 1991; Khanna, 1987; Lakha, 1999). As the country embarked on state-financed heavy industrial developments the middleclass became more like "planners, adjudicators and regulators, technical experts and managers" of this

progress (Stern, 1993, p.210). For a few years the socialist government succeeded in expanding the infrastructure, education, and industrial base but within a short period of time the limits of Nehru's vision started to become evident through economic crisis, sluggish growth, and slow progress rate (Guha, 2007; Varma, 2007). As foreign investments remained majorly restricted as part of Socialist ideology, poor infrastructure and limited consumption choices started to contribute towards a greater failure of '*Nehruvian Modernity*' (Bardhan, 1998; 1999; Varma, 2007; 2011). Contributing to this crisis, as the socialist government shifted its class interest towards rural prosperity, a sense of 'major betrayal' emerged amongst the middleclass who were left frustrated by Nehru's failed vision (Bardhan, 1998; 1999; Jenkins, 1999; Lakha, 1999). Gradually the financial crisis constrained employment and earning opportunities while the closed market restricted choice of consumption and lifestyle opportunities (Guha, 2007; Bardhan, 1998; 1999).

3.6.2 Rise of Religious Nationalism as Alternative State Ideology

The 1970s and 1980s were filled with serious political conflicts, along with rising social and communal tensions and fiscal crisis (Vijayan, 2004; Sridharan, 1999; 2004; Kohli, 1989; Jaffrelot, 1996; 2000). Inflation levels were moving above ten percent while foreign exchange reserves were completely depleted (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000). The only way to survival was economic reform and promising a huge consumer class to the world market in order to attract foreign direct investments (Varma, 2007; Guha, 2007; Bardhan, 1998; 1999).

As mounting anxiety about ideological failures and an eroding socialist vision led the mass culture in India to face an increased 'crisis of legitimacy', the failure of secular

and socialist led state views resulted in the emergence of orthodox nationalism promising to “reconstruct the nation’s glorious past” through dominant gender (masculine) and religious authorities (Chakravarti, 1998, p.244). The affiliation between middleclass and Hindu nationalism dates back to the colonial time of the early twentieth century when it emerged as an elite-led Indian nationalism (Zavos, 2004), however, towards the end of the twentieth century the idea became synonymous to organised violence and religious nationality (Hansen, 2004; Jaffrelot, 1996; 2000).

With the socialist ideology returning sluggish economic growth and social failures, the middleclass started to search for an alternative state ideology that could fulfil their aspiration of progress and prosperity which had been promised for over thirty years, since independence. Hindu nationalists took the opportunity to campaign for restoring India’s historic glory as a Hindu nation with an attempt to transform everyday public spaces into religious Hindu sanctity (Van der Veer, 1994; Jaffrelot, 1993; 1996; 2000). They embraced nationalism as a product of religion that defined the historic characteristics of the country for hundreds and hundreds of years, while the cause of the nation’s failures and anxieties were redirected towards Muslims and other religions (Van der Veer, 1994; Jaffrelot, 1996; 2000).

During the late 1970s and early 1980s the rise of Hindu nationalism created more and more religious and social divide through orthodox nationalism and aggressive masculine agendas (Rajagopal, 1994; Hansen, 1999). The display of pure nationalism and normative forms of aggressive masculinity was depicted through the archetypes of the Hindu god Rama (Rajagopal, 1994). This re-appropriation of masculinity

through a divine character was the Hindu nationalists' move to defend the Socialist's threat to regain the nation's belief and canonical symbolic power (Jain, 2001; Vijayan, 2004). The nationalists organised country wide historic rituals of chariot possessions as an initiative to re-invent the Hindu nation (Van der Veer, 1994). The politicians compared themselves to a contemporary portrayal of iconic mythological masculine figures, the epic religious heroes who took part in historic wars to save and unit the nation in the past (Rajagopal, 1994; 2001; Hansen, 1999). These religious sentiments were further consolidated with the regular telecast of Hindu epics the *Ramayana* and the *Mahabharata* which received overwhelming popularity as televisions became mass mediated objects for propagating social and political discourses throughout India (Rajagopal, 1994; 2001). The discourse of 'Hindutva'⁴ and masculine authority was dramatically spread through the televised narratives of Hindu mythological figures (ibid). As Rajagopal (1994 and 2001) identified, besides the god and goddesses from Hindu epics one of the historical televised figures was Chanakya – the archetype of patriotic Hindu masculinity, a 'saffron hero', who worshipped the nation and fought for his duty and justice, securing traditional values (Chakravarti, 1998). He was the representative of an imaginary post-colonial masculinity, a hero, who rescued a weak and fragmenting nation by transforming it into a strong spiritual Hindu empire (Chakravarti, 1998). This narration of historic manhood coincided with the epic Hindu narratives that claim how narrow, patriarchal, and aggressive visions of masculinity should evolve at the time of crisis to restore the motherland to its glory by gaining central power (Rajagopal, 2001; Vijayan, 2004; Chakravarti, 1998).

⁴ Hindu religious nationalism.

The rise of religious nationalist idioms heightened the post-colonial crisis through strong emotions and new social divides, i.e., religious movements (Hansen, 1999; Jaffrelot, 1993; 1996; 2000). Despite the promise of rejuvenation the nationalists remained focused on two simultaneous principles: commitment to protect India's territorial integrity and spreading orthodox religious ideologies (Jaffrelot, 1993; 1996; 2000). As result, the meaning of national self-sufficiency achieved a new height, as some of the handful of multinational companies (i.e. Coke) who gained initial access into the Indian market were evicted under the name of new Swadeshi⁵ ideals (see Mazarella, 2006, p. 4 – 6).

The opportunistic emergence of religious nationalism as a dominant state ideology did not survive long as the multicultural history of India and the historic Hindu-Muslim relationship prevented the nationalist ideologies from becoming a social dogma (Hansen, 1999; Jaffrelot, 1996; 2000). However, during its short lived dominance the nationalists created a fear of unknown, loss of inner coherence, and increasing genocide against Muslims and other minority groups resulting in nationwide anxieties with a potential threat to national integrity at a time of crisis (Van der Veer, 1994; Jaffrelot, 1996; 2000). According to Hansen (1999), with deepening national crisis and disintegrative tendencies a subliminal sense of pan-Indian nationalism started to grow as a central state ideology. While the socialists and religious nationalists were committed to protecting the marketplace and the territorial integrity of the nation, the emerging secular nationalism demanded exactly the opposite by seeking to preserve integrity and sovereignty with an optimistic promise (Jenkins, 1999; Kaviraj, 1991; Varma, 2007; Waldman, 2003; Weiner, 1987).

⁵ The new Self-Reliance policy.

3.6.3 Secular Nationalism and The Rise of Global Consumerism

As the transforming political economy of late 1980s begun to construct a new socio-economic system and marketplace infrastructures, the long imagined Gandhian ideology of local production was shredded in favour of a new vibrant nation (Sridharan, 2004; Nayar, 2001; Guha, 2003; Wyatt, 2005; Waldman, 2003). The structural changes implemented during the mid-1980s under a more liberal congress government led by Rajiv Gandhi resulted in the liberalisation of state control over socio-economic, media, and marketplace barriers (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000). This was an attempt to reduce trade barriers and licensing restrictions in order to create an economy that could emulate “Asian tigers” like South Korea (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000). This was a ‘golden summer’ of reformation for middleclass Indians whose interest in liberalisation specifically lay in connecting to the fair of global consumption (Derné, 2008; Majumdar, 2001; Varma, 2007; Patnaik, 1995). The reform promised India a long-held dream of middleclass to become economically prosperous and acquire the status of global consumer (Lakha, 1999; Nayar, 2001). It not only changed India’s fundamental relationship with the world but it significantly transformed an entire class politics (middleclass) and its consumption behaviour (Mish, 2007; Fernandes, 2006).

The economic reform of the 1990s allowed India to revise its third world image by exaggerating a futuristic imprint of the middleclass as a consumption-centric, status and lifestyle driven class (Varma, 2007; Fernandes, 2006; Wyatt, 2005; Waldman, 2003). As the rising political importance of the middleclass was felt by the state, the middleclass was presented at the forefront of promoting India to the global companies

as a potential target market (Kaviraj, 1991; Wyatt, 2005; Waldman, 2003). Between 1992 and 1996 foreign direct investment totalled \$3.4 billion and foreign portfolio investment totalled \$14 billion with the US, Japan, South Korea, UK, and Netherlands being major investors (Corbridge and Harriss, 2000; p.171).

One of the most important consequences of this liberalisation was the rise of consumer products and brands of global origin (Desouza et al., 2010; Derné, 2008; Mish, 2007; Wyatt, 2005). The number of television sets in Indian homes quadrupled rising from 6.8 million to 27 million (Pendakur, 1991; Rajagopal, 2001) with a state policy to increase the distribution of the national television network ('Doordarshan' – Distant Vision) to attract advertisement revenue and support the rapid expansion of media and consumption (Rajagopal, 2001; 2000). With economic prosperity and increased average per capita income the middleclass showed an uncontrolled tendency of 'keeping up with the trend' through emerging practices of lifestyle and consumption (Kulkarni, 1993, p.45; Lakha, 1999). The influx of global commodities and global brands along with the march of technology transformed the post-liberalisation middle-class into an aspirational consumption-centric class (Rao, 2000; Varma, 2007; Fernandes, 2006; Lakha, 1999; Mish, 2007). Their fetish for foreign technology meant televisions, cars, washing machines and refrigerators turning into new obsessive symbols of modernity and aspiration (Rao, 2000; Hansen, 2004).

The subjectivity of new liberal Indian men represented modernity as an entitlement of middleclass citizens as they largely endorsed the emergence of global culture and values within the old national space (Guha, 2003; Lakha, 1999; Joshi, 2001). Such a cosmopolitan rooted, consumption-driven ideology was further bolstered by media,

advertising, television and popular culture, giving birth to a picture of a 'new middleclass' man - self-assured, independent, rich, and fashionable in class (Guha, 2003; Lakha, 1999; 2002; Nayar, 2001; Fernandes, 2006; Deshpande, 1993).

3.6.4 Transforming Nationalism and Middle-Class Identity Politics

Retrospection of the previous discussions indicated that the idea of nationalism and middleclass identity politics in India had gone through a process of metamorphosis since colonial times (also see Lakha, 1999). Before independence the colonial 'nationalistic rhetoric' was understood as a macro-political discourse fuelled by anti-colonial sentiments and exercised through everyday identity and consumption (see Varman and Belk, 2009; Rao, 1999). After independence, the post-colonial ideology of Indian-ness remained a state controlled macro-political socialist discourse where anti-colonial sentiments were covered up under the vision of socio-economic progression and democratic rights (Chatterjee, 1993; 1994). The inevitable failure of the socialist vision encouraged the rise of a conceptual third space for Hindu nationalists pretending to be the almighty warriors of the nation (Lakha, 2002; Deshpande, 1998; Van der Veer, 1994; Jaffrelot, 1993; 1996; 2000). With the nationalists failing to return the imagined picture of unity and prosperity, the liberal congress or the secularists stepped in to offer a vision of 'Social Enlightenment' where the politics of inner ideologies were seemingly inspired by the forces of the commodity-centric open market system (Nayar, 2001; Lakha, 1999; Varma, 2007; Deshpande, 1993).

The consequences of secularist policies and globalisation in India have been well documented within Indian socio-economic and political literature (Nayar, 2001;

Varma, 2007; Vijayan, 2004; Fernandes, 2006; Brass, 1990). A huge section of this scholarship claimed how the rapid socio-economic and structural changes in post-liberalised India (post 1990s) sparked the transnational imaginations of the middleclass (Varma, 2007; Fernandes, 2006; Kulkarni, 1993). Fernandes and Heller (2006) described the idea of 'New Indian Middleclass' as a 'class in practice' characterised by their economic and global commodity privileges, cultural and consumption strategies, and everyday political practices. It is an analysis of the multiple ways that class comes to represent cultural and political negotiations in consumers' everyday life.

In reality, although economic reforms in the 1990s were dramatic, not many scholars tried to describe why this historic move was an epic failure with greater social consequences (see Gupta, 2000; Fernandes, 2006). Although the liberalised route to modernity was consumption centric, there was no fundamental paradigm shift on state supremacy (Gupta, 2000; Fernandes, 2006; Mazzarella, 2006; Gurumurthy, 1998). Markets were only liberalised to attract foreign investment to save the country from financial crisis, but under the shadow of culture, commodity, and economic flow, the state remained the primary determinant of the extent of modernity, making sure the country could not become 'too modern' threatening traditional norms, values, and practice (Gupta, 2000; Fernandes, 2006; Mazzarella, 2006). Here Gupta (2000, p.8) rightly pointed out that the route to modernity was "mistakenly [associated with] cars, gadgets, and foreign travel and misorganised as technological progress" by the middleclass while the government's intentions remained fixated on maintaining traditional social values, norms, class, caste, and cultural barriers.

Such a historic 'failure' essentially resulted in strategic reactions to an inner and outer dichotomy as traditional ideologies met potential conflicts with the rising global economy (see Joshi, 2001). The impact of globalisation and economic affluence is not a consistent phenomenon, similarly market liberalisation and growing economic power amongst the Indian middleclass is not necessarily a reflection of growing cosmopolitan desires amongst every single middleclass Indian (Derné, 2008; Fernandes, 2000; Gurumurthy, 1998; Moreiras, 1998). Rather it is an emerging build-up of tension between global and local (or modern and traditional) affiliations predominantly expressed through identity politics and consumption behaviour, creating ideological politics favouring or hindering emerging consumption cultures (Joshi, 2001; Mankekar, 1999; Hansen, 1999; Sarkar, 2000; Varma, 2007; Fernandes, 2000; 2006). Here it seems fair to recall Stuart Hall (1991, p.22) who rightly claimed that the process of globalisation shatters the relationship between state nationalism and national culture. In a globalised discourse 'the rupture' between culture and nation claims that identity and practices are detached from their traditional roots (Massey, 1994, p.160), while the inherent ideologies remain salient as defendant of these foundations (Bannerji et al., 2001).

These overlapping ideas have important implications for understanding class and consumption ideologies in India, as the idea of being an Indian is increasingly torn between past and present with emerging signs of 'fragmentation' (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995; Venkatesh, 1994; 1999; Joshi, 2001). Such an emerging sense of fragmentation creates a collage of superimposed ideologies (and identities) where consumers as social units struggle to make sense of traditional norms and hierarchies (Firat and Venkatesh, 1993; 1995; Firat et al., 1995;

Venkatesh, 1994; 1999; Harvey, 1990). In line with the consolidation of consumption-centric Indian middleclass, social divide and ideological fragmentations are becoming an essential part of everyday life (Lakha, 1999; Fernandes, 2000; 2006; Mazzarella, 2006; Gurumurthy, 1998). While for some men dissolving the early national ethos of a state will offer a platform for social emancipation, for others it will become a deeply distressing and disempowering exercise. Some carry the burden of being cultural repositories, while others work on resolving the balance between the old and the new (Joshi, 2001; Derné, 2008; Mish, 2007).

Therefore as India re-shapes “the needs of the nation [can] typically [be] identified within the frustration and aspirations of men” (McClintock, 1997, p.89), changes induced by global commodities and their associated culture flow demand a critical look at how men give new meanings to their consumption by reacting to the transforming economy, society, and the marketplace (Appadurai, 1993; Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995). While a number of attempts were made to analyse the complexity of masculine ideology in India (Derné, 1995; 2000; Osella and Osella, 2006; Jain, 2001; Hansen, 1996; 2004; Ivekovic and Mostov, 2004; McClintock, 1997; Chatterji, 1996), few research efforts have gone into identifying the consequences of globalisation in twenty years and the level of ideological fragmentation amongst contemporary Indian men. Therefore my interpretative efforts seek to fill this gap by identifying how class structure and gender ideologies are fragmenting with shifting economy, politics, and marketplace structure; and how contemporary ‘politics of middle-class’ serve as a metaphor for the crossroads between ‘older’ and ‘newer’ forms of identity as exercised by consumers to articulate their ideological reflection on society, politics, nationalism, and cultural change in

India. In doing so I analyse cultural constructs of brand Bajaj and its historic metaphoric appeal to Indian masculinity and cultural nationalism, as the brand remains an iconic symbol of carrier for the Indian middleclass since post-colonial period (Cayla and Elson, 2006).

3.7 Conclusion:

This chapter builds an important foundation for the literature review. I began the chapter by detailing the concept of culture and its development in social science, anthropology and consumer culture research. In doing so, I followed Warnerian and Bourdieuan line of assumptions, and reviewed the fundamental relationships between culture and consumption and its relation to some of the fundamental cultural branding factors, i.e., ideology, sub-culture etc. As Bajaj's cultural iconicity was built around two-wheelers as consumption objects, in the following section I described how throughout history automobiles have served as ideological devices for foregrounding consumer desires rather than just serving as a mere transportation artefact. Today, in the age of post-modernity automobiles have become important tools for practicing identity and demonstrating citizenship rights. Such an idea had great deal of implications for understanding Bajaj's cultural iconicity by investigating how cultural industry manipulated and transformed these passive material objects into active ideological devices. As middleclass men remained primary target market for Bajaj since the post-colonial time, I finish the chapter by presenting a brief overview of Indian middleclass and their struggle within the nation's transforming socio-economic structures.

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY & DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction:

This chapter is divided into four main sections and begins by summarising the rationale for the research along with the key objectives and key research questions. In the following section I detail my ‘*worldview*’ as a researcher, with a concise review of philosophical approaches within consumer culture research that will help me to justify my methodological approach in line with the major paradigm adopted by CCT researchers, i.e., *Interpretivism*. In the next section I articulate the strategies used for sampling and data collection along with the combination of qualitative research techniques used as part of this investigation. In the following section I present a detailed insight into the analytical process and the logic used for triangulation, coding and interpretation of qualitative data gathered as part of this project. In doing so I emphasise the issue of ‘*validity*’ and ‘*reliability*’ as these agendas were meticulously tackled and monitored to ensure analytical (not statistical) rigour throughout the process. I conclude the chapter by highlighting some of the ethical issues and limitations encountered during the process.

4.2 Research Questions:

The principles of ‘*Cultural Brand Innovation*’ require the notion of ‘culture’ to be conceptualised as a combined product of a nation’s social, political, economical, and consumption led activities (Holt, 2004; 2006; Holt and Cameron, 2010). Accordingly, the recipe for designing and understanding cultural strategies require visualising

society and the marketplace as a joint culture production arena where meanings are produced, reproduced, shared, and transformed through symbolic exchanges between consumers and the cultural industry (Holt, 2004; 2006; Thompson, 2004; Baudrillard, 1981; Mазzarella, 2006). Following these theoretical leads - the fundamentals of cultural branding - was successful in generating immense academic interests within the CCT discipline (see Arnould and Thompson, 2007; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Maclaran et al., 2008; Luedicke et al., 2010; Heding et al., 2008), but given the lack of progression in this emerging field of research I believe it is high time to rethink the fundamentals once again.

To re-think the principles of cultural brand management I designed two questions along with a set of objectives [also see Chapter 1.2].

Question 1: What defined Bajaj’s long lasting iconic legacy within transforming India?

The primary research question aims to investigate the underlying dynamics of ‘cultural brand innovation strategy’ within a distinct socio-political context - India. A detailed genealogical study of a remarkable iconic brand like Bajaj will not only help to interpret the context specific characteristics of iconic brands and the strategies deployed for their cultural survival, but will also contribute knowledge towards the development of a robust theory of cultural branding.

The following objectives will be addressed to answer this research question.

- Explore chronological development of Bajaj's cultural relationship with the Indian nation since the colonial time.
- Investigate the origin of 'cultural orthodoxies' within a nation that predominantly endorses a traditional way of life.
- Understand the source of mythical and/or ideological resources that address and inspire a diverse consumer population in a country like India.
- Scrutinise how iconic cultural expressions are crafted within ad agencies.
- Identify the wider cultural and political disruptions that provided unprecedented opportunities for Bajaj's iconic constituencies.

Question 2: What are the Consequences of the Mythological Portrayal of Transforming Indian Masculinity in Building and Sustaining Cultural Iconicity of Brand Bajaj?

The second research question focuses on understanding the dynamics of brand-mediated '*identity politics*' surrounding Bajaj two-wheeler machines. At the onset of modernity, as India faced fragmentation in its historic class, culture, economy, and political structure, more and more consumers insisted on exercising their cultural citizenship and ideological beliefs through the medium of consumption (see Chapter 3.5 and 3.6). Here, being mythological constitutions of cultural and political beliefs, iconic brands and their products often become key socio-political grounds for harbouring and nourishing identity politics (see Chapter 1.3). As the image representation of Bajaj has changed along with the transformation in Indian masculinity, life-stories of Bajaj consumers can offer an insight into parallel and

conflicting ideologies of middleclass manhood that took nourishment from such a transformation towards developing brand-mediated identity politics.

The following objectives will be addressed to answer this research question.

- Identify the dominant forms of middleclass masculinity and understand how these ideologies are exercised through brand mediated cultural and political narratives? (Primary focus on Bajaj two wheeler consumption, secondary focus on everyday lifestyle and consumption).
- Discuss the role of brand mythologies in fragmenting gender culture and creating wider identity politics.

4.3 Research Philosophy:

“My subjectivity is the basis for the story that I am able to tell. It is a strength on which I build. It makes me who I am as a person and as a researcher, equipping me with the perspectives and insights that shape all that I do as a researcher, from the selection of topics...to the emphases I make in my writing. Seen as virtuous, subjectivity is something to capitalise on rather than to exorcise.”

- Glesne and Peshkin (1992, p.87)

The term ‘research philosophy’ can be described as a set of beliefs that guide a researcher’s fundamental actions and orientations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Giardina and Laurendeau, 2013; Creswell, 2009; Morgan, 2007). According to Thomas Kuhn (1970), understanding and positioning a research within a pertinent

philosophical stance is an important task and due to the paradigmatic disagreement towards knowledge creation a researcher must explicitly clarify his or her '*worldview*' when conducting an organised research. As the practice of research is fundamentally guided by philosophical principles within social science and management research, relationship between data, findings and knowledge contribution can be greatly influenced by the philosophical thinking of a researcher (Bryman, 2008; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

Therefore, in order to establish my '*worldview*' I present a concise comparative review of major competing paradigms within social science and management research that helped me to justify my philosophical beliefs as a researcher (Teddlie and Tashakkori, 2009; Creswell et al., 2003).

4.3.1 Researcher's Worldview: Interpretivism

According to Morgan (2007), a researcher must decide on his/her methodological approach starting with a debate between competing philosophical paradigms where individual paradigms were assessed for its suitability for the project. Thomas Kuhn's ([1962] 1996) pioneering view on paradigms was further modified in the following decades, as the idea of Epistemology, Ontology, and Methodology became a more acceptable version of paradigmatic make-up amongst scholars these days (Easterby-Smith et al., 2008; Morgan, 2007) [see Table: 4.1 and 4.2]. I decided my philosophical stance for this research by following dominant practices within the *Consumer Culture Theory* discipline. According to Gill and Johnson (2010), the advantage of this approach is to help researchers to position their work within a set of '*metaphysical paradigms*' while inherently rejecting other competitive paradigms with competitive

arguments. After careful consideration and a series of comparisons I chart my ‘worldview’ for this research as following.

Table 4.1: Elements of Research Philosophy

Explanation	
Epistemology	Nature of researcher’s assumed philosophical reality. - What is the nature of assumed philosophical reality?
Ontology	Assumptions relating to the ways of enquiring, gathering, and interpreting information. - What is researcher’s relationship to the reality?
Methodology	Underpinning assumptions and concepts used to address research questions. - How is knowledge acquired?
Methods	Single or combined techniques used to investigate a specific problem - How was empirical information gathered and assessed?

Inspired by: Easterby-Smith et al. (2008, p. 60)

Table 4.2: Researcher’s Worldview

Ontology:	Non-Positivism
Epistemology:	Interpretivism
Methodology:	Inductive
Method:	Multi-Method Qualitative Approach

According to Levy (2007) and McCracken (1988), there are two major conflicting ontological views available for a researcher to link with the reality. In Positivist paradigm, researchers should be independent of reality and must adopt a ‘value-free deductive’ framework to measure and analyse a problem. While within the Non-Positivist paradigm, researchers must immerse themselves within the reality with a ‘value-laden inductive’ frame of mind (Belk, 1991; McCracken, 1988; Belk et al., 2012; Cannella and Lincoln, 2007; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005).

As the Positivist philosophy became more and more deterministic in the form of ‘*objectivism*’, where reality can only be observed and measured in numeric and/or behavioural values (Post-Positivism), the end of 20th century experienced the emergence of an alternative ‘*worldview*’ known as ‘*Interpretivism*’ (Creswell, 2009; Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2009; Gill and Johnson, 2010). Interpretivism is an epistemological paradigm that aims to understand the subjective meaning of a phenomenon under investigation (McCracken, 1988; Cannella and Lincoln, 2007; Bryman, 2008; Miles and Huberman, 1994). The core idea of Interpretivism is to

identify and acknowledge the existence of subjective meanings and use them as a building block for theory development without distorting the natural settings (Belk et al., 2012; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006; Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). The early proponents of this paradigm, such as Hume, Berkeley, and Kant, argued that reality is extraneous, and it is constructed, rather than objectively determined, and interpreted by the units of society (Bryman, 2008; Baker, 2003; Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). In Silverman's (1998) word social life is 'full of meanings' and it has an 'internal logic' that needs to be understood outside the external logic of science (ibid, p.127). While Belk et al. (2012) believes that the rich description of human activity and discourses will be lost significantly if we try to understand social phenomena as objectives of laws and natural science.

Interpretivism in CCT: On reflection it is evident that the principles of Interpretivism are central to major CCT works as the proponents, Arnould and Thompson, themselves claimed that social reality must be experienced and understood within the given reference frame when meanings are co-created by the actions of marketers and consumers as active agents of consumption (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007). As a major business and social science discipline, in many ways, the Interpretivistic approach was demonstrated to be favourable in CCT as scholars mostly believe that the social world is far too complex to be narrowed down to simple theoretical laws created by the Positivists (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011; McCracken, 1988; Belk, 1991; 2007; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007; Thompson et al., 2013). To prove the point CCT researchers have predominantly investigated how individual members of society perceived reality in distinctive ways based on their creation and interpretation of society, culture, and consumption meanings. In doing so CCT

advocated real time understandings of meanings as they are created, adjusted, and destroyed by social agents generating new ideas for research and emergent theories (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007; Thompson et al., 2013; Askegaard and Linnet, 2011; Belk et al., 2012).

Critiques of Interpretivism: The critiques of Interpretivism undermine this paradigm on the grounds of objectivity. This group of scholars believe finding objectivity is not only important but should be the ideal for research in social science and marketing (Hunt, 1993; Baker, 2003). Hunt (1993) strongly opposed the idea of Interpretivism by citing five principles of relativism. He argued that there is no evidence in the philosophy of science that denies the existence of objectivity and researchers in the marketing discipline must have a professional and moral commitment towards presenting objectivity.

On balance, researchers in favour of Interpretivistic approaches have also posed their strongest arguments against the 'value-free' philosophy of Positivistic approaches, as they argue that human values become inherent in knowledge as individual interests guide the way they think, enquire, and behave (Levy, 2007; McCracken, 1988; Denzin, 2001). These inherent values are supported by Interpretivism, as researchers in this discipline favour building knowledge on first-hand information gathered from various social phenomena (Hirschman, 1989; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006; Fischer and Arnould, 1994).

Table 4.3 presents an ideological comparison between these two fundamental pillars of research philosophy.

Table 4.3: The Fundamental Differences Between Two Major Paradigms in Business Research

	Positivism	Interpretivism
Assumptions	Reality is objective and it can be ‘mirrored’ by scientific knowledge and techniques.	Reality is subjective and constructed by society.
Objectives	Investigate the problems under question by using quantitatively specified variables.	Investigate how objective realities are produced and describe the inherent meanings of social phenomena.
Nature of Knowledge Creation	Precisely measured variables leading to hypothesis validation.	Abstract description of meanings and context specific member’s role.
Criteria for Assessing Research	Objective explanation, Statistical probability, Generalisability.	Validity, Reliability, Trustworthiness, Transferability.
Sampling	Large number selected statistically or randomly.	Small number of selected cases chosen purposefully.
Research Methods	Questionnaires, experiments etc.	Interviews, Ethnography, Observation research, case studies etc.
Unit of Analysis	The variables reduced to its simplest terms.	Underlying meanings surrounding a problem or situation.
Analysis	Regression, Structural Equation Modelling, Cluster and Factorial Analysis.	Meaning Interpretation, Coding, Triangulation etc.

***Inspired by Denzin and Lincoln (2011) and Gephart (2000).**

Therefore it appears that Positivistic approaches are appropriate for a study where much of the fundamental constructs and their relations are known, whereas, an Interpretivistic approach is more appropriate when the variables are not easily identifiable, when robust theories are not available and when there is a need for further exploration (Belk et al., 2012). I chose Interpretivism as my '*worldview*' for this dissertation as this study focuses on exploring and understanding 'reality' that may lead to development of a robust theory of cultural brand management in future (Flick, 2006). Due to the seminal nature of this newly proposed area of brand management, limited fundamental constructs are available for developing and applying Positivistic analytical concepts. In contrast an interpretivistic approach will not only help to provide an explorative point of view, it will further help to identify wider influential factors associated with this type of branding practices. This paradigm is vibrant, non-unified, and provides the optimum philosophical stance to understand subjective meanings as they are constructed and negotiated socially by individuals living within a social frame (McCracken, 1988; Belk, 2006; Mick and Buhl, 1992; Silverman, 1998; Arnould and Price, 1993; Dobscha, 1998). As a result this type of approach will help to understand "culturally derived and historically situated interpretations of...[respondents']...world" (Crotty, 1998; p.67; Moisander and Valtonen, 2006).

4.4 Research Approach: Methodology

The inductive Interpretivist approach demands that reality becomes a unit of analysis by a researcher's own interpretations (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; Gummesson, 2003). The purpose of such interpretation is to identify, interpret, and differentiate rich meanings from a subjective point of view (Belk, 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011; 2012; Silverman, 2005; Easterby-Smith et al., 1991). According to Geertz (1973), a researcher's intellectual drive, rather than their methodological selection, governs the outcome of a research investigation. Therefore, qualitative studies can be successfully developed on Positivistic assumptions and equally, quantitative studies can be used on interpretative grounds. In this context, Gill and Johnson (1997) highlighted two main contesting methodological approaches as: '*nomothetic*' and '*ideographic*'. While nomothetic approaches are characterised by Positivistic resemblance: 'systematic protocols' and 'scientific rigour' (Burrell and Morgan, 2008, p. 37), ideographic methods involve interpretative understanding of subjects' social world (Belk, 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 2011) [see Table 4.4].

As the selection and appropriateness of a methodological approach is largely determined by the researcher's worldview and the research problems being studied (Morgan and Smircich, 1980), following the CCT school of thought, I chose the '*ideographic*' paradigm as my methodological foundation [see Table 4.4]. Following Silverman (2005), I believed such an open ended inductive approach would maximise the potential for answering the research questions conforming to Interpretative domain.

Table 4.4: Difference between Ideographic and Nomothetic Paradigm:

Ideographic (Inductive)	Nomothetic (Deductive)
Results presented by understanding and explaining particular meaning systems.	Results presented by analysing casual data.
This approach emphasises qualitative data.	This approach emphasises quantitative data.
Researchers commit to immerse in everyday settings, in order to minimise validity and reliability issues.	Emphasis on using various physical or statistical controls, along with hypotheses testing.
Semi-structured to open-ended with minimum to no statistical validity.	Highly structured and statistically significant.



Ethnography - Action Research - Interviews - Surveys - Quasi-Experiments - Lab Experiments

Adapted from: Burrell and Morgan (2008, p.37)

4.5 Research Strategy (Method): Multi-Method Qualitative Study

The qualitative approach to research is a methodological discipline that comprises a wide range of data collection techniques leading to perceptual, interpretative, and largely non-quantitative (mathematical or statistical) results or findings, i.e., ethnography, interviews, case studies, discourse analysis etc. (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Belk et al., 2012). Due to its perceptual and interpretative nature qualitative research does not seek numeric or statistical validity, rather these types of

methodological approach seek to understand meanings, relationships, or the interconnection between society and human actions within complex perspectives.

Critiques of Qualitative Approaches: Despite its wider popularity it is important to remember that no methodological approach is above criticism, especially qualitative approaches, as this paradigm was widely criticised for its typical narrow, context specific, interpretative, and researchers' own perception-based approach to data analysis and data collection. In Silverman's (2000) words qualitative research is "unreliable" as the validity of data interpretation largely relies on the researcher(s), their language expertise, their limitations on expressing rich meanings through writing, and sometimes their tendency for overlooking contradictory data and observed details. To him, qualitative approaches lack 'scientific rigour' because of the paradigm's inability to generalise findings, while lack of standard parameters make it difficult to assess the creditability of the knowledge produced.

Therefore the distinction between qualitative and quantitative paradigms is quite fundamental (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005), and while the qualitative paradigm criticises the quantitative paradigm because of its 'shallow' insight into relationships, values and behavior, the quantitative paradigm condemns the qualitative paradigm on the ground of validity, generalisability, and small sample size (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). To clarify my understanding of the qualitative paradigm I present a comparative view of the benefits and challenges of qualitative approaches in Table 4.5.

Table 4.5: Summary of Benefits & Challenges of Qualitative Research

Benefits	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative studies are predominantly inductive and exploratory and provide new insights into social phenomena. • Data collection process can be less structured and more flexible than quantitative research. • More emphasis is placed on generation of theory than on testing theories. • Predominantly rejects Positivism and natural science with a preference for individual researcher's view of the world. • Predicts that social reality is constantly co-created by individuals. • Researcher achieves a deeper and penetrating insight into the subject matter compared to quantitative analytical measures. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is difficult to tackle, data validity, reliability and trustworthiness issues. • Sample size is relatively small and sometimes it is difficult to triangulate a large amount of data from a large sample. • Researchers mostly use convenient sampling which can lead to biased results and information. • Data is not quantifiable and there is little or no statistical significance of the data collected. • Results can rarely be projected onto a wider population. • Great deal of attention to detail is required during data interpretation.

Historically the marketing discipline has been engaged in a '*paradigmatic war*' in the form of a qualitative versus quantitative approach (Levy, 2007; McCracken, 1988). However, researchers these days are increasingly adopting inter-disciplinary methods without any major Positivist inclination. During the seventh CCT conference at Saïd Business School, Arnould himself expressed his desire to include more Positivist thoughts into CCT's interpretative domain to enhance the generalisability or acceptability of CCT within wider scholarly communities. Although this research does not intend to address Arnould's call by including any Positivistic dimension, what drew my attention to here was his call to increase the use of multiple methods within consumer culture research to enhance analytical rigour (Belk et al., 2012).

Therefore, considering the research objectives and the '*background theory*' (CCT) for this study I chose qualitative methods as my primary data collection technique. I believe given the exploratory nature of this study "...It [requires] a set of interpretative, material practices that make the world visible...[an approach that] turn the world into a set of representations [by using] field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self" (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005, p.3). Reflecting on the very foundations of CCT, it was clear that the fundamentals of the interpretive domain claim to investigate and understand multiple realities as constructed and experienced by members of society. Therefore, interpretative research by its very nature should be multi-method, in order to investigate the richness of meanings from different angles, involving different modes of data collection and triangulation techniques (Belk et al., 2012). Here it is important to cite an early CCT initiative by Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989), who used a combination of observation, field-notes, interviews, videos and photographs to conduct a "naturalistic

enquiry into buyer and seller behaviour” to build the *Consumer Behaviour Odyssey* (Belk, 1991). Their efforts truly reflected the importance of multi-method data collection for capturing multi-dimensional interpretative realities within a single frame of analysis. Similarly, Kozinets’ (2002a) collected and analysed a number of articles, photographs, and ‘other cultural data’, related to the Burning Man festival, for three years to build a ‘knowledge base’. During the next stage of data collection he ‘intensified’ his approach through six-days long participation in the Burning Man festival (1999), followed by conducting participant interviews along with Netnographic observation for a year. Finally, he completed his data collection by participating in another Burning Man festival (2000) where he gather field notes, photographs, videos, and participant experience. At the end, all the longitudinal quantitative data was intergraded and analysed to understand whether consumers can escape market by performing emancipatory rituals.

Methods adopted by these interpretative researchers were complimentary to each other in discerning the identity and ideology based transformations in everyday consumption. Considering the success of these studies along with the realisation that a multi-method approach helps to offset the weakness of a single-dimensional approach I choose multi-method qualitative approach for this study. In Chapter 4.6 I describe the combination of techniques used to gather data and the suitability of this methodical approach in addressing the research questions.

4.6 Data Collection Strategy:

Analysing cultural strategy demands a combined set of methodological approaches to be used instead of a single dimensional interpretative approach (Holt, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010). It requires tracking and documenting historic ideological changes within a nation and the marketers' response to such changes with innovative 'cultural expressions' (ibid). In doing so, Holt (2004) used a 'time tested' approach to build theory from cross case analysis. He selected six iconic brands, from six different industries, with an extraordinary record of creating and maintaining competitive advantages, consumer bases, and historic survival strategies. In his words:

"I developed a new method for studying brands by adapting the most influential analysis of mass-culture products found in various cultural discipline...The brand genealogy method consists of moving back and forth between these three levels of analysis: a close textual analysis of brand's ads over time, a discourse analysis of other related mass culture products as they change over time, and a socioeconomic tracking of major shifts in American society."

- Holt (2004, p. 226 – 227)

Holt (2004) defined his 'new method' as – '*Brand Genealogy*'. As part of this approach he deeply immersed himself in individual case histories of iconic American brands that led him to establish connections between context-specific socio-historic forces and the strategic survival stories of individual brands. In doing so Holt (2004) particularly emphasised the importance of historic and chronological analysis of brand advertisements over any other parameter. Initially such an advertisement-driven

analytical focus may appear to be restrictive as brands are made up of more than just advertisements, but Holt (2004, p.225) defended his approach by claiming that what makes a cultural brand special is its extraordinary iconic persona and identity value defined through commercial advertisements. These extraordinary identity values or personas only arise from a brand's ability to mythically treat a distressed society and its consumers, where advertisements play major roles in constructing and delivering mythical ideologies. As a result "[iconic] brands live or die [based] on the quality of...[identity or ideological value offered]" (Holt 2004).

Therefore, the process of genealogical study of a brand must begin with chronological interpretations of its historic roots and advertisements dating back several decades. During this stage, a researcher should focus on charting the chronological development of ideological value within the brand's myth market. This process requires systematic movements between 'three layers' of analysis: textual analysis of historic brand advertisements, understanding major cultural and socio-economic shifts within a society, and discourse analysis of related mass-culture products in the nation's history (two-wheelers in this study) (Holt 2004). He further insisted:

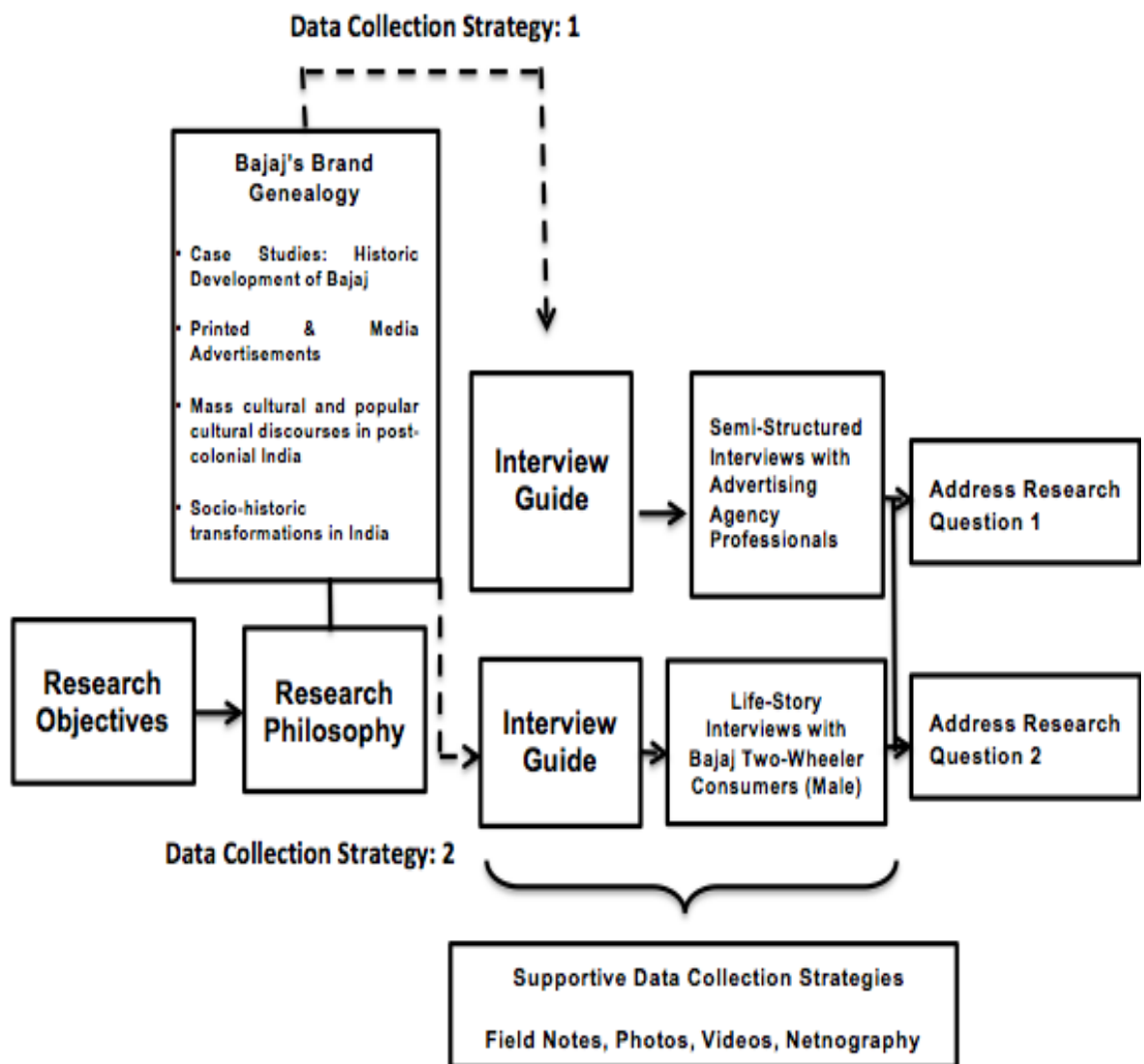
"Alongside the patterns of advertising, [researchers should trace] the history of the most influential mass-culture products relevant to the brand's communication. [They should also look] at the relevant social, political, and economic history that might affect how the brand's stories resonate."

- Holt (2004, p. 226 – 227)

Following this theoretical lead I began my genealogical research on Bajaj in 2009 by collecting printed and media advertisements released by Bajaj two-wheelers between the 1980s and 2009 [see Figure 4.1 and 4.2]. At the end I collected around seventeen different advertisement campaigns related to Bajaj two-wheelers, however, I specifically selected eight different campaigns that helped me to analyse, understand, and describe a chronological story of brand iconicity surrounding Bajaj. Besides collecting the advertisements, I also travelled to some of the famous business schools and national library archives in India with the intention of collecting historic accounts of the brand and the founding family's deep cultural involvements. In doing so, I followed the principles of '*Comparative Case Theory Building*' (Eisenhardt, 1989) (see Chapter 4.8), and further carried out an extensive literature search to trace the historic, political, social, and economic transformations within India. My overall intention here was to identify how wider socio-political transformation had an effect on middleclass men in India and how their ideological transformation had a synergy with Bajaj's changing cultural expressions. During the primary analysis I scoured the managerial and academic archives to trace the history of Bajaj's marketing practice, while I interpreted the advisements to understand the "resonance or disconnect" between the brand and the transforming Indian nation (Holt, 2004, p.227). My systematic comparison of cases revealed how Bajaj acted as a '*cultural activist*' by emulating the postcolonial archetypes of 'desired Indian manhood' since the 1980s (also see Cayla and Elson, 2006). In doing so the brand not only exploited cultural resources hidden within the socio-political junctures of an anxious postcolonial nation, but has fabricated its own brand identity surrounding transformational imageries of middleclass masculinity.

Here it is important to highlight that although my methodological approach was inspired by Holt's (2004) genealogical study, I had to implement some strategic modifications that best suited my methodological objectives. Figure 4.1 demonstrates my overall methodological approach along with the strategies applied for data collection.

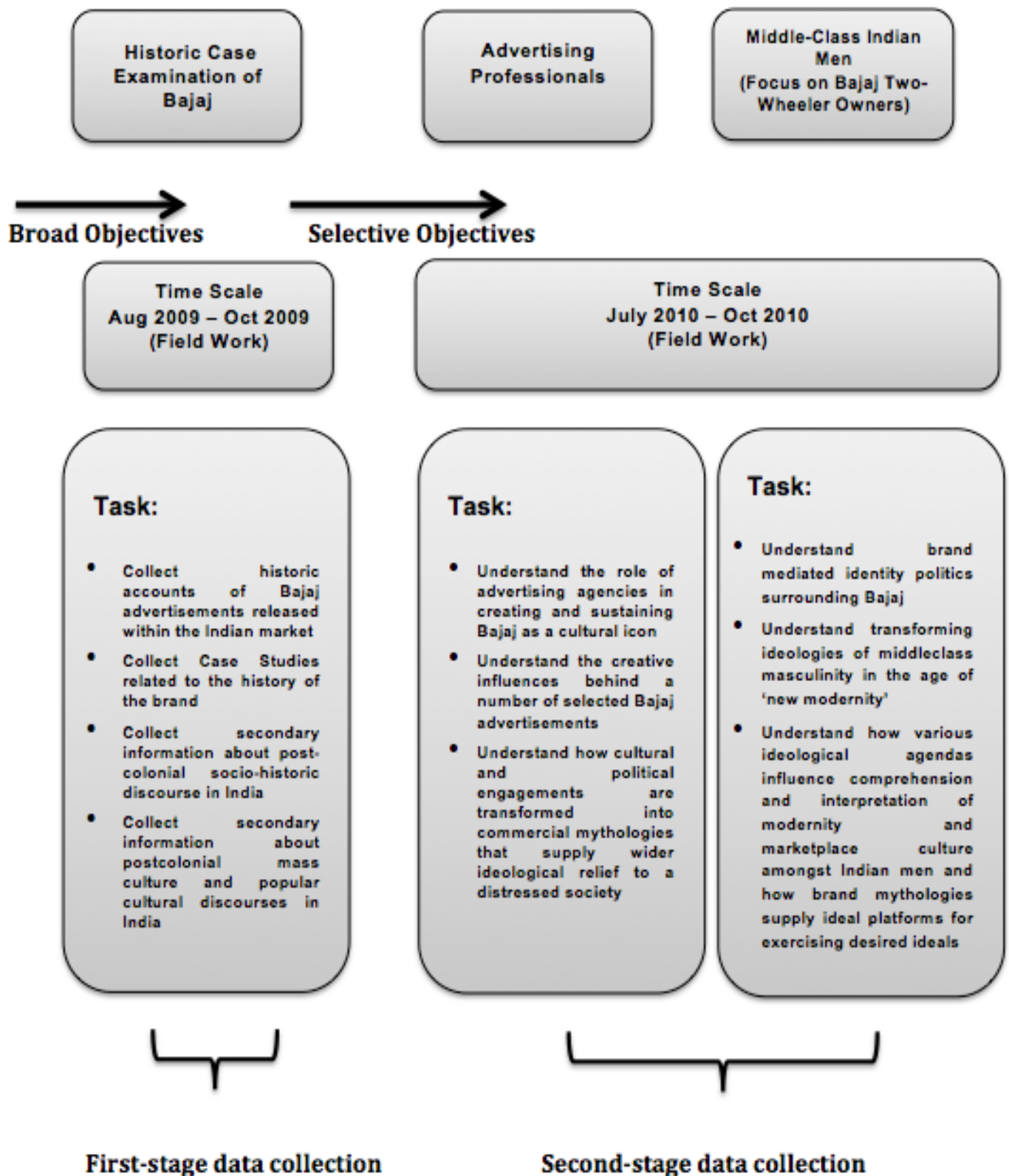
Figure 4.1: Research Strategy



After completing the genealogical study I started to diverge from Holt's (2004) suggested methodological approach to avoid developing my analytical measures solely on secondary data. In order to add nuance to the textual and genealogical analysis I used my secondary findings to design a semi-structured interview guide [see Appendix 1] and conducted interviews (see Chapter 4.9) with a number of influential personalities within the Indian advertising industry who worked for Bajaj's promotional campaign(s) at some point in their career [see Table 4.6]. Based on my secondary research I only chose to engage with those ad agencies that are/were actively engaged in the creation and promotion of Bajaj two-wheeler brands in India since the 1980s, i.e., Printas, Prodigy, Canvas⁶ etc. At the end I interviewed ten renowned advertising executives in relation to the brand and an average interview lasted between forty to ninety minutes (see Chapter 4.9). The interviews were further supplemented by additional participant observations, photographs, videos and field notes. In addition to the advertising executive interviews I carried out consumer (Bajaj two-wheelers) life-story interviews (see Chapter 4.10), during the second stage of data collection, which provided a rich description of Bajaj's perceived value from a consumerist standpoint.

⁶ Pseudonyms were used for all the agencies.

Figure 4.2: Multi-Stage Data Collection



*Field data were collected in two stages.

Holt's second literature on *Cultural Innovation Strategy* came out in 2010 when I was involved in second stage of my data collection. In this edition Holt and Cameron (2010, p.200) insisted on using additional methodological tools (literary analysis, ethnographic immersion, identity project interviews) in addition to brand genealogy and discourse analysis to achieve an increased understanding of hidden cultural codes within cultural brand innovation. However, to avoid further complexities of data analysis (and as I was satisfied with the amount of information gathered and the level of understanding achieved) I adopted alternative strategies (participant observation, photos, videos, field notes, and netnography) that brought me closer to the context for understanding brand mythologies, subliminal cultural expressions, and consumers' identity politics.

In my endeavour I used techniques that were complimentary (and not antagonistic) to each other and supplied advantages by generating rich descriptive data at individual levels making the results fundamentally more reliable during final triangulation. For example, although a number of ad agency professionals denied adding any political dimension to Bajaj advertisements, on further analysis it was clear that the ideological appeal hidden within iconic old Bajaj advertisement had a great deal of hidden political inspiration derived from Gandhi's call for 'Self-Reliance' (see Chapter 5).

4.7 Sampling:

Starting from Belk's (1976) initial thoughts on gift giving, sampling within consumer culture theory tradition has been majorly 'purposive' or 'judgemental' and not statistically validated by quantitative means (Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007; Belk et al., 2012; Denzin and Lincoln, 2000). According to Creswell (2003) these sampling techniques seek respondents or phenomenon that relates to the research problem to the highest level. Therefore, considering the objectives for this research the samples were either pre-selected or emergent (Miles and Huberman, 1994).

The population of interest for this study was twofold: ad agency executives and middleclass male Bajaj two-wheeler consumers. In order to recruit these targeted respondents I used a mixture of 'purposive' and 'snowball' sampling methods. During the primary stage of the case study analysis and desk research I identified a list of ad agencies involved in producing Bajaj two-wheeler advertisements (since 1980s) along with some of the agency executives involved in the production of individual Bajaj advertisements. For this part of the research I used 'purposive sampling' to select agency executives that I believed could offer me maximum knowledge of underlying creative inspirations behind individual Bajaj two-wheeler advertisements. During the fieldwork, alongside interviews, I observed daily work-life in ad agencies for a short period of time [see Table 4.8 for detail break down]. As my knowledge of individual agencies' contributions in Bajaj's historic development started to become clear I recruited additional respondents by using the 'snowball sampling' method. Sometimes the additional recruits were very useful as they provided more insight and exclusive

access to relevant information and documents that some of the high ranking executives didn't allow⁷.

For the life-story interviews (see Chapter 4.10) I also used 'purposive sampling' to recruit my respondents across India [see Table 4.7 and Appendix 2]. Sometimes the recruits were a part of families I stayed with, sometimes I found them through personal contacts and recommendations. Here, it is important to mention that to ensure 'variation' not all the Bajaj two-wheeler owners I came across were conveniently recruited for the interview. Potential recruits were casually observed for a short period of time and were either selected or rejected based on their suitability for life-story interviews and their categorical fit to the objectives of this research. Due to the complex nature of life-story interviews informants were selected from different geo-demographic and socio-cultural backgrounds to maximise chances of uncovering ideological fragmentations and brand-mediated identity politics demonstrated by contemporary Indian men. Commonalities that united these respondents were their citizenship, class recognition (middleclass) and devotion for their Bajaj two-wheeler machines. While variations in age and life cycles allowed contrasting insights into men's ideological development and everyday identity negotiations. Controlled interviews and restricted sample size ensured a rich description of consumers' life-world to be recorded as part of the data collection procedure (Denzin, 2001; Mick and Buhl, 1992; Fournier, 1998; Erlandson et al., 1993; Dobscha, 1998).

⁷ Ethical guidelines were followed in accessing and disclosing these information (see Chapter 4.15).

Overall I conducted ten semi-structured executive interviews [see Table 4.6] and twelve life-story consumer interviews [see Table 4.7]. The advertising agency executives were not offered any financial or material rewards for their interview time or for allowing me to access their ad agencies and other facilities, but the selected consumer respondents were offered a gift or a cash endowment of INR 200 (£2.50) for their time, relentless efforts and extensive contributions to this research.

4.8 Data Collection: Comparative Case Theory Building

The first stage of my data collection involved carrying out historic searches on Bajaj's brand portfolio and identifying the brand's cultural engagement with the Indian nation. In doing so, I followed the logic of *Comparative Case Theory Building* (see Eisenhardt, 1989).

Comparative Case Theory Building was developed in the Stanford University School of management in 1989. The proponent, Kathleen Eisenhardt – an advocate of the case study school, argued that historical generalisation of multiple cases provides methodological rigour in theory building over ahistorical theories built on rational deterrence (Achen & Snidal, 1989). Today, Comparative Case Theory Building has become one of the most favourable methods for researching socio-historic phenomena amongst social researchers and management academics (see Holt, 2004; Wilson & Vlosky, 1997). As historic accounts produce a rich description of an artefact and its context, case studies have therefore become increasingly essential in understanding grounded experience that goes unnoticed in simpler rational theory building models (Achen & Snidal, 1989; George and Bennett 2005). However, an increased

dissatisfaction against the validity of a single case approach in this field has called for a multiple and alternative case analysis approach (Eisenhardt, 1991). Although, I have built my findings for this study on a single case (Bajaj), throughout the analysis I drew inspiration from multiple examples of cultural/iconic branding. I decide to stay away from the singularity vs. multiplicity debate by following Alexander George and his colleague's suggestions (George and Bennett, 2005; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Stake et al., 1994; Stake, 1995). As my approach to case theory building on Bajaj was time and resources constrained I had to follow the rationale of 'contingent empirical generalisation' (see George and Bennett, 2005; Achen & Snidal, 1989) in order to systematically compare my single case with the existing principles of cultural brand management. In this way, I was able to present the ideographic richness of my single case with the intention of highlighting its theoretical agreements and disagreements with the established principles of cultural brand management.

As part of this process I scrutinised a number of secondary sources, i.e., case studies published by prestigious business schools (including London School of Economics and the Harvard Business School), Market Intelligence reports by McKinsey, company reports and case studies produced by Bajaj, the official website of Bajaj two-wheelers, and a number of influential business magazines and biking gazettes published in India (Forbes India, India Today, Business World, Bike India etc.). To add nuance to my understanding I travelled across India between August 2009 and October 2009 [see Appendix 2] to experience the socio-political situation within the context while collecting a number of Bajaj two-wheeler advertisements (printed and television).

4.9 Data Collection: Semi-Structured Interviews (Advertising Agency Professionals):

I started this phase of data collection in July 2010 with two different sets of interviews that were conducted parallel to each other. In total, ten formal semi-structured interviews were conducted across three multinational advertising agencies in addition to three small to medium scale advertising agencies (run by ex-directors or employees of large multinational advertising agencies). In addition to formal interviews, numerous short conversations with people working at different levels within individual ad agencies allowed me to engage with their daily activities and creative thinking (Denzin and Lincoln, 2011).

The formal interviews followed a modified version⁸ of McCracken's (1988) '*Long Interviews*' and lasted between forty to ninety minutes. An interview guide [see Appendix 1] with a list of questions was used for 'directional and scope of discourse' purposes (McCracken, 1988), but the structure of the interviews was flexible enough to encourage exploratory responses (Merton et al., 1956). The interviews began with general questions focusing on the respondents' education, background, passion, inspiration, and career in advertising agencies, then it moved on to any other projects or assignments they are currently involved in, and finally the discussions revolved around the respondent's perception of Bajaj, and their inspiration and involvement in creating and executing iconic Bajaj advertisements. Such an approach had two fundamental benefits: first being in the ad agency and its working environment supplied a natural setting for the respondents to recall events, secondly, it allowed the

⁸ The principles of *Long Interviews* were majorly followed in designing, conducting, and analysing the interviews following McCracken's (1988) guidelines. However, I used the word 'modified' as I could not invest a long period of time in observing my respondents and the context before conducting the interviews as suggested by the author.

respondents to immediately recommend someone in the team for additional insight into relevant information on the brand. The interviews were not merely used as an instrument to collect data, rather they were constructed as active ‘social encounter’ between the researcher and the respondents in order to create shared interactions and allowed both the researcher and the respondent to freely construct conversations surrounding a set of pre-planned subject areas (McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1990; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). Although a formal and structured interview guide was initially designed to allow more subject-specific discussions, over time some questions were modified or eliminated to maximise responses around the research questions (McCracken, 1988; Patton, 1990; Robson, 2002).

Following McCracken (1988) the interview guide was developed around the subjective theories of cultural branding, i.e., the interviewer held knowledge of subjective theory and discussed it to an extent with the respondents as required. This approach helped the respondents to relate to any critical or theoretical assumptions made behind the practical approach. However, specific theoretical concepts such as ‘cultural innovation strategy’ or ‘brand mediated identity politics’ were not explicitly discussed to avoid biases. Following McCracken’s (1988) guidelines I was extremely proactive in judging the issue of ‘topic avoidance’ by my respondents and in some cases I had to stop the conversation to bring them back on track. In doing so I adhered to the ethical guidelines and never showed a forceful or demanding attitude to gain access to restrictive information. The interviews and conversations heavily supplemented data gathered through case studies, company reports, micro-blogs,

biking gazettes and Bajaj two-wheeler advertisements (printed and video) (see McCracken, 1988).

**Table 4.6: Interview Schedule for Advertising Professionals
(Semi-Structured Interviews)**

Interviewee	Ad Agency	Designation	Background	Reason for Selection
Parash Nath	Printas	Ex – Director	Theatre & Film	<p>Ex-director of Printas supervised the first iconic Hamara Bajaj campaign.</p> <p>Awarded advertising man of the century award in India.</p> <p>Has a strong profile and reputation for creating iconic brands in India.</p>
Shan Jha	Printas	Account Manager	Marketing Graduate	<p>Acted as the account head for the second generation Hamara Bajaj campaign.</p> <p>Account manager for Bajaj Discover advertisements.</p>
Prabhu Shah	Wonder	Founder & CEO	Art and Photography	<p>An ex-employee of Printas and acted as art-director for the first iconic Hamara Bajaj campaign.</p> <p>His passion for culture and street photography</p>

				helped him to establish some of the modern iconic brands in India.
Madhav Rao	Common	Founder & CEO	Theatre & Film	Ex-employee of Printas and worked as a copywriter for Bajaj's first iconic advertising campaign. Experienced in handling several historic iconic Indian brands.
Jivan Dev	Prodigy India	National Creative Director	Chemical Engineer	Head of the campaign for a series of Bajaj Pulsar PR, marketing, and advertisement campaigns. National Creative Director at Prodigy India. Known industry-wide for his creative excellence.
Dharma Bali	Prodigy India	Client Services Director	Graduate	Account manager for Bajaj Pulsar advertisements. Responsible for Social Media marketing and communications for Bajaj Pulsar.

Bobby Deol	Prodigy India	Executive Creative Director, South Asia	Marketing Graduate	<p>An important member of the Bajaj Pulsar campaign creative team .</p> <p>Wider experience in global branding.</p>
Rakesh Bhat	Prodigy India	Creative Director	Marketing Graduate	<p>An important member of the Bajaj Pulsar campaign creative team and social media engagement.</p> <p>Wider experience in stunting and sports motor-biking.</p>
Raju Sharma	Canvas India	National Brand Planning Director	Advertising professional	<p>Account executive for Bajaj Boxer, CT100 and Bajaj Calibre.</p> <p>Also worked on a number of masculinity related advertising projects in India, e.g. ‘Thumbs Up’ (Cola).</p>
Deva Patil	Canvas India	Ex-Account Manager	Engineering and Marketing Graduate	Ex-Account manager for Bajaj Pulsar.

*Pseudonyms were used to conceal respondents’ real identities.

**Pseudonyms were used to conceal individual advertising agency identities.

4.10 Data Collection: Life-Story Interviews (Bajaj Two-Wheeler Consumers - Male):

The concept of life-story interviews denotes the collection of 'retrospective information' from respondents without necessarily asking for evidence (Tagg, 1985). According to Featherman (1982) life-story interviews are popular tools for understanding individual respondent's life span development from a social science perspective. As Tagg (1985) suggested, besides social science, increased use of this technique can be also noted in History, Psychiatry, Occupational studies, Educational studies etc. There are several advantages associated with life-story interviews: first, this process helps to reduce the amount of time and complexities associated with longitudinal studies; second, this method supplies an individual's perception of the past at individual stages; third, the readily interpretable nature of the data produced reduces the time and resources required for longitudinal historic investigations.

Despite all the advantages and growing interest in this data collection technique, life-story interviews and their interpretations are extremely complex and sometimes demand 'special skills' (Tagg, 1985). For example, an unstructured or unconstrained life-story interview can produce a massive amount of data, perspectives, and themes from just one single respondent. And life-stories are rarely recalled in a simplistic order, adding a great deal of complexity for the researcher to create an interpretive storyline. As the secondary objective of this study aims to understand ideological changes within post-colonial Indian men and its reflection on consumption and identity politics surrounding brand Bajaj, the process calls for a historic or longitudinal study to be conducted. But given the limited time and resources available for the project I had to look for an alternative technique that could supplement my

understanding of historical transformations in middleclass masculinity, and using Life-Story interviews appeared to be the best alternative strategy. Secondly, since the early days of my doctoral degree I have been greatly influenced by the work of some pioneer CCT and non-CCT scholars whose discovery-oriented projects repeatedly relied on life-story interviews. For example, drawing on three distinctive life-stories, Fournier (1998) presented an extensive cross-case analysis of consumer relationships at the level of individual respondent's 'lived experiences' with everyday brands. This study not only teaches the type of respondents essential for life-story interviews, it also educates as to what extent interviews should be controlled and structured to avoid information overload. This study further indicates how data collected as part of life-story interviews should be analysed and interpreted by considering individual and collective (cross-person) manifestations of consumption episodes through comparative analysis process. Additional examples of individual case-based analysis within CCT can also be identified within Holt (2002) and Holt and Thompson (2004) as the authors used individual case narratives to map transforming socio-cultural structures of 'brand resistance' (Holt, 2002) and the desired notion of 'Man-of-Action' ideological model (Holt and Thompson, 2004). The author(s) described such a methodological approach as "craft mode of science" that endorses connection, proximity, and dialogue as opposed to separation, distance, and detachment.

Besides Fournier, Holt, and Thompson I believe the methodological approach that majorly inspired my desire to use life-story narratives was grounded within Jeff Murray's (2002) re-enquiry into consumers' fashion politics. Although he did not label his approach as life-story narratives, he distinguished his approach from Thompson and Haytko (1997) by using two 'systematic variations': explicit recognition of the

informants' social world and a detailed insight into their market driven identity-seeking practices. All the interviews centered on the 'lived experiences' of individual participants and results were presented as thematic life-story vignettes [see Murray (2002, p 429)].

Therefore, inspired by the increased use of life-story narratives within consumer culture research I selected my respondents (male Bajaj scooter owners) from the middleclass Indian society and followed Fournier and Murray's lead in guiding the interviews to understand consumers' 'lived experience' of Bajaj and its surrounding identity politics. Here it is important to highlight Pelto's (1970) argument as he suggested that the limitations of 'representativeness' are a key problem of life-story interviews within social science research. According to him, life-stories are individualist and they should only be used for supportive and illustrative purposes along with other sets of data. To avoid capturing such individualistic opinion and restricted understanding of the richness of a social phenomenon Bertaux (1980; 1981) suggested interviewing a range of diverse respondents until 'data saturation' is reached. Following Bertaux (1980; 1981), a diverse range of respondents from different professional and social backgrounds were selected for this study as individual cases allowed me to gain a contrasting view of identity politics surrounding Bajaj two-wheeler machines.

In order to avoid gathering irrelevant data as result of 'directional loss' I followed Tagg's (1985) instructions and undertook a number of strategies to acquire a 'combined control'. To avoid any unnecessary drift from the line of enquiry the interviews were controlled to yield two complementary sets of information: (a) first

person description of everyday consumption and identity practices [Primary focus on Bajaj two wheeler consumption], (b) contextual details of respondent's cultural and political affiliations. During the data collection process I paid special attention to similar responses across the sample and encouraged the respondents to elaborate on relevant areas [See Appendix 3 for A Note from the Research Diary].

All in all I carried out twelve life-story interviews and they were generally carried out in respondents home, or other natural participation-consumption settings surrounding Bajaj two wheeler products. Due to the nature of this data collection technique prolonged interviews were carried out lasting between 2 – 6 hours (single or multiple sessions) in total per person [Table 4.7]. Where possible multiple interview sessions were organised giving the respondents a chance to reflect back on their thoughts. Sometimes, discussions were stimulated by directing the respondent's attention towards a specific consumption object (clothes, electrical goods, electronics, native or foreign brands etc.) and by asking them to specify the reason for their engagement with that product or service [see Appendix 8 for the Interview Guide]. Although controlled, the interviews were loosely structured as the respondents mainly set the course for their responses. In order to avoid any conceptual bias specific ideological concepts and identity agendas were not directly referenced during the interview process.

**Table 4.7: Interview Schedule for Bajaj Male Consumers
(Life-Story Interviews)**

Interviewee	Occupation & Place of Living	Reason for Selection	Interview Schedule
Ganpat	Operations Manager in a Private Firm (Vehicle Tyres). Pune, Maharashtra (Mumbai).	Bajaj Scooter Owner since 1987. Endorses modernity but resists abrupt changes. Deep consensus for local history and local production.	Session 1: 2 nd Aug 2010 2 hrs 10 mins
Karan	Software Engineer at IBM. Navi Mumbai, Maharashtra (Mumbai).	Bajaj Pulsar Owner since 2007. Keenly interested in living cosmopolitan lifestyle. Does not reject tradition but rejects anything that holds back social and economic progress.	Session 1: 7 th Aug 2010 1 hour Session 2: 8 th Aug 2010 1 hour 45 mins
Samir	Call Centre Employee. Dadar, Maharashtra (Mumbai).	Bajaj Pulsar Owner since 2009. Torn between modernity and tradition. Family influence him to live traditional life where friends influence him to live a West-mediated lifestyle.	Session 1: 21 st Aug 2010 2 hrs 30mins
Kunal	Production Employee in a Pharmaceutical Company Ahmedabad, Gujarat	Bajaj Scooter Owner since 1992. Traditional, believes in Gandhi's ideology of minimalism, non-violence and self-reliance. Deep political affiliations (nationalist) that dictate how he interprets religion, gender, and caste.	Session 1: 3 rd Sep 2010 1 hour 20 Min

		<p>Consumes minimally and actively resists Western influences.</p> <p>Does not associate status with money or consumption.</p>	<p>Session 2: 5th Sep 2010</p> <p>1 hour</p>
Deepak	<p>Self- Employed/ Entrepreneur</p> <p>Ahmedabad, Gujarat</p>	<p>Bajaj Discover Owner since 2005.</p> <p>Traditional and believes in Gandhi's ideology of self-resilience. Hence making a living running his own business.</p> <p>Lives moderate lifestyle and not too keen on constructing fake status and identity.</p> <p>State-driven religious and political view.</p>	<p>Session 1: 9th Sep 2010</p> <p>2 hours 5 mins</p>
Gagan	<p>UG Student</p> <p>Ahmedabad, Gujarat</p>	<p>Bajaj Pulsar Owner since 2008.</p> <p>Denies any political affiliation.</p> <p>Modernity and Western consumption practices drive much of his futuristic goals.</p>	<p>Session 1: 10th Sep 2010</p> <p>2 hours</p>
Sunil	<p>Govt. Employee (Indian Rail)</p> <p>Kolkata, West Bengal</p>	<p>Bajaj Scooter Owner since 1990.</p> <p>Endorses modernity but not for self-consumption or self-identity development.</p> <p>Endorses Western influences as long as they promise better living and lifestyle along with wider social recognition as a 'higher class'.</p>	<p>Session 1: 23rd Sep 2010</p> <p>2 hours 10 mins</p> <p>Session 2: 28th Sep 2010</p> <p>50 mins</p>

Raj	Newly Graduated and Employed Kolkata, West Bengal	Bajaj Pulsar Owner since 2007. Fascination for modern consumption and emerging lifestyles. Active Resistance towards traditional conformity and ideological stalemates.	Session 1: 26 th Sep 2010 2 hours 20 mins Session 2: 8 th Oct 2010 1 hour 40 mins
Anil	PG Management Studies Student Kolkata, West Bengal	Bajaj Pulsar Owner since 2009. Fascination for modern consumption and emerging lifestyles. Consumption and lifestyle equals identity and status. Resists political influences and believes in self-judgement.	Session 1: 30 th Sep 2010 1 hour 10 mins
Swapan	Retired Govt. Employee (Bank) Kolkata, West Bengal	Bajaj Scooter Owner since 1989. Active resistance of modernity and emerging lifestyles. Deep political affiliations that still govern his way of life. Blames modernity and economic prosperity for his broken family structure.	Session 1: 2 nd Oct 2010 2 hours Session 2: 3 rd Oct 2010 1 hour 35 mins

Ashis	Self-Employed/ Entrepreneur (Fashion designer) Kolkata, West Bengal	Bajaj Pulsar Owner since 2005. Modern life inspires his work and lifestyle. Likes to chart and display brands that makes up his everyday lifestyle.	Session 1: 6 th Oct 2010 1 hour 20 mins
Abhi	Sales Executive (Pharmaceuticals) Kolkata, West Bengal	Bajaj Discover Owner since 2006. Keenly interested in modern consumption and lifestyles. Minor political affiliation (communism) and co- existence of ideological resistance towards ‘extreme’ social changes. Endorses Western consumption only if it passes his political and ideological barriers.	Session 1: 17 th Sep 2010 2 hours 30 mins Session 2: 22 nd Sep 2010 1 hour 50 mins Session 3: 4 th Oct 2010 1 hour 30 mins

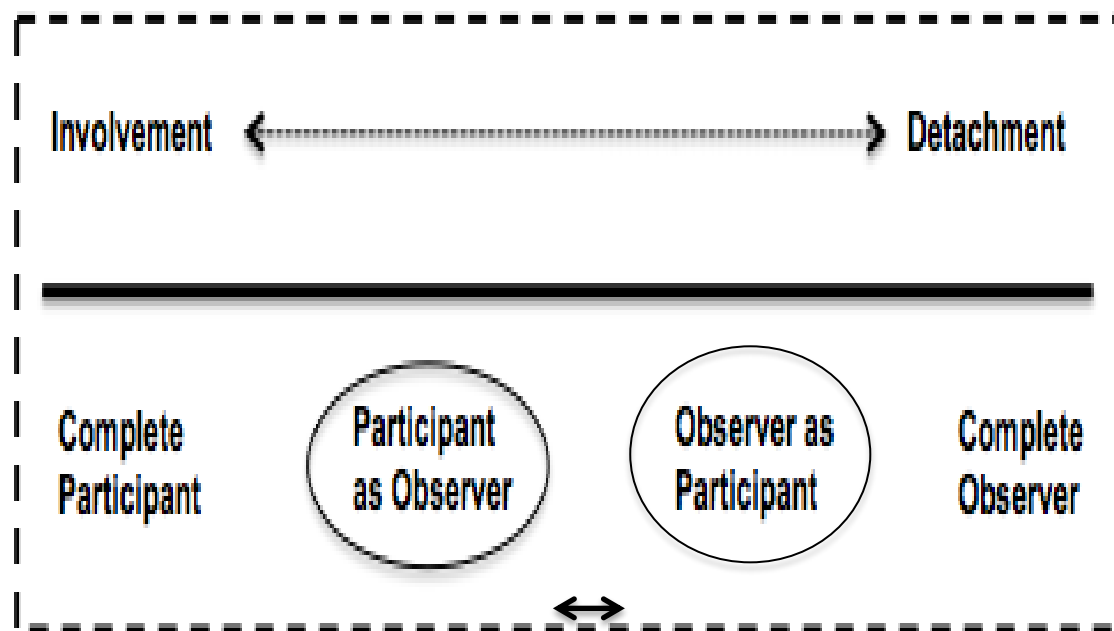
*Pseudonyms were used to conceal respondents’ real identities.

** All the above respondents were middle-class Indian men with a Bajaj two-wheeler machine.

4.11 Observational Research: Participant Observations

In 1958, Gold suggested that a researcher's level of involvement and detachment determines the type of observation research. He presented a continuum of involvement, indicating that extreme attachment to the context or phenomenon turns an observational researcher into a 'complete participant', while a fully detached observation turns a researcher into a 'complete observer' [see Figure 4.3].

Figure 4.3: Gold's Classification of Observation Research



Source: Bryman (2012, p.219)

My strategy for participant observation was twofold: following Gold's (1958) classification, in both cases, my aim was to switch between an 'insider' (limited participation) and 'outsider' (detachment) role in order to adjust a suitable spot between 'participant-as-observer' and 'observer-as-participant' depending on the situation. The nature of my methodological approach dictated that complete detachment from the respondents was not an option, while complete partition

opportunities were limited due to agency restrictions. Therefore, in order to gain authentic first-hand experience of my respondents' life-worlds I adopted two separate membership role development and immersion strategies that allowed me to gather "thick descriptions of [respondents'] social [worlds]" (McCracken, 1988; Fournier, 1998; Atkinson and Coffey, 2003). The entire research was carried out in an open and overt fashion, as all my respondents (including the ad agency executives) were aware of the nature and the purpose my engagement with them along with my role as a doctoral researcher.

The central aim of participant observation for this research was to become immersed in the life-worlds (mostly as 'participant-as-observer') of middleclass Bajaj owners as much as possible (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Murray, 2002; Bennet, 2001; Crang and Cook, 2007). In doing so, I observed my consumer respondents' everyday life (consumption habits, lifestyles, natural habitat, engagement with their Bajaj two wheelers, reaction to modernity, socio-economic, and structural transformations etc.) [see Table 4.9] and mostly documented my observations through pictures, videos and field notes. My primary aim was to focus on unpacking the issue of ideological fragmentation as captured through transforming relationships between men and Bajaj two-wheelers. Where I didn't get a chance to stay with my respondents I emphasised on membership role building by offering to come for a coffee and conversation mainly with the elderly respondents (at their houses). Besides the interview schedule we talked about food, family, politics, music, movies, media etc. in order to 'open up', increase my credibility, and build an extended rapport with these consumers (McCracken, 1988). I was more informal, casual, and mobile with the young Pulsar owners as I accompanied them on long rides, group rides, 'casual hang outs',

‘weekend masti’ (weekend fun) or even watched ‘educational’ and entertaining riding programmes such as MTV Roadies and MTV Stunt Mania. Some of my key respondents showed immense interest and openness in helping me with this project, and getting open access into their lives made it relatively easy to gather and compare individual life-stories. Eventually I formed incidental acquaintanceships with some of these respondents (both young and elderly) and kept the line of conversation alive via telephone even when I came back to the UK. However following McCracken’s (1988) advice I constantly ‘manufactured distances’, between myself and my respondents, in order to avoid the issue of indulgence and induced subjectivity in my understanding and behaviour.

The second line of membership role development was based within professional advertising agencies. I gained access to these advertising agencies through personal contacts. While some of them were more receptive (Printas, Prodigy etc.) to my approach, others (Canvas, Common etc.) were a bit conservative in terms of sharing confidential information. In order to overcome the initial reliability barriers I discussed the project in detail and clarified the academic nature of this assignment along with an assurance that all the data collected as part of this research would be protected and handled following the ethical guidelines (see Chapter 4.15 and Appendix 7). Also, I did not start conducting my formal interviews from the minute I got access to individual agencies, rather, I asked to be introduced to the team involved in creating Bajaj two-wheeler advertisements, introduced myself as a doctoral student to the individual team members, had informal conversations about their backgrounds, their interests in advertising, the type of work they were involved in etc. This approach helped me to identify potential recruits for formal interviews and also

helped me to “become socialized to the settings, to learn the taken-for-granted assumptions, [try] to grasp the settings as insiders do and, as much as possible, to feel the way insiders feel” (Adler and Adler, 1987, p.23; also see McCracken, 1988). During my observation I paid attention (mostly as ‘observer-as-participant’) to working life in individual agencies along with the executives’ working environment, exposure to different media and global cultural contents. In some occasions I was able to observe how creative ideas were composed and communicated in brainstorming sessions, how creatives deal with media planners and advertisement producers etc. During the busy periods when formal meetings were cancelled or deferred I was either given case studies or market research data on Indian customers and brands (including Bajaj). While it was difficult to develop an insider or participant role within larger ad agencies within a short period of time, I gained more intimate insight into the stories of Bajaj from the ex-advertising executives who were either retired or running their own consultation or agency business at that time.

Overall I had spent between three to fifteen days with individual Bajaj two-wheeler owners, while time spent at individual ad agencies varied [see Table 4.8 & 4.9]. The observation time and level of engagement varied from participant to participant, while based on my observations occasionally I wrote incidental field notes on the spot if something important caught my eye; otherwise I sat down every night to write reflective field notes based on my observations and experiences gathered throughout the day [see Appendix 4 for a Sample Field Notes]. From an ethical point of view I followed Bulmer’s (1982) guidelines for observational research as this approach allowed me to maximise my data collection within the available time period.

Photos & Videos: Throughout the second phase of my fieldwork (July 2010 – October 2010) I frequently used a camera to record photos and videos of Indian consumers and their everyday consumption practices (Belk and Kozinets, 2012). In total I took over 700 photos and recorded almost 4 hours of combined video logs (Belk and Kozinets, 2005; Kozinets, 2002a) capturing everyday life of Bajaj two-wheeler consumers. Most of these pictures and videos were recorded without drawing any special attention and without disturbing the natural settings. Primarily these media files were used as a ‘visual logbook’ helping me to recall certain episodes to analyse and justify the validity of other data (mostly interviews) or to gain better insights. In the later stages these media files were hermeneutically organised with the field notes and interviews during the coding process, as they became major sources of supportive and reflective materials (Belk and Kozinets, 2005; Kozinets, 2002a; Belk et al, 2012).

Table 4.8: Ad Agency Observation Schedule

Who is being Observed?	Reason for Observation	Place of Observation	Observation Schedule	Why was the Observation Necessary?	Mode of Data Collection	
Agency Life at Printas, Mumbai	<p>Thirty years of combined knowledge of Bajaj two-wheeler advertisement production.</p> <p>The first iconic Hamara Bajaj campaign was produced here.</p>	Printas' Main Office, Nariman Point, Mumbai	<p>26th July – 30th July 2010</p> <p>10 am – 3 pm</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">↑</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand agency culture. 	Field-notes, Participant Observation, Photos, Videos	
Agency Life at Prodigy, Mumbai	<p>Over ten years involvement in production of iconic Pulsar motorbike advertisements along with other related social media and PR campaigns.</p>	Prodigy's Main Office, Gurgaon, Mumbai	<p>9th – 13th Aug 2010</p> <p>11am – 4:30 pm</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand their creative influences. • To understand agencies' relationship with their clients (especially Bajaj). 	Field-notes, Participant Observation, Photos, Videos
<p>Agency Life at Common, Mumbai</p> <p>(Small Agency)</p>	<p>The founder of this agency was an ex-employee of Printas and he acted as copywriter for Bajaj's first iconic advertisement.</p> <p>This agency has a long history of producing and sustaining another iconic Indian brand.</p>	Common's Office, Colaba, Mumbai	<p>4th Aug 2010</p> <p>12 noon – 2:30 pm</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How agencies gather knowledge of society, culture, and consumers. • How agencies use internal and external knowledge to shape commercials. • To understand cultural knowledge and evolution of Bajaj two wheeler advertisements 	Field-notes, Participant Observation, Photos, Videos

<p>Parash Nath & his House</p> <p>(Runs a Small Agency from his House)</p>	<p>Ex-director of Printas, supervised the first iconic Hamara Bajaj campaign.</p> <p>He was also awarded advertising man of the century award in India.</p>	<p>Parash Nath's House, Cumballa Hill, Mumbai</p>	<p>5th Aug 2010 6pm – 7:30pm</p>	<p>within particular agencies.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To understand the logic of iconic brand creation and sustenance in India. • Validity of my respondents' answers. <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p>	<p>Field-notes, Participant Observation, Photos, Videos</p>
<p>Agency Life at Wonder</p> <p>(Small Agency)</p>	<p>The founder of this agency was an ex-employee of Printas and he was the art-director for Bajaj's first iconic advertisement.</p>	<p>Wonder's Office, Mahim, Mumbai</p>	<p>17th - 18th Aug 2010 11am – 2 am</p>		<p>Field-notes, Participant Observation, Photos, Videos</p>
<p>Agency Life at Canvas, Mumbai</p>	<p>This agency was involved in promoting Bajaj's first generation commuter motorbikes.</p>	<p>Canvas' Main Office, Parel, Mumbai</p>	<p>23rd – 27th Aug 2010 10 am – 3pm</p>		<p>Field-notes, Participant Observation, Photos, Videos</p>

*Pseudonyms were used to conceal individual respondent's and agency's real identities.

Table 4.9: General/Consumer Observation Schedule:

Who/What is being Observed?	Reason for Observation	Place of Observation	Observation Schedule	Why the Observation was Necessary?	Mode of Data Collection
Middle class Indian men in their natural everyday consumption and lifestyle settings	What is it like to be a middleclass man during a time of unprecedented socio-economic restructure.	Central Mumbai and Suburban Areas	Between 26 th July – 27 th Aug 2010 (2 – 6 Hrs Observation per day on an average)	To supplement interview data and achieve an in-depth insight into respondents' lifestyle	Field-notes, Short Conversations Observation, Photos, Videos
Consumer's relationship with their Bajaj two-wheeler machines	How men in Gandhi's birthplace deal with modern/global influences and constructs identities sixty years after India's independence. How a nationalist-led state controls western influences and affects consumers attitudes towards modernity and consumption.	Central Ahmedabad and Suburban Areas	Between 1 st Sep – 14 th Sep 2010 (2 – 6 Hrs Observation per day on an average)		Field-notes, Short Conversations Observation, Photos, Videos
Middleclass men's reaction to the onset of modernity and global consumption				To understand socio-cultural phenomenon beyond individual respondent's interpretation and comprehension	
How ideological agendas are exercised on brand-mediated platforms	Influence of communism on modernity and marketing practices How men in an agriculture-led state deal with abrupt modernity and social changes.	Central Kolkata and Suburban Areas	Between 17 th Sep – 10 th Oct 2010 (2 – 6 Hrs Observation per day on an average)		Field-notes, Short Conversations, Observation, Photos, Videos

4.12 Data Collection: Netnography

As an anthropological mode of enquiry ethnography has received wider acceptance amongst different scholar communities and social science discipline. It is inherently an open-ended practice that calls for immersion in and observation of reality or a phenomenon with distinctive meanings and practices (Sherry, 1991). Ethnographic findings usually produce a rich stream of ‘grounded knowledge’ unveiling micro and macro social foundations of a social construct or phenomenon under study (Arnould and Wallendorf, 1994; Spiggle, 1994), due to the inherent open-ended nature of ethnographic enquiries it has been ‘refashioned’ to suit particular fields of scholarships (Kozinets, 1997; 1998; 2002b; 2010). As the twenty-first century has experienced a digital revolution, computers and digital forums are increasingly becoming “novel mediums for social exchange between consumers” (Kozinets, 2002b; 2009; 2015). As a result there is an emerging branch of ethnographic practice that is adapted to study and understand consumers’ behaviour, cultural engagements, and community practices in digital or online media – a process widely known as *Netnography* or ethnography on the internet (Kozinets, 1997; 1998; 2002b; 2010). Inspired by Kozinets’ work and application of Netnography I chose this technique as a supplementary data collection method to support or critique other primary data. As Hamilton and Hewer (2009, p.503) suggested netnography is a method that “transcend the ‘limits of asking’ through observation of people’s talk”, I believe adopting this technique as an additional data collection measure has helped me to increase the depth and variety of data gathered. By observing social media and other consumer forums I was able to capture wider reactions and responses that I couldn’t have possibly gathered through interviews or everyday observations. In Hamilton and Hewer’s (2009, p.503) words

this was my endeavour towards collecting “deep [contextualised] meaning...necessary for a fuller and richer understanding of [a cultural phenomenon]”.

I started my early netnographic observations during the first phase of data collection (Aug 2009) with broad objectives. During this period I kept an open mind and did not restrict my observations, to a specific online community page. I used to search for key words such as Bajaj, Pulsar, Hamara Bajaj etc. on Google and tried to get a holistic idea of consumers online engagements surrounding the brand. But since the second stage of data collection (October 2010) I adopted a more organised netnographic data collection method. As an emerging country, India is at a very nascent stage of internet adoption, according to the World Bank (2014) report, the adaptation and usage of internet across India rose from 7.5% to 12.5% of the entire population during the period of this investigation. Because of this, it was difficult to find an organised online community or online practices relating to the brand. My best chances lay in using social media forums as observation platforms as they were relatively popular, providing me opportunities to capture numerous responses and reactions to individual biking stunts and Bajaj advertisements. For example, I used Youtube as a potential medium for capturing people’s emotional reaction to individual Bajaj advertisements which helped me to understand how Bajaj’s mythological sentiments related to an individual’s life and sense of citizenship. In addition, I monitored various social media forum pages including Orkut and Facebook where I found groups of regional biking enthusiasts coming together to share their expertise and experiences of riding with the world. These forums were mainly geared towards new generation Pulsar motorbikes and the most mature online riders’ group I came across identified them as the Ghost Ryderz <http://thegrz.com/thegrz/>. As time progressed I saw more and more biking

enthusiasts from India starting their own webpages or blogs, i.e., @BikeratHeart etc. and even the biking magazines encouraged their subscribers and non-subscribers to participate in various debates and discussions, i.e., Bike India – Biking Club <http://bikeindia.in/you/biking-clubs/>. I used these forums to observe remarks and conversations amongst Indian bikers and sometimes I also monitored my respondents' social media pages (Facebook) with permission. In addition to consumers' responses to selected advertisements, netnographic data also helped me to interpret the meaning of biking and risk consumption (see Celsi et al., 1993) as it became a large part of some consumers' lifestyle and identity projects.

4.13 Data Analysis:

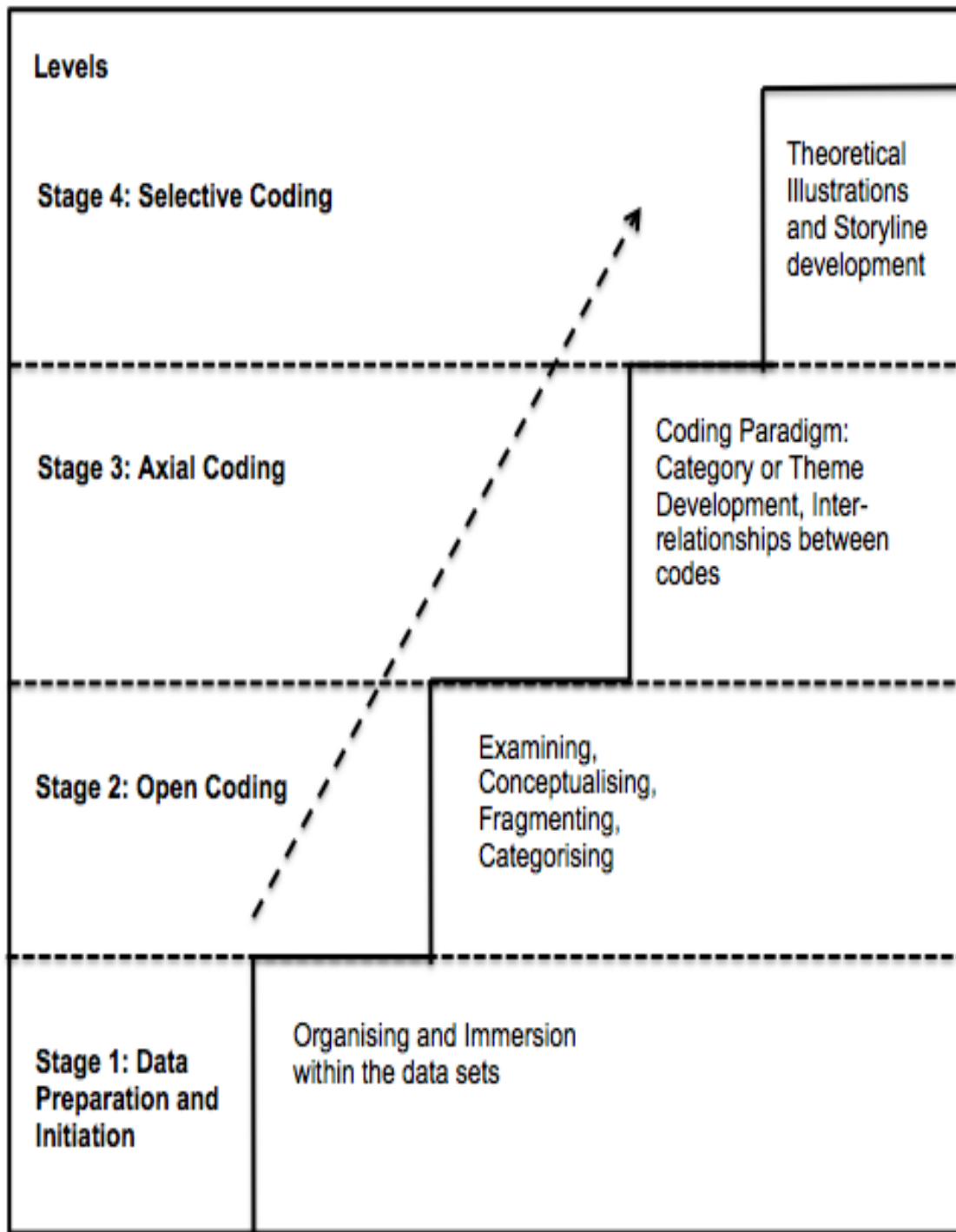
The CCT stream of research listed a number of potential data analysis techniques available to qualitative researchers, i.e., starting from 'thematic analysis', 'template analysis', 'discourse analysis', 'narrative analyses', 'grounded theory' etc. (Arnould and Thomson, 2005; 2007; Belk et al., 2012; Thompson et al., 2013). In addition to Belk's (2007) exhaustive list published within the *Handbook of Qualitative Research Methods in Marketing*, there is a series of mainstream "discursive analytical approaches" in qualitative research popularly known as 'deconstructionism', 'hermeneutic analysis', 'postmodern analysis', 'structuralist' or 'post-structuralist analysis' (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Sarantakos, 2005). For the purposes of this project I chose to follow a combination of selected qualitative analyses techniques, i.e., textual analysis of advertisements (Holt, 2004; Scott 1994b), narrative and thematic analysis of interviews (McCracken, 1988), and comparative case study analysis for the case studies (Eisenhardt, 1989).

Following McCracken (1988), Belk (1991; 2007), Belk et al. (2012), and Denscombe (2007), I realised that analysing qualitative data should be an attempt to interpret the underlying meanings and their richness. Therefore the sheer volume of data collected as part of this project called for a systematic approach to data analysis following Strauss and Corbin's (1998) guidelines (also see Denscombe, 2007; Miles and Huberman, 1994). Maxwell (2005, p.8) claimed that as a beginner he found qualitative data analysis to be "a very serious matter", as very few scientific articles made detailed references to inductive modes of processing qualitative data. Therefore, in order to generate analytical rigour it was important for me to follow organised 'coding', 'triangulation', and 'analysis' procedures (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Inspired by Carney's (1990) '*Ladder of Analytical Abstraction*' [see Figure 4.4] I adopted a four-stage analytical process to maximise the nuance of cultural meanings and understandings to be extracted from empirical information:

- **Data Preparation**
- **Initial Exploration**
- **Data Analysis**
- **Representation and validation of results**

Following Carney (1990), as I moved up individual steps of the ladder I carried out individual sets of analytical activities in order to progress onto the next level, in doing so I meticulously handle the issue of 'validity' and 'reliability'.

Figure 4.4: The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction



Adapted from: Carney (1990)

Data Preparation and Initiation: The purpose of a preparatory stage is to allow the researcher to systematically engage with his/her data (Creswell and Plano, 2007; Gibson and Brown, 2009). Therefore, following the overall research strategy and the stages of data collection, the data preparation was carried out in two phases. During the initial stage of analysis case studies and advertisements were organised and interpreted to identify themes for designing a semi-structured interview guide for interviewing the advertising professionals, while I used my ‘pre-understanding’ and ideas from peer-reviewed literature to design a guideline for the life-story interviews. After the second stage of data collection in 2010 I focused on organising ad agency interviews along with the additional data collected, while grouping consumer responses based on their consumption and ideological similarities. It also took me a significant amount of time to organise the case studies and field notes, and align them chronologically with the photographs, videos, and interviews.

Coding: The purpose of this stage is to analyse raw data to identify underlying themes and meanings and then triangulate the dominating themes to address the research questions. This process was carried out in four stages: Coding, Categorisation of Codes, Identifying Relationships between Codes (Data Triangulation), Presenting Findings and addressing the research questions (Strauss and Corbin, 1998; Denscombe, 2007). Following Strauss and Corbin (1998) I approached the raw data (Case Studies, Interviews, Field notes, Photos, Life Narratives etc.) with an ‘open mind’ without favouring any pre-conceived themes or categories, rather individual themes or categories emerged and transformed as I carried out constant comparisons between data (ibid).

Beyond Strauss and Corbin (1998), I conceptualised coding as a process that “...entails reviewing transcripts and/or field notes and giving labels and names to component parts that seem to be of potential theoretical significance and/or that appear to be particularly significant within the social worlds of those being studied” (Bryman, 2001, p.392). This process facilitated the identification of underlying commonalities within data sets, in addition to the assignment of commonalities within relevant categories (Dey, 2007). The coding and categorisation process used for this project was threefold: ‘Open Coding’, ‘Axial Coding’, ‘Selective Coding’ (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). At the beginning open codes were identified through constant comparison of data and by developing internal links as described in Table 4.10 (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

Table 4.10: Approach to Open Coding

Suggestions	Applications
I. Identify specific sets of questions to be answered by the data set	This set of questions was already identified as the research questions and objectives for this study (see Chapter 1.2 & 4.2).
II. Analyse the data thoroughly	The data set was approached with an ‘open mind’, individual interviews and life narratives were scrutinised along with transcripts, field notes, and memos to identify codes. A large number of codes were identified at this stage.
III. Establish frequent theoretical links with the established codes	Memos were kept to establish links between important codes and theoretical constructs, i.e., Electronic Equipments – Encounter with Modernity, Clothing - Material Culture, Eating – Practice Theory etc.
IV. Never assume any traditional analytical relevance unless your data emphasis it	The open coding was carried out without any prejudice or theoretical favour.

I listened to all the interviews and read the relevant transcripts to gain an overall understanding of data before engaging in coding. The recorded interview tapes and the transcripts were read ‘line by line’ and ‘word by word’ in conjunction with field notes, photos, videos, and memos as I looked for patterns or themes for developing codes (Berg, 2004; Boyatzis, 1998). Eventually, I ‘broke down’ large amounts of data into small thematic clusters or ‘nodes’ based on their significance, relationship, and overall

relevance to the research questions. The relationship between narratives and meanings was iterative but different themes developed at their own pace depending on the nature of the data and narratives. This stage of analysis appeared to be the most difficult as it added enormous amount of codes and time complexities, but as Berg (2004) suggested, having a large number of codes is advantageous up to saturation point and until the data becomes repetitive.

Following Bazeley and Richards (2000, p.18), I considered the following sets of questions to break down my data sets into relevant themes surrounding the research questions:

- | | |
|--|--|
| • What is Interesting? | - Highlight the Phrase |
| • Why is it Interesting? | - Could this relate to a descriptive or interpretative code. |
| • How is it Related to this Research? | - Helps to establish relationships between codes and create broad and abstract concepts. |

Then, following Strauss and Corbin (1998), I classified individual codes into the three following sections:

- **Label**
- **Definition**
- **Indicators**

When a piece of data indicated relevance, it was compared against research objectives and was either labelled as a new code or included in one of the existing codes

considering its proximity to the ‘definition’ and ‘indicators’ of the existing codes. The ‘definition’ and ‘indicators’ of individual labels were assigned based on their theoretical relevance and the literature review [see Table 4.11 and 4.12]. The following tables are an example of open coding and its classification [Table 4.11 and 4.12].

Table 4.11: Codes for Cultural Innovation Strategy

Label	Definition	Indicators
Archetype	A pattern of behaviour, thought, or a prototype character that is being emulated.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Best in Class Identity - Populist symbols - Cultural codes and expressions
Cultural Disruption	The tension between ideology and experience produces intense anxiety and desires. Fuelling demand for symbolic resolution from the imaginary world.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Cultural and ideological discontinuity - Ideological stalemate - Cultural contradictions - Socio-historic re-structure
Commercial Myths	Commercial myths are simple stories that offer distinctive benefits for soothing personal anxieties by reducing everyday identity burdens. A number of cultural ingredients, inspired by alternative populist values, compete to deliver the most compelling symbolic relief.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Compelling identity appeals - Cultural halo effects - Fabrics of metaphor - Imaginary self - Symbolic relief

Ideological demands	System of ideas that forges a connection between everyday life and the wider national context	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Moral Consensus - Demand for symbolic revolution - Set of values (Social, Cultural, and Political)
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Table 4.12: Codes for Understanding Identity Politics

Label	Definition	Indicators
Ideology	<p>Ideology is an unconscious system of beliefs held by an individual, class or a social group.</p> <p>Ideology is distorted knowledge causing a state of false consciousness to those who subscribe to it.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Consensus - Beliefs, ideas, and attitude - Experiences of social and political reality - System of representation
Resistance	Resistance is an exercise of power that prevents a force or agency from overpowering someone.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Resonance - Symbolic solidarity - Spectrum of protest/pressure - Repression
Modernity	Modernity prescribes reform or revolutionary changes against customs or ways of life known as traditional, pre-modern, or backward	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social reforms - Structural changes - Affirmative sense of future - Socio-historic rupture
Identity Practice	Identity practices follow the principle of unity around the fundamentals of culture, self-fulfilment, and self-expression. These are essential tags by which the state keeps track of its political subjects.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Style & expression - Material belongings - Principles of rationality - Cultural and community related belongings

The task of examining, comparing, fragmenting, and conceptualising data at this stage was extremely demanding and time consuming as an overwhelming number of competing codes came to existence at the initial stage. Due to the length of the process it was not only important to track down ideas in the form of codes but it was also important to keep a record of how the analytical and thinking process developed (Maxwell, 2005). Research memos (See Appendix 5) were an important part of this process that helped me to assign small notes around individual codes, photographs, field notes, or videos for future reference. These notes or memos were extremely useful when it came to trace the origin and development of an open code during the final stages of analysis (axial and selective coding).

Axial coding: The next stage of analysis was axial coding. The purpose of this stage was to consider the relationships between individual codes and to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. A significant issue that largely affected the progress of analysis at this stage was to establish meaningful relationships amongst the codes in order to develop comprehensive concepts. This would have been very difficult to achieve without the following guidelines from Strauss and Corbin (1998, p. 126):

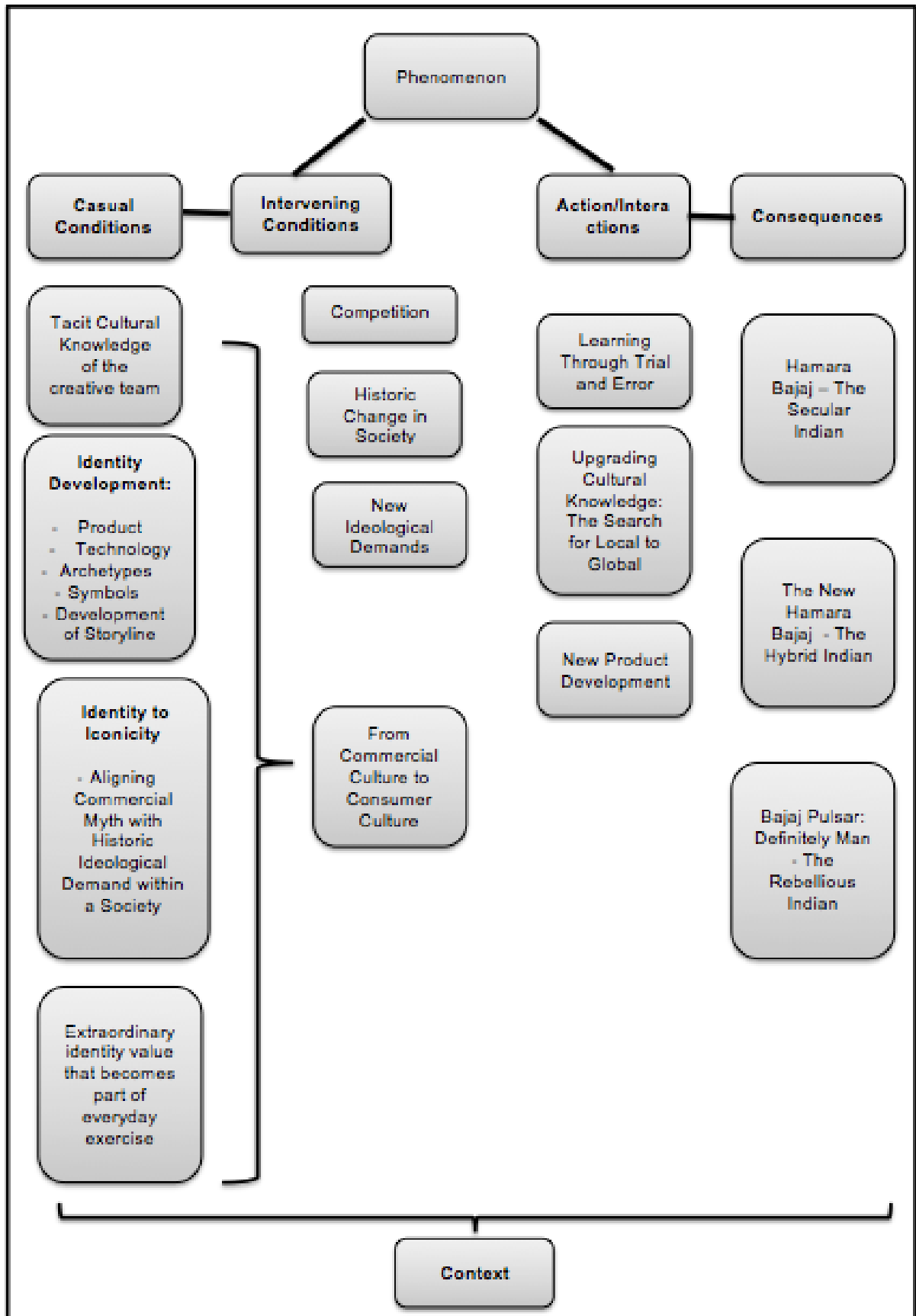
- I. Laying out the properties of individual codes and their dimensions, a process that begins during open coding.
- II. Identify various conditions, actions, interactions, and consequences associated with the phenomenon under investigation.
- III. Relate codes to sub-codes through logical explanations.

IV. Identify meanings and cues that can connect codes to broad themes.

I went through the complete list of codes and their associated sub-codes and reflected on any inter-connection or meaning overlap between individual codes. Following Strauss and Corbin (1998) a set of 'six categories' (The Coding Paradigm) were used to identify such inter-connections or meaning overlaps at this level. At this stage it was vital not to get distracted from the main objectives by keeping a record of factors that provoked mergers of individual codes. Research memos were not enough to document such a broad decision-making process therefore I used short vignettes to keep a progressive record of axial coding in the form of a research diary.

As an individual and a researcher I have always preferred visual representations of data or information for co-ordinating and establishing relationships between individual categories. Therefore, starting from the literature review to the findings and recommendations I used different modes of visualisation to draw a picture of my theoretical, methodological, and analytical understandings and interpretations (some of them are presented in this thesis and some of them were only used for personal reference and conceptualisation). According to Miles and Huberman (1994), visualising data as individual themes can sometimes accelerate the process of analysis. Hence, visualising individual codes provided food for thought regarding their interrelationships and opened up more holistic explanations for the development of patterned relationships. The issue of visual representation became more important at this stage of analysis than anywhere else. Drawing internal relationships between codes helped to visualise, and understand, individual categories or themes from different perspectives and their patterns of development [see Figure 4.5].

Figure 4.5: Axial Coding in the Making – Visual Map



Selective Coding: The final stage of data analysis involved selective coding. The purpose of this stage was to address the relationship between individual categories or themes in order to develop a cohesive storyline (Strauss and Corbin, 1998).

The category-driven storylines were developed around the research questions and they were further supplemented with theoretical illustrations. It was difficult to marshal all the thematic categories into a single storyline (especially in the case of consumer life narratives). Therefore, choices had to be made in terms of inclusion and exclusion and the illustrative execution of the storyline. The visual representation process became more concrete at this stage and it eventually led to a process of conceptual map development.

On reflection it was inevitable that the coding process did not necessarily follow a linear path of development. Rather it was iterative and the quality of analysis was dependent on my ability to constantly compare data and move between categories (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). To me the coding and categorisation process rather appeared to be a process of data reductionism than constructivism, however, after considering Charmaz's (2000, p.522) perspective it all became very clear that:

“Social world is always in process, and the lives of the research subjects shift and change as their circumstances and they themselves change...a qualitative researcher – constructs a picture that draws from, resembles, and renders subject's life. The product is more like a painting than a photograph.”

- Charmaz (2000, p.522)

Charmaz (2000, p.522) simply imagined the coding and categorisation process as a ‘heuristic device’ rather than a ‘formulaic procedure’ for analysing social life and a researcher’s re-presentation of social life as a reflection rather than a reproduction of a phenomenon.

4.14 Data Validity and Trustworthiness:

The issue of trustworthiness and rapport building is an important element of qualitative data collection as it helps researchers to maximise the quality of data gathered by avoiding participant bias. Therefore, following Belk (1991; 2007) and Maxwell (2005) I elaborate on the strategies used for standardising the data collection process at different levels and the issue of rapport building with the interviewees (or participants), along with ‘*validity*’, ‘*reliability*’ and overall ‘*trustworthiness*’ of data collected as part of this project.

While describing the idea of data representation Belk (1991; 2007) asserted that qualitative researchers must set a standard (volume, accuracy, reliability etc.) for data collection while designing their methodological approach where one of the important measures of standard being ‘*validity*’ and ‘*reliability*’. Maxwell (2005, p.45) defined validity as “the correctness or credibility of a description, conclusion, explanation, and interpretation of reality” that is relative to the purpose and circumstances of a study.

A number of scholars believe that the concept of ‘*validity*’ was developed within the positivistic paradigm; hence it is difficult for qualitative studies to identify and satisfy different sets of validity criteria in order to achieve scientific rigours (Miles and Huberman, 1994; Robson, 2002; Yin, 2002). For example, quantitative researchers can

anticipate, quantify, and add statistical corrections to their data, but for a qualitative researcher it is often difficult to anticipate any data reliability issues that could become a threat to validity, reliability, and overall trustworthiness data representation (Maxwell, 2002) [see Table 4.13]. As result, the issue of ‘quality’ within qualitative studies has become a ground for academic debate; while a group of scholars believe that any attempt to set explicit quality standards for a qualitative study may result in sacrificing the richness of underlying meanings (McCracken, 1988; Belk, 1991; Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007; Halldorsson and Aastrup, 2003), others depict that such evaluative measure will result in wider acceptance and approval of qualitative studies across scholar communities (Elliott et al., 1999).

Although, richness of data is an important factor but given my experience in qualitative data collection, and the potential retrospective biases associated with life-story interviews (see Tagg, 1985), I decided to employ four components of validity measures and extend their relationships to the overall trustworthiness [see Table 4.13 and 4.14]. A number of scholars including Guba and Lincoln (1989) have endorsed these measures of control for qualitative approach (Guba and Lincoln, 1989; Maxwell, 2002; Yin, 2003; Halldorsson and Aastrup, 2003; Riege, 2003).

Table 4.13: Relationship Between Validity and Trustworthiness

Components of Validity	Components of Trustworthiness	Description
Internal Validity	Credibility	'Degree of match' between respondent's constructs and researcher's representation of social phenomenon.
External Validity	Transferability	To what extent context specific activities are transferable to the wider world.
Reliability	Dependability	To what extent the collected data is stable over time and space.
Objectivity	Conformability	To what extent data was interpreted in logical and unprejudiced manner.

Source: Maxwell 2005

Following Halldorsson and Aastrup (2003) I used the following set of apparent and definitive strategies [Table 4.14] to minimise any threat to the issue of validity and trustworthiness (for the apparent strategies see Appendix 6).

Table 4.14: Definitive Strategies

Components of Trustworthiness	Validity Measures Undertaken
Credibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organising and immersing myself within the data set by constantly listening to the interviews, reviewing photos, field notes, and transcripts etc.
Transferability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Case studies were collected from authentic sources (Well known Journals, Newspapers, Academic Websites etc.) and any suspicious information was further verified or omitted.
Dependability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comparing, contrasting, and cross-checking emerging themes across the sample range. Sometimes these themes were discussed with the senior academics and/or respondents to measure its ‘degree of match’ (Flick 2006).
Conformability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The issue of conversation language and meaning loss during translation was verified to minimise credibility issues (see Chapter 4.13.1). Display tables or conceptual maps were often used during the analysis process to visualise thematic relationships (Miles and Huberman 1994). Tracing data analysis through research memos and research dairies [Appendix 5] (Merriam 1988). Knowledge based interview protocols and sampling procedure used to gather semi-structured open ended data across a variety of contexts. Defining scopes and boundaries along with pro-active controls helped to reach a certain level of analytical transferability but not a statistically significant one (Marshall and Rossman 2006).

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures were taken to build rapport with the respondents while sometimes developing a membership role within the activities they performed helped to maximise dependability and conformity of collected data sets. • Systematic approach to data analysis helped to achieve certain level of generalisability (Denzin and Lincoln 2005; Yin 2003). • Data sets were approached with an ‘open mind’ without any preconception of theory or analytical bias.
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4.14.1 Data Validity and Trustworthiness: Issues Surrounding Conversation Language:

All consumer interviews and some of the ad agency executive interviews were carried out in regional languages (Hindi or Bengali) as it allowed increased rapport building, giving sufficient flexibility to the respondents to explain an activity or phenomenon to its maximum potential. Such an approach maximised the depth and breath of cultural nuance within the data collected as majority of the participants lacked a good command over English language. One key criticism against such approach is the issue of validity, reliability, and meaning loss as data translated into English from different regional languages. To avoid such argument and analytical error it is best to mention here that myself as a data collector, and a data analyst, is a native Hindi and Bengali speaker and during my time in the UK I significantly upgraded my knowledge of English language to a ‘fluent’ status.

During the primary stage of translation and transcription occasionally I felt an issue surrounding meaning or expression loss becoming prominent as I tried to translate and

interpret the regional languages into English. In order to avoid this inconsistency, I tried to get closer to my data by repetitively listening to individual interviews and flagging important sections with an intention to build ‘open codes’ on selected themes. As the data analysis further progressed to the second and third stage (‘axial coding’ & ‘selective coding’) individual themes (along with associated data) were translated into English without significant meaning loss. The data and findings were further discussed with two senior academics in the UK (who were fluent in English and Indian languages), in order to verify the issue of validity, reliability, and meaning or expression loss.

4.15 Research Ethics:

According to Gray (2004, p.60) individual research-led organisations have their own ethical codes to guide and supervise the ethical consequences of a research project. For the purpose of this assignment I followed the University of Strathclyde’s Research & Ethical Code of Practice as supplied by the ethics committee in the marketing department. The main aim of the Code of Practice was to ensure that the participant’s dignity, rights, safety, and wellbeing were protected and regarded during and after the data collection process (also see Denscombe 2003). In addition, the code of practice was designed to safeguard the integrity of the University, the Department, and myself (as a researcher) in terms of moral and legal engagements (also see Denscombe 2003). For a detailed discussion on the ethical principles followed as part of this project please refer to Appendix 7.

4.16 Limitations:

As a researcher I have been very careful and critical in designing and executing this project, however problems arose in different shapes and forms at different stages partially limiting the outcome of this research. In this section I summarise the limitations that may have influenced the outcome of this project to an extent.

- I. I tried to use authentic secondary sources while collecting background information on Bajaj's historic and cultural legacy in India. I further reduced the amount of biased or dubious information by triangulating different episodes from different source materials.
- II. I trusted my respondents' designation, job title, and their professional and social engagements as described by them in the first person. Although I was certain about few people's identity based on my prior research, I could not verify the authenticity of the majority of respondents that I met in the process or through 'snowball' recommendations.
- III. This study could be gender biased as it solely represents the view of my chosen male respondents (including ad agency executives) and their socio-political world.
- IV. Due to time and resource constraints I only visited three major cities that allowed me to optimise chances of data collection. I defend my approach by citing Derné (2000) and Osella and Osella (2006) who took the authority to describe Indian masculinity based on their research within a single region in

India. Compared to their approach I believe my data collection was more widespread and rigorous.

- V. Finally, most of the field-notes taken were reflective and subject to my ‘worldview’ as a researcher. Some of the situations, episodes, and phenomena noted and explained may have different constructive or interpretative meanings to another researcher but in this research I presented my interpretation as it appeared to me through the philosophical window adopted after consulting the philosophical vernacular of CCT research (see Chapter 4.3).

4.17 Conclusion:

In conclusion this chapter detailed the methodological approach used in this research. I began the chapter by presenting and discussing two research questions that were central to this study, in addition to individual sets of objectives that are necessary to achieve rigorous responses to this enquiry. In the following section I detailed my worldview as an interpretivist and compared the nature of this research alongside different schools of philosophical thoughts to conclude why Interpretative (epistemology), Ideographic (Methodology) and Qualitative (Method) paradigms are best suited for this study. In the next section I described my research strategy and in doing so I not only clarified to what extent I followed Holt’s guidelines in investigating Bajaj’s cultural strategy, I also discussed how I deviated from Holt’s suggested method to add more nuance to the study. While Holt’s findings were limited by the thematic analysis of case studies and textual analysis of advertising, this study addresses such limitations by collecting primary data from Bajaj consumers and advertising agency executives. As part of my data collection approach I used a

combination of complementary qualitative methods (case study analysis, textual analysis, semi-structured interviews, life-story interviews, observation and netnography) that helped me to capture ‘rich and thick’ data for generating analytical rigours. In terms of designing sampling and methodological procedures I cited some inspirational studies in CCT that guided my worldview and defended my approach following the acceptability and popularity of these studies in generating academic and theoretical rigours.

In the final section I summarised my analytical approach towards preparing and handling empirical data through ‘*The Ladder of Analytical Abstraction*’ (Carney 1990). In doing so I followed the logic of open, axial, and selective coding as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998). Throughout the data collection not only did I emphasise the issue of membership role development in my respondents life but I also carefully ‘manufactured distances’ to avoid potential biases. Similarly I handled the issue of ‘*validity*’ and ‘*reliability*’ during data preparation and data analysis by following Belk (1991) and Maxwell (2005). Finally I drew conclusion to the chapter by summarising the ethical measures and some of the limitations associated with the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: BAJAJ – A STORY OF CULTURAL INNOVATION

5.1 Introduction:

"...the advertising business is a particularly compelling point of mediation between the local and the global, between culture and capital. This turned out to be true, but its mediations were far more complex and unpredictable than I had anticipated."

- Mazarella (2006, p. 3)

The principles of cultural branding presented by Holt (2004) introduced pioneering thoughts for considering nation and culture as essential constructs for brand iconicity. Bajaj is an iconic automobile brand in India that has strong cultural and political relationships with transforming Indian masculinity (Das and Hewer, 2012). For decades academics and brand managers have intrinsically engaged in explaining Bajaj's success as results of management and innovation led strategies (Gupta and Sharma 2014; Banerjee 2014; Burange and Yamini 2008; Mora, 2009). However, following Holt I believe that management and academia has largely misinterpreted Bajaj's iconicity by failing to rationalise its extraordinary ideological mystique as experienced through its widespread cultural and political appeal. In this chapter I analyse the empirical data, gathered as part of this research, and criticise the post-hoc managerial explanations (Muthukumar et al., 2011; Banerjee, 2014; Gupta and Chakraborty, 2009; Quelch, 1998) to claim that Bajaj became a quintessential icon of Indian nation by embodying pure and profound culture led mythical expressions. As I

embark on understanding and unpacking these compelling mythical expressions resonating around the social and political authorities of Bajaj's prime target market - Indian middleclass - my analytical attention remains focused on the role of advertising agencies in identifying, assimilating, and composing the fundamental factors for fabricating Bajaj into a cultural icon. The chapter begins by narrating the historic foundations of Bajaj in colonial India and describes its extraordinary story of iconic leadership and cultural survival by following a tale of discrete thematic campaigns. Although Bajaj's historic relationship with the Indian nation started with the owner's deep socio-political involvement in India's freedom fight, it was the cultural industry who exploited this fundamental relationship to restore and sustain Bajaj's long-term iconic appeal. In doing so they fabricated mythical and cultural expressions for the brand rooted within the crossroads of India's biggest socio-political turmoil – (i) Colonial Struggles (ii) Post-Colonial Uncertainty and Sluggishness (iii) Globalisation and Modern Society.

Informed by the socio-cultural theories central to the CCT discipline as I deconstruct some of Bajaj's landmark advertising campaigns and identify its thematic connection to the larger socio-historic and political context, a different picture of cultural branding emerges contradicting some of Holt's described principles. Given the nature of my methodological approach I characterise this study as 'intersectional' rather than 'unitary' (see Chapter 4). My aim, here, is not to present a deconstructive explanation of advertisement images or text, neither do I wish to analyse the impact of advertising on consumers' consciousness and their buyer decision making process. Rather, my objective here is to highlight some of the central state ideologies reflected in Bajaj's iconic advertisements and their impact on consumers' identity politics.

5.2 The Cultural Genealogy of Brand Bajaj

The Bajaj Group stands alongside Tata, Godrej, Birla and Amul as one of India's first indigenous entrepreneurial efforts that carries deep symbolic significances towards India's independence, industry, trade, and local production (Cayla and Elson, 2006; Jones et al., 2006). Founded in 1926, at the peak of India's independence movement against the colonial rule, the company has an extraordinary story of cultural engagement that parallels the transforming ideological sentiments of colonial and post-colonial Indian nation (Ghoshal et al., 2002; Jones et al., 2006; Bhatia, 2011).

Bajaj is well known in India not only for its production quality, engineering efficiency, and fair business practices but also for its ability to define the discourse of nationalism and middleclass sentiment within a post-colonial society (Jones et al., 2006; Bhatia, 2011; Banerjee, 2013; Sharma, 2011). Bajaj's flagship company, Bajaj Auto, was the largest scooter production house in India until the mid-1990s, but today with the shift in consumer economy, the company has adopted a different production and marketing philosophy surrounding the commuter and fast-paced two-wheeler machines (Pyssler, 1992; Ghoshal et al., 2002; Sharma, 2011; George et al., 2006). Bajaj's historic relationship with the Indian nation started with Jamnalal Bajaj, a young Indian entrepreneur and the founder of the Bajaj group, who was greatly inspired by the politics and philanthropy of Mahatma Gandhi (Jones et al., 2006; Kulkarni, 1951; Parvate, 1962). In order to give real meaning to his involvement in freedom fighting, in the 1920s Jamnalal became a disciple of Gandhi (Bakshi, 1992; Weber, 2004; Kulkarni, 1951). He played a key role in promoting Gandhi's vision of

*Swaraj*⁹ by leading a group of nationalists to burn foreign made products that signified revival of local production and local industry (Jones et al., 2006; Weber, 2004; Bakshi, 1992). He further insisted his fellow businessmen participate in *Satyagraha*¹⁰ with increased adaptation of handmade Indian *Khadi*¹¹ while refusing to wear or consume British commodities (mainly clothes and salt) (Gonsalves, 2013). Delighted by Jamnalal's devotion and commitment towards the country, Gandhi started to regard him as his 'fifth son'; once he even wrote to a fellow nationalist – "...there was no work in which I did not receive Jamnalal's fullest co-operation in body, mind and wealth" (Ghoshal et al., 2002; Bakshi, 1992; Jones et al., 2006). Between 1920 and 1947, Bajaj family's involvement in freedom fighting became so intense that they were often regarded as "A Family of Patriots" (Kulkarni, 1951). However the patriotic vision of the Bajaj family came to a halt when Jamnalal died on February 11, 1942 after suffering a severe cerebral haemorrhage (Jones et al., 2009; Bakshi, 1992; Kulkarni, 1951).

Following Jamnalal's death, all his business responsibilities went on to his eldest son Kamalnayan (Ghoshal et al., 2002). Being his father's disciple, Kamalnayan himself was close to Gandhi and was actively involved in India's freedom movement. However, he kept himself separate from political turmoil during the final years of World War II and India's independence movement. Kamalnayan went to complete his degree in Economics at Cambridge University, and upon his return he solely focused on rebuilding family businesses (Weber, 2004; Bakshi, 1992). It was not until 1945 that he was able to rejuvenate his family business once again, and his efforts not only consolidated the group's activity, but also branched out into various manufacturing

⁹ *Swaraj* stands for Gandhi's call for independence through 'self-governance' or 'home grown rules'.

¹⁰ *Satyagraha* is a Gandhian philosophy and practice that calls for non-violent movement or resistance.

¹¹ *Khadi* means hand-spun or hand-woven cloth made from cotton yarn on a manual spinning wheel.

fields (Jones et al., 2006; Bhatia, 2011). Kamalnayan took the group into the two-wheeler vehicle industry on 29th of November 1945 by establishing their flagship trading company Bajaj Auto Ltd., however, it was not until 1947 that the company started to fully operate by entering a deal with Piaggio the famous scooter manufacturer from Italy (Jones et al., 2006; Ghoshal et al., 2002; Bakshi, 1992). Initially Bajaj Auto Ltd. sustained its business by importing Italian scooters and selling them under the name of Bajaj, but in 1959, when the Nehru government started to issue licenses for manufacturing two-wheelers and three-wheelers in India, Bajaj Auto became more focused on building their own production plants (Sharma, 2011).

Following independence, the Indian automobile industry experienced a leap and bound growth within communal markets. Beside the flourishing scooter market, two other companies, Ideal Jawa Ltd and Escorts Indian Ltd also started to penetrate the motorcycle segment (Sharma, 2011). They started selling motorcycles under the brand names - Rajdoot and Yezdi (Ghoshal et al., 2002; Taj and Mora 2009; Muthukumar, 2011). Another key player in this market was The Royal Enfield India that gained popularity by selling imported British made 350 cc. Bullet motorcycles (Ghoshal et al., 2002; Sharma, 2011; Taj and Mora, 2009). Till the mid 1980's foreign players were not allowed to enter the Indian market, giving a strategic edge to the domestic brands (Badri and Vashisht, 2008). This restriction certainly posed a challenge to the motorcycle industry as its market share remained confined to a mere 36 percent (ibid). In contrast, by the 1970's, scooters had started to dominate the Indian market, and for the first twenty years of existence Bajaj two wheeler products were in great demand resulting in the company enjoying a virtual monopoly by selling

Italian Vespa models without feeling a need to develop further competitive advantage (Ghoshal et al., 2002; Sharma, 2011). In the 1970's, however, the two-wheeler market in India started to become increasingly competitive and Bajaj was forced to move into its own production category, and having finished their agreement with Piaggio in 1971, the company started to independently produce and sell scooters under their own brand name - Bajaj (Muthukumar, 2011; George et al., 2006; Gupta and Sharma, 2014). In doing so, the company launched their flagship model in 1972, Bajaj Chetak – a geared scooter with two-stroke engine (Ghoshal et al., 2002). In 1975-76, the company further entered into a license agreement with the Maharashtra State Government and expanded their production by introducing another flagship model – Bajaj Super. Unlike Vespa, Bajaj's flagship scooter models were not regarded for their '*style*', rather the lack of style was compensated by durability, versatility, and low maintenance costs that made the brand a key representative of Indian middleclass (Cayla and Elson, 2006; Sharma, 2011; Bhatia, 2011).

The Gandhian philosophy embraced by Jamnalal faded away in favour of a modernist viewpoint when Kamalnayan's eldest son Rahul Bajaj entered the family business (Jones et al., 2006; Bakshi, 1992). As the rise of modernist political agendas, in the 1980s, induced a shift in preference for two-wheeler consumption in India (Sharma, 2011; Bhatia, 2011), survival in the Indian two-wheeler industry became increasingly difficult following the secular Congress party's call for increasing collaboration with the world. The first blow came from Japanese manufacturers who started to look for possible business ventures with domestic companies (Sharma 2011; Gupta and Chakraborty, 2009; Quelch, 1998). In the mid 1980s, the Japanese Honda motor company directly challenged Bajaj's existing market share by introducing fast and

stylish scooters to the Indian market (Sharma 2011; Gupta and Sharma, 2014). The Honda's went into further collaboration with the Indian company Hero to form one of the all-time best-selling motorcycle brands in India - Hero Honda (Sharma, 2011). At the same time Suzuki partnered with Indian TVS whereas Yamaha partnered with Escorts to bring in revolutionary motorcycle brands (Sharma 2011; Taj and Mora, 2009). Bajaj's existence was further challenged when Italian Piaggio re-entered the Indian market, in collaboration with Singhania's, and started to redefine the idea of scooters with their new generation stylish Vespas (known as LML Vespa in India) (Ghoshal et al., 2002; Taj and Mora, 2009). The importation of Japanese motorbikes and the increasing popularity of the British-made Royal Enfield made it increasingly difficult for Bajaj to sustain its market share and brand image on technological grounds (Ghoshal et al., 2002; Sharma, 2011; Taj and Mora, 2009). This was the time when Bajaj appears to turn their back on existing '*better mousetraps*' (Holt and Cameron, 2010) and reinstate their engagement with the Indian nation to compete on the grounds of organised '*cultural innovation*' (Holt, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010).

In the following sections I summarise the story of Bajaj's cultural revival through a series of innovative myth market strategies as deployed by ad agencies over twenty years. Developing on a tale of discrete thematic campaigns, I demonstrate how the creative industry instigated and sustained a deep cultural relationship between the brand and its primary target market – the middleclass – within India's transforming socio-cultural landscapes.

5.3 First Cut: Secularity, Prosperity, and Social Harmony – Hamara Bajaj

“This nation and this universe, our past and our present is interwoven here, stronger India has a stronger picture – Hamara Bajaj (our Bajaj)”

- Jingle from Hamara Bajaj Campaign (Late 1980s)

Bajaj’s first effective culture-based commercial portrayal was released in the form of their landmark television advertisement – Hamara Bajaj (our Bajaj). With the release of the advertisement, in the late ‘80s, the company became so popular that “even...[after twenty years]...a kid can tell you what Hamara Bajaj is" - Parash. The storyline for the advertisement begins with a pair of hands releasing a dove towards a rising sun. As the new dawn becomes a new day, the camera follows a collage of middleclass citizens in their daily life along with their Bajaj scooters. For example, the advertisement shows a traditional Hindu man riding to a secluded place to practice his daily routine of yoga, a Muslim man getting ready for the day by washing his scooter, whilst a Sikh riding with his son and a Parsi carefully polishing his ride to show his pride to the nation. The advertisement further shows how a Bajaj scooter was welcomed into a Hindu household through prayers, pujas, and other rituals, while at the other side of the country it brought joy to a father and daughter. On the one hand, the scooters were acting as carriers for the daily transport needs, on the other hand they were an object of joy, pride, and social vanity.

Initially the visual and linguistic storyline of Hamara Bajaj may indicate that the significance of Bajaj's cultural allegory was carefully projected through a collage of everyday middleclass life, however, on further analysis it was clear that the underlying visual and linguistic expressions along with mythical archetypes used in the advertisement were far from demonstrating Bajaj's functional fit into people's everyday life. Instead, the deep cultural and political motives behind this remarkable call to unite a diverse nation - Hamara Bajaj (our Bajaj) - appeared to be aligned with the middleclass visionaries of peace, progress, social unity and self-sufficiency at a time when the nation was desperately looking for a way out of social and political distress induced by Nehru's failed political endeavours along with the rising ordeals of religious diversity and Hindu Nationalism (see Chapter 3.6). Before going deep into analysing the cultural significance and ideological appeal that made this commercial an iconic piece in the history of Indian advertising, it seems right to question the rationale and creative inspiration that supplied the cultural and symbolic life-blood to this campaign.

5.3.1 Hamara Bajaj: Deconstructing the Mythical Allure

In analysing the cultural politics of brand iconicity, Holt (2004) suggested that brands that become icons find their ideological appeal far beyond the restrictive intellectual paradigms of contemporary managerial practice. Instead, an 'extraordinary' in-class brand finds its '*value innovation*' or systematic strategic appeal rooted within the 'cultural and political authorities' of a nation (Holt, 2004; 2006; Holt and Cameron, 2010). Keeping this in mind, a thorough textual analysis (see Scott, 1994a; 1994b; Holt, 2004) of the Hamara Bajaj campaign, in combination with the agency interviews, revealed a series of intense cultural relationships between Bajaj and the

Indian nation, appeared to be tied in an “inescapable weight of history” and “a consumerist dream of social transformation” (Mazzarella, 2006, p. 251).

During the 1980s, the Indian advertising industry was “extremely amateur” in terms of creative thinking, as back then advertising in India meant creating awareness through functional value statements (Padamsee, 1999). Under the constraints of the government controlled marketplace, the middle-class hardly understood the meaning of consumerism to its full extent and demanded value for every single rupee¹² spent (Padamsee, 1999; Venkatesh, 1994). Having been governed by such a restrictive and parsimonious spending ideology for over forty years, when open market ideologies finally started to reveal the extravagance of global consumption, questions arise regarding what made the Indian middleclass undermine the emerging technological and status-led temptation hidden within global two-wheeler brands and why following the mythical allure of Hamara Bajaj they showed immense interest in proclaiming class, identity, and citizenship through a technologically underperforming local brand. In understanding the logic for the campaign and its underlying cultural messages, I reflect on the ex-director of Printas India, Parash Nath’s interview – the man who acted as the head of the creative team for the campaign:

“Bajaj approached us saying their sales were becoming stagnant and we need to do something about it. Bajaj Chetak was their first and most basic brand on the scooter market. But Chetak's sales began to slip due to all the modern Enfield motorbikes. So we were in a debate with the company about modernising their scooters...but they said it was financially hard for the company to raise capital at that time in India, and it

¹² Rupee is the unit of Indian currency.

could take up to two years to raise the funds. To me they would have lost a significant amount of market share by that time, so they suggested if we could do anything to hold their market share.”

- **Parash**

Therefore Bajaj scooters virtually enjoyed monopoly within a restricted two-wheeler Indian market until the 1970s, and since its introduction in 1945 the company did not face any serious survival struggle until this time. The situation became challenging when restricted market and financial policies led to the biggest fiscal deficit in India’s history leaving the government no choice but to open markets and invite foreign investments from companies around the world. With the liberation of the marketplace, Bajaj faced further competition from foreign players on the grounds of technology and sophistication. By the mid-1980s a lack of investment significantly damaged Bajaj’s sales figures and its ability to survive against the foreign counterparts who found India a virtually unexplored market. Faced with this situation, the company invited the advertising agency Printas to initiate a consultation on how to sustain their market. During the initial discussion phase, when Parash and his team insisted that Bajaj should create value and competitive advantage through technological upgrades, the company argued that such an innovation-led ‘*Red Ocean*’ strategic engagement with consumers and competitors was financially unattainable, and in reality the time required to gather such capital would make them lose valuable competitive position in the market. Instead, the management insisted Parash to come up with an alternative approach on value proposition to save Bajaj’s market. In the pre-globalised price and utility driven Indian market Printas, as an advertising agency, was well known for its cultural creativity and “out of the box” thinking (see Padamsee, 1999; Mazzarella,

2006), and in response to Bajaj's concern, the creative team decided to outline a recipe for culture-led '*Blue Ocean*' (Holt and Cameron, 2010). As Parash and his team insisted on redefining Bajaj's fate by composing and promoting the legacy of the brand through a series of cultural codes borrowed from post-colonial masculinity, consequences of such cultural manipulation created an uncontested market space for Bajaj making technological challenges an irrelevant aspect of marketplace rivalry (see Holt, 2004). As Parash described:

“We sat down for a brain-storming session and realised that Bajaj is, indeed, old fashioned, but it is reliable, it is hard working...it is the friend of the family...the whole family! On these propositions we thought that the Bajaj scooters were an exact representation of India...it's old, it's reliable, and may not be the fastest...but it's the one you can trust the most. So our goal was to find how can we turn Bajaj into a most trustworthy symbol in consumers' minds. It was in the '80s when we tried to show the brand as old fashioned and a symbol of trust, and therefore we came up with the slogan "Hamara Bajaj" (Our Bajaj) and we made the advertisement which is still popular around the country, even a kid can tell you what "Hamara Bajaj" is.”

- Parash

Therefore, during the '80s when Bajaj faced significant survival challenges from foreign competitors, the best strategic move made by Printas was not to judge the brand on its material and functional value like its foreign counterparts. Rather, in their efforts to supply extraordinary competitive advantages to the brand, Parash and his team inscribed Bajaj within the Indian nation by depicting it as an 'old', 'reliable',

‘trusted’, and ‘hardworking individual’. In other words, an archetype of post-colonial middleclass Indian men thriving for recognition within the hegemony of absurd post-colonial politics, surrounded by state controlled social and religious barriers (see Chapter 3.6). To these men, adoption of pace or artificial glamour did not offer the way to their vision of relief and prosperity, rather they cherished the idea of a prosperous India through harmony, recognition, secularism, and integration perceived through the cultural and traditional values of the nation (see Derné, 2000; 2008). In line with such dominant middleclass aspirations the Hamara Bajaj campaign encapsulated a series of images encouraging religious congruency surrounding Bajaj scooters, i.e., a claim to peace, prosperity, and citizenship by the Hindu, Muslim, Parsi, and the Sikh representing national harmony at the time of turmoil [see Figure 5.1]. According to Holt (2004) such a move should be an organised strategic decision for creating brand iconicity, but as I discuss later, the idea of creating such an extraordinary competitive position for Bajaj was more instinctive rather than a strategic.

Figure 5.1: The Religious Harmony Captured in Hamara Bajaj



Picture Illustration (from left to right, top to bottom): A Hindu man practicing Yoga, a Muslim washing his scooter, a Parsi polishing his scooter, and a Sikh riding with his son.

In addition to encapsulating the powerful message of religious harmony as the creative team further embarked on matching Bajaj's commodity features with the post-colonial middleclass mind-set they 'accidentally' ended up appealing to a long-term nostalgic aspiration of their target market. Such an aspiration, as I discuss later in the chapter, finds its root in Gandhi's call for – Swadeshi - rejecting foreign made

products while favouring local goods “even though they are inferior in quality” (Sarkar, 1973). I use the word ‘accidentally’ to remark on the ‘unintended’ consequence of Printas’ action. According to advertising professionals at Printas, building Bajaj’s long lasting cultural legacy and its deep political roots underpinning Hamara Bajaj campaign was rather instinctive than a planned course of action (see Chapter 5.3.2).

The ’80s were a time of turmoil, both socially and politically, as the failed Nehruvian vision, and increased social violence provoked by the religious nationalist group left the middleclass with a deep identity crisis (see Chapter 3.6). Beside this social crisis, influx of global brands along with an open market system challenged the very survival of India’s vision of ‘self-sufficiency’ as imagined through pioneering local engineering and entrepreneurship. As the nation was struggling to withhold its dream of indigenous progress along with the vision of prosperity and democracy, a ‘strategic appeal’ by Printas to save the dignity of the nation, once again, by adopting the values of Gandhi’s Swadeshi, supplied a deeper cultural and ideological meaning to the ‘Hamara Bajaj’ (our Bajaj) appeal.

I was intrigued as to whether such a strong and unconscious political message was deliberately endorsed and planted into the advertisement by Parash and his team, and how the team assembled selected cultural codes (old, reliable, trusted etc.) into the effective and seamless story of peace, self-sufficiency, and secularity. Answers to these questions became clear by unpacking the socio-cultural fabrics of the campaign that embraced hidden ‘*cultural*’ and ‘*political authorities*’.

5.3.2 Cultural Authority of Hamara Bajaj

The primary cultural authority of Bajaj scooters can be identified within the name and meaning signification of their flagship model Bajaj Chetak. The name 'Chetak' carries deep symbolic significance in Indian history, famously known as the venerated heroic horse of the Hindu ruler Maharana Pratap (Harlan, 2003). The heroic performance of Chetak in the battle of Haldighati and his contribution towards saving his master's life made him an all time heroic and iconic symbol of a carrier in Indian history (Harlan, 2003). Therefore, it was an intense strategic move by the company to assign such a historic and iconic name to their flagship scooters in an effort to turn the old fashioned vehicles into venerated symbols of a national carrier.

In addition to the scooter's name signification, a unique call to reinvigorate the nation through Hamara Bajaj (our Bajaj) advertisement supplied key tropes for transforming the brand into a desired cultural object, reclaiming peace, pride, and prosperity during the time of post-colonial distress. The series of visual rhetoric [see Figure 5.2] used in the Hamara Bajaj advertisement rightly reminds how “advertising relies on a ceaseless oscillation between reactionary mythos and everyday contingency” (Mazzarella, 2006, p.56). Following this lead I was intrigued to learn how images from the Hamara Bajaj television campaign encapsulated cultural and political logic, as expressed through the brand's visual iconography (dove – symbol of peace; iconic landmarks – glory from the past etc.). To unpack the images representations in Hamara Bajaj I followed the theoretical logic presented by Linda Scott (1994a) and Craig Thompson (2004). As the pioneers of rhetoric/textual analysis and marketplace mythology in CCT these scholars made broad theoretical claims about how advertising turns into ‘authentic commercial mythologies’, and how cultural industry

insert hidden sets of interpretative strategies (Joshi et al., 2001; Hirschman and Solomon, 1984). In line with this interpretative school of thought a detailed visual and textual analysis of Hamara Bajaj's image galore revealed a series of cultural messages being projected through multitudes of everyday characters, reflecting a story of desired reality through hidden cultural archetypes (Levy, 1981; Scott, 1994a; 1994b).

Figure 5.2: The Visual Iconography of Hamara Bajaj





The beginning of the advertisement showed the beginning of a new day, a new dawn of freedom represented by a dove being released into the sky. Then, a Hindu man begins his day with Yoga, possibly seeking inner peace, while a Muslim and Parsi cherish their possessions (scooters) like a family member, demonstrating 'pride' of their possession to the nation. In the next set of images the scooters ride through a heritage landmark - Gateway of India - recalling the nation's glorious past, while pictures of more and more flying doves bring a unique message of peace, promise, unity, and honor. As the day progresses, the camera follows some unique slices of middleclass life, for example, a trainer riding his scooter on a beach and encouraging

his trainee to follow him and run faster and faster. The message here appears to encourage middleclass men to run towards a new beginning, new possibilities with an unique 'winning' mentality. Then, the camera captures a few moments of family bonding where father and son or father and daughter share a ride as traditions and values being passed from one generation to the other. The next set of visuals show a new scooter being welcomed into a household through the Hindu rite of passage, involving rituals that resemble a new bride being welcomed into a house. Such a practice symbolises the long, happy, and spiritual association of the new member to the family, while the red Swastika mark on the scooter represents messages of prosperity and affluence (also see Venkatesh, 1994; Venkatesh et al., 2013). The camera further moves to capture a construction engineer pointing towards a highrise, symbolising realistic infrastructure development, as opposed to Nehru's failed industrial and entrepreneurial vision, where the middleclass could find legitimate recognition and demonstrate some 'pride' in their social life, i.e., owning a modern multistorey flat. At the end, a young boy climbs on a scooter saluting Bajaj waving a national flag, representing Bajaj as a young and rejuvenated asset of the nation.

To understand the resonance and symbolic meaning added to the logic of such image representation I approached Prabhu, the art-director for the campaign:

"I started my career at...[Printas]...as an art director. My first assignment was creating a campaign for Bajaj Scooters. Since the domestic and imported motorcycles were aggressively taking over Bajaj's marketshare, we had to do something special,

something extra-ordinary to retain Bajaj's marketshare. As a team we agreed to inject a sense of pride to the scooter owners but we didn't know where to get started."

- Prabhu

Here Prabhu confirmed Parash's claim by describing why Bajaj felt the need to shift its focus from generating product and technology-led competitive advantages to compete on the grounds of culture and communication. He also confirmed that despite delivering a number of successful iconic campaigns (see Padamsee, 1999; Mazzarella, 2006), the creatives at Printas had no specific formula in mind for creating brand iconicity by devising national culture. Therefore, the team started from scratch, all they had in mind was how to instil a "sense of pride" in consumers' minds. However, their understanding and interpretation of this concept was far more superficial and materialistic, as they did not realise that 'pride' was the sense, an ideological concept, that the middleclass had been promised for over forty years since India's independence; but like Nehru's failed vision this agenda remained unachievable for all these years. Without realising the iconic potential of this concept, Prabhu started his journey by searching imageries within daily life:

"As an art director it was mainly my responsibility to come up with the pictures for the campaign. I started thinking and chose to pick...images around Bajaj scooters. The best thing to happen was the camera man we hired didn't turn up on the day so I hired a camera and started capturing images on the road very carefully. This was my first lesson as I had no experience in photography, the best thing the shopkeeper did was to put the camera into the automatic mode...As days went by, I captured some

really good shots around Bajaj scooters. By the end I had thousands of images in front of me and it was hard to decide which one to include and which one not to. For example, I captured a Parsi polishing his scooter in the morning, a guy combing his hair using the rear view mirror of a scooter, a family welcoming a new scooter into their house with arti and spiritual offerings, and kids taking a ride with their father to the school.”

- Prabhu

As I emphasised earlier, the creative instinct of Hamara Bajaj was coincidental rather than planned [“...we didn’t know where to get started” - Prabhu]. From the beginning Prabhu was uncertain about the choice of archetypes or images that could instil a cultural bond between Bajaj scooters and the nation. Parash and Prabhu both indicated that the team did not undertake any organised research to gain insights into consumer aspirations, rather because of Bajaj’s long lasting history and cultural legacy the team knew that the brand was a forgotten ‘pride’ of the nation:

“we...realised that Bajaj is indeed...an exact representation of India”

- Parash

As Bajaj started losing its popularity under external market pressure, re-insitilling the brand’s status required making people feel proud of the glorious past of tired and diverging India. Prabhu started his creative venture by looking at everyday relationship between Bajaj and India, such a trial and error practice turned into his biggest advantage as it helped him to identify the cultural assimilation of the brand into the daily life of middleclass. In the name of ‘street photography’ what he

collected was a collage of everyday reality where Bajaj scooters were valued as an essential part of people's life, creating unification within a fragmenting nation. In addition, the automation of the camera helped him to capture "slices of life" without distorting reality – a sense of authenticity essential for brand iconicity (Holt, 2004).

"Eventually this became my approach to advertising. I started to include street photography in all my campaigns including Killer Jeans, Shoppers Stop, Airtel etc. Street photography to me is a mirror of society – capturing a moment of life, making room for instinct to tell a story. It is mostly ironic and surprising to people. I believe in today's technological world photography is the only language that crosses all the barriers...I do not plan anything, rather I stumble upon a situation...I wait for an accident to happen...somehow, somewhere all of a sudden a breeze will flow or a bird will fly or I will bump into someone...you only have few minutes to communicate a message in advertising so keeping it simple and to the point is the hardest part of advertising. Your visuals should even become clear to an illiterate person. So removing what is not the actual message from the picture is art."

- Prabhu

For a pragmatist like John Tagg (1988) these random images from everyday life are nothing more than 'technical manipulation of reality' under formal institutional rules, captured by a trained or a less skilled person. However, Barthes (1981, p. 118) suggested that we live in a society where everything is transformed into images with a hint of cultural obsession and representational realism. To him, images of everyday life are increasingly becoming one of the key mediums for expressing the complex connection between experiential temporalities of consumers' subjective lives and their

transcendent desires, something Holt (2004) conceptualised as '*ideological relief*' to the wider population (also see Berger and Mohr, [1982] 1995). Therefore Prabhu's 'learnt' approach to collect and transform everyday reality reaffirms Barthes' claim, to a pragmatist it may appear as a 'project of visual persuasion', but to an interpretivist it's a representation of the animated relationships between culture, desire and belief taken from an individual or a collection of humans (Thompson, 2004; Scott, 1994a; Stern, 1995).

If Prabhu's images spoke a thousand words then the theme song in the background signified other sensory feelings with a nostalgic and patriotic thrust.

"This nation and this universe, our past and our present is interwoven here, stronger India has a stronger picture – Hamara Bajaj (our Bajaj)"

- Jingle from the Hamara Bajaj Campaign

A combination of harmonium, tabla, flute and traditional music folklores a story of peace, unity, and a stronger India that has thousands of years of glorious past and history interwoven within the soil and the skies of the nation. The advertisement presented Bajaj scooters as a 'son of mother India' symbolising prosperity and growth through a stronger picture of India (see Cayla and Elson, 2006).

The cultural meanings and ideological agendas encoded in this campaign suggest that the audio-visual iconographies of Hamara Bajaj was built on the crossroads of politics and socioeconomic distinctions captured within the images of middleclass aspirations,

and re-crafted within the didactic theatre of '*cultural studio*' (Holt, 2004). Something Prabhu himself described as "capturing a moment of life, making room for instinct to tell a story", where each impression presents a unique mythical metaphor corresponding to a broad cultural and political agenda related to distressed post-colonial masculinity. According to Scott (1994a; 1994b) such treatment of everyday images creates cognitive cultural impressions where the continuous association of the brand and the material object (scooters), with key symbolic artifacts of the nation and its dominant class practice, creates a string of pleasant ideological beliefs (or 'ideological relief') (Belk and Pollay, 1985; Hirschman and Solomon, 1984). Prabhu argued that such a rhetorical richness and its consequent iconic appeal was unintentional ["we didn't know where to get started"]. Although he and his team did want to create "something extraordinary", his understanding and explanation of underlying cultural expressions appeared to be limited.

"So what story have you tried to tell through your images taken for Hamara Bajaj?"

- Interviewer

"Same as I said earlier...the story was about a two-wheeler people could rely on...a brand people can be proud of...a two-wheeler that is part of people's daily life. We felt an owner should feel like a proud Indian by riding a Bajaj scooter. So our motive became to show how Bajaj can become an essential part of Indian life"

- Prabhu

Therefore, the team found key cultural logic in restoring Bajaj's glory within declining middleclass pride and the use of realistic images of everyday life in

conjunction with the brand and the product presented in most objective manner without distorting reality or the authenticity of real life. Such a commodity commercial image of the brand portrayed through a representation of everyday practice framed a message of composure and assurance where the embedded ‘cultural’ and ‘political’ authorities became the basis for comprehension and gratification of perceived reality [“Street photography to me is a mirror of society” - Prabhu] (see Mick and Buhl, 1992; Scott, 1990; Stern, 1995; 1996). As the composed reality of Hamara Bajaj transformed underlying cultural and political messages into a transparent and tangible representation of a desired reality, the series of hidden cultural messages were absorbed into the consumer’s mind without the need for any complex interpretation strategy (Scott, 1994b) [“Your visuals should even become clear to an illiterate person.” – Prabhu].

5.3.3 Political Authority of Hamara Bajaj

The construct of an iconic brand does not solely rely on its cultural engagements, rather there are other subliminal agencies, i.e., '*political authority*' that drive the ideological agenda further, offering metaphoric relief from widespread social distresses (Holt, 2004). In this section, I attempt to understand the political underpinnings of the Hamara Bajaj campaign. I began with the head of the campaign by asking:

“Did you have any active political agenda behind the campaign?”

- Interviewer

“I am an advertiser not a politician. Yes, politics is an essential part of life but what could we have possibly gained from it? Our intention was simple and creative, look at the bigger picture, understand customers and do something, so when people are using a Bajaj scooter they can proudly say this is an Indian product...this is our Bajaj [with emphasis].”

- Parash

Parash offered a clear denial in his answer, insisting that politics had very little to do with the Hamara Bajaj campaign. To him, advertising is a ground for creativity and the simple objective for the Bajaj campaign was to instil a “sense of pride” of being Indian and to celebrate what the nation had achieved in forty years through local production capabilities. However, my desk research indicated a different version of the story, as the political legitimisation of Bajaj appeared to be aligned with the secular government’s New Swadeshi led policy - “consumption led route to national

prosperity” (See Rajagopal, 1993, p. 97; Mazzarella, 2006). This ideology not only finds its legitimacy in Nehru’s vision for modernisation but can be further traced back to Gandhi’s call for progress through ‘self-reliance’ (Swadeshi). Unable to verify the political logic of Hamara Bajaj from Parash I reemphasised the issue once again:

“So are you saying there was no active political agenda behind any of your iconic campaigns?”

- Interviewer

“Not that I remember...”

- Parash

As I discuss later, despite Parash’s denial, my extended analysis pointed out that in addition to Hamara Bajaj other iconic campaigns produced by Printas were full of cultural and political rationales. Therefore I wondered why Parash did not show any interest in revealing how an advertising creative’s socio-cultural knowledge (and engagement) defines their ability to manipulate political authority within iconic brand commercials. After failing to gather useful insight from Parash, I believed Prabhu could offer strong insights into this agenda. Being a great believer in street photography and real-life image representation, Prabhu may have understood the deeper political significance of Hamara Bajaj.

“Did you have any active political agenda behind the campaign?”

- **Interviewer**

“What do you mean by political agenda? I don’t understand....we used some political images here and there...for example in the Airtel campaign we showed East-Germany and West-Germany coming together by breaking down the Berlin wall...pictures from the Quit India protest...Martin Luther King’s famous speech inspiring Jawaharlal Nehru....Winston Churchill’s victorious demonstration after winning World War II...India-Pakistan border tensions etc...but no, we didn’t do anything like that in Hamara Bajaj ”

- **Prabhu**

On reflection, both Parash and Prabhu denied any conscious assimilation of political facts within the Hamara Bajaj campaign, instead, the creators continuously emphasised that their creative capabilities lay in fabricating a story borrowed from the shared vocabulary of social and cultural experiences of their target market – the Indian Middleclass. Their narratives stressed how the cultural and semiotic aspirations of the middleclass were key to transforming an old fashioned material object (scooters) into a national icon by narrating much desired stories of ‘reliability’ and ‘trust’, the fundamentals of ‘collectivism’, along with the notion of ‘individual pride’ and ‘secularism’ that dates back to the nation’s historic times.

Such a contradiction between my findings and the Printas executives’ (my informants only) denial called for further illustration from Mazarella (2006). In characterising advertising agencies in post-colonial India, Mazarella (2006) pointed out that, during

the '80s and '90s, Indian advertising agencies deliberately attempted to legitimise their existence through three distinct 'areas of ambiguity'. The first two, the role of advertisement and its effects, are not an area to be considered for this part of the discussion but, the third, one of the important ironies of post 1980s Indian advertising, as he understood was their 'fondness for attacking' the very foundation of political inefficiencies in the country. As I spoke to 'the brand father of India' - Parash - and other advertising executives at Printas (and beyond), trying to dig deep into the creative and ideological constructs of iconic brand creation, one thing became eventually clear – a failed discourse of rationally planned society (see Chapter 3.6) and its everyday image repertoire repeatedly forced the advertisers to draw their creative inspiration from the deep chasms of post-colonial politics (see Mazzarella, 2006; Fernandes, 2006). Whether such an effort was conscious or unconscious still remains a topic for discussion.

Therefore, despite Parash and Prabhu's denial, in line with Mazzarella's argument my analyses showed, beside cultural authorities, the existence of political authorities were prevalent in some of the iconic brands created by Printas (also see Mazzarella, 2006). Although, Bajaj tried to restore a sense of secularism and self-sufficiency by opposing the hegemony of state's failure in addition to immense social and political fragmentation, questions remain on what supplied deep symbolic significances to this political affirmation. Although Parash's simplistic reasoning behind Hamara Bajaj was shared and supported by Prabhu and other colleagues, I was convinced that there was more to the story rather than resonating a simple myth of everyday life around a struggling commodity (Bajaj Scooters). In the following section I build on Mazzarella (2006) and some of my background research into India's socio-political dynamics

(see Chapter 3.6) to identify the widespread political orthodoxies that supplied creative resources for Printas to turn Bajaj into an iconic symbol of the Indian middleclass. In doing so, I dig deep into the ideological transformation of middleclass since the colonial time with a view to understand the underlying political dynamics of Hamara Bajaj.

5.3.4 Turning Political Authorities into a Nationwide Appeal

In order to achieve a better understanding of the cultural and political logic used in Hamara Bajaj, I approached Madhav, one of the copywriters involved in the campaign. Madhav had spent a significant part of his career at Printas and Hamara Bajaj was one of his “historic triumphs”. Today he runs his father’s agency working on a number of small, medium, and big advertising campaigns. He insisted that:

“[Printas]...is known for its exceptional advertisements...Hamara Bajaj was a unique idea, one of a kind, but we were equally involved in other projects at that time...so there may have been some sort of idea exchange there...I think during the brainstorm we talked about Avas¹³ quite a lot.”

- Madhav

As Madhav hinted, there could have been some idea overlap between the Avas and the Hamara Bajaj campaign, I decided to draw on the cultural and political dimensions of Avas to achieve a better understanding of Bajaj’s political affiliations. My findings suggested that during the post-independence era, beside Tata, Bajaj, and

¹³ Avas is an iconic Indian brand. Due to data confidentiality issues pseudonym was used to conceal the brand’s real identity.

Camlin, Avas was one of the indigenous entrepreneurial efforts that came into existence in the late colonial period, celebrating a vision of new independent India built on local industry and entrepreneurs (Cayla and Elson, 2006). Avas achieved its iconic significance by provoking India's first 'White Revolution', i.e., dairy product revolution (Heredia, 1997; Guha, 2007; Ramagundam, 2008). Since then the company has continued to sustain its cultural and iconic legacy by promoting its values through a number of cultural discourse (Heredia, 1997).

“If you are familiar with the Avas campaigns then you will notice that, no matter what, Avas ads are always a representation of the present time in India....whether it be election time or cricket time, whether it's a war or fighting for education or women's rights....Avas and its ads are always there.”

- Madhav

Here Madhav reaffirmed that, like Bajaj, Avas has always been a key representative of India. The brand's strategy is to build on wider social events that emphasise what it is like to be an Indian in the “present time”. I was keen to know how Avas' iconicity and cultural expressions were kept alive and whether some of the explanations could clarify Bajaj's political engagement with the Indian nation.

“[The creatives]...look through newspapers....any scam, scandal, corruption, or controversy...anything that's big news....anything that India is talking about. We mainly use the medium of cartoon to send our messages as some of them are about a political gesture or political personalities...What I like about these campaigns is the freedom that we get to talk about the true colours of society. Although it's getting

harder to maintain the freedom nowadays with this hyper-touchy political environment.”

- Madhav

Madhav’s explanation was quite clear. In line with Mazzarella’s (2006) arguments, he confirmed that advertising creatives regularly try to understand the socio-political distresses within a nation that helps them to find valuable resources for sustaining cultural expressions for a brand’s iconic value.

Madhav’s comments became further indicative of what might be the reason behind Parash and Prabhu’s denial for discussing the conscious political authorities used within the vibe of Hamara Bajaj. As Madhav indicated, the political environment in India is becoming more and more “hyper-touchy” and advertisements that highlight the state’s inefficiency might bring in serious consequences for the agency and the creatives. Therefore, it seems that Parash and Prabhu disregarded this controversial agenda in order to avoid further consequences. However, as Mazzarella claimed, throughout the post-colonial and post-globalised era the state’s political inefficiencies remained a clear target for Printas executives, as the route to success in advertising was achieved through alternative pictures of nation building (see Mazzarella, 2006).

Avas’ genealogical development against India’s changing socio-political landscape helped me to understand how Hamara Bajaj may have followed a similar trajectory but with different sets of cultural and political engagements. During the post-independence Nehru (first prime minister on independent India) regime, economic policies were solely focused on the development of indigenous large-scale industry

and state-driven national infrastructure (power plants, transport links, steel production etc.). However, as the failure of Nehru's vision started to become apparent, the meaning of post-independent modernisation transformed into the vision of rural development and agriculture (see Chapter 3.6). Therefore, beside industrial development, as the discourse of modernity was primarily linked to agriculture and reduction of poverty through rural prosperity, a major part of society (especially the middleclass) was left feeling betrayed (Bhatia, 1994; Bardhan, 1999). In addition, sluggish economic growth along with failed commodity and consumption-centric promises left nothing for middleclass Indians to visualise and cherish for the future, while the rise of Hindu nationalism turned this distress into deep social crisis through genocide and religious war (Jaffrelot, 2000). The failure of the Nehru government and the rise of extreme Hindu nationalism created a volatile and turmoil situation that compelled the nation to cry out for new socio-political ideologies for restoring peace and prosperity in everyday life (Mazzarella, 2006; Fernandes, 2006). During this time of turmoil, I wondered what had helped the team to establish such a powerful nationwide cultural appeal – Hamara Bajaj:

“I believe, advertising is a combination of facts and emotions. It's not only facts, it's not only emotions...if you engage the audience with their right brain which is creative, and left brain which is rational....the combination is, what I call, the middle brain. If you appeal to the middle brain you can deliver a rational message with a grasp of emotion, like ‘Hamara Bajaj’. The rational promise was, it's a very hard working, reliable, trustworthy scooter...still the issue was the old fashioned look of those scooters, but when we added the emotional element and called it ‘Hamara Bajaj’, it

became like ‘Hamara Hindusthan’ (Our India). It added a bigger meaning to the whole picture.”

- Parash

The advertisement found remarkable cultural and political ground because it carried a message that the nation had long been waiting for. In a time of turmoil, when the nation was struggling to deal with its multiculturalism, diverse political ideologies, and consequent civil war this landmark campaign presented a sense of peace, progress, unity, and most importantly, secularism as men from different religious communities (Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Parsi etc) were shown to be living peacefully together. The slogan - 'Hamara Bajaj' ('Our Bajaj') - itself projected a collectivist theme, a message of unity, a sense of belonging and citizenship within a diverging nation.

After a thorough investigation into the root of Hamara Bajaj in Indian history and politics, it became further evident that the phrase received such a warm reception because of its strong political connection with the nation’s colonial history. For example, during the final years of the independence movement the values of Swadeshi dictated that Indians should rejected foreign products by discerning them as ‘outside powers’ (Varman and Belk, 2009). In this struggle to fight for local production and the abolition of colonial rule, a number of social activists tried to stimulate the nation by writing nationalistic songs, slogans, poems and plays where the phrase ‘Hamara’ (our) was reiterated as an integral part of nationalist agenda (Sarkar, 1973). Gandhi and the Indian National Congress took this concept further as they realised that national independence was not achievable without mobilising a

mass movement throughout India. As they realised that central to this struggle lay in the desire to integrate the nation against the colonial rulers under one roof, during ‘Quit India’ and the ‘Non-Cooperation movement’ Gandhi addressed the whole nation by referring to the phrase ‘Hamara Hindusthan’ (‘Our India’ or ‘Our Nation’) (Nehru, 1960).

Therefore, the seeds of political authority for the Hamara Bajaj campaign were sown during the final years of the independence movement where the phrase ‘Hamara’ supplied deep and significant meaning to national integration and mass movement. Parash and his team reapplied this phrase in their effort to reunite the nation in the time of political and religious diversity. Such a call rejuvenated the nation once again and created a mass movement as the middleclass rushed to buy Bajaj hoping to contest and challenge the rising state hegemony in post-colonial India. The way Parash explained the manipulative insertion of this phrase – as “it became like ‘Hamara Hindusthan’ (our India). It added a bigger meaning to the whole picture” – it seemed that the team was partially aware of the political significance of the term. Therefore, I wanted to know more about the consequences of this nationwide call:

“What was the outcome of the campaign?”

- Interviewer

“Result!!! Ooo.....sales immediately started picking up, I am talking about the '80s...'90s...anyway say twenty years ago, and even until today people refer to Bajaj scooters as Hamara Bajaj. Later the company was interested in changing the slogan Hamara Bajaj, I fought back saying don't be silly, it's a valuable

property!!...Hamara Bajaj was one of the greatest success stories of...[Printas]. The campaign has always been at the heart of India.”

- Parash

Parash was right. The legacy of Hamara Bajaj was so strong that the advertisement still lives in the heart of every Indian. During my data collection every single middleclass man I came across, regardless of region, religion, or demographics, remembered the advertisement as a symbol of India’s glorious past and after the release of the Hamara Bajaj campaign, demand for Bajaj scooters became so high that people were happy to wait over three years to acquire their desired two-wheeler brand. In Bruce dePyssler’s (1992, p.440) words, until the mid ‘90s “owning a Bajaj in India was similar to owning a station wagon in 1950s and 1960s America”.

According to Holt (2004) many cultural brands in the past have sacrificed their iconic stature by failing to recognise and retain their most valuable assets, i.e., the core values, cultural/political authorities, and the underlying sense of authenticity. Therefore, Parash was right in asserting that it was wrong to destroy such a ‘valuable’ cultural and political asset of the brand when the parent company tried to erase their key cultural expression – Hamara Bajaj – as a historic legacy. Such an instinctive warning from Parash was in fact an essential strategic advise for sustaining the life cycle of an iconic brand like Bajaj, but as the company failed to realise that, in the long run Bajaj was compelled to lose its iconic value for a certain period of time.

5.4 Second Cut: Glocal Indian – The New Hamara Bajaj

“We are changing here. The land, sky and universe are changing with us, this is a new future, this is our future, this is a new era, this is our era. New India, the stronger India has a new picture, a stronger picture - our Bajaj (Hamara Bajaj)”

– **Jingle from New Hamara Bajaj Campaign (2000)**

A rich stream of research has explored how economic prosperity and the flow of global culture has progressively educated the middleclass in emerging countries about western consumption patterns (Mish, 2007; Üstüner and Holt, 2007; 2010; Belk, 2000; Ger and Belk, 1996; DeSouza et al., 2009; Rajagopal, 1998; Caldwell, 2004; Chaudhuri and Majumder, 2006; Lamont, 1992; Krasner, 1985). Similarly, at the dawn of the twenty-first century, after almost ten years of candid exposure to the forces of globalisation, middleclass in India have started to ascribe new meanings to their class, identity, and consumption (Fernandes, 2006; Mazarella, 2006; Rajagopal, 2001; Mankekar, 1999). Today almost every Indian has an idea and image of perceived modernity producing broad ideological patterns across the nation (Venkatesh, 2012; Mish, 2007; Joshi, 2001; Favero, 2005; Belliappa, 2013); whilst with more and more discretionary buying power, these people have started to reinvent themselves as new social patrons (Fernandes, 2006; Varma, 2007; Mish, 2007). As the meaning of modernity and being modern are assumed, established and acknowledged by reviewing an individual’s aspirations, subscription, and reactions to the elements of modernity, along with media projected cosmopolitan lifestyles, and global material culture, in twenty-first century every nook and corner of the Indian society has started to experience modest structural and greater socio-economic

transformations (Fernandes, 2006; Varma, 2007; Mish, 2007). Such transformations give rise to ideological tensions in everyday life, i.e., tensions arising within family and gender rearrangements, tensions that prevail surrounding consumption practices, and most importantly tensions caused by the willingness to join the global consumption fair (Üstüner and Holt, 2010; 2007; Lash and Lury, 2007; Mish, 2007).

Due to the socio-economic and marketplace reformations, by the mid-1990s, the resonance of Hamara Bajaj became faded, as consumer preferences in India moved towards commuter and fast paced motorbikes within the two-wheeler segment. Bajaj particularly struggled to adapt to this cultural shift for nearly half a decade as the market leader Hero Honda captured the commuter motorbike sector with their own set of cultural engagement - "Hero Honda Dhak Dhak" [the 'Hero Honda Dhak Dhak (lub-dub)' depicted their motorbikes as the beating heart of the nation]. However, by the turn of the century, globalisation and historical changes in India created demands for new cultural ideologies, supplying Bajaj with fresh opportunities to reincarnate its brand iconicity.

5.4.1 Cultural Disruption: Co-Authoring the Myth in the Time of Transition

The glory of Hamara Bajaj was not eternal as globalisation in India induced wider socio-economic disruptions destabilising the mythological promises made by old generation scooters. Here it seems appropriate to recall Holt (2004) who suggested that with greater social disruption, cultural brands fall into deep 'cultural chasms' losing their 'halo effect' and value propositions. Therefore, to understand the fate of

Bajaj in the post-globalisation era I interviewed Shan, the new account manager for Bajaj at Printas:

“By the time the second Hamara Bajaj campaign was produced, Bajaj itself had shifted from a scooter manufacturer to a motorbike manufacturer. The brand was divided into many individual motorbikes with different technologies and specs targeted towards a diverse market. This was indeed problematic as people saw the mother brand being divided into small individual pieces. Every individual motorbike had its own name and campaign handled by different agencies. This was indeed turning into an identity crisis for the company.”

- Shan

As the '90s open market introduced the very idea of consumerism to its full extent, rising economic affluence attracted many foreign players to the Indian two-wheeler market, i.e., Honda, Kawasaki, Vespa etc. As these competitors increasingly promoted the value of elegance and speed offered by motorbikes at an affordable price, with more and more people choosing to adopt new generation commuter motorbikes, Bajaj started to lose its ground once again. The rational value and technological advancements offered by these new generation commuter motorbikes were so powerful that it exceeded the ontological possibilities offered by the old generation scooters. In addition, within post-globalised society as the middleclass received more and more recognition as an attractive target market for national progress through consumption, the post-colonial cultural and ideological distress naturally faded away making the mythological appeals of Hamara Bajaj ineffective in capturing the imaginations of the new generation.

To cope with upwardly mobile consumption tastes amongst the new Indian middleclass, Bajaj overlooked their cultural strategy for a period and invested in a ‘better mousetrap’ approach, emphasising technological innovation. As a result, their focus on production and marketing gradually shifted from scooters to commuter motorbike series. Such a diversification strategy along with multiple brand messages issued by different ad agencies failed to supply one unique mythical allure for Bajaj to sustain its iconic stature for a prolonged period of time. As the National Brand Planning Director of Canvas India, Raju, stated:

“We dealt with few Bajaj accounts during the 1990s but gradually the company lost its interest in the motorbikes we were dealing with, they were more focused on launching new products and became less willing to invest in the existing accounts”

- Raju

“Can you remember what kind of Bajaj accounts you were dealing with during that time?”

- Interviewer

“As long as I remember we had three Bajaj accounts...Boxer, CT 100, and Cliber”

- Raju

As Shan and Raju suggested, with the change in competition and marketplace ideology, Bajaj had to shift its production category from old scooters to more technologically advanced commuter motorbikes. This move to introduce a new series of commuter motorbikes targeted towards different competitors and different

consumer markets led to the appointment of multiple advertising agencies who imposed their own creative logics and value propositions onto their assigned Bajaj two wheelers. According to Raju, Canvas was one of the agencies that dealt with three Bajaj commuter motorbike accounts during that time. Although Raju's involvement with Bajaj started in the post Hamara Bajaj era (mid 1990's onwards), unlike Parash and his team at Printas, he could only vaguely remember his and his team's involvement in creating and executing Bajaj advertisements. As the following field note suggests:

“After so many requests [Raju]...has failed to produce any documents related to his agency's work on Bajaj products. He showed me some advertisements from his archive but that was it. He seemed reluctant to talk about Bajaj and appeared to be more interested in talking about other campaigns and other products, especially Thums Up [Cola]. While, both, Printas and Prodigy have shown a great deal of interest and enthusiasm in sharing their experience of handling Bajaj. I wonder why it seems that the ad. agency Canvas is not equally passionate about theirs?”

- Kalyan, 26th Aug 2010 [Field Note]

On further investigation it was clear that Canvas was unable to parallel Printas' efforts surrounding the brand. As I revisited the Bajaj commuter motorbike campaigns shown to me by Raju, it appeared that Canvas' commercials completely drifted from the cultural and ideological values of the brand's iconic asset - 'Hamara Bajaj'. Their multiple communicative agendas were extremely diverse, utilitarian, sometimes emotional, and individual product focused. For example, for years, their Bajaj Boxer

advertisements targeted utilitarian desires of rural class by promoting the commuter motorbikes' ability to carry more and more people faster than bicycles or scooters. Their advertisements projected motorbikes as emerging commuter concepts that were fast, durable, economic, and technologically advanced. Occasionally individualistic (not collective) emotional or aspirational appeals were inserted in these advertisements, but these elements were exclusively focused on rural class aspirations rather than the middleclass [see Figure 5.3], i.e., the dream of having enough money to buy a motorbike and travel further than the village and join city life. There was no image signification of the name Boxer, there was no cultural signification of the middleclass and their historic or futuristic desires, neither was there a sense of citizenship applied to connect with wider India. Within a globalised marketplace, while the Indian middleclass was dreaming about joining the global consumption fair, such a backward move by Canvas had obvious consequences for the brand.

Figure 5.3: Bajaj at Canvas: Misreading Middleclass Aspirations through Rural Dream



Raju claimed that most of their Bajaj campaigns were “technically successful” in creating awareness and generating revenue, but in reality such a shift in cultural and political logic saw Bajaj losing its widespread cultural appeal throughout the nation. Therefore, in Raju’s eyes the facts and figures in production and sales data may have presented a success story but every brand that sells and makes a profit does not automatically gain iconic stature (see Holt, 2004). None of my respondents were able to recall any of the Boxer or CT 100 advertisements, let alone describe the influence of these adverts towards their perception of brand Bajaj.

Such an unpredicted downfall of Bajaj’s iconic value recalls Holt’s (2004, p.39) account in which he predicted the appearance of inevitable morbid stages in an iconic brand’s lifecycle - “myth markets are routinely destabilized by cultural disruptions”. Similarly, as the mythological claims made by the old Hamara Bajaj failed to find cultural and political ground in post-globalised India Bajaj lost its widespread iconic appeal to the nation. According to Shan Bajaj failed to recover from this “identity crisis” for a long time because of their own product diversification policies, in reality factors that contributed towards this downfall also included agencies like Canvas’ inability to foresee and rejuvenate Bajaj’s cultural legacies. On this topic, Parash (head of old Hamara Bajaj campaign) admitted:

“Hero Honda has always been Bajaj’s main competitor. They did not enter the mass scooter market, rather they were always focused on motorcycles. When the motorcycles became popular, Bajaj was slow in adapting into that market but Hero

Honda was very steady and aggressive...like Hamara Bajaj their Dhak Dhak [lub dub – beating heart] campaign stood out and won many, many Indians.”

- Parash

Therefore, as the wide spread cultural disruptions brought by the ‘90s open market in India made it difficult for Bajaj to sustain its iconic value both on technological and cultural grounds, competitors like Hero Honda who had a long-term vision and adaptation policy to combat socio-economic and cultural instability became the new iconic two-wheeler brand. From a cultural point of view, Bajaj’s demotion appears more fundamental as with the decrease in demand for scooters, Bajaj undermined their most valuable asset: middleclass Indians. As the company moved on to capture new consumer segments with new production and organisational ideologies, they left a valuable cultural space open to be subjugated by the rival companies. As an established player in the commuter motorbike segment, Hero-Honda was first to reclaim that cultural space by putting collective middleclass aspirations at the heart of their campaign - “Hero-Honda: The Heart Beat of the Nation”. Rather than sending out diverse messages Hero-Honda’s campaign focused on presenting a united image of their motorbike brands, seen through the collective aspirations of a forward thinking nation [see Figure 5.4].

Figure 5.4: Hero Honda: Reclaiming Bajaj's Cultural Space through Emerging Middleclass Ideology



Therefore, throughout the mid '90s Bajaj continued to lose its appeal to the nation and it was not until the end of '90s when Shan and his team realised there was a need to rejuvenate the brand by reclaiming its cultural expression:

“...this was indeed turning into an identity crisis for the company. We were still dealing with Bajaj, it was kind of our [agency's] grandchild...so we proposed let's make it easier for customers by bringing all the brands together. So we produced Hamara Bajaj, part two”

- Shan

Although Shan indicated that the production of the second Hamara Bajaj campaign was a solution to the brand's identity crisis, but the logic behind his understanding appears to be driven by traditional marketing practice. Shan and his team decided to give new life to their agency's “grandchild” with a revised version of Bajaj's old mythical allure in the form of – the ‘New Hamara Bajaj’ or ‘Hamara Bajaj part two’. Although this campaign shares its thematic identity with its predecessor (the original Hamara Bajaj campaign), there was something significantly different. While the previous version tried to send a message of peace and national integrity, the new version parted from this message by highlighting evolving tensions and disjuncture within an emerging society. In this case, the storyline followed and presented a series of vignettes from everyday life but rather than projecting scooters and typical post-colonial middleclass life on the centre frame, Printas decided to replace it by showcasing emerging contradictions in modern life.

5.4.2 Advancing the Myth: Composing Cultural Brief for Mythological Reincarnation

The new Hamara Bajaj commercial begins with strong metallic rock background music showing a macho young man cruising through a remote highway to the unknown, on his ‘aggressively masculine motorbike’ (Willis, 1978) named *Bajaj Eliminator*. His clothing, jeans and a t-shirt signify modernity and upper class taste mobility, whilst his flapping leather jacket makes a statement of ‘personal freedom’ in contrast to the collective freedom signified in the previous version by flying doves. His stylish helmet, boots and sunglasses not only supply a sense of arrogance and profanity, but it was a symbolic rebirth of Indian men with a sense of strength and control over the self as an agency (see Willis, 1978; Bellaby and Lawrenson, 2001). Here the combination of man and machine creates a sense of ‘agency’ foregrounding cosmopolitan taste through the consumption of ‘automobility’. The name of the motorbike - *Eliminator* – itself projected a sense of separation (as opposed to integrity) by trying to eliminate the rider from the hegemony of society. Just when the audience starts to think that such a stylish, assertive version of masculinity is an “imported image”, making obscure statements against tradition and morality, the young man slows down and offers a tribute to god as he passes a roadside Hindu temple, asserting that his experimental identity remains rooted to the norms and values of traditional Indian society.

In the next scene, the background metallic rock music continues as the camera follows a gang of youths, dressed in black leather, black sunglasses, with stylish long hair, macho earrings, and chains, who appear to be on a mission to solidify their ontological security by taking part in rebellious or even profane activities [see Figure

5.5]. As they slowly walk towards their Boxer motorbikes, a sense of vengeance prevailed for the first time, paralleling a morbid perception of violence, death, and excitement to be delivered as ‘new experiences’ to Indian audiences (see Willis, 1978; Bellaby and Lawrenson, 2001; Holmes, 2007). Their attitude in conjunction with the name of the motorbikes – *Boxer* – projected an image of fighters or warriors. However, just as the audience starts to think that this is a bold abstraction of profanity and Hollywood-style ghetto culture that completely desolates the very idea of non-violence in Indian manhood, one of the gang members accidentally touches the leg of another member with his own. Such an act is considered to be extremely disrespectful and arrogant in Indian culture, but rather than getting involved in a fight or some reckless profane activity the man offers respect to his fellow for the mistake, just like a traditional non-violent Indian man keeping alive Gandhian ideologies by contradicting his apparent machismo desires.

The next set of vignettes presents a modern Indian couple wearing western clothes (and not traditional garments) riding along the city road on a motorbike called *Bajaj Calibre* showing affection and intimacy towards each other in public. Their fashion, style and attitude along with the name of the motorbike - *Calibre* – projects a sense of being carefree and ignorant to the restrictions of traditional society. Just when the audience starts to question the cultural sovereignty of modern youth in India, the couple sees an elderly person on the street and immediately separate from each other showing respect to traditional values and norms. In the following scene, two reckless riders race with each other along narrow neighbourhood alleys wearing jeans and black helmets. Their reckless attitude along with faces covered by black helmets projects a sense of negativity with violent and antisocial motives. While the audience

starts to think that western norms may have seriously started to threaten the very foundation of Indian society, the riders suddenly encounter a piece of folk art called *Rangoli* crafted on the street. These traditional crafts are made by families during religious festivals to symbolise prosperity and good luck. Undermining or destroying these pieces of work means showing disregard to tradition and culture. But as the reckless riders stumble upon a *Rangoli* they slow down and carefully ride past making sure that this historic marker of tradition is not disrespected. Until the end the new version of Hamara Bajaj surprises the audience by showing the tensions evolving in Indian society through the dichotomy between past and future, modernity and tradition, and the new possibilities filtered through the glories of the past. There was no visual or auditory reference to a new dawn or a new beginning, rather in this case it was about catching up with the progress, leaving tradition behind (not completely), and having the ability to accept and welcome a new future without violating the nation's traditional integrity, i.e., becoming modern and mature through adaptation while preserving faith and respect for tradition.

Figure 5.5: The Visual Iconography of New Hamara Bajaj







In order to understand the transformed cultural and political logic behind this campaign as presented through unique themes of duality and apprehension, instead of peace, unity, and secularity as documented within the old Hamara Bajaj, I reflect back on Shan's interview:

“Hamara Bajaj has always been a reflection of current mood in the country. You take it twenty-five to thirty years back, at that point in time foreign companies started to come into India, they were merging with Indian companies...especially in the two-wheelers division. Scooter used to be the popular two wheeler vehicle in India...it was for normal everyday people, and motorbikes like Enfield Bullet, Raajdoot, Yazdi used to be a elite kind of thing at that time. Having an Enfield was like possessing a mini elephant. Then the 100cc Japanese bikes were made available to the masses and people felt like, wow, hey man now I can even afford and ride a motorbike. But there was a significant chunk of people who still believed old is gold, this is exactly why our agency came with the first Hamara Bajaj campaign...our seniors felt the mood of the country at that time and reflected that in Hamara Bajaj...the majority of the people believed Indian scooters were far better than adopting flimsy foreign motorbikes and the changes that are happening around us.”

- Shan

Shan’s comments here not only verify the strategic fit of old Hamara Bajaj to its intended target market as described by Parash and his team, but he further indicates how Printas identified a large section of the market (middleclass) that wasn’t addressed by the low tech Japanese motorbikes or the “elegant Enfield”. As result, the creative inspiration for old Hamara Bajaj originated from the cultural and ideological beliefs of its target market (middleclass) who “still believed old is gold” (Shan), and since then, it has become an organisational practice at Printas to locate cultural and political resources for Bajaj’s iconicity deep within the country’s “current mood”.

Here, it is important to recall Albert and Whetten (1985) as these authors suggested that successful organisational practices often become shared understandings between members when they are perceived to be central and distinctive logic of an organisation's identity and work culture. Such a philosophy parallels Printas' approach towards rejuvenating the iconic legacies of Bajaj. As Shan indicated, even before looking into the creative possibilities for the new Hamara Bajaj campaign, his team was fully aware of the conceptual underpinning of the original Hamara Bajaj that had already become a central legacy of Printas' claim on the brand.

According to Cayla and Peñaloza (2012), advertising agencies offer prime examples of '*fundamental organisational flexibility*' or '*strategic adaptation*' because they routinely engage in market learning processes to adapt their creative endeavours in line with transforming consumer aspirations. However, in Printas' case, it appears that the grand success of Bajaj and other iconic commercials created a cogent of pre-determined creative logic, forcing the next generation of creatives to conceptualise how particular brands should retain their unique identities and characteristics by building on existing legacies (see Padamsee, 1999). As a result, Shan and his team did not think about building new creative or ideological parameters for their proposed new advertising campaign, instead the team decided to revitalise the conceptual summary of old Hamara Bajaj by following the strategic, creative, and cultural foundations laid by their predecessors.

5.4.3 Deconstructing the Cultural Authority of New Hamara Bajaj

“An icon must possess integrity” (Holt, 2004, p.189) by keeping its value propositions consistent with renewed mythical beliefs. Whilst creating a potential [commercial] culture myth is not easy, managing the underlying values of an existing myth is indeed more challenging (Holt, 2004). Even some of the well-known historic brands such as Mountain Dew, Budweiser and Volkswagen had routinely struggled to either “milk the myth” or to “pursue the next big trend” and fought for survival for many years (ibid). A similar trend can be identified within Bajaj’s historic struggle and revival strategies. While asked about the creative inspiration behind the new campaign, Shan replied:

“The idea for second Hamara Bajaj campaign was developed on the clash between the older generation and the younger generation....like most of the time you will hear an elderly person blaming the new generation for being funky and independent....but it’s not their fault...today’s generation is growing up in a different environment so their thoughts and behaviours are different, but will they leave their family for that? No! Will they stop being Indians? No...that was our main point. We used the motorbikes as a medium and showed that, despite copying all the Western outfits and Western attitudes, the new generation was purely traditional at their heart. There were four macho guys ready to board their motorbikes, they put their legs across, but accidentally one of them kicked another, but without breaking out into an uncivilised fight, the guy sincerely apologised to others...this is a very Indian kind of thing. When you are riding your motorbike in a narrow lane and you suddenly come across a rangoli, would you just ride over it and disrespect your culture because you are

modern? No! No way...so we showed how the rider respects the rangoli and goes around.”

- Shan

Here Shan’s explanation recalls Holt’s (2004) proposal where he describes: when a compelling myth runs out of value and appeal due to transforming socio-historic beliefs, brand managers and advertising agencies should focus on revitalising established values by using new cultural codes, whilst keeping the underlying cultural brief static. Therefore, as the mythical allure of Hamara Bajaj failed to capture the imagination of post-globalised India, Shan and his team insisted on re-mythologising the company through a ‘*pushing buzz*’ approach – a resurrected brand mythology that emphasises the most memorable aspects of the older one (see Holt, 2004, p.190). As Printas had a successful pre-determined cultural logic set for Bajaj, the new campaign focused only on assembling old legacies with new cultural codes to craft a new direction for the brand. However, in their effort to find new ideological ground for cultivating new cultural codes, instead of targeting Holt’s described emerging or ‘*better ideologies*’ (emerging cosmopolitanism in India), Shan and his team decided to aim at the crossroads of tensions arising from the ideological confrontation between post-colonial and neo-liberal models of middleclass manhood.

While searching for new sets of cultural and political authorities for the new campaign, Shan and his team could have conventionally aimed to satisfy the emerging middleclass dream of status reflection through global consumption (as Üstüner and Holt, 2010; Cayla and Elson, 2012; Mazzarella, 2006). Accordingly, the team could have transformed Bajaj into a mythical platform for joining the global commodity and

culture economy that middleclass Indians had long waited for. Instead, as ‘close and critical agents’ for learning the market transformation process (Cayla and Elson, 2012; Mazzarella, 2006; Padamsee, 1999), deep inside Shan and his team realised that addressing India’s emerging cosmopolitan dream singlehandedly would not only wipe out the brand’s long history and tradition, but would also exclude the historic authenticity of scooters as seen through the novelty of the original Hamara Bajaj. In addition, the team also realised that the emerging idea of cosmopolitanism is an aesthetic or superficial makeover for the middleclass. In reality, these new middleclass dreams do not necessarily reflect a desire to challenge traditional beliefs, neither are they an attempt to inscribe new meanings to nationalism for staging cosmopolitan movements. Rather, they are “the [prolong] dream of consumerist globalization” that aligns ‘home’ and ‘outside’ through utopian embodiment of ‘local’ (Mazzarella, 2006).

Therefore, in adapting emerging Western notions, with a commitment to avoid contesting traditional and patriotic elements of their advertisements, Shan and his team prepared a ‘*zone of continuous engagement*’ within the new Hamara Bajaj campaign (Holt, 2004). They drew upon a series of contrasting cultural expressions engaging post-colonial and post-globalised ideological discourses within a single frame of interplay (Mankekar, 1999). For example, while the Eliminator rider pretended to become disengaged from the hegemonic society and the idealised model of post-colonial masculinity as his speed, appearance, and attitude made repeated statements of personal freedom or emancipation, in reality he could not undermine traditional beliefs when challenged to withdraw his cultural origin. Similarly, the couple on the Caliber motorbike may have been influenced by the media portrayal of

Western culture where getting intimate in public is a fashionable, regular and acceptable social practice, but when challenged by year old tradition (facing an old man), rather than being provocative, the couple immediately showed respect towards the elderly by separating from each other. Until the end, the advertisement not only presented a series of tensions emerging from disagreements between the past and the present, but it has equally offered relief to audiences by assuring that such incompatibilities only reemphasise the nation's capability in becoming accountable on the global stage without compromising traditional morals or principles.

In addition to this visual promise, the jingle and the background music further emphasise this idea. Whilst the old Hamara Bajaj sung the folklore of heritage, tradition and unity, the background song for the new Hamara Bajaj advert presented a more realistic tale of stronger India.

“We are changing here. The land, sky and universe are changing with us, this is a new future, this is our future, this is a new era, this is our era. New India, the stronger India has a new picture, a stronger picture - our Bajaj (Hamara Bajaj)”

– **Jingle from New Hamara Bajaj Campaign (2000)**

The fusion of strong metal and placid Indian music in the background clarified the true meaning of being a ‘new Indian’, led by the new values parallel to the new image of brand Bajaj. Here, the fusion of past and present paints a strong picture of India, a nation that not only capitalises on its centuries old glorious history and tradition, but also has the ability to change and adapt to the new “land, sky, and [the] universe”.

The advertisement signified India as a nation that seeks to be recognised by the world, not by adoption but through adaptation stemming out of its indigenous culture.

5.4.4 Mythologising Hybridity: The Post-Globalisation Political Authority for Reanimating the Nation

According to Holt (2004) alongside cultural authority, a brand's widespread iconic appeal also comes from its underlying political authority, which remains subliminal within a nation at a given time. After learning the cultural vernacular of 'hybridity' in globalised India, in addition to consumers and advertising agencies' interpretation of the term for personal and commercial benefit, I set out to identify the underlying political authority that rejuvenated the nationalistic tone of Hamara Bajaj once again in the post-globalised period. Here it is important to recall Mazzarella and Cayla, both, as after scrutinising the 'creative' and 'aesthetic politics' of Indian advertising agencies they stated that rather than resolving emerging socio-cultural tensions in post-globalised India, advertising agencies in India took advantage of this disjuncture by conceptualising them as "idioms of aspiration" (see Mazzarella, 2006, p. 118). Through the market learning and adaptation processes, advertising agencies in post-globalised India not only turned themselves into 'brokers' for the emerging consumer class, but they also presented themselves as 'local professional specialists' or 'cultural guides' for the multinationals willing to enter India (see Mazzarella, 2006, p.234-235). Such an opportunistic cultural creativity promised to comply with consumer preferences at the crossroads of post-colonial and neo-liberal thoughts in India.

To understand this creative politics I explored the role of advertising agencies in manipulation and application of ‘hybridity’ as contemporary dual logic for post-globalised consumer culture. Here the second Hamara Bajaj campaign served as a vital reference point where Shan and his team appear to have heavily relied on this dual logic. On one hand, the new Hamara Bajaj had a strong claim on its historic and cultural past, affiliated with the nation and its patriotic values, on the other hand the advertisement offered a unique mythological passage for experiencing market-led ‘self-transformation’ (McCracken, 2008). Such an application of visual (and audial) cultural hybridity created a double logic that not only dignified the cultural foundations of the new middleclass, but also supplied them with a passage to liberate themselves from the tensions induced by the onset of modern lifestyles. When asked about the politics behind the emerging practice of such dual logic in post-globalisation Indian advertising, Shan responded:

“No, I don’t think there was any political inspiration as such. We wanted to present a new face of India as Bajaj itself had a new makeover with the motorbikes. So the parity between India and Bajaj was there but our target market was diverse. It could be an eighteen-year-old young person or a forty-five year old mature family man. Handling this dilemma was a little bit difficult but we addressed this diversity by showing the younger generation’s aspirations...what they aspire to be, how they want to be different from their parents,...we equally showed how these people were proud to be Indian. The whole campaign was planned on this script, there was no other external or...political influence.”

- Shan

Therefore, like Parash and Prabhu, Shan repeatedly brought up the cultural affiliation of the new Hamara Bajaj campaign within a transforming society, denying any conscious political metaphor being used within the campaign. Like his predecessors at Printas, his overview of the campaign appeared to be fixated on a set of cultural authorities surrounding their target market.

In my endeavor towards the interpretation of political authority within the new campaign the primary political appeal that became apparent was renegotiation of the term – ‘Hamara’ (our) – for the second time. In the earlier section (Chapter 5.3.3) I discussed how the term ‘Hamara’ found its meaning signification within colonial politics and the National Congress’ call for independence movement, i.e., during the pre-independence era the phrase acted as both a call to reunite (collectivise) and reclaim (possess) the nation from colonial power, while in the post-colonial era, reinsertion of the term within the old Hamara Bajaj campaign supplied an ideological foundation for rejuvenating a fragmented nation from political hegemonies of rising religious nationalism (see Chapter 5.3.3).

In contrast, within the second Hamara Bajaj campaign, the term ‘Hamara’ received a different meaning signification, separate from its historic use and association. Despite retaining its collectivist tone, this time the phrase appeared to be an assertion, rather than an appeal, that found its political authority within the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) government’s effort to ‘showcase’ a new liberalised India to the world (Fernandes, 2006). When the second Hamara Bajaj campaign was launched, post-globalised India had not only become much stronger and more united compared to its post-colonial past, but the nation was ready to embark on a journey to re-

establish India's position amongst the global leaders (Varma, 2007; Nayar, 2001; Perkovich, 2000; Gupta, 2000). Hence, the new Hamara Bajaj was a claim, a statement, to the world that the sixty year old aspiration to establish Gandhian self-reliance had finally materialised. Today's India is not only a progressive and self-resilient nation but it is ready to compete with the world - a claim that also finds its ground on the new managing director Rajiv Bajaj's vision (see Chapter 5.5 and 5.6).

Therefore, in the making of second Hamara Bajaj, once again the concept of nationalism was culturally reinvigorated and politicised within the boundaries of Printas and released to the world as the voice of an emerging nation. This was indeed a conscious (or unconscious) strategic effort by Printas to re-inject 'pride' into the nation, once again, through Bajaj's political affiliations.

"We...showed that these people were proud to be Indian"

- Shan

In addition to politicising the word Hamara, on reflection, it became apparent that, unlike the old Hamara Bajaj, the new campaign had multiple political dimensions that utilised 'hybridity' as one of the important foundational concepts. As globalisation spurred an increased interconnection between societies, cultures, economies, and marketplace commodities, advertising agencies in India felt increased pressure to commodify the juxtaposition between the traditional 'home' and the 'outside' world ideology (Cayla and Elson, 2006; 2012). Hence post-1990, India saw an increased animation of the dual logic of 'hybridity' as a key cultural and political trope. As Shan denied conscious assimilation of 'hybridity' as the new politics of

representation, I recall Bobby's (Executive Creative Director, South Asia, Prodigy) interview, who not only appeared to have more experience in the advertising industry compared to Shan, but he definitely had a better understanding of the socio-political dynamics of globalisation in India.

“I joined this industry in a pre-globalisation phase and I have been in this industry throughout the entire phase of so called globalisation. Throughout my working career what I have realised is that the Indian consumers have multiple existences...and this diversity is increasingly growing. When I am producing a commercial for Ponds, I always need to be careful about the fact that my campaign should appeal to those people who are very traditional and also to those who are very liberal. I think what has changed is that today's commercials are much more tricky. Because of increasing exposure to satellite televisions, consumers' expectations of imagery are becoming more and more tricky. They are all exposed to MTV and they will not accept any shoddy looking imagery that has no personification value in today's world.”

- Bobby

Therefore, the vision of new India manifested within the policies of economic liberalisation produced citizenship ideologies centred on consumption culture, where images of newly available commodities served as an important route to the world (Gupta, 2000; Mish, 2007). In addition, television and print media both increasingly contributed towards the production of citizen consumer ideologies inspired by the political vision of a consumption led world (Fernandes, 2000; Meijer, 1998; Pendakur, 1991; Rajagopal, 2001; Mankekar, 1999). Such prolonged visual representation of newly available global commodities not only provided a lens

through which the urban middleclass attached new meanings to their class, consumption and identity, according to Bobby, in post-globalised India these images of transformation also became a critical site for negotiating identity where individual consumers chose to accept or reject new relationships between the local and the global based on their own ideological reasoning (see Chapter 6). Therefore...

“Westernising India doesn’t mean people will buy straight into western ideas. There needs to be some sort of Indianess to it otherwise the majority will turn away...I think these consumers want a balance...they certainly want to follow the westerners in certain aspects like clothing, food, music etc. If you talk to a lot of these people, you will be quite surprised to see that they might be wearing all those black rockstar outfits and grooming themselves in a very western way, but they only talk the talk of West...still family and tradition comes first, and showing respect to parents becomes priority. You will find these people are not ready to walk out of the family to lead an individualistic life.”

- Bobby

As Bobby described: “Westernising India doesn’t mean people will buy straight into western ideas”, in post-globalised India critical to a brand’s iconicity depends on an agency’s capability in recognising and producing cultural and symbolic repertoires concealing the ideological disagreements between local and global. As a result, advertising agencies in post-globalised India repeatedly referred to a hybrid model of the ‘cosmopolitan Indian’ (Cayla, 2002) as a force, a prototype, a representation that harmonises the emerging socio-cultural disjuncture by protecting indigenous taste, capital, and identity on one hand (Bajaj as a representative of old heritage and

national identity), while authorising access to the symbols, commodities, and capitals of global consumption fair on the other. That is why the logic of the new Hamara Bajaj told a story of adaptation and perseverance where the middleclass were allowed to feel a moment of independence, or reckless virility by imagining themselves as agents of transformation. However, in reality, these imaginings were strictly dominated by the nation's heritage and authenticity that did not allow them to escape the society they live in. This politics of representation through 'hybridity' was visible everywhere in the second Hamara Bajaj campaign, for example, on one hand the Eliminator rider's desire to become emancipated from everyday social hegemony, on the other hand he demonstrated how his cultural roots were strictly tied to traditional society. Equally, the Boxer gang might indulge in wearing Western profanity, but on balance they only signified the non-violent image of Gandhi.

Here, Gupta (2000) rightly pointed out that the route to modernity was mistaken by allowing the sudden influx of global commodities. The 1990s market reformation allowed wider access to material culture and commodity images from the west, but at the same time the secular government tried to protect and intensify distinctive traditions and the value of indigenous culture. This strategy was intended to align India with other progressive nations while its foundational values were protected in silence, however, in reality such a move created hegemonic domains of nationalism resulting into a series of disjuncture in everyday life (Chatterjee, 1993). Therefore, as the middleclass became more and more lucrative targets for the government to attract global investments and other market forces, they became victims of portrayal to the world in westernised or cosmopolitan images. However, the parallel existence of indigenous boundaries restricted the extent of an individual's subscription to the

global economy, creating a disjuncture for ideological struggle within a ‘third space’ (Gupta, 2000; Fernandes, 2006). Hence, advertising in post-globalised India was full of Western references, but at the same time the creative industry had to master the craft of identifying and drawing distinctions between the ‘home’ and the ‘world’ dichotomy (also see Cayla and Elson, 2012).

5.5 Future of Bajaj at Printas

In the previous section I discussed how the second Hamara Bajaj campaign rekindled the nationalistic sentiment left by the legacies of old Hamara Bajaj. While Shan and his team saw it as a...

“Grand success because...[the advertisement]...recognised the mentality of modern India...[and]...heavily contributed towards the sales figures”

- Shan

...the new generation Bajaj consumers perceived it as a medium for reinvigorating old memories through a new vision of India (see Chapter 6). The campaign presented Bajaj motorbikes as commodities of the future with a vision to build a stronger India stemming out of the cultural logic accumulated from the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ world (see Chapter 5.4). In doing so, the advertisement referred to the emerging ideological confrontations and its resolution through the cultural capital of ‘hybridity’ by using it as a metaphor for a ‘stronger India’. Although the second Hamara Bajaj campaign was a serial effort to extend the old Hamara Bajaj myth, the underlying story was excessively focused on ‘chasing trends’ rather than resolving ideological

incompatibilities. As a result, the campaign experienced a short-lived glory (less than one year) as the ‘insider’ credibility quickly ran out portraying Bajaj as a ‘*cultural parasite*’ of the nation (see Holt, 2004).

After this failure the fate of Bajaj at Printas was quite obvious. The agency never received any further requests to renew the legacy of Hamara Bajaj. As the Bajaj management started to realise the aftermath of the second Hamara Bajaj on numeric and analytical grounds, the company started to believe in more diversification strategy rather than integration.

“In just three months from now, 'Hamara Bajaj' could become 'Hamara Pulsar' or 'Hamara Discover'. And the man presiding over this mega transition will be none other than a Bajaj himself Bajaj Auto Managing Director Rajiv Bajaj. The country's second biggest two-wheeler maker with a market cap of Rs 37,800 crore (Rs 378 billion) is undergoing the most radical change after the three-way split of the company nearly four years ago.”

- Rediff Business [Online Source, 2011]

As the Rediff Business News (2011) suggests, with increased complexities and strategic challenges the company decided to branch out from its historic propositions of a united brand for a united India, and immersed itself in a ‘consumerist vision’ by splitting into three different production categories of automobiles. In the managing director’s eyes such a strategic move was essential because:

“Markets are shaped by customers more than they are by manufacturers. We have operated in the Indian market for 65 years—we are part of it, have grown with it, and

we understand it intimately. And that hasn't changed just because India is now the world's second-largest motorcycle market, and perhaps its most profitable one. Our competence has been shaped at the crossroads of a market characterized by...consumer expectations of high-quality, durable vehicles. We're the player that reflects this market.”

- Rajiv Bajaj [McKinsey Quarterly (2010)]

“You say that markets are shaped by customers, yet, of course, manufacturers also play a role in driving consumer demand. You've created and put together some terrific brands in India and on a global level. What aspirations of consumers are you trying to meet and surpass?”

- The Quarterly Interviewer [McKinsey Quarterly (2010)]

“There are two kinds of global motorcycle makers: niche, with often unsustainable scale; or mass, with commoditized brands. Our strategy hinges on bringing together the best of both worlds, so that more consumers may be able to experience the pride of owning an aspirational motorcycle brand.”

- Rajiv Bajaj [McKinsey Quarterly (2010)]

Therefore, according to Rajiv, adapting Bajaj to transforming consumer characteristics in India required aligning the company's philosophical approach in line with the global marketplace. He insisted that after more than a decade of open market along with culture and commodity based influences the middleclass in India

was ready to embark on a new experience of two-wheeler consumption, hence the ‘three way split’ with an individual strategic focus on both the mass and niche markets within the two-wheeler segment (the third segment was focused on three wheelers). As part of this initiative, Bajaj introduced two flagship models Discover and Pulsar, targeted at mass commuters and niche bikers respectively. To combine the “best of both worlds” these two models were built on Bajaj’s new landmark technology DTS-i (Digital Twin Spark Ignition System). Whilst the technological makeover of these two models was almost the same (although Pulsar was more advanced and sophisticated), their pricing, promotion, and product placement took different angles. While Discover appeared to be a stylish and sophisticated version of earlier generation commuter motorbikes, Pulsar defined “a new consumer category” [Jivan] with new consumption style (see Chapter 5.6).

Despite the ideological failure (not necessarily a commercial failure) of the second Hamara Bajaj campaign, the company’s long term relationship with Printas meant that the agency received a new proposal to create a distinct brand image for the new commuter motorbike – *Discover*. As the managing director vowed to create a futuristic vision for the company by bringing ‘globalness’ to the motorbikes and the brand, according to Shan, the product itself was designed to be “modern and stylish with world-class technology”. However when it came to designing image, identity, and positioning strategies for *Discover*, once again Printas proved that their creative efforts were rather “captives of their [own] past” living in the dream of Hamara Bajaj (Bartlett and Ghoshal, 1989, p.195). Instead of representing Bajaj’s new vision – an image of cosmopolitanism or the new global image of the brand - Shan and his team

came up with a series of instrumental stories procuring nationalism as a commodity sentiment for the mass, i.e., “Discover India with the power of one litre” (strapline).

The ‘*Discover India*’ campaigns were headed by Shan with much of the team from the second Hamara Bajaj campaign working on this project, but in their effort to negotiate the brand’s identity the team completely overlooked the commodity aspects of style and technology. Instead the team decided to build the brand by targeting everyday utilitarian spots along with a pro-nationalistic undertone, i.e., how to “Discover India on one Litre” of fuel. In Hackly and Kover’s (2007) description disagreements between parent companies and advertising agencies materialise when “creative milieu...conflicts with the commercial milieu”. I wanted to understand the reason for such a disagreement that led Shan and his team to choose utility and nationalism as a source for image negotiation over technology, aesthetics, or other commercial realities described by the managing director.

“A Discover owner is very different from a Pulsar owner. Pulsar is...a chick magnet...but Discover is a family brand...a person who is mature and who uses his motorbike for his daily requirements. You can't explain technology to these consumers. You can only explain the manifestation of a technology...it can be either in terms of power or in terms of milage. So we decided to go for the milage aspect and came up with the 'Discover India' campaign.”

- Shan

Here, Shan’s analogy for the ‘*Discover India*’ campaign actually made a very good case for the inescapable weight of history that usually gets lost in the cosmopolitan

dreams of the twenty-first century. One after another, the *Discover India* campaign presented a series of vignettes related to historic and cultural wonders of India, i.e., a Vedic Village where people still speak pure ancient Sanskrit instead of renowned national language Hindi; or a remote Indian village where houses were open planned without any physical doors or windows for protection because the villagers believe in ancient communal faith and trust that protects their community without the need for a physical barrier; or even the story of India's own Black village with an African population. In each case, these small vignettes came as an utter surprise even to the most traditional or knowledgeable Indian as people could barely imagine that the country is full of such hidden cultural wonders. Unlike the second Hamara Bajaj campaign, the '*Discover India*' campaign showed no sense of violence, vengeance, social rejection or style statement, neither was there a conflict or ideological battle. Rather, the plot attempts to engage even the most modern Indian with their cultural roots and make them feel proud of the nation. For example, one of the advertisements showed a young rider getting lost on his way to somewhere and taking a detour that lands him in a strange place within his own country and own state, but surprisingly the young man cannot understand the local language or the dialect. Then a background voice narrates: "Only in India one litre petrol can take you 3500 years back in time...Mathoor, 100 Kilometres from Mangalore, that means one litre petrol in Bajaj Discover DTS-i, a Vedic village where people...[still]...speak ancient Sanskrit...Discover India with the power of one litre". After the statement the young rider expresses his excitement and joy at finding such an ancient cultural root that the outside world or even India barely knows about. He bursts out in joy saying - "this is wonderful!".

In another storyline, a young city-dwelling couple set out for a weekend ride to a place called Sani Singapore, a place fairly well known for religious pilgrimages. From the beginning, the storyline shows how trust has become a major cause for concern in modern India as the couple lock their windows and doors properly and double-check everything before leaving the house. Throughout the journey, the couple are very protective about their luggage and possessions as they pass through unknown territories. However, as they get to their destination they are mesmerised by the fact that none of the houses in the village have any doors, windows, or other barriers. Then a background voice starts to narrate: “This is Sani Singapore, 100 kilometres from Aurangabad that means one litre of petrol in Bajaj Discover DTS-i, where the good will and the trust amongst people protect their homes, not wooden doors or windows. Discover India with the power of one litre”. After the statement the couple are left feeling mesmerised by being able to reunite with the values of trust and bonding that have become obsolete within modern Indian cities.

Such a collective vision of cultural engagement understood through the inescapable glory of history with objective possibilities created a consumerist ground for escaping contemporary cultural and political struggles triggered by the conflicting logics of colonial, postcolonial, and post-globalised society. Therefore, I wondered whether emphasising culture and nationalism over technology, aesthetics, and global competitiveness had an organised strategic intention stemming out of the Hamara Bajaj legacy. Here Shan’s narratives just reaffirmed my thoughts:

“The Discover brand is a reflection of typical India. The main idea came from the creative team, but the whole advertisement was a collective effort...There are several reasons why we came up with the '*Discover India*' tagline. One, it fitted very well with the brand's history and name...second, we wanted to highlight the milage aspect and we knew our consumers were heavy commuters, but rather than reflecting their daily life on these motorbikes, we decided to excite our targeted customers. So, rather than saying it's a high milage motorbike made to survive your day to day long commute, we said, yes we understand your daily routine and your busy lifestyle, but did you know that right outside the city, within a distance covered with a litre of fuel, there is the wonderful cultural past of our very own country. If you look at our advertisements...they always highlight a major city and then bring in an Indian cultural wonder that is almost within 100 kilometers of the city and unknown to the majority of the crowd, and shows how a litre of fuel in the Bajaj Discover could help them to Discover our past. So this is how we sold the story of milage.”

- Shan

Shan's explanation appeared to be schematic, manipulative and tactical related to a compelling practice of adding moral and emotive dimensions to advertising (Mazzarella, 2006). In doing so, Shan and his team constructed a new consumerist pledge, understood through alternative meanings of nationalism restored in the form of cultural heritage within a transforming society. This creative manipulation appears to be sceptical, arguably in two areas:

- I. Shan's ignorance towards Bajaj's futuristic vision of creating a world-class brand image (see Rajiv Bajaj's vision).
- II. Investing in the idea of "Indian-ness", once again, to set a nationwide appeal, instead of highlighting technological or aesthetic marvels.

In twenty-first century India, where consumers have the liberty and power to choose, buy, and associate themselves with global commodities and prestigious global brands, was it a good idea to tell them "I am Indian, therefore feel good about me and buy me"? (Mazzarella, 2006, p. 205).

The answer to this question, as it turns out, was yes – firstly, Shan described that despite advanced technological specifications, *Discover* was an object for mass consumption. It was a commuter motorbike that had to draw the attention of aspired middleclass city workers as well as the urban, suburban, or even rural family men. Therefore, instilling cosmopolitan appeal or highlighting advanced technological measures as an unique selling point for the product would have appeared 'impressionistic' - a mere juxtaposition of commodity and capitalism – not aligned with the totalising narratives of mass consumer ideology in India. A marvellous technological statement may have made sense to the city and urban customers but in the process, Shan would have overlooked a major section of the commuter motorbike market – the suburban and the rural customers. Therefore, rather than emphasising technology, Shan and the team decided to highlight the utilitarian value of the product with added sentiments of history and culture in order to level the playing field with Bajaj's cultural past. The strapline itself – "Discover India with the Power of One

Litre” – appears to be provocative, but value conscious at the same time. As Shan suggested:

“Discover riders are pure family men. Mature, hard working...earners for their families...mind their own business. Save every rupee for the future...basically they live a boring and routined life. So we told them once in a while why not feel that biker inside you...why not to pump up the accelerator, take some risks and explore...because it will only cost you one or two litres of petrol.”

- Shan

Therefore, inside the entire emotional outfit the *Discover India* campaign was actually full of rational promises. The campaign had two sides to it:

- I. Teaching consumers about technological advancement through the logic of cultural and utilitarian value.
- II. Provoking a sense of freedom and ruggedness through class assimilation (mass-market appeal).

As Parash suggested, Indian consumers are extremely value conscious. Although they may aspire to invest in global lifestyles and identity makeovers, deep inside utility and durability still plays a major part in their everyday lives (see Padamsee, 1999). Therefore, the story of mileage re-emphasised the utility and durability aspect of the new DTS-i technology in a provocative tone that challenged the very idea of an individual's citizenship and cultural roots by presenting them with a historic or cultural wonder that the nation was largely unaware of. The campaign also challenged the placid breadwinner role, that the majority of Indian men are forced to live in, by

encouraging them to set off on a journey to find their own cultural roots. For example, making a connection between today and 3500 year old history for the price of one litre of petrol presents exciting possibilities for a man and his family to indulge in finding the nation's cultural heritage with a promised destination (and not riding into the unknown) along with the assurance of safe return. Despite a mild rugged tone to the campaign these journeys are not shown to be endless, individualistic, or rebellious, as mature breadwinning men with family responsibilities may not be inclined to insurgent principles.

Therefore, although the *Discover India* campaign appears to be a logical extension of the Hamara Bajaj legacy ["The Discover brand is a reflection of typical India." – Shan], but not once does Shan refer to Hamara Bajaj or its manifesto as creative inspiration for Discover India. Rather, it was all about creating a profound experience of pride and curiosity amongst everyday commuters and breadwinners for fabricating emancipatory fantasies through Discover motorbikes.

"We owe special thanks to the National Geographic Channel and other documentaries that made us aware of these fabulous...wonders in India. We ran all the campaigns on...stimulus and we tried to create Déjà vu among our audiences...if you look closely at our advertisements then there is a very thin boundary between our campaigns and the Incredible India campaigns...the last thing we wanted to happen was for our audience to misinterpret our campaigns as an Incredible India advertisement. So even the cultural appeals were almost similar, we had to maintain a distance from Incredible India advertisement's logo, colour, classical dances etc. We just tried to tell surprising...stories from the past and present that made sense to

motorbike commuters. Interestingly, one of our clients who is actually from Junagrath tried to challenge us, asking if we were making up stories to sell the brand. Born and raised in Junagrath, he had never himself heard of any Indian village in Ahmedabad that has a black African population. I am sure it wasn't only him, a lot of people would have reacted in the same way. This is exactly what we wanted to do; we wanted to surprise people with a cultural fact on their door step that would made them feel 'wow'! That is why we came up with the slogan "Discover India with the power of one litre"

- Shan

Therefore, besides emotional and utilitarian appeal, the '*Discover India*' campaigns had a profound political meaning. The name of the motorbike – *Discover* - itself projects a sense of search, an effort to uncover reality, truth, or unexpected findings. Such an appeal could also be interpreted as an ontological search for one's self through discovery of one's true cultural, traditional and political roots. Although Shan admitted that, both visually and conceptually, the motorbike campaigns remained distant from the government's efforts to promote India's image to the world through 'Incredible India' tourism campaigns, yet in reality the creative elements of both of these campaigns remained the same – while the government insisted on selling India to the world, Shan and his team insisted on selling India to the Indians. But why create such a political "Déjà Vu" of cultural nationalism in the age of globalisation? Although Shan didn't give a direct response to this question, the answer could be identified in Mazzarella's (2006) comments describing how subscription to global commodities and marketplace culture only offer "second-class citizenship status in the global ecumene", as a result consumers assign deeply rooted values to something

that is locally attainable (Mauss, 1990). Therefore, production of ‘Indian Consumers’ as a culturally specific marketing category in the twenty-first century requires instilling an inner authenticity of citizenship by reconstructing the idea of nationalism as a subconscious commercial ideology for self-orientation. Printas’ philosophy on Bajaj appeared to be fixated on this concept, starting from the old Hamara Bajaj to the second Hamara Bajaj and beyond the advertising agency repeatedly politicised the idea of Indian nationalism within various socio-cultural discourses (also see Mazzarella, 2006). When this material embodiment of nationalism had a utopian connection with India’s wider socio-historic context and desired class politics, Bajaj became an icon to the nation, but whenever such cultural engagement failed to lessen the widespread burden of identity, Bajaj became an identity brand for mere self-expression. So, with the change in management vision and production philosophy did the new Discover campaigns help Bajaj to restore its long lost iconicity?

“A Discover is totally different from a Pulsar. We are talking about two different markets here. The young generation may be crazy for a Pulsar but our campaigns were successful in creating awareness and increasing sales within our target markets...I don’t know the exact figures but these two products have their own respective sales approach and sales targets and I am sure Bajaj is achieving that as we haven’t had any negative remark from the client.”

- Shan

Shan’s answer was rather subjective, without being conclusive. On reflection, it was indeed difficult to determine whether the *Discover India* campaigns were truly iconic and whether they rejuvenated Bajaj’s cultural status. All the primary respondents

(consumers) I spoke to gave a subjective opinion regarding their own Bajaj motorbikes and why it was better than any other motorbike in India, but there was no impartial conclusive statement from either the advertising executives or the consumers confirming the reincarnation of Bajaj's long lost glory through the Discover India campaigns. However, my combined observation and experience expressed through a field note offered the best empirical resource for retrospection:

“There is definitely a Pulsar craze across the country which seems to be growing everyday. Pulsar seems to be the new face of India where Discover only looks back to the past. Pulsar seems to be a dream not just to the young but to the aspirant bikers of any age, as the Pulsar appeal truly makes someone's age just a number. It is indeed a mania that defines someone's appearance, attitude, and lifestyle. It's like an object of transformation. In the past four to five weeks I didn't really experience any Discover craze as such, the Discover brand appears to be another Bajaj motorbike that carries the burden of history and culture from the past. It makes people nostalgic but does not inspire them as such. Pulsar appears to be an object of desire in contrast to Discover that appears to be a material object for need satisfaction.”

- Kolkata, 5th Oct 2010 [Field Note]

Being a non-Bajaj consumer along with my role as a *'participant observer'* (see Chapter 4.11), I believe my experience, observation, combined with the field note presents a strong case for comparing whether the Pulsar or the *Discover* campaigns were successful in restoring Bajaj's iconic status in twenty-first century India. According to the principles of cultural branding, an iconic brand achieves the 'best-in-

class identity' status by becoming an object of desire (Holt, 2004). From this perspective, *Pulsar* was more of an 'object of desire' than *Discover* considering its appeal and the high demand (see Chapter 5.6). On further analysis and reflection it was clear that, despite using nationalism as a product of cultural and political authority, '*Discover India*' campaigns were flawed on many levels as Shan and his team failed to realise that using emotion as an identity appeal is far less effective than using emotion as a '*fabric*' for healing ideological instability (see Holt, 2004). According to Holt (2004), brands that become icons usually tell a story of reconciliation, stories that ease wider cultural anxieties, stories that supply positive meaning to consumers' everyday struggle. While *Discover India* campaigns had storylines that immediately appealed to men in their breadwinner role, but the campaigns only provoked a sense of anticipation with limited possibilities of emancipation. For example, journeys on *Discover* led to a historic or cultural wonder that ultimately tied a rider to his traditional roots even more firmly, where the idea of travelling with family typically bound them back to their routine breadwinner identity crises. The only thing that remained was a false hope of escape and excitement commanded by a restrictive society and the rider's utilitarian vanity, both restricting the potential of these campaigns by nurturing the stigmas of breadwinner masculinity. Therefore, '*Discover India*' projected a sense of nostalgia, an emotion that certainly connected a citizen to their past, but the ideological revolution that could compel consumers to become 'cultural pilgrims' of a commercial product was nowhere to be seen as a result.

To summarise, since the downfall of the old Hamara Bajaj Printas has repeatedly struggled to replicate the iconic success of Bajaj. Despite the brand's technological

and visionary progress Printas' cultural manipulation appeared to be fixed on the central organisational idea of using 'nationalism' as a compelling culture led commodity expression (Luedicke et al., 2010; Zhao and Belk, 2009; Prideaux, 2009). At the dawn of the twenty first century, cultural nationalism in the form of the second Hamara Bajaj only acted as a commodity medium for reflecting identity and the politics of hybridity, while the *Discover India* campaign created nostalgic allures and reinvigorated the ideological struggles of breadwinner masculinity. To date, Discover remains Printas' final project for Bajaj but the emerging *Pulsar* craze I noted, during my time in India, has a different story to uncover.

5.6 Final Cut: Power, Performance, and Ruggedness – “Bajaj Pulsar: Definitely Male”

The imagination and onset of modernity is a complex affair (Hannerz, 1990). While the idea of national independence stands for the historic moment when India broke its social, cultural, and political ties with the colonial power, postcolonial India never managed to cease its ambivalent relationship with its colonial past (Cayla and Elson, 2006; Mazzarella, 2006). Therefore, under the influences of open market when a subject selectively acquires the practices and norms of the 'outside' world, whether through the forces of globalisation or under the influences of acquired cultural capital, a disjuncture between home and the world becomes prominent in their assertion. In the previous section I discussed how Printas made strategic use of these ideological disjuncture to rejuvenate Bajaj's cultural legacy within twenty-first century India, however, it is important to remember that chasing the trend to 'mirror' a society destroys the authenticity of a cultural brand (Holt, 2004). As cultural brands are founded on myths and not 'mirrors' an attempt to fabricate nationalism by emulating

recent trends makes an iconic brand culturally and politically untenable. A similar analogy can be identified within Bajaj's cultural struggle since mid 1990s when the mythical allure of old Hamara Bajaj ran out of its shelf life. In their second attempt Printas did try to restore Bajaj's iconic glory but over reliance on 'mirroring' the society destroyed the iconic potential of both, the second Hamara Bajaj and the Discover India campaign. Although due to the '*mindshare*' effect these campaigns experienced a short-lived glory, but these were rather a '*Pushing Buzz*' effort that did not match the quality or legacy of the original Hamara Bajaj appeal (see Holt, 2004, p.190). Therefore, in response Bajaj tried to survive this long-term crisis by renewing their ties with India's emerging consumer class. According to the new managing director Rajiv Bajaj's interview published in McKinsey Quarterly (2010):

“Over the past two decades, India has been progressively and significantly liberalized, both economically and socially. That has increased both the wealth and spending capacity of consumers, resulting in almost unparalleled market scale for consumer durables in general and automotive products in particular...For me, being an emerging-market champion means aligning the organization's ideas, energies, and resources toward building a few key motorcycle brands that, collectively, could make us one of the world's most comprehensive and profitable motorcycle makers. It means building and positioning Bajaj as a global motorcycle specialist and, given the rapid pace of evolution of our market, leveraging our expertise and experience to expand into emerging markets similar to ours.”

- Rajiv Bajaj [McKinsey Quarterly (2010)]

Such speculation into entering a new era with a new production and promotion philosophy, resulted in Bajaj coming up with a series of new generation motorbikes along with a new vision for the brand introduced at the beginning of twenty-first century (in the year 2000). Innovation of world-class technology (DTS-i) in addition to aesthetic design implementation saw Bajaj coming up with two distinct brand lines – the *Discover* and the *Pulsar*. While the *Discover*'s mass-market fate was sealed at Printas, the brand *Pulsar* took a completely different trajectory to win the nation's heart. In the National Creative Director's (Prodigy, India) words:

“...are you aware of what kind of a bike Pulsar is? It's a sports bike! India till then had only seen commuter bikes like 'Hero Honda Splendor', 'Passion' etc. Bajaj also had it's own range of commuter bikes, they had a bike called 'Boxer', they had a bike called 'Calibre'. But these were all low CC bikes, they were generally between 100 and 110 cc. Pulsar was launched as 180 and 150 cc bikes, it was in a way the start of the first sports biking or performance biking segment in India.”

- Jivan

Therefore, even in post-globalised India two-wheeler consumption was largely restricted within commuter-centric utilitarian values. Despite the direct and fierce competition between Bajaj and Hero-Honda, motorbikes that dominated the post-globalisation era had low power engines (100 – 110cc) matching the aspirations and capabilities of a developing nation. As post-globalisation recovery meant consumers had limited spending power along with a gradual sense of adaptation to new technological innovation, in the first ten years of market liberalisation technological advancement within the Indian two-wheeler sector experienced a slow and timid

growth. However, as Rajiv Bajaj took over the company's production responsibilities, India was set to experience something new, something iconic:

“There is an interesting story behind how and why the...non-commuter motorbikes came to the Indian market. Rajiv Bajaj was the main visionary for these new generation bikes. He is a mechanical engineer by education and he knew there was a change in demand within the market. Young people wanted something different, so he kept working on the technical side of the project and came up with the new DTS-i technology...but his father did not approve of the idea at that time. Bajaj hired a big market research company, and even they said there was no demand for sporty performance motorbikes in India at that time and the market would hardly pick up in the next ten years. But Rajiv was an adamant guy, in a meeting he threatened to leave the family business if his wishes were not fulfilled. So that was the origin of Pulsar.... In business or in advertising some-times you just need to ignore all the calculations...and just follow your instinct.”

- Jivan

Rajiv Bajaj belongs to the third generation of the Bajaj family and joined the two-wheeler business in the 1990s and worked his way up to become the managing director in 2005. Educated as a mechanical engineer at Warwick University, he developed world-class knowledge of advanced two wheeler engine technologies. In 1993, he became the general manager for product development, and following India's emergence in the global marketplace he wanted to improvise technological advancements to transform Bajaj into an “emerging-market champion” in the two-wheeler segment. As Holt and Cameron (2010) suggested that operational imperatives

of bureaucracy have derived a large “Command-and-Control Management” culture for managing brands in contemporary marketplace, Rajiv Bajaj’s father Rahul Bajaj’s vision wasn’t any different. He did not diverge from the primary assembly line of corporate bureaucracy as he insisted on employing market research agencies to justify whether India was ready to step up from the commuter motorbike category to the performance category. Unfortunately the results did not match Rajiv’s aspirations as the market research rather indicated that India was not ready to embark on performance motorbike category at that time. Hence the proposal was dropped and Bajaj started to refocus on its existing commuter motorbikes. But, being “the main visionary”, Rahul Bajaj did not give up on his dream, and made instinctive judgements in directing the company towards designing and developing technologies suited for Bajaj’s new performance category - *Pulsar*. While common sense and traditional marketing practices (market research) dictated that post-globalised India was not ready to flex its muscle through aggression and power, having experienced the outer world, Rajiv Bajaj felt that somewhere deep inside, society was crying out to exercise its virility and power. Whether Rajiv’s decision was instinctive or a considered judgement remains a topic for discussion, but as I discuss later in Chapter 5.6.2, this hidden and widespread anxiety for exercising power found deep cultural and political significance in India’s emergence as a nuclear power.

Rajiv’s forced embodiment of technological power and performance within the brand not only resulted in Bajaj introducing a new performance category of motorbikes in India, but also forced the company to reinvent their image by introducing a range of new generation sleek motorbikes. Hence, in response to my first question Jivan reaffirmed whether I understood “what kind of a bike Pulsar is?” - Jivan. Although I

knew the answer to the question in 2010, at the beginning of the twenty-first century without any internet revolution, very few Indians would have understood the meaning of performance category within the two wheeler segment. Therefore, it became Bajaj's immediate priority to attract the nation's attention to these new generation bikes by teaching the meaning of power, performance, and virility in motorbike riding. As McCracken (1986, p. 78) claimed, commodities are used to "affirm, evoke, assign, or revise the conventional symbols and meanings of the cultural order". It appears that a lesson of power, performance, and aggression was delivered through the '*cultural authorities*' of the material object trickled down to three elements of the brand – the name (*Pulsar*), design aesthetics, and most importantly, the image archetype of rebellious man ('Bajaj Pulsar: Definitely Male').

5.6.1 The Pursuit of Power and Performance: Deconstructing the Cultural Authorities of Bajaj Pulsar

Name Signification: As the notion of Hamara Bajaj faded away under Rajiv Bajaj's vision for championing the Indian market by targeting its emerging aspirations, the new generation 150cc and 180cc motorbikes were named as the Pulsar. The term *Pulsar* finds its meaning significance in the etymology of astrophysics denoting powerful rotating neutron stars (Becker, 2009). These celestial bodies are rare in the universe and they emit extremely powerful gravitational forces along with harmful pulses of radiation (Lyne and Graham-Smith, 2012). *Pulsars* come to life as a result of dying supernovas, and due to their high speed rotational energy *Pulsars* emit pulses of radiation and energy by using strong electro-magnetic spectrums (Becker, 2009). That's why the term *Pulsar* stands for 'pulsating star' and these exotic objects are popularly known for their high speed rotational energy emitting pulses of radiations.

Such a meaning signification between the motorbike and these celestial bodies not only appears to represent the power and aggression of the rider and the motorbikes like an energised *Pulsar*, but it also denotes that these motorbikes are rare exotic assets from the outer world, i.e., advanced western worlds. As the bikes offer more than a ride (rotation, maneuverability etc.) from point A to point B, it becomes a centre of attraction drawing curious attention from the spectators and society (a metaphor for celestial *Pulsar's* high gravity attraction). In addition, the advanced DTS-i (Digital Twin Spark Ignition) technology was designed to send out pulses of electric sparks to the engine by resonating around a magnetic field, just like a celestial *Pulsar*, offering a quick and powerful start and acceleration feature to the motorbikes. *Pulsar's* arrival was a clear statement to the nation, i.e., like a phoenix Bajaj aspires to rise again from the ashes of old Hamara Bajaj (similar to a *Pulsar* being born from a dying Supernova).

Design Aesthetics: Although the *Discover* brand uses the same DTS-i technology, Shan and his team insisted on concealing the mechanical complexities of the product by highlighting culture and utility -“Discover India with the power of one litre”. While Shan believed “You can't explain technology to these consumers. You can only explain the manifestation of a technology”, technology, power, and aggression became the primary manifestation of the new generation *Pulsars*. In Jivan's (National Creative Director, Head of Pulsar campaign, Prodigy India) opinion these elements of cultural authorities were partly expressed through the design aesthetics of these motorbikes:

“You know what...I think...what has worked for us behind the success of Pulsar...at least according to my understandings...Bajaj created a really great product, and they have constantly upgraded the product...they have constantly upgraded the technology that goes into the product...Bajaj came up with the DTS-i technology which became a big success. DTS-i stands for Digital Twin Spark Ignition system, at that point...if I am right...the only company or bike that had that technology was Ducati, no other bike in the world had it. Also, Bajaj kept pushing on the design bit of the bikes, the styling, maneuverability, machoness and the whole shape of the bike. So they constantly pushed it to the edge and unlocked the product...”

- Jivan

Therefore, whilst a decade ago the scooters stood out as a national carrier because of their simplicity and lack of style, according to Jivan, Pulsar became ‘*Distinctly Ahead*’ because of the design, style, manoeuvrability, and ‘*machoness*’ applied to the motorbikes. Due to the very nature of the product (sports motorbikes) Pulsars appeared to be a lot heavier than normal everyday commuter motorbikes. The design includes a heavy 150 or 180cc engine fitted within a light aerodynamic metallic frame with solid structural rigidity and integrity. The engine itself is one of the pioneering world-class technological replicas that matched the renowned Italian market leader Ducati in the performance motorbike category. In addition to this technological statement, what made Pulsar stand out was its design aesthetics with special features like a mammoth fuel tank and the immediate stop disc brakes.

By studying the identity makeover of the ‘motorbike boys’, Willis (1978) suggested that the ‘boys’ had a unique style of developing a symbolic statement of masculinity along with a sense of ontological security by drawing strength from the ‘agency’ between them and the motorbikes. In line with this description, the design of Pulsar motorbikes appeared to be extremely manipulative, as the company had a lot more underlying intentions behind pushing the design to the “edge” to “unlock the [full potential of the] product” [Jivan]. To start with, although the external structure of the motorbikes appeared to resemble a normal sport or performance motorbike, what made a Pulsar different was its exposed (rather than covered) mechanical and internal structure. The strong and metallic exposure of the engine, chassis, shockers, and exhaust pipes supplies an intimidating quality to the motorbikes resembling a man taking off his outfit and flexing his rock solid muscles and six pack. In addition to the body work, the headlights appear to be identical to the facial construction of ‘*Optimus Prime*’, a fictional transforming robot character from the Hollywood Transformer series, who is also the leader of the heroic ‘*Autobots*’ and has a special power to transform into different prototypes of vehicles while participating in a war to save their home planet from the ‘*Decepticons*’. This implies that the Pulsar motorbikes are convertible, despite their robotic and metallic outfits they have artificial intelligence that makes them warriors and rebellious thinkers.

Figure 5.6: Meaning Signification of Design Assembly



The Transformer Autobots



Bajaj Pulsar Headlight Assembly

Pulsar's ability to perform numerous stunts and manoeuvres in addition to its ability to challenge the low speed dogma of the commuter category makes them truly independent and rebellious thinker with a dominant and aggressive style. But at the same time, the *Autobots*' intentions are not vindictive, they flight to survive and safeguard their home planet, similarly Pulsar's intention is to safeguard the nation through a statement of power and intelligence whilst dignifying Indian's position in the world. Such an image signification, as I discuss later in Chapter 5.6.2, finds its cultural and political roots in the nationalist government's intention of 'show casing' the country and its nuclear power. Here it seems appropriate to recall Hebdige who rightly pointed out that: "[Machines] are brought down to earth...by being made to function as differential elements – as markets of identity and difference – organised into meaningful relations through their location within cultural/ideological codes"

(Hebdige, 1988, p. 86 – 87). Similarly, Pulsar motorbikes were “brought down to earth” to generate cultural meanings of solidity, style, strength, and responsiveness offering a compensatory space for exercising a desired model of rebellious man (see Holt and Thompson, 2004; Kimmel and Kaufman, 1995):

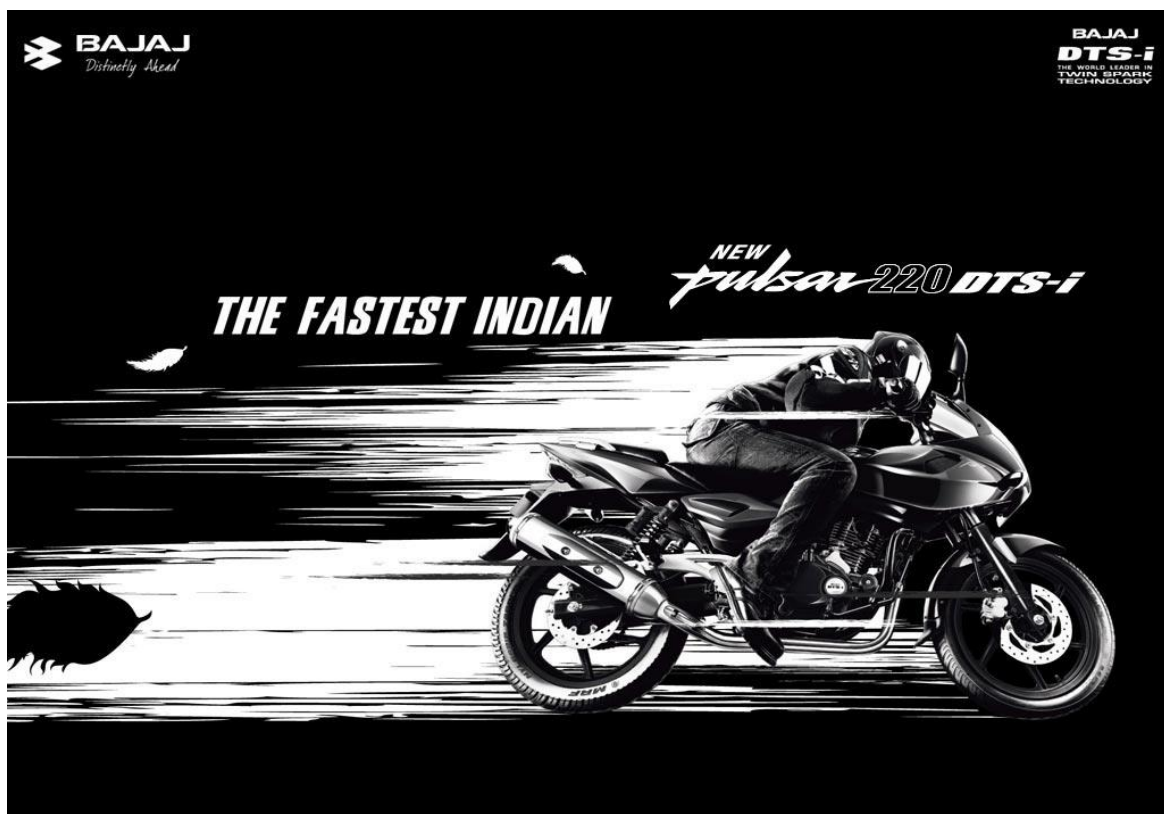
“Three agencies were invited to bid for the Pulsar [advertisement] account. You know what the client told us about the bike? They said this was a man’s bike...then we saw the look of the it...it was indeed a very masculine bike, very macho in style. Its look, appearance...and the feel it gave out...was absolutely out of one’s imagination. In my sort of reading a lot of it came from the design of the tank...it was a HUNKY tank.”

- Jivan

As the design of a motorbike determines its image signification and consequent practice (Murphy and Patterson, 2011), it is clear from Jivan’s comments that by taking charge of the name and design aesthetics Bajaj was absolutely certain that Pulsar would become a symbolic portrayal of profane and aggressive men. Therefore, while the headlight and the external body aesthetic were designed to create an imagined persona of a rugged ‘*risk-taking maverick*’ (Murphy and Patterson, 2011), the large “hunky tanks” also became a strategic design element that added further significance to the style and appearance. Having a large fuel tank not only means the motorbikes have more capacity and self-sufficiency for surviving a long ride without refuelling, but a large tank along with a lower seating arrangement means an increased distance between the steering handles and the biker’s seat forcing the biker to lean forward to become an integral part of the man-machine agency. In addition,

this posture and seating arrangement also creates less resistance to the oncoming wind, making the bikes run faster, while the sensory feelings of speed and excitement are heightened as the rider becomes immersed in the system by leaning forward (Murphy and Patterson, 2011; Natalier, 2001). Later, Jivan and his team identified and translated these attributes into an invaluable cultural expression – *The Fastest Indian* – that reinstated Bajaj’s iconic status once again in post-globalised India.

Figure 5.7: The Fastest Indian Metaphor



Although I expand on “The Fastest Indian” metaphor in the following section, here it is important to discuss the final element of the design, the immediate stop disc brakes, that made these motorbikes ideal commodities for ‘*voluntary risk consumption*’ (Celsi et al., 1993). As Dharma, Client Service Director at Prodigy, explained:

“There were some serious accidents soon after Pulsar was released. These bikes are very difficult to control, I have been riding motorbikes for 15 years now, but when I bought my Pulsar I just felt the bike wanted to run faster and faster...no matter what. You put some throttle on and all of a sudden you will find the bike is flying on the air. It was so difficult, if not impossible, to get used to riding it on and around the city roads...and getting back to the accident issue, not many people realise how powerful these bikes were...so it became daily news at that time that somewhere somehow a Pulsar was in accident...the news that actually became a sensation was a guy in Delhi losing his private organs because he braked really hard and his private parts got smashed into the tank. Later the company did research into it and found out that the tank size and the disc breaks were the main reason for fatal accidents.”

- Dharma

Therefore arrival of Pulsar in India was a statement of transforming motorcycling into a practice of ‘*edgework*’ (Murphy and Patterson, 2011). Following Lyng (1990), Murphy and Patterson (2011, p.1325), described the idea of edgework as “the boundary between ‘life versus death, consciousness versus unconsciousness, sanity versus insanity, an ordered sense of self and environment versus a disordered self and environment’”. The series of fatal accidents that immediately followed Pulsar’s arrival was a strong indication that the motorbikes were here to push the threshold of Indian masculinity to a new level by provoking voluntary risk consumption (Celsi et al., 1993). Either subscribe to this provocation and achieve a sense of self-fulfillment by mastering the art of free style motor biking, or accept death as an immense failure by being submissive (ibid).

Figure 5.8: Pulsar Advertisement Provoking Risk Consumption and Reckless Manhood through Riding



The skill of championing high-speed and performance motor-biking is an art that the mainstream India was unaware of, in addition, as the company found out later, design and technological novelties such as the tank and the disc brakes added extra levels of uncertainty to the ‘*edgework*’ (Mitchell, 1983; Murphy and Patterson, 2011). Therefore, even to an experienced rider [“I am riding motorbikes for 15 years now” – Dharma] taming and controlling such a powerful autotelic agency appeared to be an extremely difficult job.

According to Dharma research indicated two brutal sides of design complication causing the initial accident saga – the raised fuel tank and the immediate stop disk breaks. The idea of a raised fuel tank is not new to the biking world as it is an integral

design element of sports motorbikes (Foale, 2006), but on the other hand leaning forward to become a part of an autotelic agency was not only a new restrictive proposition for motorcycling to the slow paced commuter motorbike loving Indians, but also a provocative posture that encouraged the rider to speed up and ‘attack’ (see Chapter 6). Similarly, disc brakes were invented in the 1920s and since then it has become an integral part of technologically advanced motorbikes (Foale, 2006). These are high performance braking systems that use a slotted metal disc for the quick reduction of speed. Usually in sporting motorbikes, disc breaks are fitted on the front wheel as it helps to slow the motorbike down while the rear wheel maintains balance using the rider’s bodyweight, but Bajaj had a different plan for Pulsar’s structural assembly. As the company wanted to highlight the motorbike’s maneuverability through stunting, they fitted disc brakes on both wheels making it extremely difficult for the rider to stop the machine at high speed. Hence, the fatal accidents that resulted in complaints against the raised tank and the disc brakes. But did the company respond to these concerns? Did they change Pulsar’s design element by listening to the customers? No, to date the company has not altered any of the design or power elements of the motorbikes, instead Bajaj has gradually increased the engine power from 150 cc. to 220 cc. sending out a simple message, Pulsars are not here to compromise, rather “this is a man’s bike” [Jivan].

Figure 5.9: Cultural Signification of Design Assembly



Large Fuel Tank Design



Disc Brake Assembly

The central concept of this new brand imagery not only appears to be an intentional and strategic desolation of the early non-violent and collectivist model of Indian masculinity, but this was a provocation to select destiny by championing *individualism* and *risk consumption* through inherent rebellious pursuits (Holt and Thompson, 2004; Natalier, 2001; Celsi et al., 1993). Therefore, as I discuss later (Chapter 6), the immediate row of accidents that followed Pulsar's arrival actually worked out in Bajaj's favour by demonstrating the real life consequences of '*high-risk leisure*' pursuits affiliated with the motorbikes.

5.6.2. Image Signification: Mythologising Risk and Ruggedness, Bajaj Pulsar – Definitely Male

Although the name and the design aesthetic of Bajaj Pulsar appear to supply the cultural expression required for risk consumption, input from cultural industry truly sealed Pulsar's fate by reviving the brand's cultural authenticity:

“That time three of us pitched for it...July 2001...when they were about to launch the motorbikes. Between the client's side and the agency's side...I think probably I am the oldest hands on Pulsar. Lots of people have come and gone...come and gone, but I think I am the only man standing beside Rajiv Bajaj.”

- Jivan

As Jivan indicated, three advertising agencies were invited to bid for the Pulsar account. From the beginning Bajaj made it clear that this was going to be “...a man's bike”, so the surrounding images, actions, and scripts must comply with the desired and elementary image of the motorbike. Jivan claimed that beside the creator Rajiv Bajaj he is possibly the only person to have a long-term engagement with the Pulsar brand and he believes his team won the account because they were the only agency to identify a unique ideological scope for positioning the motorbikes:

“While brainstorming, a sort of interesting linguistic thing came out - which was - in India if you say "motorcycle jati hai" or "motorcycle chalti hai" (there is a motorcycle going: in feminine verse) then it becomes female...so "agar chalti hai toh woh ladki hai" (people saw the commuter version of motorbikes as feminine), so we needed to focus more on its male counterpart. Therefore if we said "motorcycle chalti

hai" (if a commuter bike represents a female) then "Pulsar chalta hai" (Pulsar would represent a male), so it is a male! And that was sort of the origin of the name of the first campaign – ‘Bajaj Pulsar - Definitely Male!’”

- Jivan

Therefore up until the introduction of Pulsar motorbikes, commuter motorbikes dominated the Indian market with the promise of speed, fuel economy and comfort by competing against lacklustre scooters. However, as the image signification of these commuter motorbikes became increasingly associated with men in their everyday lives, an orthodoxy of breadwinner masculinity started to grasp the internal and external characteristics of commuter segment. According to Holt and Thompson (2004, p. 427), during the post-war era, the idea of breadwinner masculinity foregrounded a myth of successful men with boundless opportunities, freedom, independence and mobility, but with the rise of organisational bureaucracy today, the breadwinner ideology has become a potential source of emasculation for men turning them into dependable “paragons of family values and community pillars”. Therefore, in the twenty-first century a commitment to the breadwinner model offers nothing but social stigma, bringing a man’s masculine attributes into question, while stereotyping them as ““failed fathers,” sell-outs, petty bureaucrats, cowardly sycophants, or [even] broken men” (Holt and Thompson, 2004, p. 427). Similarly, as India progressed to become an emerging nation, the rise of neo-liberal social norms along with transnational organisations and their bureaucratic measures forced men to sacrifice their freedom and authority in pursuit of money and social respect that could only be earned through job title, salary, and material possessions. Therefore, the constant association of commuter motorbikes as part of daily life only emphasised men’s

repressive power structure, turning these machines into feminine archetypes of modern society. Understanding such an analogy paved the way for Prodigy's claim over Pulsar's true masculine image, when the team realised that the new generation motorbikes could become an essential platform for men to reclaim their power by subscribing to the '*rebellious men*' mythology – a mythology where men rely “upon their individual cunning, determination, and brute strength not only to survive nature but also to conquer it” (Holt and Thompson, 2004, p. 427). And, since then, Pulsar has threatened the status quo of non-violent and secular breadwinner models by characterising Pulsar motorbikes as – “Definitely Male”. Such a claim not only coincided with the cultural expression hidden within the name signification and the body mechanics of Pulsar, but it also matched Bajaj's core ideology of presenting the motorbikes as an archetype of rebellious men.

The Birth of a Rebellion: Although the initial idea appeared to have revolutionary potentials, challenging the status quo with rebellious mythology was not a straightforward task. Despite the underlying demand for men to regain their social and institutional power (see Chapter 6), in a country like India, even in the twenty-first century, society and tradition dictated the extent of reclaiming that power structure. Therefore, gaining cultural authenticity for the rebellious model through a one-off advertisement approach like Hamara Bajaj or Discover India wouldn't have been possible. Instead, Jivan and his team designed a long-term plan for Pulsar to develop an authentic rebellious image that India would eventually agree on. The storyline begun with a statement:

“...the initial bit was all about announcing: It's a boy! It's a boy! And then we moved into expressing some nice performance shots...overall it gave the brand an attitude.”

- Jivan

The campaign presented a birth metaphor (Figure 5.10), as the first Pulsar television advertisement showed two young nurses on their rounds in a neonatal hospital ward, recording every single newborn's gender, health and wellbeing. Then they approach an unusually large bed with an 'unusual baby' wrapped up in a bed sheet. One of the nurses whispers, “let me check this”, then the other one replies “go...go for it...pick it up”, as they pull back the cover unveiling the bike they burst out in joy shouting...”it's a boy...it's a boy!”. The next set of images shows the baby boy's future potential, an anonymous rider riding a Pulsar on an open road leaving everything behind, no one can match its speed, power or acceleration, something that men in India had never experienced before. Then a background voice starts to narrate - “180cc...15bhp...solid muscular styling...Bajaj Pulsar – Definitely Male”. In the final scene, the advertisement shows a Pulsar motorbike parked outside a hospital (possibly meaning the baby was discharged from hospital and has grown up), as two young female nurses cross in front of the bike, the bike follows them by tilting its head from side to side. Such an attitude makes a statement about rugged masculinity by highlighting the flirtatious character of a teenager or a man. Something Jivan himself described as the “naughty male aspect” of the bikes:

“We basically focused on highlighting two masculine aspects: one...the performance aspect - the machoness, the other bit was the little naughty male aspect.”

- Jivan

Therefore, the very first Pulsar advertisement did not make any straightforward inadmissible rebellious claims within a conservative society. Rather, Jivan and his team decided to start a storyline showing the birth of a new genre of rebellious men with unprecedented momentum and raw instincts. This was a wake up call (or a *better ideology*) to the breadwinners to dare and challenge the growing social stigma and to reclaim their authority and power. Therefore, whilst the speed, power, and ‘machismo’ of the motorbikes nurtured the raw instincts of masculinity that had long disappeared beneath the non-violent and secular traits of Indian men, the flirting or the “naughty male aspect” pushed traditional boundaries through an element of profanity and directness (flirting with girls) (also see Willis, 1978).

Figure 5.10: The Birth of a Rebellion



None of the traditional business models could justify the fate of such profanity or the meaning of speed and aggression within a slow paced, peace loving, harmonious nation:

“...they said there was no demand for sporty performance motorbikes in India at that time and the market would hardly pick up in the next ten years.”

– **Jivan**

However, despite all the bad press and emphatic denials, the results shocked everyone. With the release of Pulsar motorbikes along with the baby and birth themed advertisement the nation started to suffer from ‘*Pulsar Mania*’:

“To be very honest I don't think that anyone believed within Bajaj or us that the bike would do so well!! I remember there were times when we used to have conversations like...the day we start selling 5,000 bikes a month, we will celebrate. but initially we started by selling 70,000 bikes a month!”

- **Jivan**

Therefore, Jivan’s rebellious appeal stoked the nation’s imagination. As Derné (1995) described: “men [in India] see themselves as superiors, who must mold” a power structure to become dominant in the family and in their social lives, but recent studies (Mish, 2007; Gerke, 2000; Rao, 2000; Beteille, 2001) suggest that the rising forces of globalisation are dismantling traditional power structures as societies are breaking up into nuclear families, demanding equal rights for women, while pushing men to sacrifice their authority everywhere. In addition, the neo-liberal pressure of earning

social respect by virtue of being ‘a respectable man’ (Holt and Thompson, 2004) that can only be achieved through the diligent pursuit of material possessions and global commodities, emasculated twenty-first century Indian men as a result of a disparity between desire, affordability and income.

This ideological distress calls for ‘compensatory consumption thesis’ (see Holt and Thompson, 2004) that repeatedly pointed out how modern man turns to commodity and consumption to compensate their everyday identity crises. This analogy equally applies to the cultural branding context as Holt (2004, p.8) suggested, “Customers use iconic brands as symbolic salves. They grab hold of the myth as they use the product as a means to lessen their identity burdens”. One of the prime examples of this compensatory consumption comes from Schouten and McAlexander’s (1995) study of Harley riders, the authors described how Harley riders construct themselves as rebels against mainstream bourgeois society by subscribing to the autonomy of the open road, where appearance and performance of motorbikes become compensatory to their identity setbacks. Similarly, the *motorbike boys*’ identity statements gravitated around their motorbikes (Willis, 1978). According to Willis, the boys’ style, attitude, appearance, and attire were direct extrapolations of their motorbikes (ibid). Therefore distressed by changing social and marketplace structures in India when the much-admired model of non-violence and secularity gradually turned into a traditional ‘*cultural orthodoxy*’, men in twenty-first century India searched for a ‘better ideology’ in order to regain their power and authority. Here the “Definitely Male” appeal supplied wider inspiration to the nation by challenging the central norms and obligations of breadwinner masculinity. In addition, the world-class technology, style, and makeover achieved through local engineering not only fulfilled the middleclass

dream of joining the global consumption fair at an affordable price, but it also supplied a means to instate India to an eminent position within the world. As a result, after suffering from a decade long crisis, Bajaj was once again successful in restoring its iconic status by ceasing connections with its own cultural history, i.e. secular non-violent masculinity.

Style, Virility, and Ruggedness – Pulsar Mania: In line with the principles of cultural branding, Holt (2004, p.39) suggested that iconic brands are sensitive to cultural disruption and that is why “successful iconic brands leap nimbly across cultural disruptions by [periodically] dispatching...new myth markets”. A similar analogy can be identified within industry practice as Jivan suggested:

“What makes a campaign successful is a good understanding of the market...in that way you can stay ahead... a brand lives on how it communicates with the market. I believe in advertising, it is absolutely essential to up the value of a brand from time to time by using different channels and that is what kept Pulsar successful for ten years”

- Jivan

“The Pulsar defined the performance segment category in India couple of years back...and ever since then it has redefined it with each upgrade. And what we have tried to do in the communication is sort of try to express that redefinition in a nice manner.”

- Jivan [Pulsar Mania behind the Scene Interview, 2008]¹⁴

¹⁴ “Pulsar Mania - Behind the Scenes Extended Version” can be accessed from <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lq6w6wlbABQ> [Last Accessed December 2014]

Here Jivan confirmed Holt's recommendations by saying sustaining a brand's cultural leadership depends on the brand's ability to renew its ties with a nation on a periodical basis. In doing so, the brand manager and the cultural industry must be able to extend the mythical storyline without damaging its underlying authenticity. Therefore, Jivan wasn't planning to achieve a sense of accomplishment from the immediate success of the first Pulsar advertisement. Rather, his plans were more long-term and his goal was to extend the storyline by luring the nation into imagining what happens when the newborn grows to become a man. The answer came from Jivan himself:

"...we wanted a very fashionable image for the bikes...no doubt. The good thing about collaborating with Bajaj is...we were never instructed on the advertising side...everything just evolved from our side. What we were conscious about was that other motorcycle manufacturers in India were starting to produce motorbikes in the performance sector. We always knew that we have to be ahead of the game in terms of imagery, so...on the performance side what we started to do....we tried to show great riding shots...lots of speed...nothing else. We pushed the bikes a little bit towards stunting...basic wheelies and stoppies...the commercial called it free biking...two guys riding their bikes in the streets. Then we pushed it even more when we did the Pulsar mania film, which was all 6 - 7 of the world's best performance stunt bikers coming together to create a ballet on bikes with the Pulsar. So somehow...we always stayed ahead of what the market was thinking and became a hit, just when they thought Pulsar was at the top of its performance, we came up with something new to surprise them."

- Jivan

Therefore, the team wanted to compose a statement of style for the mature and grown up Pulsar through a “very fashionable image” and their next set of task was to compose a ‘Man-of-Action’ archetype for the motorbikes (Holt and Thompson, 2004). Such an image signification strategy calls for the Birmingham School’s reading of fashion and style as subcultural emblems, for example in ‘*The Meaning of Style*’, Hebdige (1979, p.80) described style as a ‘coded response’ that foregrounds ideologies through “symbolic forms of resistance”. Jivan implied similar thoughts by saying he “wanted a very fashionable image for the bikes”. As he planned to reclaim ‘natural authority and power structures’ (see Holt and Thompson, 2004) for emasculated Indian men Pulsar advertisements insisted on posing symbolic resistance against the growing social mayhem. In doing so throughout the decade Pulsar advertisements made one heroic statement after another, and encouraged men to regain their social position by exercising virility and power. As the motorbike metaphorically matured to become a complete man, the new series of advertisements showed the riders’ growing instinct for increased voluntary risk consumption through participation in reckless stunts. While at the beginning it was all about speed and an ‘open road’ ideology, with the release of the ‘*Pulsar Mania*’ campaign the motorbikes became an iconic commodity for demonstrating anger, violence, and virility against a progressive bourgeois society:

“This commercial today we are doing I think it is a little more spectacular than what we have done till now. It brings out the power, aggression, as well as the grace of bikes and the maneuverability in a really amazing fashion. Its not typically an ad spot as such...if I can call it it's bit like a ballet on bikes...sort of synchronised swimming equivalent on bikes.”

- Jivan [Pulsar Mania behind the Scene Interview, 2008]¹⁵

“Before Pulsar Mania...stunts and wheelies had never been seen in India before. Stunts in some way capture and highlight the performance aspects of the bike...whether it's power...whether it's manoeuvrability...whether it's the design of the bikes or balancing. I think a really great sports bike should be able to do stunts...and it is a good way of showing a bike's performance. Also, as a sport for youngsters its an extremely aspirational spot, and it tells the youngsters that if this bike is not capable of doing stunts then obviously it's not good enough for me. He might not do the stunting himself but he is eager on buying a can of imagery. So, we knew that we had to pursue stunting for awhile and therefore free biking was about showing stunting...Pulsar Mania was about stunting.”

- Jivan

Therefore after the birth metaphor the ‘Pulsar Mania’ campaign [Figure 5.11] acted as a wider call for men to reinvent themselves by joining the rebellion. The commercial starts with heavy metal rock music (without any folklore or traditional element added to it) and shows two reckless stunt riders jumping into a street on their Pulsar motorbikes. As these riders ride along an empty street, a few more group members

¹⁵ “Pulsar Mania - Behind the Scenes Extended Version” can be accessed at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lq6w6wlbABQ> [Last Accessed October 2014]

join them by performing “ballet on [their] bikes”. The group of stunt riders are dressed in shiny thick motorbike outfits covered from head to toe with stylish durable helmets, leather shoes, and leather gloves as they gather to perform reckless stunt activities in the middle of suburban city roads. The colour combination of their outfits (black and blue) signifies the riders’ profane intentions (black) along with their claim to gender affirmation (blue stands for male). As one after another the riders demonstrate their expertise in motorbiking, like a dramatised theatre their performance starts to take multiple arrangements through championed stunting actions and risk consumption skills. Sometimes the riders show aggression by going around and around at high speed, sometimes they show skills through motorbike acrobatics [Figure 5.11]. In Jivan’s interpretation this is a “ballet on bikes” or “synchronised swimming equivalent on bikes”.

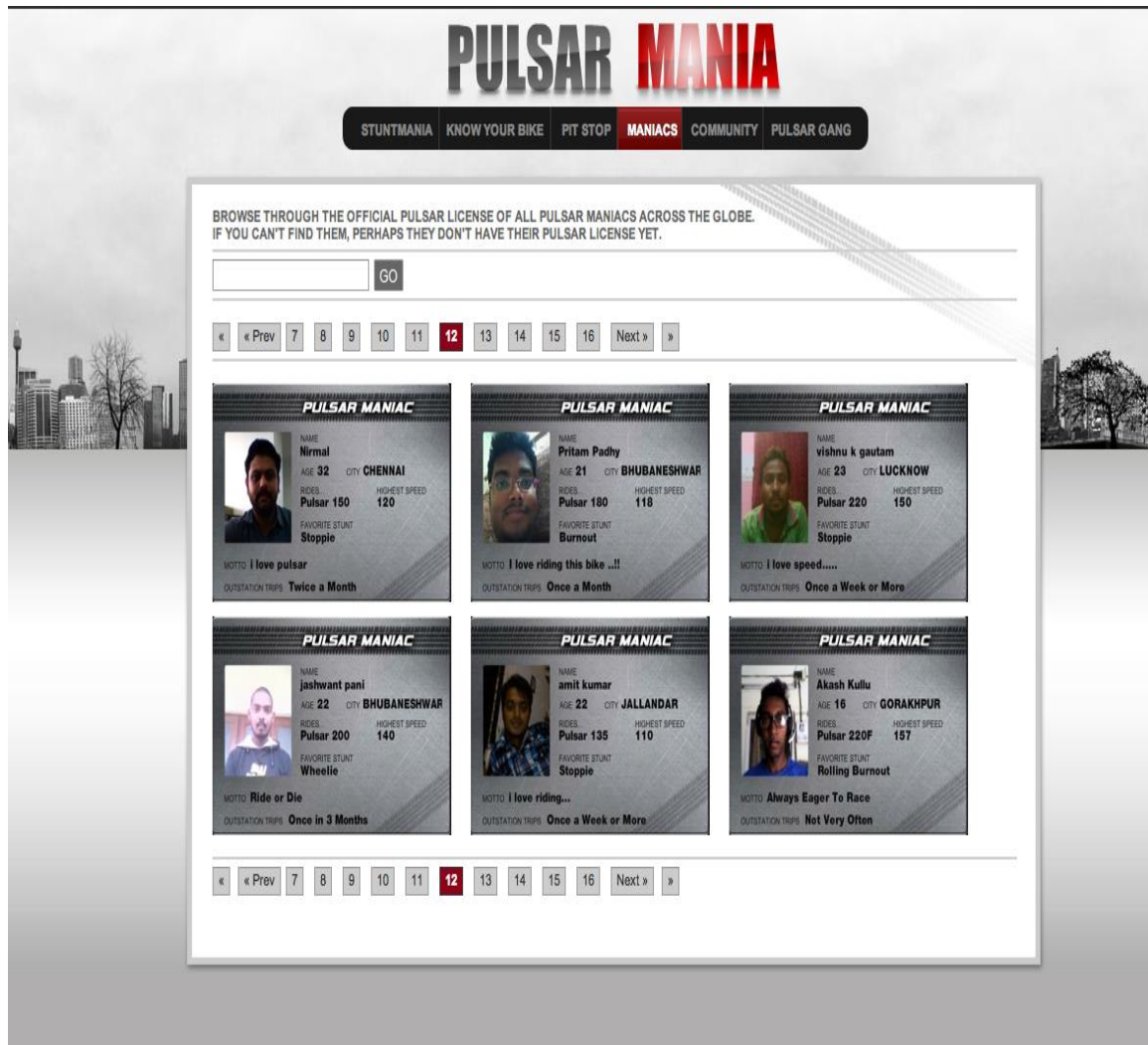
The entire commercial has no proper storyline or background narrative, but as Jivan explained it is all about dramatised performance and speed demonstrated to the highest level. In other words, the group’s playful behaviour and reckless stunting actions are an open invitation to gamble with life over death by subscribing to the ‘*edgework*’ of freestyle motor-biking (Murphy and Patterson, 2011; Lyng, 2008).

Figure 5.11: The Pulsar Mania



Here it is important to recall how Holt insisted that brand managers or the cultural industry are not the sole proprietors of cultural brands, rather it is the ‘*insiders*’ and the ‘*followers*’ who carry forward the legacy and values of an iconic brand. These consumers join the marketers in value creation by co-authoring the myth, as their culture co-creations and ritual actions make the brand virtually impossible to replicate. As an example, he discussed, how challenged by the Japanese motorbikes, the hard-core riders helped Harley to sustain its competitive advantage by becoming active co-authors of its brand mythology. In doing so the hard core ‘*insiders*’ not only protected Harley’s cultural values by exercising outlaw ethos surrounding the motorbikes, but their emulation of the patriotic ‘*gunfighter*’ archetype supplied an immense sense of nationalism (Americanism) to the brand. Similarly, as Jivan and his team realised that a growing competition in the market could indeed become a survival threat to Pulsar, they decided to transform the consumers into active co-creators of the brand. Through the ‘*Pulsar Mania*’ campaign as Jivan and his team enticed the nation to create new cultural meanings for the brand through free style ‘*edgework*’ (stunting), consciously or unconsciously they facilitated a postmodern discourse by removing the “natural distinction between” production and consumption activities (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995, p. 258). Therefore as the responsibility for maintaining authenticity shifted from the producers to the consumers, the process insisted riders should become ‘*citizen-artists*’ by deeply investing their identity projects in ‘*Pulsar Mania*’, i.e., free-style ‘*edgework*’ using Pulsar motorbikes. As the riders move up the hierarchy by mastering the art of speed and stunt motor biking they earn the official right to claim the ultimate status within the official Pulsar Mania community [Figure 5.12].

Figure 5.12: Official Pulsar Mania Community: A List of Pulsar Maniacs Along with Indications on Highest Speed Achieved and Their Favourite Motorbike Stunts



Source: My Pulsar Official Community, can be assessed from: <http://www.mypulsar.com/newlookpulsars/index.aspx> [Last Accessed: July 2014]

Although motivation to suffer from this obsessive ‘mania’ was created in the desire to develop high speed riding skills, in reality the advertisement forced the riders to gradually discover their sense of achievement in escalating the “instrumentality of high-risk activities” (Celsi et al., 1993). By subscribing to Pulsar Mania riders put emphasis on two important aspects of the motorbike: speed and machismo, while

riding fast to infinity along with dust, heat and stench becomes an undeniable part of machismo, the unprecedented rush of adrenalin received from speed acts as motivation to break free from the mainstream restrictions (Bellaby and Lawrenson, 2001; Broughton et al., 2009; Holt, 2004; Willis, 1978). Hence subscription to Pulsar Mania supplies a new rite of passage to enter a new concept of rebellious manhood, where the interplay between power and pleasure can be fully understood by exploring the lucid spaces of freestyle biking marked by – speed, group maneuvers, and individual stunting (Murphy and Patterson, 2011; Natalier, 2001). For the novice such involvement is achieved simply through speed, while climbing up the hierarchy requires individual expertise expressed through group activities.

Here is it important to recall Wallack et al.'s (1962) work where the authors noted that 'group polarisation' produces increased perception and acceptance of risk in the presence of peers. Similarly as Pulsar riders were forced to acquire recognition through skill-led status and performance expertise, as time went by, 'like-minded aficionados' came together to build communities around the brand (Muñiz and O'Guinn, 2001; Brownlie and Hewer, 2007). In Dharma's opinion:

“When we launched the Pulsar Mania campaign, we saw a rise in the number of online fans...calling them Pulsar Maniacs etc. We never envisioned that people would become so enthusiastic about our product. I think it happened because bikers are so passionate, when they find something that speaks to their heart, they just get involved in the game of exchanging knowledge and experience with each other...finally they end up creating a whole world, and honestly we have no input in that. I vaguely remember uploading the Pulsar mania advert on YouTube, even now it's one of top

five viewed, rated, and commented automobile commercials in India. The point is...it was never my intention for people to get involved around the campaign in such a hardcore way, but the product and the adverts had such a profound impact on these people's lives that they couldn't stop talking about it.”

- Dharma

Here Dharma agreed with Jivan by saying there was no pre-planned strategy to form consumption communities around the brand, rather the team insisted on selling “a can of imagery” through group stunt-riding conceptualising it as an “aspirational spot” for the younger generation. But contrary to the team’s belief a part of society showed an increased interest in mastering motorcycling skills, not only to gain extrinsic status and attention but also to set intrinsic boundaries to separate themselves from the amateurs and the spectators (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Holt, 2004). Therefore, although the desire to join freestyle motorbiking was created through curiosity, thrill-seeking, or social disregard, the motivation to continue was strategically placed in self-accomplishment, heightened experience and group camaraderie. During my observation period I noticed the emergence of many of these groups online, claiming status, recognition, and authority through self-proclaimed group activities and performance. However, out of all these self-proclaimed groups ‘The Ghost Riderz’ claimed the highest hardcore status by receiving official Bajaj sponsorship.

Emergence of such consumption-led group hierarchies and camaraderie through shared ritualistic experiences was something new to India or even in Bajaj’s own history. While the notion of Hamara Bajaj tried to integrate the nation under the

conceptual promise of peace, secularism, and prosperity, the rise of ‘Pulsar Mania’ generated opposing dynamics, fragmenting the nation into microcosms of self-expressive rebellious consumers – “a distinctively postmodern mode of sociality in which consumers claim to be doing their own thing while doing it with thousands of like-minded others” (Holt, 2002, p.83). Here it is important to acknowledge the increased research interest surrounding the idea of community within the CCT discipline. Building on the sociological meaning of the term ‘*communitas*’, a number of scholars have suggested that communities emerges from “shared ritual experience” that transcends the mundane of everyday life – something that lies at the heart of ‘Pulsar Mania’ (Celsi et al., 1993; Muñiz and O’Guinn, 2001; Brownlie and Hewer, 2007).

Another aspect of stunt biking that becomes evident from the ‘Pulsar Mania’ campaign was the notion of ‘flow’. According to Celsi et al. (1993) ‘*flow experiences*’ are usually achieved through total immersion and participation within a system where a performance or action flows into another without any conscious intervention. The subliminal insertion of such flow experiences are highly evident within the ‘Pulsar Mania’ advertisement, where the riders are shown to be immersed in a parallel world of performance and high-risk consumption. One after another their skill sets flowed into an interlocking mechanism of dramatic act, glorifying the meaning of reckless riding by pushing the riders to “near their physical and mental [strength]” (Celsi et al., 1993). According to Celsi and colleagues, while an unchallenged context does not offer motivation for risk consumption, an overwhelming situation can cause anxiety through added pressure. In contrast, the flow experience offers a sense of control over the balance between an individual’s ability and the situational demand of the context.

Similarly, the 'Pulsar Mania' advertisement does not create overwhelming pressure to become a champion stuntman from the beginning, rather it encourages a gradual assimilation of the rider into the hype, in that way the riders get the opportunity to push the boundaries of speed and freestyle riding to their desired level; as they gradually start to encounter the immersive experience, they start to develop a sense of satisfaction and fulfillment through the manifestation of their "true-selves" (Csikszentmihalyi and Csikszentmihalyi, 1988). As I discuss in Chapters 6 and 7 these manifestation of true-selves are the result of rebellious desires against the burden of social stigma that post-globalised India still carries on its back, i.e., emasculation, corruption, illiteracy, income disparity etc. As these consumers cannot actively participate in politics to exercise their citizenship they use Pulsar as an ideological medium to demonstrate their citizenship rights.

These findings call to end the chapter by understanding the political authority of Pulsar campaigns. Whilst historically Bajaj has leveraged Gandhi's vision to congregate the nation under a secular version of manhood, the Pulsar campaigns espoused radical politics by provoking the nation to fragment by challenging traditional norms. In this cultural and political appeal emphasis was placed upon standing out from the crowd, rather than being at one with the crowd. In explaining the shift Jivan suggested:

"Hamara Bajaj was a different era. In this case we were very clear from the beginning that we should position the bikes somewhere along the lines of rawness...something that captures the macho effect of youth. The young generation in India is very different to what's been portrayed to the world. The youngsters want to be different

from their mum and dad and the older generation, they live on the internet, MTV, and media and are highly driven by aspiration. So, while designing our campaign for Bajaj Pulsar, we were looking for this aspirational spot that would appeal to the entire Indian youth and create a distinctive imagery for our bikes compared to the commuter motorbikes.”

- Jivan

Therefore, in the twenty-first century the increased flow of global culture through mass media and the mobilisation of people along with marketplace activities has produced an exponential increase in cultural amalgamation (Üstüner and Holt, 2007; Wilk, 2006; Ger and Belk, 1996; Öncü, 1997). Such a flow of global culture is further dramatised by the cultural industry (advertising agencies) by facilitating local and global interaction. Although Jivan’s explanation echoes what globalisation literature has taught us about the consequences of “deterritorialized cultural capital” (Üstüner and Holt, 2010), but the radical deviation of Pulsar’s cultural and political meaning signification from its peaceful, patriotic past has deeper strategic intensions that neither Jivan nor the team clearly pointed out.

In reality, the political signification of Pulsar is equally patriotic as it supplied an ideological platform for a fraction of the middleclass who wanted to join the global consumption fair by building and presenting a strong and self-confident India to the world. While the call to unite the nation under the influence of Hamara Bajaj found its legitimisation in Gandhi and Nehru’s aspirations, the autonomous spirit for exercising power and virility through death-defying motorbiking found its political legitimisation in the nationalist government’s attempt to demonstrate ‘pride’, ‘presence’ and

‘security’ by showcasing India’s nuclear power ownership to the world. According to Fernandes (2006) such a political exercise was a *‘fetishized sovereignty’* by the nationalist government as it displaced the concept of nationalism leading to social fragmentation and wider class politics.

While Hamara Bajaj folklore was a story of building a ‘stronger India’, by the time Pulsar was launched that mission was accomplished in which local engineering and local production played a pivotal part. Pulsar was one of the landmarks of such progress where global ingenuity was achieved with indigenous production capabilities, however, a large section of Indian society would continue to resist such achievements because they believed that this new image violated the nation’s tradition and sovereignty. According to Rakesh, a copywriter for Pulsar campaign:

“The company itself has a new internal mantra which is 'Distinctly Ahead', not just in terms of number, but also in terms of becoming a benchmark for others to follow. So what the company believes...we are Distinctly Ahead of the time in terms of thoughts, hence, age nikal rahe hai hum, khudse he age hai kadam (we are progressing, progressing faster than we could ever thought). Time has come to fight with ourselves...we are not keen on following someone else, we are not keen on fighting with someone else, rather this is the time to fight with ourselves and come out of our shell.”

- Rakesh

Therefore, fueled by global dreams and local achievements while a section of society was increasingly looking to negotiate India's position amongst emerging global leaders, a part of society opposed the idea of joining global aspirations to protect the dignity of the nation. This social tug-of-war created tension in everyday life, and despite being a democratic country as India offers very little political passage to exercise democratic rights a section of society turned to consumption as a compensatory ground to rebel against the burdens of mundane aspirations. Here the image of Bajaj Pulsar came to accommodate an archetype of the rebellious and cosmopolitan Indian who lives for the autonomy and free spirit of the open road, an image at one with the fast-moving zeitgeist of contemporary India where the idea of risk consumption through freestyle motorbiking acts as a platform for demonstrating ideological jeremiad against convention, dogma, illiteracy, corruption, income disparity and so on; everything that is holding India back against its own aspirations.

5.7 Conclusion:

In conclusion, this chapter presented empirical evidence and analytical foundations critical to this thesis. The series of new insights gathered in this chapter not only contradict some of the key elements of Holt's (2004) seminal 'cultural branding model', but also help to generate thoughts for progressing the model in future (see Chapter 7).

Today, it may appear that the importance of Holt's (2004) pioneering thoughts has gone largely unnoticed in academia and industry practice. Empirical evidence gathered as part of this study reaffirmed that the principles of cultural branding have

largely been followed and applied by brand managers and advertising agencies, not only within the advanced socio-economic boundaries of western countries but also within aspiring and developing consumer-centric societies. However, while the managerial approach to cultural branding appears to be mostly unplanned, arbitrary, and non-systematic, academic leads have also failed to present an authentic stream of knowledge contribution towards the development of a comprehensive theoretical model. Therefore, this chapter remains at the heart of this emerging research stream as, following the chronological development of Bajaj in India, I presented a unique story of brand management through cultural innovation strategy.

As the making of post-colonial and neo-liberal India was full of socio political anxieties, the creative politics of advertising agencies catapulted Bajaj's authenticity by crafting messages of 'moral relief'. Following the tale of Bajaj's advertising campaigns the chapter unveiled these transforming stories of brand mythology designed on the 'class based grammar of middleclass' ideology.

Following the findings three key areas for modification to be considered are: a) Transforming cultural brief; b) The loyalty model; c) The Blue Oceans of technology. I discuss these topics in Chapter 7 in order to draw out the key knowledge contributions offered by this thesis.

CHAPTER SIX: MARKETPLACE MYTHOLOGY AND THE POLITICS OF IDENTITY

6.1 Introduction:

The previous chapter illustrated how the creative industry juggle cultural and political knowledge to craft powerful brand mythologies, and in doing so, how they regularly engage in a search for creative inspiration in wider socio-political issues that can serve as valuable cultural means. The story of Bajaj's brand iconicity and its unique survival strategy unveiled a series of culturally engineered images, framed by professionals at Printas and Prodigy, surrounding middleclass masculinity. Based on these findings this chapter explores the cultural and political spectrums of middleclass manhood and its ideological fragmentation as consequences of new modernity (Bauman, 2000; Slater, 1999).

The onset of modernity within traditional societies induces an ever-increasing pace of change (Bauman, 2000; Slater, 1999; Giddens, 1991). Modernity transforms societies into a more complex infrastructure, where the only constant remaining is 'change' itself (Gibbins and Reimer, 1999). Since the 1990s, the state, media and the marketplace emphasised a vision of India idealised through the urban middleclass and their quest for new commodity consumption, but contrary to popular belief, not every single middleclass Indian subscribed to the new economy and its commodity-centric progressive vision (Gupta, 2000; Fernandes, 2006). As a result, today, society and the marketplace have become critical sites for middleclass men in India to articulate their relationship with the 'local' and the 'global' (Cayla and Elson, 2006; 2012). Bajaj survived this cultural disruption by renegotiating men's power structures through the mythology of 'Man-of-Action' (Holt and Thompson, 2004), however, the co-

existence of scooter, Discover, and Pulsar owners in twenty-first century India indicates that the onset of modernity is far from a simple linear mechanism (Arvidsson, 2001; Bauman, 2000; Slater, 1999; Appadurai, 1996). Instead, modernity and neoliberalism induces broad ideological divides within consumers' 'life politics' (Giddens, 1991, p.9) and these ideological divides are strategically exercised to produce new ideologies of gender, culture, and consumption habits (See Mish, 2007; Fernandes, 1997; Derné, 2000; 2008; Emrence, 2008; Luedicke et al., 2010). In this chapter, I highlight two central components of fragmented middleclass manhood that fail to integrate by dissolving territorial anxieties. Such anxieties, as I note, arise from disagreements between post-colonial and post-globalisation masculine ideologies. Central to this identity politics lies an imagined discourse of nationalism and related socio-political beliefs that are actively nourished by Bajaj two-wheelers and their brand mythologies.

6.2 Reinvigorating the New Swadeshi:

The Swadeshi ideology refers to a wide body of postcolonial theory that investigates complex relationships between western and indigenous identity practice (Bhabha, 1994; Gupta, 2000; Jenkins, 1999). This complex ideological agenda derives from anti-colonial sentiments that continue to harness reflexive ideological constructs amongst postcolonial agents in modern India (Mazzarella, 2006; Bhabha, 1994). My story of 'New Swadeshi' develops around a 65-year-old retired government employee Swapan. Swapan comes from an extended family that lived through the dismal days of the closed market philosophy when consumption and commodities were only meant for sustaining basic needs. With limited exposure to the outer world Swapan discovered the value of simplicity and self-reliance in his father's beliefs:

“I grew up in a large joint family. My grandfather was head of the family and my father was the eldest amongst all the brothers and sisters. Everything was shared in the family so I grew up living a basic life. I had very few clothes and never had access to television or radio when I was young. In fact, television didn’t come to this country until half way through my life, and that was even one television in every ten households...my father always used to say, “it is so simple to be happy, but it is so difficult to be simple”. You don’t need to find happiness in extravagance.”

- Swapan

Being part of the post-colonial generation, an immense part of Swapan’s life was spent in socio-political struggles. Living through the unrest of postcolonial years, Swapan had experienced social, political, and religious turmoil throughout his childhood and teenage years. He lived through the horrors of ‘70s riots and aggravated Hindu-Muslim genocide that forced his family to part from their original family home and move to the communist capital of India: Kolkata.

“For generations my family have lived in the eastern part of the state, but after the partition, the political situation became incredibly difficult. Riots followed throughout the east and Hindus were selectively victimised. We were attacked several times but we are lucky to be alive. Eventually my father decided to move to Calcutta. We moved to Calcutta in 1975, but it was another story; instead of religious war, Calcutta was suffering from a political war between the communists and the seculars”

- Swapan

Therefore, in search of peace and stability, although Swapan's family fled the religious war in the east, they encountered new forms of anxieties politically diversifying Kolkata (Calcutta) during the postcolonial period. Being a socialist, Swapan's father was a follower of the Indian National Congress and was involved in regional movements for independence, over the years his father's political involvement had become inherent to his own ideological pillars. However, living in a communist state offered him very little opportunity to exercise his democratic political rights, turning his ideological aspirations into deep desires.

“My father was an active member of National Congress. He used to write for the press and as a lawyer he fought for the country many times. He took part in many Congress rallies and I even heard of him being an active member of independence movement. His political beliefs had a big influence on how we grew up. Even when I started college I had to dress in modest dhoti and punjabi, I went to a college that had a secular political inclination. Even the daily newspaper we used to get was ‘Bartaman’, I had never seen any other newspaper in our house”.

- Swapan

Although initially Swapan denied any active political engagement, unlike his father, it is clear that from his childhood his consumption choices were dictated to align with secular political ideals. Growing up under the supervision of a patriotic father Swapan had little opportunity to develop his own ideological thoughts, starting from education to the choice of newspaper, his mind was surrounded with secular political thoughts. Over the years these beliefs have gradually built strong foundations in his mind and that is why he believes:

“I don’t have any political connections like my father but I will never support the left front [communist party]. In forty years of the left regime not once have they thought about the middleclass. All their policies seem to be focused on agriculture and rural developments, there is no industry, no private sector in West Bengal because everybody is scared of left politics and their trade unions. Even with a good qualification I struggled to get a job because of political nepotism. Even with a B Tech degree my son couldn’t get a job here, but look at him now, he moved to Bangalore and now he is a software engineer.”

- Swapan

In this life narrative Swapan reconfirmed how state politics extensively favoured the rural class, leaving the middleclass to carry the burden of failure. Therefore, despite having no active political affiliations, broader state politics had dotted his life with stigmas of poverty, sluggishness, genocide, eviction, and political nepotism.

Fast-forward 35 years, Swapan welcomed me to his house with a traditional welcoming gesture. He was spending his retired life in a middleclass suburb of Kolkata with his wife when I met him in October 2010. After an initial conversation over the phone, Swapan was extremely eager and excited to see me as I wanted to talk about his Bajaj scooter. Despite retiring from a prestigious government role, Swapan’s lifestyle appeared to be simple and minimalistic, whilst his house looked old and lacklustre, filled with basic non-branded commodities. On further observation I failed to come across signs of modernity and technological progress in his house, the only noticeable commodities were a years-old Indian refrigerator (Godrej) and an Indian television (Onida) brand. While twenty years of open market and globalisation

had transformed Kolkata into India's third largest megacity, populated with flyovers, high rises, shopping malls, and foreign cars, Swapan's modest lifestyle and attire presented a picture of the middleclass that goes unnoticed in the glamorous apparel of twenty-first century India (Gupta, 2000; Lakha, 1999; Bardhan, 1998). Such modesty was not a result of financial constraints, rather it was self-selected and conspicuous consumption choice.

“I have worked for a state-run co-operative bank and retired as a branch manager. I have completed all my responsibilities towards my son and I am self-sufficient as a retiree.”

- Swapan

I was intrigued to know, despite having sufficient wealth and opportunity, why Swapan chooses to live a modest life. He replied:

“I was never as privileged as today's generation. Growing up I never had a television or a mobile phone. Forget about a mobile phone, we didn't even have a landline or a radio. Luxuries were few and far between in those days, our daily ration used to come from the local grocer, not a department store. Even today I buy my own piece of cloth and get it made by a local tailor, I don't need to go to a shopping mall.”

- Swapan

Swapan's simple and minimalist approach to life has precipitated a number of personal relationships that runs through his brand portfolio for many years. Such relationships can only be distinguished by the enduring nature of consumer brand

association stemming from his deeper ideologies and norms (Fournier, 1998). On critical evaluation, it was hard to find a brand that did not have deep meaningful significance in his life. Some of these brand relationships have survived for decades and evoke pleasant memories of past (Aaker, 1997; Belk, 1988; Holbrook, 1993). For example, one of Swapan's favourite outfits is Khadi made Kurta Pajama, he has even bought Khadi made silk saris for his wife "to mark special occasions like birthdays and marriage anniversaries for the past forty years". While to the new generation of middleclass, branded clothing means Polo, Gucci and Adidas with extravagant meaning, logo, and class signification, it should not be forgotten that Khadi is a traditional historic brand in itself that symbolises India's self-sufficiency and domestic production (Trivedi, 2003; Sarkar, 1973). In modern India Khadi may have lost its wider appeal and symbolic value, but consumers like Swapan still worship the brand as it helps him to create a desired political representation.

"Do you know how many people still prefer Khadi products? It's a self-run co-operative, government funded, and it's even got high street shops! So how can you say it's out of date? My son always insists...oh, dad I will buy you a Rolex, I will buy you an Italian suit. Sometimes I get angry sometimes I just laugh at him. I have been wearing Khadi made products since my childhood, my father used to wear Khadi kurtas, I have seen people around me wearing Khadis and I am not going to change that because the new generation is obsessed with foreign attire. Khadi is pure and reliable, it's made by local people, everything is made by hand with pure cotton grown right here in West Bengal, and most importantly the money goes back to local co-operatives and farmers. It's not flimsy high priced foreign material that never sees through its self-life, one of these Khadi outfits last me ten years...they never go out of

date. I can show you my wife's khadi silk that she has been keeping for twenty years. And it's not just clothes, do you know that they sell bottled honey? Purely sourced from the Sundarban mangroves...no impurities, no chemicals. One of the best honeys I have tested in my life."

- **Swapan**

Swapan's onerous efforts to reclaim Khadi as a national product and a 'superior local brand' have strong foundations as even in modern India traditional wear and Khadi maintains its competitive place against some of the powerful renowned global brands. On further analysis, it was clear that Khadi's powerful symbolic resonance was down to the 'cultural and political authorities' of the brand that still offers ideological compensation to postcolonial men. Many postcolonial theorists, including Bhabha (1994), emphasised how the creation of an alternative and authentic Indian identity was an important dimension of Swadeshi manhood that offered them a platform to counteract the lack of sovereignty posed by colonial rule. This ideological framework appears to be inherent in consumers like Swapan who take every single opportunity to label foreign brands and commodities as 'imperialist', 'inferior', and 'agents of alienation' (Varman and Belk, 2009). This is a conscious effort by a postcolonial man like Swapan to reinvigorate the ideologies of Swadeshi once again in modern India where the inferior imperialistic stigmas are thrown upon 'foreign made products' using the cultural and political discourses of Gandhian nationalism (Canclini, 2001; Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Goffman, 1963). Therefore, in post-1990s globalised India, although Swadeshi as an integral ideology of manhood gradually faded away, its commodity-centric survival offered consumers like Swapan a platform to keep the manifestation of its identity politics alive by consuming and claiming national

products as ‘pure’ and ‘superior’ over ‘inferior foreign made artefacts’ (Trivedi, 2003; Gupta, 2000; Bhabha, 1994).

Informants like Swapan demonstrate that ideologies do not merely reside as an idea or a concept in one’s mind, it seeks commodity expression and material signification that integrates with everyday practice translating into the wider politics of identity (Thompson, 2011; Üstüner and Holt, 2010). Episodes of such identity politics are abundant in Swapan’s life but for the purpose of this thesis I particularly highlight his lived experience with his Bajaj scooter. On the first day of interviews, after a prolonged conversation, Swapan was eager to introduce me to one of his life-long assets, his twenty-year-old scooter, Bajaj Chetak.

“This is my Bajaj. I bought her in June 1989 and she is still intact. I even took a ride to the market this morning. She has grown up with the family for the past twenty years. Actually, she is a part of my family.”

- Swapan

It was a replica of a post-war Vespa sold as brand Bajaj, the vehicle was blue in colour, and appeared to be sturdy and well maintained for its age. The way Swapan remembered the purchase date and emphasised how the vehicle was part of his family, indicates how brands can become viable relationship partners at a personal level (Fournier, 1998). In the age of fashion and performance motorbikes, Swapan was proud to claim a committed reciprocal relationship between him and a two-decade old scooter by saying “This is my Bajaj”. At this stage I was eager to find out what influenced his purchase decision, I was intrigued as to whether it was the

inspiring Hamara Bajaj advertisement that lured him into the cultural allegories of these vehicles. Swapan replied:

“I was in my forties when I bought the scooter. I was married, settled, and had a son but I was fed up of using public transport. In those days we did not have the metro rail or abundance of auto-rickshaw. Public transport meant overcrowded buses which were very few and far between in supply. So, commuting to the office or taking my son to school was a real trouble. Then Bajaj launched their scooters, affordable to the middleclass...everyone kind of rushed into it. I was on the waiting list for about three years, actually, I was in a race with my cousin, who was going to get it first. In the end, I was the winner.”

- Swapan

Swapan's response was unexpected. Not once did he mention that the Hamara Bajaj advertisement played an influential role in his purchase decision. Instead, he narrated stories of struggles in his daily life, personal freedom, and mobility that repeatedly highlighted the constraints of middleclass life resulting from wider state-led failures. Since his childhood Swapan had encountered substantial amounts of socio-political and religious unrest that dotted his life with multiple layers of anxieties and distress. Although he did not mention any active socio-political struggles when he became an adult and self-sufficient, his comments indicate that the state's failure and a subsided middleclass restrained his everyday life from many angles. In his personal life, such anomalies unfolded in the form of restricted mobility, over population, and a lack of planned transport infrastructure that victimised informants like Swapan as a result of failed postcolonial modernity. Amongst all these social crises, Bajaj scooters, as an

affordable mode of personal transport, offered a passage to ‘moral relief’ that Swapan had long been waiting for. He explained:

“She just revolutionised my life. All of a sudden I didn’t have to wrestle with other commuters to get to work. It was very quick to get into the office and it was very quick to get back home. I was more efficient and was able to choose what to do. Whenever I went out with her people showed immense respect, they were asking me all sorts of questions. It felt like I had accomplished something special in my life.”

- Swapan

Once again Swapan did not mention the Hamara Bajaj campaign or its influence in his purchase decision. Instead, he kept emphasising victimisation narratives and state-driven orthodoxies that were mitigated by the two-wheeler brand. By owning a Bajaj, Swapan not only gained mobility and personal freedom but it became a means for him to reclaim middleclass dignity and recognition that was actively side-lined by Nehru in his search for rural transformation (Gupta, 2000; Lakha, 1999; Varma, 2007). As Bajaj’s active cultural negotiation came in response to an aggressive influx of foreign motorbikes, I wondered why Swapan did not buy a motorbike to claim speed, status and higher social recognition in the form of ‘high cultural capital (HCC)’ (Üstüner and Holt, 2010). He replied:

“My father taught me to believe in simplicity. Scooters were simple, easy to maintain, very economical, and because of its small wheels, it was extremely safe to ride. Like a car, I could carry my whole family on the scooter. It was easy for my wife to hop on

even wearing a sari while my son would just stand on the front deck. This scene was very common back at that time. It was certainly a family man's ride. Apart from that all the mechanical parts were made in India, it was very easy to replace and repair. Even an ordinary mechanic was able to repair Bajaj scooters...Motorbikes had big wheels, difficult to control...they were catastrophic and more accident prone on Indian roads. It was difficult to carry the entire family on a motorbike...and the foreign brands were very difficult to maintain because of the lack of parts and engineering expertise available at that time.”

- Swapan

At this point, one thing is clear; that the allegory of Hamara Bajaj did not act as an active influential factor in Swapan's purchase decision. In fact, he never emphasised that he bought the brand because of the Hamara Bajaj campaign. He was not a passive gullible dupe who fell into temporary emotional traps laid by a brand mythology and its cultural codes (Holt, 2002; Ozanne and Murray 1995; Murray and Ozanne, 1991), instead, the scooters as commodity objects became so much immersed in middleclass desire that it became a perfect material and cultural fit into his life world.

After a prolonged discussion, I broke the silence and showed him the Hamara Bajaj advertisement to measure how the brand mythology fitted in his life-story and made a widespread ideological appeal to adapt Bajaj as an integral part of his life. Swapan became nostalgic after watching the advertisement and like many others he admitted how those “golden days of simplicity” have been buried under “shopping malls, fancy cars, and deadly motorbikes”. He did not appear to be a good reader of mass media advertisements or an expert in analytics of marketing ploys hidden within the Hamara

Bajaj appeal (Holt, 2002; Ozanne and Murray, 1995). As a result, Swapan did not elaborate on his reading of Hamara Bajaj and its mythological context, so in order to determine a wider reaction, I reflected back on other informant interviews. Amongst them, Ganpat, another Bajaj scooter owner insisted:

“This advertisement always reminds me of our tradition and culture. For this reason, Bajaj will always be Bajaj. It runs through our blood and it is as Indian as we are.”

- Ganpat

Here Ganpat's comments create an integral national space for Bajaj that was reinvigorated twenty years ago through the mythical archetype of democratic postcolonial man. Following this creative manipulation, the advertisement deployed a discourse where heterogeneous India was represented through an alternative social space characterised by economic and social stability (see Chapter 5). The spatial identity and citizenship created in this cultural space strongly amalgamated with a picture of desired India making the brand an integral part of the nation's years old tradition and culture. From this perspective the Hamara Bajaj campaign may not have created an emotion spot for buyer to buy into Printas' marketing ploy, but as Holt (2004) insisted, cultural brands do not create short-lived 'commodity emotion traps', instead, their halo effects are widespread and long lasting that/and pulse through a nation's spirit and desire. Some of the netnographic evidence gathered as part of this research further supports this claim:

“Remember it watching when I was soooo young.... felt like reliving the past.....cried a bit.....thanks a lot for the ad....”

- Rajesh [Netnographic Data]

“The purity that ads [advertisements] of that time possessed is missing somewhere today except for a few good ones none of the ads today have the capability to connect with the common man but this one did the tagline 'hamara bajaj' is enough to tell us that it belongs to us”

- Megh [Netnographic Data]

“The golden days. when all was innocent. all was pure. all was real. not like today's fake world. those days will always be cherished!”

- Prat [Netnographic Data]

“The meanings & values shown in this ad will be appreciated ONLY by Indians [& people of similar cultures].”

- Deep [Netnographic Data]

Actually, the story of Hamara Bajaj is one of the first mass television advertisements by Bajaj that passively engulfed the nation’s imagination during a difficult time. The series of commentaries collected as part of netnographic data demonstrate that even today a ‘true Indian’ cherishes the meaning and resonance of Hamara Bajaj and personifies the brand as the nation’s glorious past. In this personification process Bajaj scooters become an animated material representation of mother India, bonded in

a loving and caring relationship with the families they belong to. That is why in many of these cases, consumers formed deeply committed relationships, not only with Bajaj scooters as material objects, but also with the advertisement itself that offered them a sense of love, affection, prosperity, integrity, and Indianness. For example, for Rajesh the advertisement was a piece of nostalgia, a token from his childhood; while for Megh, Deep, and Prat, Hamara Bajaj is a vessel that carries meanings and values of ‘common man’ at its purest form, it’s a reminder of the ‘golden days’ when mother India wasn’t contaminated with fake commodity appeal or ‘inferior’ global norms (Varman and Belk, 2012). In reality, the ‘80s and early ‘90s were a time of socio-political turmoil that barely resembled the ‘golden days’ of the nation, however, the advertisement was successful in portraying a picture of ‘common man’ and their desired world in such a way that its legacy lives through these informants’ minds as an iconic image. As a more skilful analytics of mass advertisement explains:

“Did u guys notice one thing?? they haven't given focus on the product, It shows the life of people and how they are attached to the product, they are enjoying life with it. Can you find someone washing the vehicle in its commercial now a days?? :D This ad is just brilliant! hats off and i miss my childhood..”

- Jeff [Netnographic Data]

Therefore, if the advertisement takes the focus away from the product and the brand, and if Hamara Bajaj had not presented a wider emotional trap, then questions remain regarding how the brand became an iconic emblem in Swapan’s life. To find the answer once again I reflect back on Swapan’s life narrative in which he described how growing up in a socio-politically exploited generation, his life was dotted with

social and political turmoil. Following in his father's footsteps as he looked for comfort through 'peace', 'simplicity', 'reliability', and 'non-violence' within middleclass means, Bajaj supplied a perfect passage for emancipation offering him ideological relief (Holt, 2004). In this discourse, Bajaj scooters became a cultural and political virtue of a long-awaited homogeneous national space, an archetype of a national carrier that promoted and supported dignity, integrity, and self-sufficiency for people like him (Cayla and Elson, 2006). The brand and material object together re-signified the concept of Swadeshi, imagined through the image of a progressive traditional family driven by a man and accompanied by his wife and children in traditional attire.

As the myth of Hamara Bajaj had the perfect cultural recipe to emulate Gandhi's call and projected a secular, peace-loving archetype of middleclass man in search of a self-sustained India (see Chapter 5). Informants like Swapan may not be actively manipulated into the commercial plea of the advertisement, rather the myth of Swadeshi seamlessly tapped into his life and supplied desired ideological resources through the cultural and political authorities of the brand. After all the humiliation and ideological setbacks experienced through religious diversity and genocide in his lifetime, subscription to Bajaj not only offered Swapan respect and freedom at a personal level, but he further believed that the nation was culturally and politically congregating once again. To him it felt like all of sudden India had worn off its religious stigma as the Hindu, Muslim, Sikh and Parsi gathered together to reinvent and cherish a dignified middleclass in India.

“In those days having a Bajaj meant you were a gentleman with a good job and you had a good social standing. Nobody would have cared about your caste, religion, or class. You would have earned automatic respect. A few years after I purchased the scooter, there were widespread developments around India, when Congress came back to power all the conflicts eventually started to settle down. It felt like the scooter had changed my life for better.”

- Swapan

Although Swapan’s description of political stability and wider social developments may have been a result of 1990s economic liberation, the myth of secularism, personal accomplishments, and tangible middleclass growth, along with the celebration of tradition were already captured and presented to him through the mythology of Bajaj scooters. Such powerful association of brand mythology with the material object may have reignited Swapan’s imagination making him believe that Bajaj scooters were the landmarks of an optimistic social transformation. As a result, integration of a Bajaj scooter in Swapan’s life saw repositories of joy and excitement unfolding through many personal episodes in his life, i.e., from attending successful client meetings to taking his son to his graduation, from saving his father’s life searching for blood banks in the middle of the night to bringing his grandson back home for the first time. It was clear that Bajaj’s cultural and political authorities not only were a seamless fit for Swapan’s ideological constructs but they also made his life more profound and meaningful, according to his desire.

As Bajaj started to become an active contributing factor in people’s lives, deeply rooted in their personal history and the core concept of self, people started to animate,

humanise, and personalise the scooters as an integral part of their everyday life (Arvidsson, 2001). For example, beyond Swapan, some of the wider netnographic stories indicated how the owner and his family felt rejuvenated when they reflected on the advertisement, even twenty-five years after it's release, they became nostalgic about a message from the past that glorifies their identity, affiliation, and citizenship. Some of the respondents even suggested that they felt distressed when that piece of memory was taken away from them forever.

“My dad worked so hard and one of the important milestone in his life come after purchasing the scooter, that helped him out of the situation and today our generation is gainig fruits out of it. I am sincerely oblidge to the vehicle, the product and its not just an add [advertisement] but a token of love to all those who are use to it-It rejuvenates me....”

- Shiv [Netnographic Data]

“When my family decided to sell bajaj chetak...we all were sad, we even record it when it was leaving us, my dad remained upset for whole day.it was his first two wheeler :(“

- Sanj [Netnographic Data]

Even Swapan couldn't “think of selling...[his]...scooter in...[his]...lifetime”. The eternal bond between Bajaj and the middle class was established through the inherent ideology of Swadeshi but this relationship was put to the test when economic reforms supported a fast paced India imagined through foreign motorbikes that challenged the

very existence of Bajaj and its scooters in the age of mobility and socio-economic reforms. But consumers like Swapan stand against such social shifts by claiming:

“Motorbikes just took the very essence out of two-wheeler riding. In my time riding a Bajaj scooter would have earned huge social respect. Motorbikes can never match that, it all started about ten to fifteen years ago and now it seems they have just taken over the world. People use them to showcase themselves, it’s all the young generation...I have seen many of these motorcycles, they are all short-lived...they come and go in a matter of years...and the riders...you can tell they belong to lower class, like vendors, salesman, shopkeepers, or employees of a call centre. You will never see a sober man riding a motorbike. And the way young people ride motorbikes today I am convinced that they dig their own graves before leaving the house. There is more...the other day I saw in the news that organised motorbike gangs are haunting the new town area, these are all new to me.”

- Swapan

Therefore, the arrival of motorbikes was considered a paradigm shift that no longer fitted into postcolonial ideals, instead it was seen as a personal attack by uncivilised masculine motorbikes to the sovereignty of mother India. As a result, postcolonial men like Swapan enacted particular versions of anti-motorbike sentiments that resemble how Swadeshi ideology protected local goods and local productions from imperialist colonials (Trivedi, 2003). Swapan’s reflexive response to the arrival and proliferation of motorbikes follows Swadeshi analogy by throwing stigmas of ‘inferiority’ to the bikers and their affiliation of class and culture. Such responses further intensified when Bajaj moved on to the motorcycle category abandoning the

scooter generation. This perceived sense of displacement caused to the scooter owners like Swapan encouraged the rise in wider identity politics and social fragmentation in modern India.

“I felt cheated...I felt disgusted when I realised Bajaj was withdrawing scooter production and all its support for scooter owners. It’s all about money and profit these days...isn’t it? Wherever there is profit, companies will run after it. What about loyalty? I have so many loving memories with my scooter and if it has no value to the company then I equally disown the new face of Bajaj. I know my scooter in and out...I can repair it myself...they have stopped producing the parts [mechanical parts] but I can get them from any local mechanic shop...that’s not a problem...the only regret is what the company has done to us...is this all I get for twenty years loyalty... now I am a total stranger? Bajaj is no longer Bajaj anymore, there was a time when everyone used to say Hamara Bajaj, but you don’t hear it anymore.”

- Swapan

Bajaj’s transformation following modernisation in India had a profound effect on consumers like Swapan. As the brand’s new cultural and political reality demystified Swapan’s Swadeshi dream, he was left to deal with new sets of challenges by carrying the burdens of postcolonial masculinity. However, as an agent of ‘creative resistance’ (Holt, 2002; Kozinets, 2002a) he did not give up on reanimating a national space that resembles Bajaj’s cultural past and its original citizenship. That is why, even today, Swapan rides his scooter wearing traditional Khadi made garments, proudly showcasing his classic cultural affiliation that allows him to reinvigorate the idea of ‘new-Swadeshi’ (Mazzarella, 2006; Trivedi, 2003). In this renewed ideology, Bajaj’s

new cultural and political expressions are actively sidelined through anti-social narratives while claims to years old authenticity of the brand are kept alive through eternal loyalty along with knowledge of mechanical expertise.

Therefore, as renewed exposure to the idea of colonial market power looms with globalisation and India's marketplace reforms, fresh ideological anxieties arise amongst postcolonial agents who condemn western influences on Indian soil (Varman and Belk, 2009). As a result, informants like Swapan continue to animate their Swadeshi dream as a reflexive attire through consumption and identity politics. Enacting such identity politics through a historic material possession (Scooter) along with its brand mythology means Bajaj' or India's new reality, i.e. motorbikes or society's new western makeover, does not overpower his version of the nation and postcolonial masculinity.

6.3 Rebellious Cosmopolitanism:

The term 'cosmopolitanism' was described as a 'shared identity project' central to one's life-narratives whose outlook towards cultural differences in consumption are understood and adopted through a complex and dominant ideological system of global capitalism (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999). Following this theoretical lead, one recurring theme that came out of the life narratives of Pulsar owners was their increased encounter with transnational cultures and the global economy in the age of modernism. Unlike Swapan's resistance to modernity through the stereotypical appropriation of post-colonial masculinity, I found these consumers open and willing to explore the spectacle of 'global sign economy' (Lash and Lury, 2007). Such a story of rebellious cosmopolitan man is developed around the life narratives of a 22 year

old, single man: Raj. In 2010, when I met him, Raj was set for a journey to strip off his middleclass status by redefining his cultural space (Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006; Üstüner and Holt, 2010; McCracken, 2008; Mehta and Belk, 1991). Raj lives with his brother and his widowed mum in a middleclass suburb of Kolkata. He was born and bred in a city that is still recovering from its imperial impulse and burgeoning colonial past (Varman and Belk, 2012; Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Lukose, 2005; McClintock, 1995). It's not only the city's blurring colonial past that has a profound effect on his self-construction, but his life story is full of transitional phrases that have constantly forced him to create alternative passages for personal freedom and rights (McCracken, 2008; Markus and Nurius, 1986; Varman and Belk, 2012; Fournier, 1998). As a result, a victimisation narrative that becomes prominent in his life story is: forced compliance to social norms.

“I grew up in a very conservative environment and all I heard in my life is ‘don’t do this, don’t do that’. My family was always concerned if I go out with a girl what the society will think, if I don’t get a good grade what would the relatives think. Even in college, joining the union meant I had political aspirations, someone literally dubbed me a political thug and told my dad, so I had to stay away from it. I was there to make some friends, nothing else. Similarly, if someone saw me in a good restaurant or eating out with friends that news would have got to my dad within half an hour. Then questions would arise where I got the money from, why was I wasting it. Literally people had problem with everything that didn’t fit their mind.”

- Raj

It all started fifteen years ago when Raj had to move with the whole family to suburban Kolkata, as his father managed to afford their own house. Being the head of

a middleclass family, his father's main responsibility was to protect the family and provide them with "the basic necessities for survival"; his mother has always taken a back seat role in the family and served as a "domestic goddess" throughout her life. In Raj's lifetime, his father had worked as a lower grade government employee and made "just enough" money to feed the whole family and provide a roof in an unfurnished single bedroom house. Unfortunately, the post-colonial strains of middleclass life had hit the family so hard that sometimes it wasn't even possible for his father to provide the basic amenities like "installing a door in the bedroom". Lack of financial strength had forced the family to "share every single means of life", even a king size bed where four of them had to "squeeze in to spend the night". The only asset to the family was a rusty iron wardrobe, a lacklustre "multi-purpose" dining table, an old fashioned king size wooden bed, a stand-alone dressing table, and a "pile of financial liabilities" acquired by his father. The only means of entertainment available was an "ancient broken radio set" and a "twelve-year-old black and white television".

Throughout his life Raj had always been forced to decide his own destiny, especially by his father, if not, his mother and his immediate family members. During childhood he was forced to go to a local boys' school and his parents were extremely selective about his social circle. Throughout his school life Raj was repeatedly reminded to "stay away from girls"; his parents believed that a premature relationship before marriage would be detrimental for their social acceptance and family status.

"I was obedient and listened to my parents all the time. I was sent to an all boys' school, then I wanted to study science but my father decided I should study

commerce. I wasn't allowed to walk back from a private coaching session with a girl, even though she was just a friend, in case society might misinterpret it. I had strict guidelines on what to wear, where to go so that I do not humiliate my family at any time.”

- Raj

In 2010 when I met Raj, it had not been long since he had lost his father in an unfortunate incident. As a grown up man he was forced to take responsibility for the entire family. Although his family didn't suffer any financial hardship after his father's death, Raj resented that his mother had never stepped forward to take up the leadership role in the family or assisted him to do so appropriately.

“My father's death was a big turning point in my life. Although financially we didn't struggle as much...we received a lump sum from his pension and gratuity, but emotionally it was daunting. My mother just did not step up from her role and because my brother was so young I had to take up all of the responsibilities. From everyday grocery shopping to paying off the bills everything was on my shoulders, there were days when I had to stand in a queue for six hours to claim my father's pension.”

- Raj

As life became ever more challenging in his father's absence, one positive thing that came out of it was Raj getting a job, and starting to discover a number of passages to attain his desired ideological beliefs (McCracken, 2008; Liechty, 1995; 2003; 2010; Murray and Ozanne, 1991; Markus and Nurius, 1986; Little, 1989; Marcia, 1980).

The glamorous myth of "city lifestyle" had always captivated Raj's imagination; however, under his father's supervision he never had the "courage to explore the avenues of emerging modernism" (Appadurai, 1996; Slater, 1999; Hall, 1990; Miller, 1995a; Ozanne and Murray, 1995). He "almost took it for granted" that a premium lifestyle was a privilege to the elite class who "lives in a posh city area, attends an English medium school, and ends up being an engineer or doctor". However the lack of authoritative measures within the family that came as a result of his father's death, suddenly gave him a unique passage to escape traditional barriers. Joining a multinational work environment made him realise how the hegemonic boundaries of a traditional society not only restricted his potential to everyday status quo, but also how it affected millions of others, hindering the destined progression of the nation.

“Since I started working for a multinational company, my outlook on the world has grown quite a bit. Part of my job requires dealing with foreign clients and a big part of that is about understanding foreign customs and cultures. We even had official training on it. I feel like the way I was brought up has had a profound effect on my confidence and the way I lived. I see my managers, my clients they are so smart and upbeat, and it comes from the way they grew up, the school they went to. They are all English medium educated guys. I realise now that the way I was told not to do certain things has only made me more incompetent at certain things. And it’s not just me the whole young generation is suffering. The whole country is talking about India’s growth but how can we compete if our generation is so weak and immature.”

- Raj

Raj's early manhood was restricted, reserved, and debilitated as his family's effort to remain respected pillars of the community forced him to comply with institutional rules and everyday conformities. Raj's father's efforts to raise his elder son as a 'cultural pantheon of a respectable man' were indeed an attempt on his part to instil the early traits of the breadwinner role in Raj (Holt and Thompson, 2004). However, the number of stigmas thrown at this model of masculinity evokes questions about whether men relying on this ideology can achieve 'real manhood' (ibid). In multiple narratives, Raj indicated how he regularly asked these questions of himself while living under his father's supervision, but with the first opportunity to break free he challenged and side-lined this subservient power structure and made every effort to establish him as a social paragon.

Here it seems appropriate to recall Victor Turner (1974) as his theoretical accounts provide an excellent insight into Raj's role transformation (also see McCracken 2008). According to Turner, in modern societies consumers are subjected to isolated liminality with fewer collective passages. This forces consumers to create their own rites of passage where marketplace resources play critical roles in shaping new identities and practices (Luedicke et al., 2010; Murray, 2002; Thompson and Tambyah, 1999; Mehta and Belk, 1991; Varman and Belk, 2012). This appears to be the case in Raj's life as his restricted childhood and teenage years has forced him to search for collective passages for personal freedom. One of these opportunities came when he started working for a multinational organisation and attached himself to a circle of friends who forced him to idealise consumption as an autonomous institution for attaining his desired self-transformation (McCracken, 2008; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006; Cherrier and Murray, 2007; Emrence, 2008; Liechty, 1995; 2003;

Markus and Nurius, 1986). Raj's new friends come from all over India and they stigmatise middleclass bureaucracy as forced aggravation.

“My friends are very casual; they have a different outlook to the world than I had. They are always up to something...travel, fashion, music, drinking, dancing...you name it...and that is how life should be. Sometimes I try to hide my background because they know being casual is not a middleclass thing. There is a saying that the middleclass is like a bucket of crabs; if you leave them over night they will remain the same in number. If one tries to climb up others will drag it down. It's so true!”

- Raj

Such stigmatisation is deeply discrediting to Raj's origin and class background turning his daily struggles into symbolic sites of ideological instability (Holt, 2002; 2007; Holt and Thompson, 2004; Fournier, 1998). However, Raj admits that these acquisitions are true and the only way he could escape reality is by breaking off from the hegemony of his middleclass background (Üstüner and Holt, 2010; Goffman, 1963). As a result, Raj's rebellion against social supremacy started by submerging himself into an 'open minded' youth culture while making active efforts to separate himself from imposed orthodoxies of society and culture. To escape his subversive identity Raj's daily rebellious rituals involve meeting his friends outside work in places that are mostly designated as “high class”, “trendy”, and “unconventional”. These places are pubs, nightclubs, and high-class shopping malls (not regular shopping malls) that have displaced “many families...encouraging ‘videshi’ (foreign)...” instead of Swadeshi (local) culture (Varman and Belk, 2012, p.62). Several scholars have reported that in developing countries these social spaces are

regarded as ‘western spectacles’ facilitating the flow of global culture to the masses (Varman and Belk, 2012). Therefore, regular participation and consumption in shopping malls and other retail spaces not only allows Raj to emancipate from traditional orthodoxies but also offers him an immersive learning environment for acquiring new cultural capital for his new identity (Üstüner and Holt, 2010; Liechty, 1994; 2003; 2010; McCracken, 2008; Öncü, 1997; Emrence, 2008).

“Walking into a shopping mall is always interesting. They are colourful and decorative...not like a department store...it’s all mood lighting, escalators, lifts...something that couldn’t be imagined about five years ago. There is more to it...new clothes, fashion, gadgets, food from all over the world. Every time I walk into a proper shopping mall I learn something new...something about a brand, or a food, or a fashion, or a cool dude wearing something new. There is always something and sometimes they are very inspirational. I would say I have come far since I started working...and living for myself.”

- Raj

Fashion and clothing are one of the consumption and ritualistic avenues that helped Raj to conceal his restrictive middleclass background (Miller, 2010; Liechty, 1994; 2003; Cherrier and Murray, 2007). Having lived in suburbia for most of his life, emerging fashion trends were intriguing and aspirational, but it soon became an integral part of Raj’s lifestyle as he realised exercising new fashion and trends offered him a legitimate way out of becoming an everyday breadwinner (Cherrier and Murray, 2007; Murray, 2000; Miller, 2010). When Raj welcomed me into his newly refurbished two-storey house he was wearing a British Union Jack printed on his t-

shirt. The skin tight fitting of Raj's t-shirt almost revealed his projected six pack and well-toned arms, something identical to the masculine appeal of Sylvester Stallone as 'Rambo' or Arnold Schwarzenegger as the 'Commando' on his bedroom wall posters.

Miller (2010, p.12) stated, "clothing is not superficial", it can represent gender, class, occupational role, and most importantly one's origin and culture. It's a 'pseudo language' that could speak volumes and add a whole new significance to the study of identity and material culture. It represents the imagined self that lies deep within us (Banister and Hogg, 2004; Thompson and Haytko, 1997). While for an informant like Swapan a Union Jack may carry anti-colonial sentiments and deep symbolic resistance to colonial culture, for Raj it provided a discourse for promoting new values, while making an attempt to challenge the hegemony of post-colonial manhood in modern India. This was an effort by him to create a new bricolage to gain emotional rewards ["I am pretty sure it carries a positive image ..."], while positioning ["This is for broad-minded people who understand fashion..."] his identity and class in accordance with the emerging cultural standards (Üstüner an Holt, 2010; Rafferty, 2011; Mish, 2007; Liechty, 2003).

"I do not allow anyone to dictate how I dress or get seen in public. I know sometimes people distinctly notice my clothes but there are plenty of narrow-minded people out there. Do I really care?...no...this is for broad-minded people who understand fashion. I am pretty sure it carries a positive image, as I would definitely appreciate someone wearing something similar."

- Raj

Raj's analysis and understanding of '*style*' as a pretext for transformation are rooted in the belief that a constant search for new meanings can supply popular currency for a new class, status, and culture (Liechty, 1994; 2003; Hebdige, 1979; McCracken, 2008). The widespread 'appreciation' that Raj has received through such symbolic statements and demarcations not only proves how the dominant cultural logic of new modernity is understood in terms of aesthetic innovation and experimentation (Üstüner and Holt, 2010; Emrence, 2008; Fleischer, 2007), but it is also an effort towards the controlled dissolution of postcolonial sentiments amongst rebellious Indian youths (Oza, 2006; Mazzarella, 2006; Lukose, 2005; Liechty, 2003).

"I learn from anywhere and everywhere. Recently MTV is airing a reality fashion programme...it shows new looks and styles being judged by experts and gives me a lot of inspiration for my daily wear! Then the video jockeys, Ranvijay is my favourite...I absolutely love his appearance...girls die for him. In shopping malls you will see every now and then celebrities launching new clothing brands. It doesn't always need to be casual wear...I have fifteen different combinations of office wear alone."

- Raj

The makeover of his new identity had a massive impact on Raj's world. Throughout his pile of clothes I struggled to find a single traditional item or a piece of Khadi that could speak for the novelty and simplicity of Gandhi's ideology or its symbolic connotation to nationalism and activism against 'foreign ideologies' (Moore-Gilbert, 1997; Trivedi, 2003). Rather, in Raj's case, a neatly organised stack of colourful t-shirts and Denim jeans seemed to have threatened post-colonial efforts to culturally unify Indian men. Centre to this identity politics lies a man and machine agency,

emulating the model of 'Man-of-Action' with an emerging logic of 'style' and consumption (Holt and Thompson, 2004; Liechty, 2003; 2010; Hebdige, 1979). This heroic embodiment of rebel spirit was constructed between Raj and his almost brand new 180cc. Bajaj Pulsar.

"I bought the Pulsar because it didn't feel right to ask for a lift to ride behind my friend's motorbikes all the time. Using public transport is troublesome, especially during office hours, plus it's not a convenient option for staying out late at night. I always wanted to have my own motorbike. She wasn't cheap to buy but now I think every rupee spent was worthwhile. It was one of the best decisions I made in my life. She accompanies me everywhere."

- Raj

As entering the 'independent world of adulthood' demanded serious negotiations for constructing the desired self, it is clear from the previous narratives that Raj's dominant ideological project was gradually anchored within the 'rebel model' (see Holt and Thompson, 2004). According to Holt and Thompson (2004) this type of manhood challenges the status quo and existing social norms through the moral threats of 'anti-social outlaws'. They are more of a 'warrior than father', more 'seducer than husband' or serious workers (ibid). These characteristics of the rebel model are central to Raj's current life theme, as he conforms to the idea of self-independence, determination, and brute strength in order to stand apart from institutional bureaucracies. Raj's upwardly mobile fashion sense, along with his participation in night clubs and shopping malls (or 'western arenas') can be seen as an effort by a 'Third World subject' to return to the 'gaze of the (neo) coloniser's' world

(Varman and Belk, 2012, p.3; Bhabha, 1994). Such anti-establishment led free spirit was further heightened in Raj's life by acquiring the Pulsar motorbike (Willis, 1978; Hebdige, 1991; Murphy and Patterson, 2011; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). As Willis (1978) noted, motorbikes remained at the centre of the 'boys' lifestyle and activities, supplying them with ontological security and solidarity, similarly, the self-rule, independent, and free will logic attached to the Pulsar mythology supplied both desirable and attainable meanings to Raj's self-transformation (McCracken, 2008; Murphy and Patterson, 2011; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995).

Raj bought his Pulsar motorbike to disguise his constrained middleclass identity along with his marginalised masculine ideologies in a search for higher social acceptance amongst the new generation (Liechty, 2003; Lukose, 2005; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006; Castle, 1986). Like a breadwinner, he did not want to take a backseat role in his family or his social life ["it didn't feel right to ask for a lift to ride behind my friend's motorbikes"]. Instead, he wanted to trade for an ideology that could offer him autonomy, conformity, and frontier manhood. That is why the raw and rebel cultural authorities of Pulsar fitted into his ideological aspirations promising a dramatic version of 'Man-of-Action' with increased power and authority:

"Advertisements were indeed great but there was a Pulsar craze everywhere, I could see the bikes everywhere. That look and that performance was everything for me. One day I couldn't resist and walked into a showroom. The first time I saw her I fell in love.... that glamour and that macho appearance...that solid engine, thick tyres, and the curvy tail lights...I had never seen anything like it before in any motorbike. When

it came to test drive it just felt out of this world. It was wild...she wanted to run faster and faster. That was the moment I decided that I wanted a Pulsar.”

- Raj

Hebdige (1988) noted that machines are “brought down to earth” to form meaningful cultural relationships with people. Similarly, Pulsar motorbikes were “brought down to earth” to generate cultural meanings of solidity, style, strength, and responsiveness offering a compensatory space for consumers to exercise their desired rebellious manhood (see Chapter 5). However, the ‘rebel model’ has its limitations, often these type of men are seen as ‘immature boys’ trying to ignore their social responsibilities, while being characterised as ‘anti-social’ by the mainstream (Holt and Thompson, 2004). Consumers like Raj do not want to be side-lined from mainstream society by being classed as anti-social, instead his rebel ideas are constructed to renegotiate men’s power structure in a post-globalised world (Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004; Dorné, 1995; 2000). As a result, Raj’s rebel aspirations have gradually become moulded in the ‘Man-of-Action’ model that draws utopian resolutions from both the breadwinner and rebel ideologies (Holt and Thompson, 2004). According to Holt and Thompson (2004), the ‘Man-of-Action’ ideology is driven by the idea of ‘reinvention’, an archetype that calls for admiration through talent and skills without bowing down to the constraints of society. Men following such ideologies must defy the status quo and fulfil their duties towards family and society for greater social wellbeing (ibid). Throughout his life narratives, Raj indicated how he develops and deploys such ‘reinvention’ strategies by using consumption as a conspicuous method (Liechty, 2003; Lukose, 2005; Kjeldgaard and Askegaard, 2006; Murray, 2000; Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004). Starting from everyday wear to his beloved Pulsar,

he selects everything carefully to fulfil 'the meaning of style' that gets him closer to his desired masculine archetype. Therefore, although the series of rebellious characteristics seeded in the Pulsar mythology had an impact on how Raj perceived the brand, like a well-informed analyser, he carefully analysed the elements of style, appearance, and reinforcements (engine, tyre, structural integrity etc.) before making a purchase decision. The youthfulness, speed, and dynamism of Pulsar motorbikes offered an assurance of danger and risk-taking mentality that Raj aspired to instil in his life. Such an effort to rebuild the power structure around him became further prominent from his regular workouts and gym routine.

"I started regular exercise right after buying the motorbike. It was a bit embarrassing riding a Pulsar without having the body for it. So I joined the gym and worked hard to get to this stage. Now I feel more confident wearing skin tight t-shirts and exposing my biceps...and to be honest the bike weighs over hundred and fifty kilos, so in order to maneuverer it you need to be strong. It's certainly not for faint-hearted people."

- Raj

Therefore, buying an iconic brand like Pulsar does not offer an assured mythical association to the ethos of man-of-action. As motorcycling demands a specific type of relationship between the machine and the rider (Murphy and Patterson, 2011), a shared practical understanding of appearance and performance is essential to form the agency between man and these hyper-masculine machines (Magaudda, 2011; Belk, 2004). Such a shared identity project allows informants like Raj to become expressive

and self-directed to enjoy momentary emancipation from the mundane of reality (Murphy and Patterson, 2011).

Ironically Raj's body-building endeavours is further resembled by posters of mythical heroic figures on his bedroom wall. His favourite archetype of manhood, i.e., Sylvester Stallone (as Rambo) and Arnold Schwarzenegger (as Commando) were described as dramatic portraits of 'Man-of-Action' that do not "play by the rules", and operate outside everyday hegemony to restore moral order through action, adventure, and heroism (Holt and Thompson, 2004). Raj's moral 'uprising' follows a similar analogy as his heroic endeavours are directed towards building a nation that appears to be a victim of its own conformity. Although wider socio-economic transformations dominate newspapers and the media, contemporary India is a discourse of enormous social setbacks where young citizens like Raj have limited political power to exercise or establish their imagined version of India (Varman and Belk, 2012; Fernandes, 2006; DeSouza et al., 2009). This is why Raj relies on his newly acquired hyper-masculine companion to engage in identity politics against the widespread social antagonism. Instead of expressing such frustration through active political movements Raj's identity politics find a unique expression through everyday riding:

"I like to ride fast and I like to ride a lot. I can't explain that sensation in words. It's more like a sense of relief from everything. Kolkata city roads are always congested but having the Pulsar makes a huge difference. Traffic barely affects me as I can zip past them and get to the front easily and the self-start feature is the best part of it. While other riders are busy trying to kick start their motorbikes after a traffic light I have a half a kilometre head start because my Pulsar starts with the press of a button.

It feels great to have that power to speed up and leave everything behind...I don't find cars or other big vehicles that annoying to be honest, what really bothers me is the slow scooters and two stroke motorbikes. They congest the road and take up valuable biking space. There are so many times I have had to slow down or stop because of them blocking my way. Worst is getting stuck behind them in traffic and I have to wait forever for them to bring their dead engines back to life. Sometimes I deliberately throttle up, zip past them and exhaust gas in their faces...that is my way of saying get out of my way...I do this to any slow two-wheeler that blocks my way. Scooters and mopeds are the worst, they are ancient, overworked, and exhausted...like their owners, they are waiting to die. I am a person who does not like to contemplate the past. I am more interested in Bajaj's future. I am more interested in when the company will rock the world by launching their latest sensation 1000 cc. motorbikes."

- Raj

Hebdige (1979) stated that interaction between humans and objects often becomes an important symbolic passage for co-creating cultural meanings in everyday social life. In this metaphoric relationship fast motorbikes are imagined as the progressive image of the nation, where consumers like Raj occupy a front seat role. Here, the scooters, mopeds, and other slow-paced two wheeler vehicles are seen as part of a restrictive past that is holding India back from its own progression. While part of society is excelling in engineering and business to speed up the nation on a global stage, the slow-movers keep restricting such progress through the burdens of 'corruption', 'superstition', 'illiteracy', 'dishonesty', 'nepotism', and 'non-violence' (Fernandes, 2006; Oza, 2006; Rajagopal, 2001; DeSouza et al., 2009). Regardless of whether such

a slow paced non-violent approach has been a part of India's rich tradition and history, as modernity requires speed, ingenuity, and rugged individualism the young generation must learn to live up to it. Consumers like Raj participate in this modernisation movement by practicing 'motorcycle edgework', i.e., "dangerous motorcycling behaviour such as excessive speeding" (Murphy and Patterson, 2011, p.1324). According to a biking blog this is the analogy of problem solving in the bikers' world:

"Some do drugs...others pop bottles...I solve my problems...with wide open throttles"

- Biker@Heart [Netnographic Data]

Following such an analogy, Raj not only lives the moment through his riding but it is also his way of participating in a wider cultural movement demanding sovereignty.

"It has been sixty-three years since independence, still a quarter of our country is illiterate, over two hundred million people live below the poverty line. Our country has everything but we still want to live in the past. It's all because of corruption, dishonesty, nepotism, superstition...our young generation needs to stand up against it."

- Raj

Therefore Raj's ideological struggles are not constructed at a personal level, rather it was a wider social and political setback that affected an entire generation (Fernandes, 2006; Varma, 2007; DeSouza, 2009). Because of his struggled teenage years, Raj

appears to be a good reader of these social perils emasculating an entire generation. That is why, for a Pulsar enthusiast like Raj, the myth of western culture and consumption (Üstüner and Holt, 2010) holds a dominant position in his version of the desired India that competes and struggles for supremacy against corruption, dishonesty, superstition and other social uncertainties. As rebellions against such social setbacks through organised political movements are onerous, informants like Raj carefully work towards building a free agent identity that allows him to challenge and displace fallacies and subaltern subjectivities within a developing country. As a result, instead of showing a greater sense of deterritorialisation in modern India, informants like Raj actually show a renewed sense of association with the nation with their progressive ideas. Although Raj regularly submerges himself into western lifestyle and consumption practices, his efforts are primarily directed towards legitimising a society that is free from traditional barriers. Swapan and Raj, both, seemed to be dedicated to claiming their citizenship and class from their own ideological roots, and in doing so they both enact their own version of Swadeshi to create a desired national space that makes them feel comfortable. As the original idea of Swadeshi was developed to reinforce nationalism and self-sufficiency (Trivedi, 2003), both these informants follow their own logic to practice and construct their own version of this ideology. While Swapan's interpretation of nationalism and self-sufficiency stems out of colonial Swadeshi practices, Raj's interpretation of the same is reinvented through cosmopolitanism and new modernity (Varman and Belk, 2012; Liechty, 2003). Here Bajaj's past and present create a national space for consumers to simultaneously deal with local and global mentality (Gupta, 1998; Robertson, 1995), where the myth of technological elitism is used to overcome the sense of inferiority looming from the past. As further interviews and netnographic data indicates:

“Fantastic advertisement...shows how far Bajaj has come since its old days. Now India is producing world-class motorbikes equivalent to Italian superbikes, this is enough to dispose the Japs. Recently Japs have failed to give us two things; technology and reliability, and this is where we Indians thrive. Soon Bajaj will be a world-wide name.”

- Karan

Karan, a software engineer and a Pulsar owner, understands how modernity is marching through technological progression in India and how this is one of the selected avenues that can be used to reinstate India’s position amongst the global leaders. While Bajaj, in post-colonial India, fought against Japanese motorbikes by compensating technological setbacks with cultural stories of non-violence and secular man; Bajaj in post-globalised India follows a complete reverse logic where the myth of technology, violence, and aggression is used against the Japanese and other competitors. Pulsar is an iconic representation of such ideological evolution that remains at the heart of a new generation and empowers them to challenge the status quo by saying:

“India's engineering will rule the world in 12 -15 years...We will make superbikes better than BMW S1000RR...[and]...Ducati Panigales!!”

- Ravi [Netnographic Data]

“Beware earthlings...this is Hamara Bajaj”

- Ajay [Netnographic Data]

Therefore, Bajaj's revolution is India's revolution where the phrase 'Hamara' (our) now designates a different generation with different socio-political desires. According to Oza (2006) such a nationwide desire to establish India amongst the global leaders comes from India's ultimate demonstration of national strength and technological ingenuity acquired politically through nuclear power. During the late 1990s, the Indian nationalist government's aspiration to instill national pride and self-esteem through nuclear arms exercises had certainly inspired a generation of Indians to aggressively demand sovereignty, progression, and reformation of the power structure. Therefore, although the cultural industry believes that Pulsar's iconic success was down to its ability to emulate a much desired image of western bikers, in reality, consumers see the mythology of Pulsar as a passage to re-territorialise their manhood to enforce a new version of localism (Miller, 1995). Beyond Raj, the wider netnographic data collected further indicated how a part of society do not see the emergence of new bikers as sites for neo-colonial oppression, instead the remarkable progress of the brand becomes a tangible ground for imagining and experiencing India's progression (Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004).

This study demonstrates that cultural brands can give rise to identity politics by supplying imaginary mythological passages to celebrate one's imagined version of the self and the nation. In this celebration, informants like Raj deploy contradictory elements of cultural and political authority through consumption against the perils and backwardness of post-colonial manhood. Here the discourse of modernity or the west are not seen as 'inferior', instead they are idealised as sources of bricolage that help to construct rebellious identities amongst a new generation. Such a quandary between the local and the global is appropriated through Bajaj motorbikes depicting a new

image of citizenship where local desires are trapped within the ethos of global. An image where local India became constitutive inside, and the outer world remains a part of reflexive or temporary attire.

6.4 Summary of Analysis:

This chapter was designed to explore the research question investigating the dynamics of brand mediated identity politics surrounding Bajaj and its key target market – the Indian middleclass. Bajaj's transforming product and image signification strategy discussed in the previous chapter (Chapter 5) may indicate that the onset of modernity in India was a linear process, hence Bajaj's cultural appeal was changed to cater for the needs and wants of 'modern men', but in reality the situation was found to be more resonant.

As cultural brands carry deeper cultural and political ideologies, by subscribing to their ethos consumers often align their identity politics within the constellations of marketplace myths (Holt, 2004; 2006; Luedicke et al., 2010; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). However, this study shows that consumers use iconic brands and their mythical legacies, not only to combat against state supremacy, but also to dispute repressive fellow consumers who synthesise conflicting social boundaries against their will. In this context, the story of Bajaj presents a compelling case of an iconic brand that provoked and nourished widespread identity politics as a result of harbouring conflicting cultural and political myth markets. Bajaj's iconic legacies (past and present), as we learnt from this thesis, rest on two completely separate foundations of cultural and political beliefs, one on the benevolent model of

Gandhian peace, progress, and unity, the other on the aggressive, individualistic, forward looking men deriving power and pride from India's nuclear authority. As India's progressive socio-economic landscape forced the creative industry to look for cultural and political inspiration beyond indigenous culture, norms, and values, they inspired a new generation of the middleclass to flex their muscles by exercising individualistic, progressive, and virile ideologies of 'Man-of-Action' (Holt and Thompson, 2004). In doing so, Bajaj ignored its loyal base of scooter consumers who were lured into an eternal promise of Gandhian peace, prosperity, and unity through the allegory of Hamara Bajaj. Therefore, while Bajaj's past folklore a story of peace and unity, its current appeal provokes disintegration through rebellion and risk taking. This brand-mediated conflict gave rise to extreme forms of identity politics in twenty-first century India as riders with conflicting ideologies clash with each other in everyday life to claim their affiliation of class, citizenship, and culture. Underlying this identity politics lies one simple question: does Bajaj represent the traditional peace loving non-violent model of middleclass or does it represent a nuclear armed nation and its rebellious cosmopolitan desires.

The findings presented in this thesis highlight an important paradox for cultural brand research, i.e., while the key to brand iconicity lies in its ability to resolve socio-cultural distress by offering moral relief, in the long run brands like Bajaj that do not rely on a consistent cultural brief evoke widespread fragmentation and socio-cultural anxieties instead. This brand-mediated ideological fragmentation created wider social contestations, by giving birth to parallel fields of competing ideological systems amongst Indian men. For example, as the mythical allure of Hamara Bajaj continues to facilitate a traditional national space within globalised India, consumers like

Swapan find a fertile ground for investing and nurturing secular non-violent Swadeshi ideals. Such investments are made through a set of beliefs and practices that supply moral relief by offering an imaginary past to him. In contrast, market-led activism mythically transforms consumers like Raj into an agent of modernity. Growing up with modernist rhetoric and a progressive global marketplace, consumers like Raj have always felt a victim of stagnation and social orthodoxies led by traditional power structures. In response, Pulsar and its rugged socio-political appeal offer moral relief to Raj's identity burdens by restoring his upwardly mobile socio-political desires. By performing solitary social and consumption jeremiads Raj not only asserts his rebellion against rising institutional supremacy but it's also his way of constructing a new Pan-Indian identity to confront the nation's orthodoxies.

Here it is important to mention that in reality, Swapan and Raj, both, are extremely passive in demonstrating their socio-political manifestations via organised political movements or even voting rights in a country like India, but their relationship to Bajaj empowers them to use consumption as a compensatory ground for exercising perceived versions of class, identity, politics, and culture (Thompson, 2004; Thompson and Tian, 2008; Crockett and Wallendorf, 2004; Holt, 2002; Sandíkçi and Ger, 2005). Raj's efforts to advance his social class position leads him to borrow cultural capital from the 'outside world' which in turn does not become part of his inherent 'habitus'. Instead, inherent local cultural capital remains core to his identity and citizenship, while acquired global culture becomes a reflexive mechanism deployed strategically to combat social mayhem. Consumers like Raj never undermine their local roots or disseminate global culture as a currency for higher status or class consumption, rather it's a weapon used to challenge socio-political

status quo. Similarly, informants like Swapan draw their aesthetics, expression, and cultural capital from a mythical past that denotes particular moments of prosperity, self-sufficiency, integrity, and secularism. Rendering such “suitable moments” through a partial reading of cultural texts (Hamara Bajaj) not only helps these consumers to reinvigorate a new Swadeshi, but also helps them to disregard the perils of de-territorialised modernity.

6.5 Conclusion:

In conclusion this chapter illustrated how consumption and identity politics in contemporary India is a product of restructuring economic prosperity that precipitates through the marketplace along with cultural specifications of class and gender (Holt, 1997; Banerjee-Guha, 2006; D’Costa, 2003; Fernandes, 2004; Radhakrishnan, 2008; Rajagopal, 1999). With the onset of modernity and social transformation, consumers like Swapan resist transforming socio-political landscapes by enacting traditional beliefs as an ideological shield; in contrast, consumers like Raj push oppositional ideologies of reflexivity and self-production through an extreme cosmopolitan mentality. In doing so, on the one hand Swapan and Raj become rebels against the state and society, a society that retains its past but dreams of being independent and progressive amongst global leaders, on the other hand they engage in a quintessential moral battle to each other as ‘emblematic enemies’ (Holt, 2002). Although this moral battle is shaped within one’s ideological foundations, consumers like Swapan and Raj validate, articulate and venerate antagonistic moral threats to each other by becoming incorporated into brand-mediated mythic structures. In this case the central marketplace resource that supplies conflicting mythic structures is Bajaj and its cultural industry constructed rhetorical antagonism of middleclass manhood.

CHAPTER SEVEN: THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTION, IMPLICATIONS, AND DIRECTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

7.1 Rethinking the Principles of Cultural Branding:

The foundations for this study were developed in response to the increased dominance of economic and management led agendas in brand management, in contrast the cultural dimension that suggests brands and their marketplace mythologies are symbolic vehicles for structuring our understanding of society and marketplace merits further work (Holt, 2004; Schroeder et al., 2006; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Luedicke et al., 2010; Fournier, 1998). In Askegaard's (2006, p.84) words, today brands have become "central metaphor[s] for understanding marketplace actors and practices in the modern game of identity", as a result, brand mediated allegories have become central to consumers' ideological pursuits (Thompson, 2004). Inspired by the growing interest in brand management research from a cultural perspective, the point of departure for this study was grounded on Holt's (2004) explanation of cultural branding. Prior studies in this discipline have identified brands as '*symbolic vessels*' or emotional assets valued by consumer society (Levy and Rook, 1999; Gobé, 2001; Aaker, 1996), however, this study demonstrates that brands that become icons on cultural grounds possess strong mythical and symbolic value shaping consumers 'life politics' (Giddens, 1991; Thompson, 2011; 2014).

Although the principles of cultural branding proposed by Holt challenged the economic and management led dogma by presenting an organised seminal model, this

study proposed to re-evaluate and extend these principles by exploring the dynamics of cultural innovation within a transforming socio-economic context. In doing so, this study investigated the genealogical history of an iconic two-wheeler brand in India called Bajaj. Although my analysis and understanding of Bajaj's cultural innovation and survival strategy majorly endorses the principles proposed by Holt (2004), identification of several contradictory elements extends the model beyond North American cultural and socio-political background. In the following sections, I discuss the elements of Holt's proposed principles complimented by this research, followed by a set of criticisms highlighting why the principles proposed by Holt are far from being satisfactory towards the development of a comprehensive model of cultural brand management.

Complimenting Holt's Seminal Model: The primary question underpinning this research was to investigate what defined Bajaj's long lasting iconic legacy within a transforming economy like India. This study largely compliments Holt's seminal model by demonstrating how the foundations for Bajaj's brand iconicity was inherently built around its strong cultural and political history linked to transforming India. During the post-colonial era such iconic constituencies were potentially authored by advertising agency Printas who successfully salvaged the brand through a landmark advertising campaign called Hamara Bajaj. In the post-globalisation era, as the metaphoric allures of Hamara Bajaj gradually faded into mere nostalgia, Bajaj lost its iconicity for a long period. However, with the introduction of new technology along with the appointment of a new advertising agency (Prodigy) Bajaj regained its lost cultural ground once again in twenty-first century India.

As the making of post-colonial and neo-liberal India was full of socio-political anxieties (Joshi, 2001; Haggard and Kaufman, 2001; Weyland, 2003; Kohli, 1989), the creative politics of advertising agencies catapulted Bajaj's authenticity by crafting messages of 'moral relief'. Following the tale of discrete Bajaj advertisement campaigns this research unveiled the transforming stories of brand mythology designed on the '*class based grammar*' of middleclass men (Cayla and Elson, 2012). In this context, advertising agency Printas and Prodigy's contribution was indispensable, while the parent company's progressive vision along with India's transforming socio-political landscapes has always supplied the right cultural opportunity for Bajaj to make a comeback. These opportunities in the pre-globalisation era were identified and exploited by Printas who emulated a dramatic picture of peace, progress, and unity, whilst in the twenty-first century the central theme of cultural aspiration surrounded the dual logic of '*hybridity*'. However, with the arrival of new generation powerful motorbikes (Pulsar), Prodigy insisted the nation should forget its cultural past and aspire to grow and exercise its power, virility, and risk-taking mentality following India's acquisition of nuclear power.

This study compliments Holt's findings by demonstrating how agency-led brand mythologies inspired a selected generation of men in India to consider Bajaj as a cultural icon by reflecting on their desired picture of manhood. Throughout the study, it was distinctively noticeable how the informant's (consumers) self-portrayals (life-stories) were mostly fixated on victimisation narratives, following Holt, which can also be understood as '*red oceans*' of cultural orthodoxies. During the post-colonial era such orthodoxies were generated as a result of declining middleclass recognition along with social and religious divides induced by the Hindu nationalism, however, in post-globalised India, this widespread crisis was identified in the emasculation of men

and their eroding power structure. This declining authority of man, in post-globalised India, was not draped into the demand for non-violence or secularism; rather it was an outcry for recognition through demonstration of authority and power. According to Holt such interpretation of marginalised demands in the consumers' everyday life signals absence of State-mediated 'justice', inviting marketplace resources to supply extended moral relief (Holt, 2004; Thompson, 2014; Levy, 1959; Luedicke et al., 2010; Mazzarella, 2006; Schouten, 1991; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). As a result, the morally impeccable '*cultural blueprints*' supplied by a cultural brand eventually becomes a foundational ground for the consumers to construct an imaginary society.

Holt (2003a; 2004) was right in claiming that brands become iconic when the cultural industry successfully fabricates mythic stories surrounding widespread cultural anxieties. Such stories supply desired socio-political authorities to the citizen consumers turning them into animated activists. However, one of the important characteristics of this approach is to use advertisement as a commodity image that generates personified resonance to be experienced and understood in the flow of strongly desired society turning commodity and brands into a symbol of cultural leads (Holt, 2003b; 2004). In contrast, advertisements that attempt to replicate public culture discourse rendered through a dialect between reality and imagination, without understanding the actual ideological demand of a society, fails to achieve the required symbolic appeal.

Moving forward, with the progression of time, when societies encounter ‘disruptions’ and move on to a new socio-political system these brand mythologies eventually lose their halo effect (Holt, 2004). Such a ‘disruption’ or transformation in a developing country unfolds in many forms including changes in government, politics, or socioeconomic policies, but one of the wider disruptions that have a profound effect in a developing country like India is the onset of globalisation in the form of new modernity (Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995). Such disruptions bring changes with new sets of socio-political anxieties; brand managers and advertising agencies that become a good reader of these historic changes successfully reinstates their brands into iconic status with renewed mythological appeals (Holt, 2003a; 2004). In contrast, brands that try to relive their cultural past within a new socio-political system lose its glory leaving the cultural space open for the rivals to flourish.

Here, complimenting Holt (2004) it seems right to claim that managers and advertising agencies transform brands into experimental mediums for delivering ‘provocative’ marketplace mythologies in response to a country’s socio-political needs, but unlike Holt’s suggestion, their creative intentions do not always follow a pre-determined equation. From this perspective Holt has also failed to detail the role of advertising agencies in this unique brand management process, however, this study addresses the knowledge gap by highlighting how marketplace mythology becomes a process of ‘*bricolage*’ in cultural brand management when advertising agencies engage in culture led mass manipulation and image commodification following a two-stage process. In this process, initially advertising professionals transform into agents of ‘*bricoleur*’ (Lévi-Strauss, 1966) and embark on a journey to identify the “bits and pieces” of creative capital along with culturally embedded archetypes. In the

following step, the agents engage in synthesising objective relationships between pre-determined cultural categories to mirror an imagined society where specific cultural archetypes receive a 'priority status' to manipulate relationships between the self and a cultural commodity (in this case men and their machines). Such a culture-led innovation is a long-term learning process that hasn't become a clear systematic pursuit within some of the top Indian advertising agencies. However, in twenty-first century India as '*cultural brokers*', agencies have increasingly started to learn the importance of hidden cultural codes – the string that unites diversity, the myth that soothes countless anxieties – woven into the fabric of creative communication.

Bajaj's initial attainment of iconicity, appears to be unplanned and coincidental, became reality through the creative aspirations of a generation of creatives at Printas. However with the progression of time, as agencies gather more and more knowledge about a brand's existing culture-led values, they forcefully pass that knowledge to the next generation of creatives as a predetermined formula for successful creative executions. Such a forceful and orthodox knowledge distribution produces an agency-led, inflexible creative dogma amongst the new generation of creatives that prevent them from fully conceptualising and utilising transforming socio-cultural demands within a society (Ravasi and Schultz, 2007; Orlikowski, 2002; Kogut and Zander, 1996; Collins and Porras, 1996). That is why the creative string that integrates and harbours a series of advertising campaigns in a cultural brand's life cycle becomes stagnant in terms of their underlying cultural and political authorities, resulting in iconic brands failing to convince a nation until their underlying concepts are revolutionised through new initiatives. As liberated India demanded a liberating picture of men with increased authority and power structure (Derné, 2008; 2000;

Fernandes, 2006; Gupta, 2000; Varma, 2007), Prodigy was the first agency to recognise such a demand in globalised India. With Printas repeatedly failing to re-establish Bajaj's iconic status through old cultural affairs, Prodigy's conscious efforts to nurture a new form of masculinity using hyper-masculine motorbikes rekindled Bajaj's iconic constituencies once again in twenty-first century India.

Such an analogy proves that in order to make cultural innovation a systematic managerial pursuit, managers and creatives need to keep an open mind and design mythical appeals based on true reflections of society, politics, and culture at a given time (Holt, 2004). However, due to the prolonged nature of the process, often ideas become orthodoxies within agencies leading to the replication of cultural codes that consumers want to cease.

Finally, complimenting Holt, it seems appropriate to claim that cultural brands are built through animated relationships between people and inanimate objects that offer experiential temporalities of subjective lives and better cultural ideologies. However, Holt failed to describe the underlying mechanism that transforms commercially crafted brand mythologies into an illusionary and indistinguishable reflection of desired reality. This study helps to address this knowledge gap by presenting three important criteria: first, the images or the visuals of an iconic advertisement should be simple without incorporating any complex sentiments into it; second, the series of visuals or imageries should relate to the material object itself without any exaggeration or fictionalisation incorporated to it; third, the story behind the visuals should be passively absorbable without involving active interpretation skills. In this way cultural brands offer a passage to associate with distant experiential myths that consumers can use to create complementary roles in their everyday life. Such an easy

and possibly unconscious metaphoric alignment between reality and fantasy presents a case for consumer-brand relationship, narrated through a distinct marketplace mythology, to achieve strong competitive advantages by relieving multiple ideological distress shared by the core consumer segments of a branded commodity (see Thompson, 2004; Luedicke et al., 2010; Holt and Thompson, 2004). According to some of the informants (agency executives), this type of creative instinct comes from a combination of experience acquired through inherent and acquired capitals from society.

Criticising Holt's Seminal Model: The empirical evidence presented in this research emphasises how the cultural branding model perceived and designed by Holt (2004) remains an important landmark in the evolution of brand management, but the analytical insights gathered from this study suggest that the applicability of Holt's model is not theoretically robust at this stage. Despite adopting an interpretative research philosophy, Holt's suggestive measures are too rigid for an emerging and under-investigated area of brand management, and he appears to be sceptical in his approach in combining a limited set of cultural innovation stories towards developing a comprehensive theoretical model. This study demonstrates that cultural branding continues to be a developing area of brand management that requires further research and modification to enrich our understanding of it as a comprehensive theoretical field. The findings and analysis presented in this research highlighted a series of disagreements with Holt's proposed model. In the following section, I suggest three key areas of modification and begin my critical disagreements against Holt's narratives by recalling his description of iconic brands and their life cycles.

Transforming Cultural Authenticity: While analysing the secrets of the long lasting legacies of iconic brands, Holt (2004, p.39) stated that “myth markets are routinely destabilized by cultural disruptions”, as a result, there are obvious and routine appearances of morbid stages in an iconic brand’s lifecycle:

“Symbolic earthquakes pulse through society, shattering the value of existing myths and spurring the creation of new ones. Iconic brands...are sensitive to cultural disruptions shifting their targets when...[socio-cultural disruption]...strikes”

- Holt (2004, p.39)

That is why from the refreshment ideology of sunny Mexican beaches (Corona Beer) to the outlaw ethos of Harley Davidson; from the reactionary alternatives of masculinity (Marlboro or Jack Daniels) to the essence of artisanal cosmopolitanism (Starbucks), every single case history presented by Holt accompanied by his colleague (Cameron) indicated similar patterns of higher and lower value attainments within a cultural brand’s lifecycle (Holt and Cameron, 2010). When the cultural activism of an iconic brand reaches its imaginative peak, brands become icons by supplying ‘extraordinary symbolic meanings’ (Holt, 2003a; 2004), but as societies move on and get hit by new waves of ‘symbolic disruptions’ or ‘earthquakes’, existing ideological demands fade away lowering the brand’s value-based propositions (ibid). According to Holt, when a brand loses its iconic value appeal it gets demoted to a mere ‘*identity status*’ within a society. However “brands that author a successful myth earn the right to come back later with new myths...[affiliated to]...the same cultural concerns” (Holt, 2004, p. 125). Between the 1960s and 2000

Mountain Dew leveraged on delivering a number of mythical storylines (Hillbillies, Rednecks, Slackers) in contrast to the transforming American mainstream ideology of manhood, but the cultural and political authorities used in the storyline remained focused on the archetypes of virility and counter cultural demonstrations (Holt 2004, p. 129). Similarly, between 1959 and 2000 Volkswagen leveraged on delivering two powerful myths (Bohemian & Indie) that remained fixated on counter culture artisan and aesthetics pursuits of a nation (Holt 2004, p. 130).

In contrast, the cultural innovation strategy identified through the optics of brand Bajaj seems to follow a different socio-political trajectory. Bajaj's iconicity is a direct measure of its underlying cultural brief, yet changing the brief (from unity to individualism, from non-violence to rugged rebellion) did not result into Bajaj losing its cultural authenticity. Although Holt advocated that consistent cultural brief lies at the heart of a brand's iconic success, and without it a brand will fall into 'cultural chasms' losing its years-old credibility, this study suggests that brands can maintain their cultural iconicity even after changing their precious cultural narratives. Instead, if an iconic brand tries to repeat its cultural expressions too many times consumers became "fed up" and start to become aware of the underlying commercial motivations. Therefore, in order to remain a cultural icon brands must target the most compelling contradiction in the society at a given time that is not necessarily a continuation of its existing cultural blueprint, instead creative industry can introduce new radical codes and idioms of culture giving a new direction to a brand's cultural iconicity.

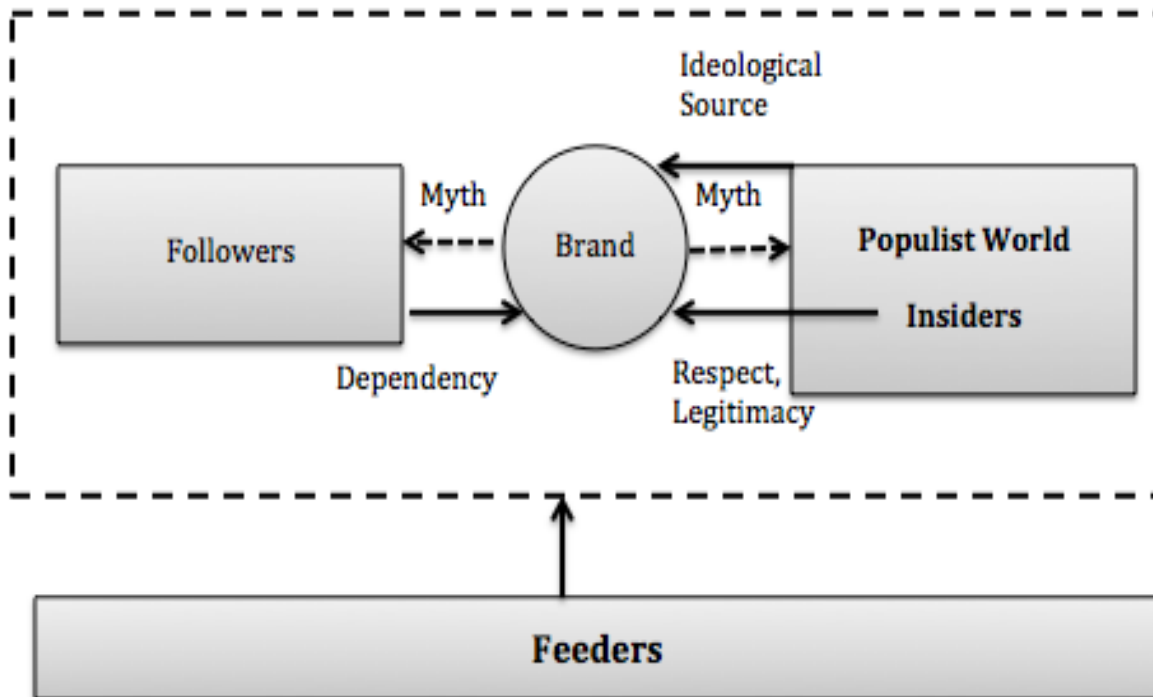
In this context it also seems logical to recall how Holt insisted that iconic brand myths are drawn from '*populist worlds*' to secure credibility, however, many companies have tried and failed to learn this analogy (Holt, 2003a; 2004). Brands that drew elements of myth market from mass cultural codes lost their fidelity to the audience by becoming typical '*mindshare fellows*' (Holt, 2004). This study contradicted such view by unpacking the iconic Hamara Bajaj myth that ultimately found its root in Gandhian mass cultural discourse instead of a popular cultural belief. Therefore, contrary to Holt's belief mass cultural discourse can supply powerful cultural narratives for brand iconicity as long as the message is drawn from a nation's widespread underlying desire regardless of mass culture or popular culture beliefs.

Technology as Blue Ocean: Favouring the idea of 'innovation through cultural expression' Holt and Cameron (2010) criticised product and technology driven innovations as '*white spaces*' of resonating '*better mousetraps*' (or '*red oceans*') that easily capture managerial or entrepreneurial imaginations (Holt and Cameron, 2010, p. 2 – 11). In contrast, this study demonstrates that parallel to cultural innovation technological innovation is an important aspect of iconic brand management that depends on the cultural characteristics of commodity and context respectively. As the onset of socio-economic development demanded higher commodity value in post-globalised India, technology itself became a desired cultural expression for the new socio-economic vista. Therefore, producing innovative new generation motorbikes were equally important in re-invigorating the cultural appeals of Bajaj where technology itself became an essential part of the new mythology and cultural expression (Arvidsson, 2001), without which Bajaj would have struggled to regain its lost iconic value.

Although Harley's success story was written by its cultural appeal rather than constant innovation or technological upgrade, influenced by global media as the new Indian middleclass thrived for '*better ideologies*', technology became a new metaphor for advancing the society (Rajagopal, 2001; Venkatesh, 1994). Therefore, despite Holt's criticism it is inevitable that in a country like India an iconic two-wheeler brand's historic survival was very much dependent on technological sophistication that acted as '*blue oceans*' of synergy largely integrated with the brand's new image and ideological perception that could not be delivered through lacklustre scooters and their feminine identity (Willis, 1978; Dregni, 1995; 2005; Dregni and Dregni, 1995; Bellaby and Lawrenson, 2001).

The Loyalty Model: In explaining the value system of an iconic brand Holt claimed that "customers of iconic brands value them differently" (Holt, 2004, p. 131) as 'loyalty' is a key component that determines the life span of a brand's iconicity. As part of his analysis, Holt presented a three-dimensional loyalty model that co-creates sustainable values for an iconic brand as products of a dynamic social networking system [Figure 7.1].

Figure 7.1: Co-production of Equity as Brand Loyalty



Source: Holt (2004, p. 140)

He further insisted that there are two important reasons why a brand loses its iconicity:

- I. A critical mass of '*followers*' abandoning the brand in response to an inefficient myth market.
- II. A critical mass of '*insiders*' rally against the brand as a result of disintegrated populist value system.

The '*followers*', '*insiders*', and '*feeders*' are 'interdependent constituencies' of customers segmented based on their level of commitment to the brand [Figure 7.1] (Holt, 2004). Such a commitment-based hierarchy model is an integral part of Harley-Davidson and its fan base as the hardcore members insist on claiming their authority

through power, commitment, expertise, and ritualistic practices (Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). In contrast, the peripheral '*cultural clichés*' emulate the hardcore to 'feed' on the cultural imagery of Harley-Davidson (Holt, 2004). Although such a hierarchy-based loyalty model finds a solid ground in Holt's principle theory, it fails to satisfy my interpretation of the loyalty surrounding Bajaj's brand iconicity.

According to material culture studies, scooters represent a more 'feminine' and 'elegant' persona compared to reckless motorbikes and their profane characteristics (Willis, 1978; Haigh and Crowther, 2005; Bellaby and Lawrenson, 2001). Therefore, as an object of elegance and class scooters in India never created networks of '*insiders*', '*followers*', or '*feeders*' hierarchy. Instead, they supplied prestige to its owners ('*insiders*') and their families while remained an object of desire to the '*followers*'. There was no such clear community or hierarchy based on riding experience or membership role, rather loyalty was developed on practicality, reliability, and endurance of the vehicles (see Chapter 6). In the majority of cases, such dependence had formed a strong bond of family-based relationships and social camaraderie between the brand and its owners (Fournier, 1998). The scooter owners interviewed had a strong bond with their vehicles and this critical mass of '*insiders*' never protested against the commodity or its brand mythology; instead, they still grab hold of it as a valuable possession even after twenty years of continuous ownership. To them, Bajaj scooters and their valuable memories provide a means to cherish the glories of the past. In contrast, the '*followers*' could not abandon the brand as they still feel the presence of nostalgic and patriotic values left behind by the legacy of the brand. In contrast, the '*feeders*' who never subscribed to the brand's cultural authority and material possession, moved on to adopt the commodities (motorbikes) and

practices of the new economy. In reality, as the middle-class gained more purchasing power, more and more new buyers chose to adopt higher technological and performance levels by purchasing commuter motorbikes. However, these motorbikes never supplied the same sense of cultural value, integration, or camaraderie across the nation.

Therefore, Holt's proposed model does not fit the nature and pattern of loyalty practices demonstrated by Bajaj scooter consumers, instead, the social network pattern proposed by Holt becomes incomplete in this instigation. In contrast, increased adaptation of new generation hyper-masculine motorbikes in India compliments the three-dimensional model of loyalty studied by Holt in other iconic brands. For example, like Harley-Davidson, based on experience, commitment and risk-taking mentality the new generation motorbike consumers can be classified into a hierarchical order. While the great devotees who have learned and championed the skills of stunting and voluntary risk consumption in a restricted country like India, naturally claim their authority to become 'maniacs' (*'insiders'*) by devoting their life to the brand, in contrast, the *'followers'* buy into such an ideology to use it as a platform for demonstrating passive social jeremiad. Finally, the *'feeders'* thrive on the values of cultural and political authority, as society and family make it an ideological burden by curbing their rebellious desires.

Such a discrepancy can only be described by the nature of the myth market and its continuation strategy adopted by advertising agencies. While the Hamara Bajaj allegory offered a strong and long lasting loyalty proposition that the *'insiders'* find

difficult to escape, with further socio-economic development it is suggested that the hard-core Pulsar maniacs will move on to catch the next big cultural wave.

This section supplied some stimulating thoughts to CCT scholars of the twenty-first century, hoping to successfully rejuvenate their interest in the emerging field of cultural brand management. After all, it is high time for CCT researchers to invest organised and collective efforts in transforming this theoretical field into an important academic and managerial pursuit. “The use of the right theory in the right way, in combination with other theories, to develop novel strategies is particularly challenging intellectual work. It’s not a connect-the-dots exercise and so diffusion is the exception not the norm. Due to the reward system of academy, there are very few people today doing this work.” (Holt, forthcoming). Combining theories to develop and redevelop novel strategies was a particularly challenging and rigorous part of the project, due to the mastery of inter-disciplinary theories required, but more systematic insight is required in this theoretical field in order to meet “the highest standards we set for CCT” as a developing field of research (ibid).

7.2 Cultural Branding and the Politics of Identity:

The next set of questions underpinning this research was to investigate the dynamics of brand mediated identity politics surrounding Bajaj and its key target market - middleclass men. Bajaj's transforming product and image signification strategy may indicate that the onset of modernity in India was a linear process, hence the company changed its cultural appeal to cater the needs and wants of 'modern men', but in reality, the situation was found to be much more complex.

The idea of '*modernity*' has been intellectually and politically debated across disciplines since the enlightenment in the eighteenth century (Bauman, 2000; Slater, 1999; Giddens, 1991; Appadurai, 1996; Hall and Gieben, 1992; Brown, 1995). Some of the influential theories of modernity developed by Marx and Weber described modernity as a single homogenous process, however, much of these analytical interests conceptualised the interplay between '*liberalism*' and '*consumer agency*' as a consequence of political and legal facets (Sayer, 1991; Bartolovich and Lazarus, 2002; Whimster and Lash, 2014). Minimum attention has gone into understanding how modernity and neoliberalism induces broad ideological divides within a consumer's life politics¹⁶ and how these ideological divides are strategically exercised to produce new ideologies of gender, culture, and consumption habits (Thompson, 2011; 2014; Holt, 2002; McNay, 2010; Ericson, 2011; Fernandes, 1997; 2004; Derné, 2008; Parekh, 2008). Following the transforming image of middleclass men in post-globalised India, this study addresses such knowledge gap by demonstrating how modernity as a complex multidimensional process shatters straightforward social relationships between class, culture, and gender, and the role of brand mythology in

¹⁶ Life politics as describe by Giddens (1991, p.9) is a process concerned with individual or collective self-actualisation that emerges from the 'shadow of emancipatory politics'.

catalysing this outcome (Bauman, 2000; Giddens, 1991; Slater, 1999; Appadurai, 1996; Hall and Gieben, 1992). Although the cultural industry credits themselves for being a good reader of socio-cultural landscapes, yet in many cases, such commercial anticipations fail to match desired reality, turning cultural brands into a centre ground for staging multiple identity politics (Klein, 1999; Thompson et al., 2006; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Deighton, 2002). Such politics are not organised consumer movements; rather they are individual identity ‘jeremiads’ that receive active cultural and political nourishment from cultural brands and their underlying mythic structures (Holt, 1997; 2002; Ozanne and Murray, 1995; Baudrillard, 1998).

Therefore, the secondary contribution of this research lies in its ability to address Thompson’s (2011; 2014) call to mobilise ‘*politics of identity*’ as a significant field of enquiry in consumer culture research. In highlighting the fundamental disagreements with Holt’s model I generated further analytical insights into the role of cultural brands in instigating wider identity politics within a nation. Here India as a developing marketplace provides an excellent ground for investigating the ‘*consequences of modernity*’ in a globalised world (Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995; Appadurai, 1990; Ger, 1998; Ger and Belk, 1996; Cayla and Arnould, 2008).

Identity politics emerge from social ‘struggle’ resulting in ‘movements’ or ‘resistance’ within individual societies (Keith and Pile, 2004; Ericson, 2011). Examples of such consumption-led rebellions and marketplace stigmatisation are abundant in consumer culture research where brands and material objects become the centre of consumers’ political practice (Luedicke et al., 2012; Varman and Belk, 2009; Askegaard, 2006; Thompson and Arsel, 2004), for example, when the

hardcores insisted on mobilising organised movements against the conventional power structure in post-war America, they used Harley's political legitimisation of patriotism and the gunfighter myth as a central ground for organising 'ideological jeremiads' (Holt, 2004).

As cultural brands carry deeper cultural and political ideologies, by subscribing to their ethos consumers often align their identity politics within the constellations of marketplace mythologies (Holt, 2003a; 2004; 2006; Luedicke et al., 2010; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995). In doing so, consumers use iconic brands and their mythical legacies, not only to combat against state supremacy but also to dispute repressive fellow consumers who synthesise conflicting social boundaries against their will. This brand-mediated conflict gave rise to extreme forms of identity politics in twenty-first century India as riders with conflicting ideologies clash with each other in everyday life to claim their affiliation of class, culture, and citizenship (see Chapter 6). Central to this form of identity politics lies a series of claims to unattained socio-political desires that consumers attain through the cultural and political authorities of their preferred marketplace mythology.

Prior CCT studies have theorised struggles of identity and politics of consumption through group movements such as market-mediated anti-corporate or anti-consumerist feelings (Humphreys and Thompson, 2014; Thompson et al., 2006; Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Kozinets, 2002a; Luedicke et al., 2012). In these investigations, the issue of identity politics was captured as consumers' collective movements against brands (Luedicke et al., 2012; Thompson et al., 2006), corporations (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Miller and Sturdivant, 1977), and

capitalists (Varman and Belk, 2009). However, this study indicates that identity politics are not necessarily organised collective movements, instead, they can be marginalised struggles experienced at a personal level. Due to social and political restrictions when consumers fail to exercise their desired citizenship rights they use material objects and brands to mobilise marginalised movements as individuals (Holt, 2002; Holt and Thompson, 2004). As a result, brand-mediated identity politics do not always translate into ad hoc activism or organised movement, instead consumers continue to battle in solitary, using marketplace mythologies and their underlying socio-political authorities as an imagined reality. Although these consumers may share wider socio-political anxieties with other like-minded in a country like India, in reality, they become docile in exercising their democratic rights through organised socio-political affairs (also see Fernandes, 2006; Varma, 2007; Gupta, 2000).

This type of passive but strategic activism is a way of contesting rising inequalities, institutional hierarchies and moral erosion without drawing direct socio-political attention that could result in serious consequences for the informants in an orthodox nation. In this state and market-mediated marginalisation brand mythologies not only help consumers to overcome their ideological anxieties but also help them to think of themselves as “better citizens” of the country.

While the cultural industry did not think beyond celebrating the successful restoration of Bajaj’s brand value in the twenty-first century, academics have also been reluctant to explore such brand-mediated identity politics by assuming that these are the consequences of postmodernity (see Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995; Holt, 1997; 2002). It is true that postmodernity transforms consumption into an

‘autonomous space’ (Holt, 2002), but very little research has gone into understanding how postmodernity allows brand-mediated cultural and political ideologies to be used as autonomous symbolic fields for exercising identity politics (Holt, 2002; Thompson, 2014). The findings presented in this thesis highlight an important paradox for cultural brand research, i.e., while the key to brand iconicity lies in its ability to resolve socio-cultural distress by offering moral relief, in the long run, brands that do not rely on a consistent cultural brief instead evoke ‘*fragmentation*’ through widespread socio-cultural anxieties (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995). Such brand-mediated ideological ‘*fragmentation*’ results from wider social contestations giving birth to parallel fields of competing ideological systems surrounding an iconic brand and its marketplace mythologies.

While developing a dialectic theory on “*why do brands cause trouble?*”, adopting a postmodernist stance Holt (2002) insisted that the marketing discipline still finds it hard to explain definitive ways used by brands to provoke vigorous social antagonism. Building on the postmodernist point of view he further blamed growing consumer empowerment and anti-brand sentiment as the prime cause of brand mediated social separation; undervaluing the role played by marketers or the cultural industry in this process. In contrast, this research presents a strong case for evaluating the cultural industry’s role in inducing social upheaval. Although the role played by managers and advertising agencies in this context are purely driven by competitive and commercial motives, the unintended consequences of their cultural manipulation appear far reaching. From the data on the interpreted articulation of identity politics surrounding an iconic brand this study highlights an interplay of marketplace resources and mythical structures supplying resilient narratives for an ideological

battle that is difficult for individual consumers to organise and stage in the everyday social and political sphere. Prior studies in this field have put emphasis on understanding how two-wheelers as material objects supply symbolic resources for ideological movements (Arvidsson, 2001; Brownlie and Hewer, 2007; Urry, 2007; Schouten and McAlexander, 1995; Hebdige, 1979; Willis, 1978), in doing so they have overlooked the role of marketplace mythology in animating false ideological structures that go beyond the symbolic meanings of two-wheelers and their automobility. Here, it seems appropriate to recall Arvidsson's (2001) reading of scooters as objects of modernity and its surrounding brand-mediated identity politics. Arvidsson believes that in many ways Vespa became a fetish for the emerging transnational countercultures within post-Fascist Italy by showing political optimism that marked the post-war period along with a basis for national identity (Arvidsson, 2001). Underlying this meaning signification lies the creative instincts of advertising agency Leader who transformed Vespa into a central part of youth culture and mobility (ibid). Similarly, the appointment of Prodigy in India saw Bajaj becoming an integral object of mobility and youth counterculture, following the fads and gimmicks of the 'outside world'. While many would support Vespa as a functioning icon of Italian prosperity and integrity, in reality, it contributed towards the disintegration (*fragmentation*) of post-war socioeconomic and cultural fabrics (Arvidsson, 2001). This study indicates similar trends in Bajaj's role in inducing social fragmentation in modern India where cultural industry and their creative rhetoric have served as a catalyst for inducing identity politics and social fragmentation as "one of the visible consequences of [modernity]" (Arvidsson, 2001, p.51).

Although Arvidsson highlighted the role of advertising agencies in transforming a two-wheeler brand as a centre of social movement or identity politics, he failed to describe how such movements lead to social disintegration by facilitating self-productive consumption motives. This study demonstrates how market-mediated mythologies supply an ideological infrastructure that underlies consumer sovereignty. With the onset of modernity and social transformation, while a group of consumers resist transforming socio-political landscapes by enacting traditional beliefs as an ideological shield, another group of consumers push oppositional ideologies of reflexivity and self-production through an extreme cosmopolitan mentality. Although this moral battle is shaped within one's ideological foundations, yet consumers validate, articulate and venerate antagonistic moral threats to each other by becoming incorporated into brand-mediated powerful mythic structures (Thompson 2004; Holt 2004).

On a similar note, cultural research has long advocated how standing against brands is no longer an anti-establishment badge for consumers today, rather it is a fully developed socio-political movement (Ozanne and Murray, 1995; Luedicke et al., 2012; Varman and Belk, 2009; Thompson et al., 2006). Following this line of argument postmodern research has largely advocated how the proliferation of consumption style in '*liberatory postmodernism*' will force consumers to liberate themselves from marketplace dominance by becoming the adjuncts of their own consumption choices (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995; Thompson and Troester, 2002). With the onset of postmodernity, consumers increasingly become '*decentred*' subjects engaged in micro emancipatory practices, while their growing empowerment helped them to detect and eradicate the influence of marketing

practices (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al., 1995; Holt, 2002). As an example, Ozanne and Murray (1995) presented an image of a '*reflexively defiant consumer*' who is well aware of market imposed reflexive codes and is able to strategically reflect on them to decide how to create distance from the influences of market-led institutions. Similarly, Holt (2002) presented an image of a sceptical postmodern consumer who live beyond the autonomy of the marketplace seeking self-sovereignty beyond consumption. In contrast, this study indicates that cultural brands and their mythologies can animate authentic power structures that successfully channel consumer desires through commodification and commercialisation of desired cultural and political narratives. As brands become more and more successful in insulating effective expressions of cultural and political sovereignty, marketers become largely successful in luring consumers into pre-determined consumption logics. As a result, although a part of society appear to condemn the rise of commercial marketing practice at a discursive level (Kozinets and Handelman, 2004; Kozinets, 2002a; Klein, 1999; Holt, 2002), deep inside they rely on selective marketplace mythologies in order to strategically exercise their sovereignty. That is why, in postmodernity, consumers may see conventional branding as an inauthentic commercial ambush (Holt, 2002; 1997; Klein, 1999; Sandıkçı, 1999), but brands that succeed in supplying authentic cultural blueprints, without any instrumental commercial agenda, appear to motivate consumers to become their disciples.

Moving forward from the postmodernist debate it is evident that with the flow of global culture within a developing marketplace, a part of consumer society deploys significantly different consumption strategies to claim cultural sophistication and higher social standing (Mish, 2007; Emrence, 2008; Derné, 2000; Howes, 1995;

Hannerz, 1996). According to Üstüner and Holt (2010), in this culture-led consumption game consumers divide into a highbrow (HCC) versus lowbrow (LCC) dichotomy based on their understanding, interpretation and expression of cultural codes and commodity aesthetics (ibid). In the authors' view consumers who grab hold of the indigenous consumption field in order to narrow the scope of class consumption, belong to the lowbrow (LCC) faction, while consumers who demonstrate intensive knowledge of Western consumption and vigorously adopt them, claim their cultural superiority as HCCs. Despite advocating Bourdieu, Üstüner and Holt's study differs from cultural capital thesis as Bourdieu (1984) saw society, culture, and consumption as a 'level playing field'. In Bourdieu's (1984) description sophistication of '*taste*' is achieved through inherent or acquired aesthetics, abstraction, and expression without any highbrow-lowbrow dichotomy or epicentre where cultural capital flows to one direction or another (Appadurai, 1996; Appadurai and Breckenridge, 1995; Ger, 1999). Bourdieu's narratives were further supported by cultural globalisation literature (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999; Mazzarella, 2006; Cayla and Elson, 2012; Zhao and Belk, 2008; Caldwell, 2004; Emrence, 2008) that described globalisation as not an unidirectional homogenisation process, rather successful flow of cultural capitals are mostly improvised (by market and media), applied in an unexpected manner, leading to a heterogeneous expression of habits and tastes (Thompson and Tambyah, 1999; Emrence, 2008; Ger and Belk, 1996; Keyder, 1997; Üstüner and Holt, 2007). Following this theoretical lead, it seems unsuitable for Üstüner and Holt to assign 'higher' status currency to Western cultural capital (and the myth of Western consumption) while undermining local culture and consumption as the 'low' brow one. This research demonstrates that such a distinction should be more appropriately understood through the metaphor of 'home' and the 'world'

dichotomy (Cayla and Elson, 2012). Although a part of society engage in ideological claims embedded in Western lifestyle and consumption practices, their efforts are directed towards legitimising a society that is free from hegemonic practices. As a result, advancement of social class position demands cultural capital to be borrowed from the 'outside world' that in turn does not become part of one's inherent capital (also see Varman and Belk, 2012). Instead, local cultural capital remains the core construct, while acquired global cultural capital becomes a reflexive mechanism to strategically combat trailing social drawbacks. In reality, these consumers never undermine their local roots or disseminate global culture as a currency for 'higher status' or class consumption, rather a combination of these two creates a reflexive mechanism for challenging the tradition and the status quo.

7.3 Summary of Contribution:

Theoretical Contribution:

As “theory is the currency of our scholarly realm” (Corley and Gioia, 2011, p.12) this thesis offers knowledge insight towards progressive advancement of cultural brand management and consumer culture theory. Challenging the ‘knowledge bureaucracy’ constructed by the economic and management discipline, this study systematically highlighted the importance of culture, politics, and society in creating and sustaining brand iconicity. In doing so this thesis acknowledged Holt’s (2004) pioneering thoughts and demonstrated how the principles of cultural brand management proposed by him remains a leading thought provoking mechanism. However, besides, complementing the principles of cultural branding this research also highlighted the limitations associated the model calling for more context and industry specific knowledge insight towards the development of a robust theoretical model. In this endeavour three key areas of disagreement that stands apart from Holt’s model are: Transforming Cultural Authenticity, Technology as Blue Ocean, and the Three-Dimensional Model of Loyalty. Theoretical insights gathered from this study aim to supply stimulating thoughts for more organised research into the area of cultural brand management, leading towards the development of a dialectic theory of cultural brand management.

The secondary contribution of this thesis lies in understanding the consequences of cultural branding, in nourishing class fragmentation and identity politics, from a Postmodernist perspective. As cultural brands carry deeper cultural and political ideologies, by subscribing to their ethos consumers often align their independent and individualistic identity politics within the constellations of marketplace mythologies. These brand-mediated individualistic movements are silently contributing towards social fragmentation that has gone largely unnoticed in consumer culture research. However, addressing Thompson’s (2013) call this study demonstrated how consumers use iconic brands and their mythical legacies, not only to combat against state supremacy but also to dispute repressive fellow consumers who synthesise conflicting social boundaries against their will. The findings presented in this study highlight an important passage to postmodern branding practice along with an important paradox for cultural brand research, i.e., while the key to brand iconicity lies in its ability to resolve socio-cultural distress by offering moral relief, in the long run, brands that do not rely on a consistent cultural brief instead evoke *fragmentation* through widespread socio-cultural anxieties.

Managerial Contribution:

Theoretical insights gathered from this research make thematic advancements to the vernacular of CCT, addressing the newly proposed Consumer Culture Strategy sub-discipline (Holt, forthcoming) that calls for the selective use of wide range of CCT research for

synthesising or repurposing managerial theories. As one of the defining characteristics of this research was to demonstrate the co-constitutive and co-productive ways in which advertising agencies understand and recreate cultural worlds using brand mythologies, this study offers a number of important lessons for managers and advertising agencies interested in building and sustaining unprecedented advantages through this competitive brand management practice. One of the most important managerial contributions of this study lies in developing and supplying a theoretical blue-print that can be translated into a systematic managerial pursuit by brand managers and advertising agencies with a view to increase their understanding of society, politics, culture and their role in iconic brand management practice, with a strategic purpose that goes beyond the ‘calculable rules’ imposed by the economic, cognitive, and management discipline. The study further details how managers and advertising agencies need to conceptualise cultural branding as a strategic sequel of a brand’s genealogical constructs in addition to deep socio-cultural and political affairs that find its root within transforming ideologies of a nation. The thesis has also contributed towards generating managerial understanding of how competitive values of an iconic brand should not be measured through its historic or financial success. Cultural brands do not compete in the financial or the equity market, instead they become assets to consumers’ lives by becoming deeply rooted into their life-politics. Hence, advertising agencies need to dig deep into socio-cultural values of a nation rather than building mythologies on apparent cultural value or demographic characteristics. An agency led creative and knowledge based dogma along with financial motives can often become a self-hindering proposition in an iconic brand’s life-cycle, hence, a long term, informed and open-minded creative approach is absolutely essential for a cultural brand’s survival.

Methodological Contribution:

From methodological perspective this study further challenges the stigma of ‘subjectivism’ surrounding qualitative research and carefully tackles the issue of ‘validity’, ‘reliability’, and ‘trustworthiness’ to demonstrate how systematic qualitative insights (Levy, 2007; Scott 1994b) can generate supplementary ideas for breeding alternative brand management theories. The methodological approach adopted in this study not only validated and complimented Holt’s prescribed ‘laboratory approach’ towards studying cultural brand management but it further demonstrated the importance of considering empirical data in order to generate more nuance within this emerging research domain. Therefore, in addition to genealogical studies, it is equally important to gather empirical data in the form of interviews, observations, participation, and netnography involving brand managers, ad agencies and consumers to complement or criticise data collected as part of secondary research. Methodological approach adopted in this thesis has further indicated how studying cultural brands are a highly methodical process where individual data collection stages needs to be organised, planned and implemented to gather progressive knowledge level. It further highlights how case study research (Eisenhardt, 1989) which has become almost obliterated even within the qualitative consumer culture research domain, plays a central role in generating genealogical constructs of an iconic brand’s socio-political history and cultural affairs.

7.4 Conclusion:

Levy (2007) stated that consumer culture research is a 'reflexive' and 'dialectic' discipline that progresses through incremental development of knowledge gathered towards the generation of comprehensive social theories (also see Arnould and Thompson, 2005; 2007; Thompson et al., 2013; Askegaard and Scott, 2013; Belk, 1987). According to Arnould and Thompson (2007) a single study cannot make global advancements to the vast theoretical vernaculars of CCT, similarly one single research cannot supply sufficient theoretical insight towards the development of cultural branding as a robust theoretical field. It is a progressive area of theoretical development and that is why, even after supplying legitimate groundwork, Holt's proposed model is far from presenting a complete set of theoretical principles. This study aimed to rekindle Holt's efforts and justified why it is the time for consumer culture researchers to work together and reinvigorate a comprehensive culture led brand management framework that can receive wider reception across business schools and marketing literature by challenging the economic and management based principles. In my endeavour to contribute towards the progress and development of this theoretical field I studied the unique cultural and political survival of Bajaj within a transforming post-colonial (and post-globalised) economy. The findings of this research present a unique amalgamation of two emerging areas of consumer culture research, i.e., Cultural Branding (Holt, 2004; Holt and Cameron, 2010) and the Politics of Identity (Thompson, 2011; 2014). In other words, on one hand this research consolidated the principles of cultural branding by complimenting and criticising Holt's ideas through context specific knowledge of Bajaj in India, on the other hand, it demonstrated how market led identity work can encourage the development of wider identity politics within a developing socioeconomic arena. In

doing so this study remains at the forefront in addressing Thompson's (2011; 2014) call and understand the consequences of market led practice in supporting consumer empowerment and how agency led cultural manipulation translate into widespread postmodern facets (mainly '*fragmentation*' and '*decentred self*') (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Firat et al. 1995). As marketers are becoming cautious of consumer empowerment in the age of postmodernity they are becoming more and more concerned about legitimising their brand's authenticity (Holt, 2002; Thompson and Troester, 2002). However, such legitimisation effort through cultural branding in turn backfires as consumers use marketplace authenticity as a compensatory measure to become more independent and empowered. Therefore, this study presents cultural branding as an effective postmodern branding technique that is capable of disguising commercial intentions behind the authentic curtains of cultural images.

Theoretical insights gathered from this study make thematic advancements to the theoretical vernacular of CCT, addressing the newly proposed Consumer Culture Strategy sub-discipline (Holt, forthcoming) that calls for the selective use of wide range of CCT research for synthesising or repurposing new managerial theories. As one of the defining characteristics of this research was to demonstrate the co-constitutive and co-productive ways in which consumers recreate their cultural worlds using brand mythologies, the majority of findings presented in this study concentrate around the thematic vernacular of '*consumer identity projects*' in CCT. In addition, the second theoretical construct of CCT addressed by this research was the distinctive characteristics of iconic brands and their '*marketplace culture*' as imagined, acquired, and engineered within advertising agencies. The third theoretical construct of CCT addressed by this study also unveiled the role of consumers as 'players in a social

game' (Holt, 1995) governed by the '*Socio-historic Patterning of Consumption*', whilst the final theoretical construct of CCT, '*Mass-Mediated Marketplace Ideologies and Consumers' Interpretative Strategies*' was addressed by highlighting how being influenced by marketplace mythologies consumers exercise their inherent ideologies (Hackly and Kover, 2007; Cayla and Elson, 2012; Arvidsson, 2001; Thompson, 2004; Luedicke et al., 2010; Horkheimer and Adorno, [1944] 1996).

I believe this study supplies stimulating thoughts for renewing interest in cultural brand management and move the discipline forward to draw an end to the economic and management led dogma in brand management. In addition, the findings in this research also contribute towards consolidating the theoretical vernaculars of CCT leading to the establishment of Consumer Culture Strategy sub-discipline (Holt, forthcoming).

7.5 Direction for Future Research:

The principal direction for future research should be concentrated on extending and developing the principles of cultural branding, by investigating a range of iconic brands taken from various socio-economic contexts. In doing so future research should consider brands from different industries along with various material objects. This study further indicates that so far investigation into the idea of cultural branding has been extremely divergent (see Holt 2003a; 2003b; 2004; Holt and Cameron 2010; Kravets and Öрге, 2010; Maclaran et al., 2008; Arvidsson, 2001; 2005), therefore, future research in this area needs a clear direction and a clear foundation for building a comprehensive theoretical model. In doing so more empirical data is required from various groups of consumers and cultural industry that can lead to the development of

a dialectic theory of cultural brand management. In addition, efforts should go into understanding what happens when a locally established iconic brand builds on its global desires. As limited research has gone into understanding global iconic brands (i.e. Coke) (Holt et al., 2004), further research is required to understand the fate of native brands like Bajaj and its cross-cultural affairs, i.e., what cultural contradictions are targeted on a global stage? Who is responsible for managing cultural iconicity in a cross-cultural context? What happens when an iconic brand's cultural past becomes a burden to its global desires?

On a different note, this research also opens up opportunities to study the social impacts of cultural brands in terms of rising politics of identity work. Findings from this research suggest that future enquiries should focus on studying the various natures of identity politics emerging from agencies formed between consumers and their brands, and the role of marketplace mythology in propagating such individualistic movements. Future research can dig deep into this subject area from a postmodern perspective and try to detail the role of cultural brands in inducing or resolving '*reflexive consumption*' in the age of postmodernity (Thompson and Troester, 2002; Firat and Venkatesh, 1995; Ozanne and Murray, 1995).

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Appendix 1

Interview Guide for Advertising Professionals (Semi-Structured Interviews)

I. Introduction

- Greet the interviewee
- Introduce myself to the interviewee
- Explain the nature of the research project (including aims & objectives)
- Explain the purpose of the interview
- Explain the consent form and data protection rules

II. Informant's Background

- Can you please tell me a little bit about yourself and your background?
- What does your typical day to day work life involve?
- What made you seek a career within an advertising agency?
- How long have you been working for your current agency?
- What is your current job role? How long have you been in this position?
- Where do you get inspiration for your creativity and how do you keep yourself updated with the market?
- Do you travel a lot? If yes, do you frequently travel to the West, e.g., US, Canada, Europe?
- Do you interact with your Western counterparts or your colleagues in the US/Canada/Europe? If yes, in what context (business, friends, family etc.)?
- Do you like Hollywood movies or any other Western movies, e.g., French? Please specify...
- What is your opinion about Western popular or counter-cultures?
- Do you think you are personally influenced by any of them? If yes, how (sources such as books, magazine, foreign channels etc.)?
- What is your impression about the work culture within your agency? Overall how would you classify your team members' thoughts and lifestyles, are they Western/Modern/Contemporary/Traditional/ or do they take a balanced approach?
- Tell me about something that you really want to achieve in your future work, for example, if you have seen an advertisement or if you have read a book and you want to bring those ideas into your future work.

III. Indian Consumers

- How do you define a typical Indian consumer?
- In your opinion what are the factors that drive a typical Indian consumer?
- How does your agency gather knowledge about these consumers?
- As an advertisement producer (or as a marketer) do you think there are transformations in identity, needs and desires among Indian consumers? If yes, Please explain since when, how, and why?
- In your opinion which consumer category or social class has been mostly affected by this change?
- How is this transformation posing challenges and opportunities to your everyday work?
- Do you find it challenging to appeal to regionally and culturally diverse consumers via a single advertising message? Please illustrate.
- What strategy(s) do you use to deal with this challenge?
- Do you think consumers in India have started to relate consumption beyond utilitarian values? If yes, please illustrate.
- How is this affecting your strategies and approach as an advertiser?

IV. Experience with Bajaj

- Outside your work life how do you see Bajaj as a brand?
- When and how did you get involved with the Bajaj account?
- Tell me about the structure of your team for the Bajaj campaign (with a little bit of background about each team member).
- Why do you think Bajaj officials appointed your agency to promote their brand?
- What was their initial proposal about creating a distinct brand image, e.g., what message did they want to send out to the public?
- How did you and your team work on that proposal and come up with your first Bajaj advertising campaign?
- Who were your target markets? Why did you select them?
- What was your key message to these consumers? Why?
- What communication channels did you use to reach these consumers? Why?

- Do you think your final campaign was on par with Bajaj officials' initial expectations or did it change a lot throughout the whole process?
- How did the consumers react to your campaign (increase in sales, emotional response etc.)?
- Do you believe your aims and objectives for the Bajaj campaign have changed since you started? If yes, what are the factors driving this change?
- In your opinion what is the future of this brand? And how does your campaign help Bajaj [specific two-wheeler brand name] to get there?
- Have you ever worked with a brand that has such a strong national connection as Bajaj? If yes, please illustrate...did you relate that experience to your work with Bajaj?
- Personally are you a motorcycle/two-wheeler enthusiast? If yes, did you bring your experience and passion to your campaign? If no, how did you become familiar with the product and the brand?
- How do you see your campaign as different from Bajaj's other two-wheeler brand extensions?
- Considering the Bajaj campaign who do you think are your main local (national) competitor(s)?
- Considering the Bajaj campaign who do you think are your main global competitor(s)?
- Do you think the marketing efforts of these brands have/had any direct/indirect influence on your Bajaj campaign? If yes, please specify (e.g. focusing on a different brand image, targeting a different consumer market etc.).

V. Advertisement Related Questions

Show the interviewee specific Bajaj two-wheeler advertisements selected from their own work and emphasise the following topics:

- Reason for the campaign
- Inspiration for the campaign
- Key message
- Target market
- Communication channels
- Success of the campaign

- Measure of success
- Consumers' reaction
- Competitors' reaction
- Follow up activities

VI. End Notes

- Ask the interviewee for any archived documents, presentation slides, company reports, or videos related to the Bajaj campaign.
- Close the interview session with a final thank you.

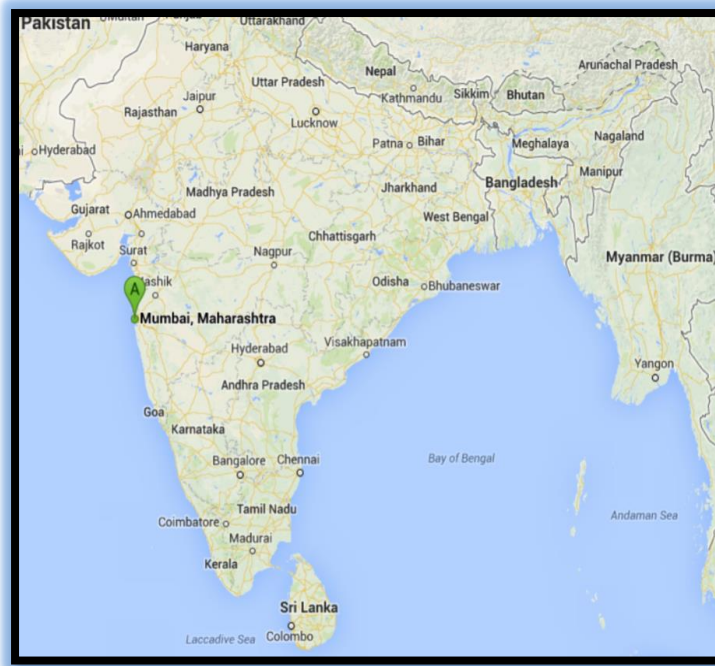
Combinations of the questions above were asked depending on available time and individual respondents' involvement with brand Bajaj.

Appendix 2

Context Selection:

According to Moisander and Valtonen (2006), besides sampling, context selection is an important part of culture research that can significantly alter the outcome of a qualitative study as researchers vow to engage with a wider context through wider observation and other contrasting analytical measures. Looking at the objectives of this research it was essential to collect data across the country to achieve a holistic understanding of Indian masculinity, but due to time and resource constraints I collected data across three major cities (Mumbai, Ahmedabad, and Kolkata) in India that I believed supplied me a contrasting construct of Indian masculinity twenty years after economic liberalisation. In doing so, I followed Derné (2000) who depicted the much talked about ‘new middle class’ as an urban phenomenon shaped within the largest commercial cities in India. Such restructuring of class is a result of socio-economic transformations along with political influences on consumption resulting in greater ideological divides.

I started my data collection in India’s largest commercial and cultural hub – Mumbai (or Bombay prior to 1995) – where I found a number of consumer respondents and all the ad agencies that dealt with Bajaj. Four hundred years ago Bombay was gifted by the Portuguese to the British, when the British left India they left an infrastructure of secular and democratic society, religion, law, and - greatest of all - a gateway to the Western world. At the beginning of the twenty-first century when India was experiencing an unprecedented growth, Bombay acted as the financial powerhouse of the nation. The city promotes a positive vision of the future, a place where ‘Indian



dreams come true'; and for many money, status and lifestyle is the key to that prosperity. Such a promise of economic and social prosperity attracts millions of migrants to Mumbai every year adding to the social and cultural diversity of the city. Politically

Mumbai was a strong hold of Indian national congress and it played a large part in national movements but lately it has been under the political control of a nationalist group that has an extreme political agenda.

Being the commercial and financial gateway to the world, Mumbai presented an unprecedented opportunity to understand India's upward mobility and social transformations, where tradition and modernity were involved in the ultimate battle for social regeneration. During my five-week stay I travelled from the financial epicenter of Nariman Point to the famous slums of India looking for the dynamic trappings of economic liberalisation and the extreme contrast within Indian masculinity and their transforming habits of consumption.

The next stage of my journey took me to a prosperous industrial but traditional city in the northwest of India – Ahmedabad. Only 530 km part from the structural glaze of Mumbai, this city is the capital of the state where Gandhi was born and characterised

much of his non co-operational movements against the British raj. Following Gandhi's vision the city became home to a thriving textile industry famously known

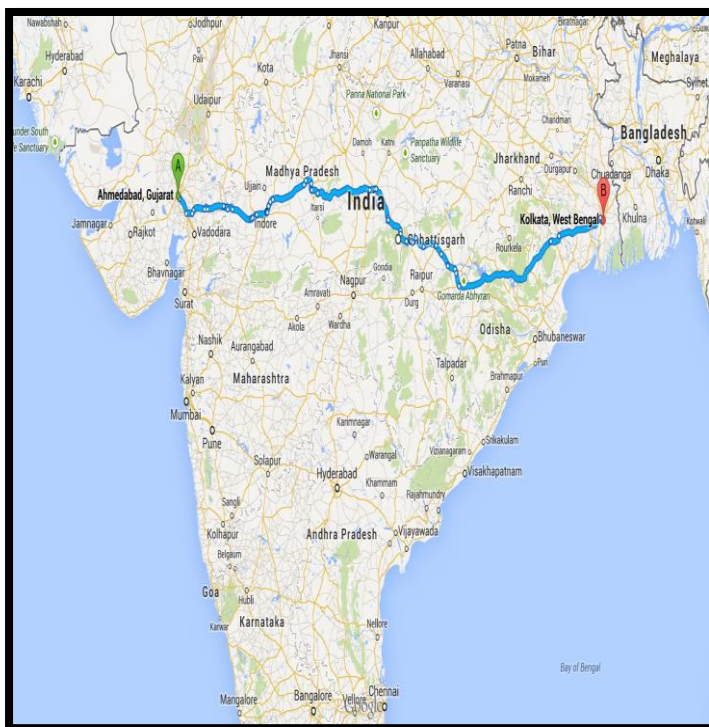


as the Manchester of the East. Ahmedabad was at the forefront of the colonial movement with Gandhi's ideologies and now sixty years after independence the city still celebrates the colonial ideologies of self-resilience and self-

production through indigenous industrial revolution and traditional infrastructures. Despite being conservative, Ahmedabad has the highest rating in India for the adoption of green energy and green transportation. There were clear signs of modernisation and western influence in the city but it appeared to be very much state controlled and not as abrupt as India's financial capital Mumbai. During my three weeks stay, I travelled to Sabarmati Ashram, where Gandhi planted the seeds of non-violent movements and mobilised resistance against the British Raj. The symbolic 'non-corporation movement' was famous for boycotting foreign products in favor of indigenous salt and cloth production. During my visit I experienced the growth of local entrepreneurs, indigenous businesses, modern textiles and automobile production centres in Ahmedabad indicating how Gandhi's unique self-reliance and

anti-foreign sentiments still dominated the city shaping indigenous values in twenty-first century.

I completed the final leg of my data collection at the former capital of British India – Calcutta (Kolkata). The history of the city began with the arrival of the East India Company in 1690, founded by a Lancastrian administrator of the British East India Company – Job Charnock – Calcutta served as the capital of British India until 1911.



The city has its unique stories of movements against the British Raj (separate from nationalist movements) and it served as the preceding stage for twentieth-century intellectual movements in India (Sarkar 1973; Gupta 1998). Kolkata ranks 3rd in India for its economic and

domestic production, but the most interesting characteristics that make this place so important for this research is the existence of communism as a dominant political ideology ruling the state for over forty years. Although at the brink of the twenty-first century the communist government in Kolkata started to open up following the Chinese model of market liberalisation, yet West Bengal as a state was closed for business to the world for over thirty years of communism (Jha and Negre 2007; Goswami 1998). As a result, despite being a metropolitan city Kolkata had

experienced the least surges of modernity until the beginning of twenty-first century. Today, after sixty-seven years of independence, communism has ignited an ever-growing agriculture first – industry first debate in this city creating serious political and ideological divides within the state with severe consequences for modernisation and manhood. In terms of masculinity, Kolkata had a unique history of colonial masculine characteristics – famously known as Babu or Baboo - who worked in clerical office jobs and were engaged in consumption and identity practices that lifted their status closer to the British during the Colonial Raj (Sinha, 1995). These people favored consumption of foreign products during the colonial time as opposed to resisting it (ibid), today this picture of manhood has dissolved as communism has restricted the flow of global market for a long time.

In this city I found a strong contrasting characterisation of ideological divides amongst men and their identity exercises. Although my selected respondents in Kolkata grew up under the same socio-economic and political influences, due to their varying ideologies, and reception or resistance to modernity, they were found to live in self-made parallel societies.

Appendix 3

A Note from the Research Dairy

Ganpat, an operational manager for a private manufacturing firm, lives in Pune near Mumbai, and Swapan, a retired ex-bank employee lives in Kolkata, both have owned a Bajaj scooter for over 20 years and they both experienced India's larger social and economic settings before and after the economic liberation of the 1990s. While Ganpat's understanding of 'localness' is limited to his state (Maharashtra) and pre-colonial historic warriors, Swapan's definition of 'localness' endorses a more contemporary version of wider India and Gandhi's united nation. When Ganpat was asked to explain his thoughts on post-colonial politics and national integration, he became very protective saying that national integration has only contributed to destroying his native culture (Maratha). Mumbai's increased financial success has attracted a number of migrants from all over the country making it difficult to sustain the traditional values passed on for generations within the Maratha community. In contrast, Karan, an engineer working for a multinational software company (IBM) and a Pulsar owner living in Mumbai sees such social integration as a wider opportunity for 'learning'. He described how Mumbai being a financial epicentre has attracted people from different corners of the country and the world, giving him the opportunity to learn various skills and become a true competitor at a global stage, which he would never have thought possible to accomplish if he stayed with his parents in a village just 140 miles away. He works for a multinational software company (IBM), lives in a newly built multi-storey building, loves to play Rugby (rare in India) and believes that his lifestyle is 'truly cosmopolitan'.

When I told Karen about his fellow citizen Ganpat's view towards modernity and the increased demolition of local culture, he simply cancelled out Ganpat by calling him a 'hypocrite'. To Karan, people like Ganpat are the source of social and political conflict and they are the reason why the country is still failing to advance.

Appendix 4

Examples of Field Notes

Ad Agency Observation: As I arrived early for my appointment, I was offered to experience a typical day of agency life at Prodigy. A diverse generation of workers were working towards the creation and execution of their 'dream' advertisements. The office layout and the work culture appeared to be fairly western; everyone seemed to have access to the latest technologies with almost every desk having an Apple desktop computer. Some of the desks were surrounded by posters and images of Western brands, i.e., Harley Davidson.

As I was trying to get accustomed to my surroundings a guy in his mid-forties approached me, holding out his hand introducing himself as Jivan Dev (pseudonym), the creative director of Bajaj Pulsar advertisements. He was not exactly the figure of the successful national creative director of Prodigy India I had anticipated. Jivan appeared to be gentle and very much down-to-earth compared to his designation and high profile. Looking at his personal style and appearance anybody (including me) would misjudge him as a typical middleclass government employee and a traditional family man. However, the decorations, books, and magazines in his office unveiled his level of international exposure along with his global engagements. The photos, wallpapers, trophies, awards, and appreciation messages spread over his office wall clearly reflected his popularity and success not only within his own agency but also across the world.

If pictures could say a hundred words then the pictures on Jivan's office told me that he was a born thrill-seeker, from sky diving to mountain biking, he seemed to have a real passion for anything that gets the adrenalin going. Maybe this is what drives his creative side as well.

10.02 pm, Kalyan
9th Aug 2010

General Observation: It's exactly half nine in the morning, boarding a commuter train I am heading towards one of the 'wealthiest suburbs' in north-west Mumbai, famously known as Goregaon. Gifted by the Portuguese to the British, Mumbai had always been a trading city and the 'land of the Indian dream'. Today, some parts of the city have a population density of 1 million people per square mile, by 2020 Mumbai is projected to be the world's largest city, this alongside the coming of global trade and prosperity means that Mumbai has just begun to boom.

The Mumbai suburban railway is one of the first and oldest railway systems in Asia to be built by the British during 1853. Spread over 464 Kilometres the suburban railway carries 6.94 million commuters up and down to the city every day. The contribution of the Mumbai suburban railway is so deeply rooted within its middle class sentiments that it's often regarded as "The City's Lifeline", without which the city simply cannot come alive. I have been travelling on these trains for the past four weeks, chasing the constructs of a transforming middleclass Indian dream. With a mixture of observations, photography, and video recordings I have tried to tap into the city's lifeline and I encountered a range of middleclass consumption, aspirations, inspiration, and most importantly identity negotiation.

But today I have experienced something extraordinary that certainly Danny Boyle had failed to capture in his film "Slumdog Millionaire". I saw two teenage boys, possibly 15 years or younger, dressed up like American ghetto rap stars dancing to some loud American rap song loaded in their Nokia mobile phones. These boys certainly don't belong to an upper class family, not even to a middle class family, they were more the "slumdogs" of Boyle's film, so if cultural capital determines an individual's consumption 'habitus', I wonder what triggered their passion for rap music? Where did they get the clothes from? They barely looked like school-goers so who taught them English? Who taught them the dance moves?

And how is American ghetto culture silently making its way to Mumbai's underground? I didn't have the answers in the end as I couldn't speak to them for an explanation.

10:15

pm,

Parel

23rd Aug 2010

Observation at Consumer's Household: I am delighted to receive the opportunity to spend some time with Karan (pseudonym) who works as a software engineer for a global company (IBM). Karan is single and a bachelor in his late twenties and he lives in a dazzling modern skyscraper in one of the most posh and popular areas of Mumbai. Surprisingly for a single bachelor his flat appeared to be very neat and clean with modern flat-pack furniture and world-class electrical appliances everywhere. However, from the collection of large cardboard Dominos boxes in his kitchen I could easily guess his favourite everyday staple – Pizza. After showing me to my bedroom Karan was very keen to show me the collection of foreign alcohol in his bar. It was truly impressive as there was a collection of beers and wines from all over the world.

The next thing that struck me was his collection of rock music and his mini studio where he spends most of his free time practicing guitar. Karan's knowledge of rock music and its evolution was overwhelming and I think he could easily challenge a Western rock enthusiast. Karan showed me a pair of concert tickets from 2005 when American rock guitar legend Joe Satriani was in Mumbai. He could not stop telling me how lucky he was to see Satriani's live performance in his lifetime.

8.32 pm, Navi Mumbai (New Mumbai)
7th Aug 2010

Appendix 5

Examples of Research Memos

Research Memo:

It is clear that Printas has an existing cultural mould for creating Bajaj advertisements even 30 years after the release of its first iconic advertisement. A historic and chronological account of their Bajaj advertisements shows the spontaneity of cultural messages that supplied iconic resources to the brand until the mid-'90s, before a diverse range of motorbikes took over the Indian market. It is interesting to note that Bajaj's cultural expression of self-reliance and national integrity is not well received in the age of globalisation. Rather, with faster social changes, Indian men (of the younger generation) dream of becoming the 'fastest' on the road so that they can leave all the traditional stalemate or economic sluggishness behind to emerge as a new Indian. Therefore, yesterday's Hamara Bajaj has turned into today's Fastest Indian but the irony is that they both aspire to a new image of India.

Research Memo:

40 years of communist dominance did not impose full restrictions on consumption choices in Kolkata. People have the democratic right to chose their political affiliations and develop ideological extremity. All the respondents, in Kolkata, who identified their political affiliation as communist barely understood the real meaning of Marxism or Communism but showed a great deal of distinction when it came to endorsing modernity or western consumption.

Appendix 6

Data Validity and Trustworthiness: Apparent Strategies

- I. **To be trustworthy is to check:** I constantly monitored the data for any possible biases or triangulation errors etc. by getting it reviewed by the interviewees, fellow PhD students, and sometimes by established academics.

- II. **To be trustworthy is to question:** The main criticism against trustworthiness in qualitative research is the difference in interpretative meanings extracted by different researchers. Therefore, it was very important for me as an early career researcher to explicitly understand the research questions and objectives set for a particular study and constantly challenge the interpreted data in order to maximise the richness of generated meanings.

- III. **To be trustworthy is to theorise:** During the axial and selective coding process I constantly tried to validate my findings through data triangulation and tried to relate my findings to existing concepts and theories in order to minimise data mishandling.

Appendix 7

Research Ethics:

Although I followed the standard set of guidelines given by the departmental ethics committee, it is important to remember that ethics is not a uniform subject area (Gray 2004). According to Bryman (2008), ethics is a paradigm made up of a set of relative principles that changes according to an individual's moral transgressions and situation as it appears. King (2012, p.117) supported this idea by saying that ethical guidelines should move beyond "the tick box mentality" by recognising the often-negotiated nature of some studies. However, looking at the nature of my research it was evident that I did not need to make any abrupt judgement at any point of time that could essentially require me to seek additional permission or violate the agreed ethical guidelines. Therefore, following Sarantakos (2005), I fully complied with the ethical guidelines given to me by the departmental ethics committee and I obtained full ethical clearance from the committee before conducting any fieldwork. I did not cause harm to any of my respondents or to the natural settings I observed as part of this research. Neither at any point did I demand invasion of privacy or forceful access to essential documents that my respondents' were unwilling to share. As a researcher, I remained "truthful", "neutral", "accurate", and "respectful" to my respondents and to my research approach. I did not force anyone to participate in this research even though some candidates may have appeared to be interesting and potential recruits for the research. Informed consent was achieved with every single informant and the participants were fully made aware of the voluntary nature of their participation with the option to stop or restrict my access to their personal and/or professional life at any point. I did not compel anyone to complete the interview process by offering them

money or other benefits. Offering money or gifts was a good will gesture towards the participants' time and enthusiasm and they were always offered these at the final interview sessions after completing all the formalities successfully. Under any circumstances I did not compel any respondent to offer an answer, especially during the life-story interviews where revealing emotional or stressful events were completely based on the respondents' willingness and discretion. Similarly if an ad agency executive refused to offer insights into any of the existing or future projects I simply changed the topic to make them feel comfortable. Formal appointments were made to access any of the ad agency premises, while permissions were sought to access respondents' houses. Other forms of data collection (observation, netnography) mostly took place in public places, or in open online forums that were available to the public and at any given time I did not disregard or disrespect the rules and regulations governing that individual place or forum. To maintain my respondents' dignity and rights I always showed respect to everyone regardless of their profession, age, gender, class or appearance, and I have used pseudonyms throughout this literature to protect the privacy of my respondents.

Appendix 8

Interview Guide for Bajaj Consumers (Life-Stories)

I. Introduction

- Greet the interviewee
- Introduce myself to the interviewee
- Explain the nature of the research project (including aims & objectives)
- Explain the purpose of the interview
- Explain the consent form and data protection rules

II. Informant's Background

- Early Childhood - Where born and raised?
- How the person was raised (class, family structure, socio-economic situation)
- Likings and disliking from childhood and adolescence
- Lifestyle in childhood and adolescence
- Educational background
- Professional career
- Personal interests
- Role in family and work-life
- Memorable consumption episodes from childhood, adolescence, and adulthood
- Are there any serious transitions in selected respondents' life?
- Detail about the transition (how, when, where, what triggered the transition etc.)
- Stories of recent consumption habits and lifestyle
- Respondent's cultural affiliation (viewpoint)
- Respondent's wider socio-political belief, affiliation and participations
- Expand on specific ideological agenda through consumption episodes
- Expand on episodes on socio-political and personal struggles
- How these distress or struggles are handled

III. Lifestyle specific questions

- Questions on daily activities
- Questions on hobbies
- Questions on clothing, fashion, and style

- Individual outlook preference
- Friend circle
- Communal actives
- Engagement and relationship with individual brands (mostly brands that the visible in respondents' house)
- Aspirations in life
- Any achievements or accomplishments
- View towards modernity and socio-economic changes
- Questions related to selected brands and artefacts in respondent's house
- Explain a typical day or a week in individual respondent's life

IV. Bajaj two wheeler specific questions

- When the vehicle was purchased
- What was the motivation behind the purchase
- How and where the purchase was made
- What the informant knows about Bajaj as a brand
- What was the consequence of the purchase
- What is the purpose of riding a Bajaj two wheeler
- Why not to choose any other products or any other brand
- Expand on different memorable episodes surrounding their Bajaj two wheeler
- How (or weather) they think the vehicle makes a perfect fit to their life
- What are the utilitarian values of the vehicle in individual respondent's life
- What type of emotional and relationship values have been developed around the brand and the vehicle
- What the respondent think about selected Bajaj advertisement
- Any influence/relevance of these advertisements in their purchase and consumption decision
- Does the respondent notice any change in Bajaj's past and present? How these understandings effect their attitude towards the brand

VI. End Notes

- Ask the respondent if they would like to add anything else to the conversation
- Remind them to get in touch if they remember something important
- Close the interview session with a final thank you.