The Lore of the Brand: An investigation into how organisations can build consumer engagement and brand affinity through a shared narrative.

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Abstract

This thesis aims to explore how organisations can build consumer engagement and affinity through establishing the conditions for a shared narrative. It is set against a backdrop where brands are facing up to a serious collapse in consumer confidence, which is having an increasingly detrimental effect on the trust that people choose to place in brands and a consequential erosion in the depth of emotional connectivity between them. The consensus view amongst practitioners is that brand engagement appears to be at best fragile and exacerbated further by how the internet is redefining the way consumers interact, influence and ultimately consume. The literature describes a deepening disconnection between brands and consumers and it is clear that any future prevailing societal model will require brands appealing more to consumers' hearts, minds and aspirations. As a result, practitioners need to re-evaluate how brands can achieve deeper mutual bonds and be provided with rich insights to assist in this. The research will investigate firstly what appears to be causing the breakdown and examine what the barriers and enablers are to achieving a more mutually effective relationship.

The most recent literature has laid the foundations of where a support mechanism may exist, that in encouraging an open and shared narrative to be developed with consumers. This thesis therefore aims to explore how organisations can build consumer engagement and affinity through creating the conditions for a shared narrative. The literature review will emphasise that knowledge in this area is underdeveloped and lacks empirical evidence and hence the real value, and timely nature of this study.

The thesis adopts an interpretivist perspective and gathers qualitative data through seven in-depth interviews with senior marketing professionals of global brands and via twelve consumer focus groups. The data was analysed using a thematic framework, which, using a colour identification process, allowed the themes to be highlighted along the thesis journey from literature to recommendations. The process has established a number of salient findings such as: understanding where we are now - the disconnect; where we need to get to - a deeper, emotionally connected relationship; and how we should get

there - the gap in the research and the insights to assist in practical application.

Firstly, there are a number of factors influencing the breakdown in brand and consumer affinity, from the increased power and choice afforded to consumers via the internet, to a lack of organisational openness and a willingness to engage with consumers. It is apparent that the old models of engagement are ill at ease with the modern branding landscape and that a new understanding of engagement is required.

Secondly, and apparent in all three cases under investigation, is that the foundations for deeper emotional relationships with consumers has to be via establishing authenticity. A number of drivers were identified that evoke authenticity cues: a shared corporate ethos, a staff passion for the brand, an engagement with community, and absolute corporate transparency. The broad raft of drivers identified resonates with consumers and lays the groundwork for developing a mutual narrative – the real driver of affinity.

Next the research uncovered a number of insightful narrative drivers that had real value in the cases for stimulating narrative between not only the organisation and consumers, but also broader consumer to consumer. These drivers are diverse, including a call to humanize the brand, having a corporate cause, having and showing flaws and ensuring all staff believe. Finally, the research concludes with a vision and a framework for how narrative can and should continually flourish and how this image of branding should sit at the very heart of the brand essence. Since this research is fundamentally exploratory in nature, the thesis also identifies opportunities for future research for academics and practitioners and, born out of the zeitgeist, an alternative and practical branding route map to consider.

The growing scepticism consumers have for brands, the effects of the global economic crisis on organisations and the deep illumination into companies that the web has offered to consumers, all mean the volatile *brandscape* is new and unchartered. Insights to assist practitioners in navigating through it and to ultimately assist in building consumer engagement are timely and it is affirmed

that this thesis will provide the enlightenment to assist in recalibrating the situation.

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Chapter 1 - INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The overall aim of this study is to present a theoretically based, empirically grounded and insight rich framework that can be applied by practitioners in the modern day digitally fused *brandscape* (Jowitt and Lury, 2012). The vision is to deliver practical insights that can assist in building affinity between brand owners and their consumers. This study will firstly attempt to understand why and where there appears to be a widespread emotional disconnect *(across brands and sectors)* in the brand/consumer relationship, "*No brand is safe from the erosion of confidence that has swept society*" (Clark, 2009), and ultimately deliver practical insights that can act as a counterbalance.

Practitioners need to understand how brands today can achieve deeper mutual bonding with their consumers specifically by focusing on the dialogue, the brand narrative and the brand story, and how this can positively build affinity. As Jenson (1999) illuminated "*It will no longer be enough to produce a useful product: A story or legend must be built into it, a story that embodies values beyond utility*". This thesis will investigate the role and impact of narrative on brand affinity and deliver insights, via a focused academic study, to help in establishing the conditions by which to build a mutually beneficial relationship.

This chapter provides a background to the study, an understanding to the branding industry context, justification for the research question posed, the aims, objectives and scope of the study, the research philosophy and the methodology engaged. It concludes with an assessment of contribution to practice and finally outlines a structure of the thesis.

1.2 Title

The Lore of the Brand: An investigation into how organisations can build consumer engagement and brand affinity through a shared narrative.

1.3 Justification and Background of the Study

The researcher commenced this DBA journey with over fifteen years of practitioner experience in the marketing and advertising agency industry. The involvement spans working for global advertising groups WPP (Ogilvy Group) and Havas (EURO RSCG) together with creating the marketing communications agency Multiply, which has offices in both London and Edinburgh. During the course of his career to date, it has presented the researcher with exposure to, and influence over, a number of global brands in many diverse sectors such as alcoholic and soft drinks, entertainment, fashion, finance, healthcare and tourism. Experience has also been gained through a myriad of UK based communications initiatives and, more recently, digitally based organisations.

Over that time the researcher has witnessed a branding landscape that has become more complex, highly competitive, faster paced, more reactionary and, via the influx of digital medium, more scrutinised. Consumers have new expectations, increased standards and are forming new broader relations with an ever complex web that includes other consumers, family, friends and now brands (Keeling et al., 2011). In addition to this increased interconnectedness (Fournier and Avery, 2011) there has been an unprecedented emotional disconnect by consumers underlined by a reduction in the trust they now have in brands and their associated communications (Buckingham, 2012).

This growing emotional disconnect is presenting both brand owners (organisations) and practitioners (branding consultants) with a knowledge gap and a real need for rich, contemporary and practical insights to help counterbalance the ever deepening and distancing situation (Meyer et al., 2012). As academics begin enquiring into this area the growing importance of developing a modern narrative with consumers and of sharing and developing a story with brands, is delivering the seeds of opportunity (Lundqvist, 2012). It is with this insight that the research opportunity has been identified and together with it, the potential for delivering real practitioner value.

1.4 Aims and Objectives

It follows that for affinity levels to be built and shared, mutually, between brands and consumers (main aim) then this thesis will need to delve deep into the current branding landscape (*from both perspectives*) and achieve insight in a number of areas (key objectives):

1. The first aim is to evaluate the current academic literature in order to ascertain what influential themes currently appear dominant in shaping levels and depth of consumer/brand affinity.

2. To investigate and evaluate the relationship between organisations, their brands and consumers and understand what is driving the current disconnect and reducing levels of trust.

3. Critically analyse and evaluate the case organisations to understand the motivations, strategies and practices of the key organisational branding guardians and identify key insights that drove affinity amongst their core consumer target.

4. Understand what factors appear to be the building blocks of brand authenticity (*a key disconnect factor*) in consumers' *(and broader stakeholders)* minds – what can raise levels of trust?

5. Discover, in the case organisations, what appear to be the emergent narrative drivers. What stimulates this dialogue and encourages it to thrive?

6. Ultimately deliver a framework rich in insight for organisations, brand guardians and branding consultants that can be considered for application within their own corporate credo, marketing and branding activities.

Each of these aims and objectives have been specifically returned to in chapter five, conclusions (page 198) — highlighting how each has been met.

This study has sought to provide an empirical examination of the important drivers of building affinity between consumers and brands, an affinity that can manifest real consumer engagement and traction.

Finally and, from a practitioner perspective, it is also envisaged that this doctoral study will deliver real competitive value and edge for the researcher's consultancy. It is suggested that providing an academically endorsed practitioner framework will establish a new layer of credibility over the Agency's reputation and add to the authority of its insight and output.

1.5 The Parameters of the Research Question

The literature review sets out to not only recognise the limited research in this specific area of branding and brand affinity, but also how the marketing revolution (Alpert, 2012) cast by the new digital landscape means this study is at the forefront of current thinking and practice (*the zeitgeist*). There has been a shift in how consumers fundamentally interact, engage, inform and ultimately consume and this paradigm shift necessitates new knowledge and insight (Kirby and Marsden, 2012).

The negative impact of ever downward spiralling and fragmenting brand affinity with consumers has ultimately delivered a detrimental effect on brand value – there is a need to gain insight on how to build retention and rebuild affinity to counteract this monetizing effect (Stahl et al., 2012). It is envisaged this research will deliver practical insights to help bridge that gap.

From the beginning of investigating the current literature it became apparent that the concept of sharing and creating narrative with consumers is as much an organisational concept as it is a brand idea. Research highlights the need for organisations to engage staff with the right credo (Kelly and Zuniga, 2010), open up to consumers, bring them inside and to even welcome and facilitate the co-creation of product and communications (da Silveira and Lages, 2012). As this plays an essential role in *brand* and *brand narrative* then insight is required to deliver guidance to practitioners on what organisational and management conditions need to be allowed and encouraged to flourish. This

required a change in the cultural paradigm and has been shown to be a difficult initiative (Stuart, 2012) where insight is needed. This is contained within the scope of the research question.

1.6 Scope of the Study

To ensure this study meets its aims and objectives a tight scope is required.

The research is focused on:

1. *Brands with a regarded high degree of consumer affinity.* The cases chosen were nominated for their anticipated richness of insight, so brands with anticipated levels of consumer indifference have not been included.
2. *Corporate brands* – it does not attempt to cover *third sector* (charities), *not-for-profit organisations*, *public sector*, *business to business* or *retail own brands*.
3. *Young adult brands* – the focus is on brands whose core target market is 17 to 35 years old. The study does not draw insight from other categories such as children's or senior focused territories.
4. *Case respondents* with a senior level of brand influence. Sales force, supply chain, operational management or Human Resources are not covered within the scope.
5. *Organisational practitioner* insights are delivered and not via their organisations marketing, advertising or public relations agencies.
6. *Brand narrative and dialogue* are the focus of the study not specifically brand identity or brand positioning.
7. *The study embraces the conditions* that create brand affinity through a shared narrative and in no way attempts to define the constituent parts of brand story or how it should tell its story (that is, via marketing communications).

1.7 Research Philosophy

In establishing the researcher's philosophical position, it was important to

firstly accept that from a practitioner standpoint, the thesis sets out to accommodate the marketing industry's desire for a 'context of application'. Such an approach and positioning requires researchers to adopt a trans-disciplinary approach by attempting to go beyond any single discipline and utilize well established collaborative links with practitioners to ensure validity in the collection of data. This approach has been labelled Mode 2 research by Gibbons et al (1994), and considering the nature of the research question and the validity measures (practitioners and academics) required, it is a *multi-disciplined* and *discipline blended* approach that in this environment, has delivered results (Skinner, 2012).

In order to analyse the factors affecting the connectivity of brands and consumers from both perspectives, an interpretivist, inductive (theory building), qualitative strategy that employed in-depth interviews and focus groups leading to a thematic analysis seemed most appropriate (Bryman and Bell, 2011). The approach allowed the researcher to extract themes and rich insights relating to and taken from the consumer, brand and organisation perspectives and ultimately provide a contribution to practice, based on the subjective, interpretive data. In specifically taking an interpretive, critical realist stance it is also suggested that a more colourful picture is established in attempting to explain the social world and, in doing so, attempting to make causal statements and identify causal mechanisms (Eaton, 2009). It allowed reality to be viewed from different perspectives and to challenge the status quo of the industry and break down the dominant orthodoxies. This critical realist approach therefore required delving broadly into the phenomena, and hence understanding all of the deep, actual and empirical influences.

In taking this critical realist and more interpretive stance, the researcher acknowledges that from an ontological (the researcher's view of the nature of reality) perspective, knowledge of reality is socially constructed. Hence epistemologically, knowledge (subjective) can only emerge from the social interaction between researcher and participants. In essence it is believed the researcher has to live inside the research and consequently the methodology should be viewed through this interpretive lens, as should the thesis in its entirety.

1.8 Research Methodology

Following an expansive analysis of the literature pertaining to branding from both a corporate and consumer perspective, a questioning, semi structured, qualitative thematic analysis approach was adopted. In an attempt to explain this social world phenomena and be in a position to make causal statements, the semi structured, open-end questions were put to seven senior organisational brand guardians (from Chief Marketing Officer to Creative Director) and to six focus groups containing individuals described as their key target market.

The research was carried out across three sectors, Sportswear, Alcoholic Drinks and Entertainment, and the data triangulated within each sector, against each sector, via the literature and through the use of individual respondent ranking worksheets. From the depth and richness of data uncovered a thematic framework was developed and presented as an "*insights aide-mémoire*" for practitioners to consider applying within their future branding programmes.

1.9 Contribution to Practice

This research focuses on how three brands from very different sectors, Sportswear, Alcoholic Drinks and Entertainment, develop brand affinity with their consumers. It identifies their distinct approach at a corporate level to building narrative with their consumers and attempts to understand how this affected levels of consumer affinity. The study illuminates what new knowledge can be obtained in understanding how consumers build an affinity with a brand/organisation and what encourages them to construct a rapport, a dialogue. The literature adds real contribution to an under-studied area and provides practitioners with rich insight and a practical framework to consider in their branding and communications campaigns.

This research delivers a better understanding of how to emotionally engage with a new digitally connected consumer and how the organisation should shape itself to meet these needs.

1.10 Thesis Structure

Chapter two reviews the current literature, *with an emphasis on the most recent*, pertaining to branding and consumer affinity taken from both the organisational and consumer perspectives. The chapter concludes by identifying the research gap in the literature and the scope of aims to assist in delivering insight to bridge the gap. To assist the reader and allow comprehension of the themes uncovered, a colour coded system is applied and follows through to data analysis, making it clear to understand where the opportunities for insight emerge.

Chapter three covers the methodological approach and research design taken for this study. It encompasses data collection, analysis and interpretation and presents why the interpretive, inductive, qualitative, thematic analysis of semi-structures interview questions is the most appropriate method of investigation, from the researcher's perspective, for reaching the research aims.

Chapter four is a synthesis of the research case analysis and findings. It details analysis from each individual case and concludes with a cross case investigation and presents the broad findings uncovered.

Chapter five summarises the thesis, reflecting back on the thesis aims and questions and reviews the main findings. A summary framework of what the research recommends is developed and presented as a tool for practitioners to consider in future branding work. The chapter also considers the broad implications for academics and practitioners and outlines the study limitations and the opportunities for future research.

The thesis now reviews the literature and delivers a gap for the thesis to add real practitioner value.

Chapter 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2. 1 Introduction

This chapter will investigate the existing literature in relation to the factors influencing consumer brand affinity and ultimately identify a gap in the research that has the potential to deliver real academic and practitioner value with resonant insight. The chapter will also explore (see schema below) the major themes emerging from the literature that are complicit in shaping the relationship between the consumer and the brand in order to assist in establishing a framework for undertaking the research. The literature review will attempt to understand why and where there appears to be a widespread emotional breakdown and disconnect in the relationship between brand and consumer (Herskovitz et al., 2010) in order to ultimately assist practitioners to navigate through the ever complicated branding enigma.

Schema of this chapter

1 Understanding the modern branding context and researcher motivations.

2 Identifying the salient brand affinity impact themes from the literature.

3 Delivering a process for uncovering the research gap.

4 Funnelling down toward a clear research gap with practitioner value.
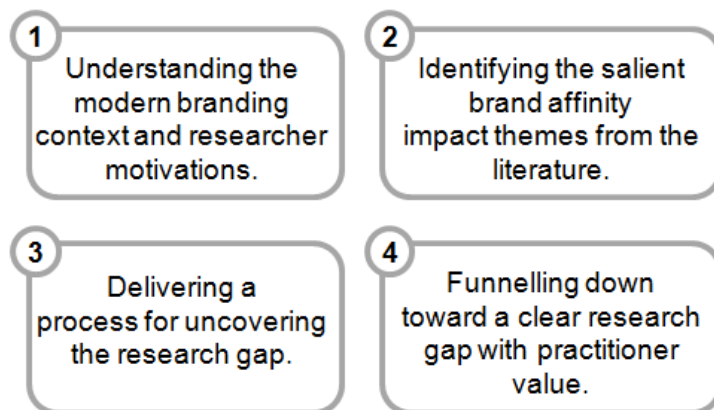
As the chapter concludes, a colour coding system apportioned to the a priori themes is discussed. This coding not only allowed for themes to be illustratively captured as they emerged from the literature but also acted as a filter to assimilate the research data. Fig. 2.1 demonstrates the approach taken and how this method uncovered the gap in the research, but it also shows how it acted as a roadmap for channelling, focusing and illuminating the data.

Colourful themes emerging
from the literature

Authenticity	New society	Individualism v collectivism	Storytelling	Symbolism - brand meaning & persona	Empowerment to the people – lose control
Promise / reality gap/ trust	Impact of the web	Rewriting the rules in a digital age	Market noise	Deterioration of brand worth	Brand release
Why we buy	Connectivity	New business models	The economic crisis	Reputation & persona	Heritage & tradition
Surplus society	Communication	Narrative	Global	Brand failures	Influence

Fig. 2.1 snapshot of colour coding system – detail at end of chapter. Source: Original

2 Context and Motivation
2.2.1 The Scope of the Brand

The American Marketing Association defines a brand as a *"Name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other seller."* This rather traditional, and one dimensional view of a brand and its desire to be distinctive, has been superseded as academics agree that its real value is in the combination of both functionality together with meanings and association (Kornberger, 2010). Functions are easy to define but meanings are complicated drivers and the current consensus suggests it is out of the immediate control of the organisation. Kapferer (2004) ascertained that it takes more than branding to build a brand – there are so many non-branding facets that are integral to brand success and these all add up to what constitutes the modern day complexity of brand management.

Keller (1998) suggested that a brand is a set of mental associations held by consumers that add to the perceived value of the product or service over and above its functional aspects, therefore the focus is on these added perceptions. In this way one person's interpretation of a brand are just as valid as another (Berthon, 2009). For example Nike is all about performance (Hooi et al., 2011), not just shoes; Baileys is about sensuousness not just alcohol (Kilbourne, 2012), Harley Davidson more about rebellion than just motorcycles (Schembri,

2009), and Jack Daniels about a grungy rock and roll lifestyle, not just bourbon (Shankar, 2012). Importantly as Kornberger (2010) suggested, brands are indeed props and scripts that help people in defining their identities. He added that in the ever-interconnected world, brands are becoming the interface in the ever-expanding conversation between consumers and producers and that the once power play of corporations is being subverted by the creativity of the networked community. Indeed the recent digital phenomena of Brand Communities (Zaglia and Maier, 2011) that now allow consumers to get together and share their own experiences and expressions of the brand are clearly another *affinity reward* and yet another dimension and expression of the brand's scope (Feather, 2000).

Significantly for the scope of this research, Hatch and Schultz (2003) define a brand as an amalgamation of the different stakeholder associations given to it – *both internal and external stakeholders* - and all potentially with different visions, values and cultures (de Chernatony, 2012). The work of the researchers importantly suggested a potential tension between these differing and influential perspectives. De Chernatony (2002) earlier captured this broader (internal and external) vision of the brand meaning by defining it as a collection of both functional and emotional values, which essentially manifest themselves as a set of mental associations. Additionally, Bruce and Harvey (2008) suggested that any brand is a summation of 3 drivers; legacy (where it has come from), behaviour (how it acts) and dream (where it wants to be) and, overlaid with the other researchers insight on brands, captures the very real complexity in building affinity when so many drivers are involved (Nicolaisen and Blichfeldt, 2012).

It is apparent that researchers are pointing to the complexity of a brand and reflecting the very human characteristics they possess (Freling et al., 2011) and the very varied emotions they portray. It is evident that coordinating these requires the dexterity of a proficient puppet master (Chen and Hartwell, 2012) in order to engage the desired brand meaning and positioning and is, in today's complex world, a truly dark art (Beverland, 2005). It is under these conditions and under this holistic understanding of brand meaning that the research is grounded.

2.2.2 Global Brand Crisis

In 2012, the world of brands found itself in a very different place than anyone could have anticipated at the commencement of the global economic crisis (Johansson et al., 2012). The collateral damage to household name brands of the crisis has been significant; Woolworths, RBS Group, Allied Carpets, Pontins, Habitat, Setanta, Land of Leather are just some of the familiar marquees that have been either been liquidated, administrated, capitulated or wholly held up. Those organisations, like others, are either victims of the economy or of the effects of the buy-cott (Stolle et al., 2005) in which consumers exert their force by refusing to purchase.

As brands have been defined as the souls of organisations (Kornberger, 2010) this effect on brands has been devastating across a wide array of industries. It has therefore necessitated new thinking in order to understand branding in this crisis (Castells et al., 2012). Whilst the brand landscape has been in this disintergration, it has impacted on the long held *love affair* that consumers have held with brands (Nobre, 2011). The trust that consumers had appears to be fragile and the once high held models of engagement appear to be crumbling (Fortin and Uncles, 2011) leaving marketers to ask themselves if a new perspective on brand affinity should be engaged (von Hippel, 2005).

2.2.3 Consumer Disconnection than just Brand Life Cycle

As a support for practitioners in this new era, Wang et al (2012) and Haig (2011) stated that storytelling and the requirement of building a brand narrative (Smith, 2011) could extend and protract brand lifecycles. We live in a period of unparalleled digital and consumer (social) connectivity and these new influences, it is asserted, must be creating this disconnect (Patterson, 2012). Inversely, Ewing et al (2009) suggested that brand demise is not necessarily caused by managerial incompetence but an inevitable and natural part of a brand's developmental process and changing consumer needs. Strong consensus, in contrast, seems to exist that managing brands for the long run is both possible and desirable (Doyle, 2012 and Keller, 1999). Plummer (1990, p.26) asserted *"only…poorly managed brands have a finite life cycle…if a*

brand turns out to have a finite life cycle, it is not the brand that failed but the people who managed it".

Their model was born out of work of Tellis and Crawford (1981) where they identified that the product life cycle model can provide a metaphor of the cycle of "birth–growth–maturity–death". Indeed it has been argued that new technologies have been a contributing factor (Norton and Bass, 1987,1992); products become out-dated and the experiences simply run out of steam. The suggestion is also supported by de Chernatony (2012) who discussed the effects on a brand as their supporting technologies become out-dated. The literature suggests that it is not just technology affecting consumer/brand disconnect and the premature demise this leads to (Ormerod, 2005).

There is now a need for the brand to be constantly connected (Hooker et al., 2012) by whatever means possible. Indeed this perspective was developed much earlier by Collins and Porras (1996), who showed that businesses which were able to preserve their core values and purpose while adapting strategies and tactics to suit environmental (and societal) changes outperformed the general stock market by a factor of twelve over seventy years. This (good management branding practice) suggests that, as a brand is more of an imagination concept (Bastos and Levy, 2012) in the mind of consumers than a purely functional one, mismanagement of the brand's world contributes to its disintegration, demise and disconnection, and this is where real research value and practical industry insights can be laid.

2.2.4 Need for New Measures

From the literature, it is apparent that today's brand management needs a whole different set of skills than Bernay's more traditional ideals of *"manipulation and control"* Danser, 2005). As Achrol and Kotler (2011) contested, marketing is struggling to grasp the new fields of explanation and this shift is bending the worldview of marketing as well as the traditional theoretical tools and methodologies. The researchers call for a new emergent paradigm, one that embraces the sensory consumer experience that brands

are shifting towards and one that appreciates how dialogue now manifests (Munro and Richards, 2012).

The current marketing landscape has been referred to as a Kuhnian Paradigm Shift, so anomalous that it really cannot be explained (Hey et al., 2009; Travis, 2001). Similarly Sheth and Parvatiyar (2000, p.140) suggested that *"an alternative paradigm of marketing is needed, a paradigm that can account for the continuous nature of relationships among marketing actors."* Indeed, the many models on which much of marketing are based were in the main, developed during the nineteenth century (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), and there appears to be a need for greater insight around *"interactivity and connectivity and ongoing relationships"*.

The researchers have suggested that future models should be consumer centric and not the more traditional goods *(organisationally)* centric and that they should be created around, and absolutely with, consumers (Von Hippel, 2005). The literature illustrates that, now more than ever, there is a real need in creating, developing and sustaining deep emotional bonds with consumers (Loureiro and Ruediger, 2012).

2.2.5 Customer Relationship Breakdown

Brands, like other institutions, have come under equal scrutiny (Burmann, et al., 2009) and the perception/reality gap is having a detrimental effect on brand equity and brand affinity. Wilk (2006) outlined the 2004 controversy surrounding Dasani Water after its manufacturer Coca-Cola admitted it was essentially selling purified tap water and that the source of the bottled water was the mains supply at its factory in Kent. (BBC News Monday, 1 March 2004). As Moynihan (2011) suggested, today's informed citizens leave nowhere to hide anymore. It is apparent that we are in a period where brands are facing up to a serious collapse in consumer confidence and this is having an increasingly detrimental effect on the *trust* that people choose to place in brands, leading to an erosion in the depth of emotional connectivity (Basini, 2011).

With regard to another perspective, Langen et al (2010) also uncovered the growing mistrust of consumers relating to corporate social responsibility, exacerbated by the disingenuous tactics used by some organisations – *green washing* (Parguel, et al., 2011). All of this conspires to define that consumers are now more sceptical of brands and their motives and, consequently, disconnected (Talton et al., 2011). As Brodie et al (2011) concluded, there is scope for a new perspective on engagement to be researched in order to develop a more fluid model that covers all the behavioural, emotional and cognitive dimensions of the brand and the potential affinity drivers with consumers. This consumer breakdown had been predicted by Jensen (1996) who claimed that *"It will no longer be enough to produce a useful product: A story or legend must be built into it, a story that embodies values beyond utility"*. Jensen laid out a case for understanding emotional connectivity and how consumers and brands can be engaged through story and a shared narrative. Hwang (2012) expanded on Jensen's call by suggesting that, particularly with younger consumers, there are three dimensions to emotional connectivity and loyalty: emotional attachment, self-concept connection and brand love. All three of these dimensions should be mobilised in today's practice.

Finally, Davies and Knight (2007) suggested that consumers are looking for brands that share their passion. They also stated that it has become increasingly apparent that if emotional connectivity is the platform then a shared narrative might be the conduit to reverse the current trust collapse. Hosein (2000) summarizes this position, *"if we inject that channel with story, authenticity and a certain amount of emotion, we have laid the groundwork for an ongoing relationship".* The power of brand narrative and how it connects with consumer identities was also illuminated in Vincent (2012) – the bonding attributes are now very visible.

2.3 Cross examining the major themes emerging from the literature

In setting the context for this research it is apparent from the literature that both the consumer brand disconnect and fragility of affinity are grounded in a number of re-occurring themes (Fig. 2.2).
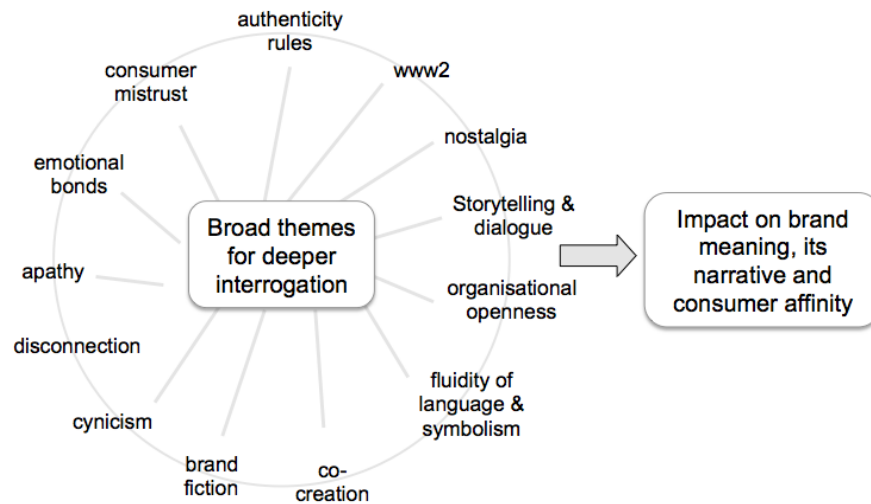
Fig. 2.2 Re-occurring themes for investigation. Source: Original

These themes are discussed next and provide a conduit for ascertaining the gap in the research and for discovering where supporting insights might be uncovered. They embrace the impact of digital, societal mistrust in institutions and the destructive unwillingness of organisations to simply engage with their consumers (Jahn and Kunz, 2012).

2.3.1 Trust

Quandt (2012) suggested that *trust*, or indeed a lack of it, is rapidly becoming the driver in creating the shape of the society we live in, one importantly with a new model of societal communication. "*In the current economic crisis there's a chasm a mile or more wide for many organisations between brand promising and brand delivering*" (Schultz, 2009 p.6).

In addition to this, Hulme (2010) outlined the situation in a UK/US study for brand owners, hastening the need for more academic research and, ultimately, practitioner guidance. In the research, Hulme found that only 5% of UK customers trust advertising, 8% trust what the company says about itself and just 10% believe that companies are prepared to listen to the views of their customers. More recently, Eisend and Knoll (2012) also referred back to this advertising mistrust issue and supported the idea that the situation was in fact becoming even more exacerbated. From a digital perspective, Okazaki, Katsukura and Nishiyama (2007) also found less consumer trust in online advertising than with traditional advertising.

2.3.1.1 Lack of consumer connectivity

Consumer engagement and its influence on consumer loyalty and connectivity is certainly an under researched area (Hollebeek, 2011), but customer disengagement is a very real phenomenon. Gerzema (2009) referred to The Brand Asset Valuator study that found consumer *love* for brands was on the wane. Brand awareness was down 20%, brand esteem down 12%, perceptions of brand quality declined 24% and critically, *trust in brands had eroded by almost 50%.* Consumers, faced with more choice and more information, appear to be emotionally investing in fewer brands than ever before. Brodie et al (2011) outlined that "word of mouth" has become all-powerful, as brands have appeared not to have delivered on their basic promises (Alam et al., 2012). In addition a 2009 study from Lightspeed Research highlights that trust is now an ever increasing issue for brands than it was 12 months previous: *"14% of consumers are less trusting of advertising than they were last year."*

Kozinetz et al (2010) researched "word of mouth" and delivered a new narrative model that shows that it does not simply increase or amplify marketing messages, but rather marketing messages and meanings are systematically altered in the process of embedding them into the narrative. The power of consumer-to-consumer advocacy is really gaining momentum and adoption (Silverman, 2011). Casalo et al (2007) highlighted the potential power of online communities in building trust and loyalty amongst participants to the product, brand or organisation around which the community is developed. Trust in the community first and foremost, is shown to be the cornerstone (Dawes, 2012 and Valette-Florence, 2011).

2.3.1.2 Value relationships more than short term brand value

Valette-Florence et al (2009) also highlighted the potential negative effect of short-term marketing mix instruments on brand equity. Certainly whilst price has been the cornerstone of many marketing strategies since the economic downturn, it is forecast that brands that fail to earn or maintain that trust *(thinking longer term rather than shorter term fixes)* will inevitably find

themselves out of favour. The researchers concluded that it is the brands that can deliver their promises and maintain trust that will succeed.

The research confirmed the growing importance of relationships (Yannopoulou et al., 2011), friends and online reviews as key information sources. Ye et al (2011) investigated the positive (*significant*) impact of online user-generated reviews on business performance and their findings show the growing influence this plays on business success. Trust appears to be the buzz-word following the demise of Lehman Bros and has been captured in Forrester's Research (2006) and supported by Irvine et al (2011) which highlighted that as the web becomes the new front line retail space, the virtual home of brands and our communal social space, a staggering 81% of consumers do not trust branded websites. In contrast they uncovered a return to good old family values where consumers tend to trust other people (71% said they trust family friends and colleagues as a source of product information). The researchers believed the answer is to return to the real and often forgotten way of human engagement and relationships.

Brakus et al (2011) suggested that brands have to appeal to the more emotional traits such as senses, feelings, intellect, curiosity and self-image rather than the more traditional and rational ones. Hosein (2010) in his research called for a new way of understanding and measuring credibility and trust, as he concluded that the old vision where trust emanates exclusively from the power of a brand name or big institution does not resonate anymore. In this way, it is time to rebuild relationships (Trueman et al., 2012). Smith (2011) built on this insight by suggesting that social salience and permanent engagement is critical for brand longevity, and finds that marketing communications should be bonded in strategic and tactical brand dialogues, which consumers co-create, disseminate and advocate.

Beverland (2005) and Hosein (2010) suggested that if a brand's words and deeds are well matched then organisations will create in customers a crucial, intrinsic, and implicit emotional connection that will form the basis of a long-lasting relationship built on the predictability of the brand's behaviour. Dee (2009) added that a brand loses its customers' trust when it ceases to live up

to its word over the long term: *"If a brand repeatedly 'under delivers' on its promises, it will be very difficult to earn back clients' lost trust and loyalty".* Schau et al (2009) highlighted, particularly in an on-line perspective, that engaged consumers show all three elements of brand community: shared consciousness, shared rituals and a shared sense of responsibility. This sense of brand community is a rich and many layered relationship built over time. This position was again underlined by Omar et al (2009) whose research found that credibility and trust are significant elements which must be constantly managed and communicated to maintain the organisational image and reputation.

2.3.2 Authenticity

Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003) found that authenticity is often *"made-up"* by organisations. Ten years on from their work and the digitally connected world leaves no hiding place for these deceptions (Kerr et al., 2012), as Fournier (2011) found consumers are openly challenging accepted brand truths and paradigms.

2.3.2.1 Authenticity from the ground up

According to Ind (2011) and Shah et al (2007), Starbucks began to reshape its image with a raft of carefully selected authenticity cues. The sterile interiors were smartened up with local artefacts, community notice boards and shabby chic vintage furniture. It was a direct move to build in consumers' eyes a sense of authenticity and community.

Indeed, as Starbucks started to disconnect it appeared to start telling its customers a story (Godin, 2005) – *fair trade beans and healthcare for employees.* They created a bond and provided consumers with a reason to participate: a rich story. There is a trend, worth investigating, that consumers are seeking the authenticity that somehow strengthens their mental image of the brand or indeed delivers an authentic consumption experience (Beverland et al., 2010).

2.3.2.2 Authenticity through truth

The apathy, cynicism and lack of consumer confidence (Prindle, 2011) shown by today's marketing literate consumers prove that functional features, style and hype are not nearly enough to differentiate and resonate brands into consumers hearts and minds. Finchum (2010) warns that business reputations are now more fragile than ever and emphasised the influence of word-of-mouth through social media. Ind (2007) sees the heart of the problem being a lack of authenticity that permeates the very essence of modern fast moving consumer goods. He argues that not only have consumers' faith in marketing fallen to new lows but that the humanity and truth has been wiped from most branding programmes, resulting in complete lack of engagement. Godin (2005) also warns that consumers may simply close their eyes to marketing as they get increasingly more sceptical and suspicious. He sees future successful marketers not talking about features or benefits, but telling a story - a story consumers will want to believe in and one that has authenticity and truth.

Haig (2011) and Campbell et al (2012) supported this *collapse in authenticity debate* and suggested that there has been a great swath of realisation in the consciousness of society that the stories brands and advertisers have been using for decades just do not stack up. There is a demand for truth together with authenticity and it is a key intention of this research to uncover how these (and possibly more) key motivators can be established to bring back the emotional bonding brand owners need. This subtle seduction that engagement offers, resonates with truth. Indeed Malcolm (2012) also found that consumers could be very unforgiving to those who do not deliver on basic truth promises. Consumers have set standards that if brands do not live up to they will dismiss them. It really is time for brands and consumers to have meaningful and truthful conversations. Another aspect to truth is simply being true (straight with consumers) and Antorini (2007) found in his analysis of Lego and their changing philosophy on branding that their organisational mantra and philosophy was shaped around what *consumers would like them to be* - being true to their consumers.

2.3.2.3 Organisations practicing what they preach

Beverland (2005) conceded that authenticity requires brand managers to downplay their *"overt marketing prowess"* and instead locate their brands within communities and sub-cultures – to release the strings and let consumers and communities play a role. He also suggested that brands should become members of communities (also Close et al., 2012) and appeal to more timeless values, while also delivering to members' needs. He emphasised that marketers will need to indicate authenticity by drawing on attributes that can be real, *being upfront and personal* or as Forden (2001) suggests, that they are steadfastly committed to, and also to living the story and that this sticks. This connection with time and place is also seen as important for consumers (Postrel, 2003) as it is suggested that a sense of provenance can really affirm tradition.

Postrel (2003 p. 461.) saw this perception of authenticity as serving consumers with a form of self-expression for brands that represents *"a genuine expression of an inner personal truth or an expression of identity through community membership".* Harley Davidson motorcycles illustrates this point: you are not just riding a bike but taking history on your passenger seat – living it (Schembri, et al., 2012). He recommended that marketing practice has to constantly knit together all these disparate sources to create rich brand meanings for target consumers. He added also that sometimes authenticity has to appear non-commercialised, as seen in the surf / extreme sports categories where consumers prefer not to view their brands as brands, but rather as friends. Building on this, Iglesias et al (2012) found that brand managers are progressively losing control over the potential multiple sources of brand meaning and concluded that brand meaning is co-created during the consumer-brand relationship and re-interpreted at each touch point that a consumer has. Hence if brands live it consistently then the brand has more chance of delivering the meaning it intended (also Merrilees et al., 2012).

Huang (2010) discovered that many successful brands communicate with consumers through brand stories and that these play an important part in helping consumers make sense of the totality of the brand and lets them live

with it. Importantly the study investigated the relationship between story structure, including authenticity, narrator and plot (also Hakala et al., 2011 who defined the broader essence, story and heritage), and the consequent consumer perceptions of the brand's image. The findings suggested that a brand story with *high authenticity* tends to be perceived as having a more positive brand image than one with lower authenticity. In line with this, and in an exploration of anti-Starbucks discourse, Thompson et al (2006) suggested that inauthentic brand meanings motivated consumers to avoid the Starbuck's brand and this is magnified when consumer expectations of the product or service are not equal to the experience – if they are not living it then consumers certainly will not.

A final view in this area of the literature is forwarded by Schultz (2009) who believes the route map to consumer affinity is maintained by the constant brand experiences *(living it constantly)* the customer receives, whether product or service based, and this route map *has to be* based on truth – *just tell the truth* (Baskin et al., 2012). Schultz saw the reality being a huge chasm for many organisations between brand promising and brand delivering. Real brand relationships are, the researcher suggested, based on developing and maintaining valuable and consistent quid-pro-quo relationships where both the brand owner and the customer benefit. Hiscock (2001) believed the ultimate goal of marketing is to generate an intense bond between the consumer and the brand, and the main ingredient of this bond is the illusive concept of trust and its underpinning pillar of authenticity, which he saw as a vital component for the brand to build a lasting relationship with consumers.

From the literature review it is apparent that it will be essential to identify what key foundation stones, and their constituent parts, have to be in place to establish authenticity and build trust. As Kemp et al (2011) found, when consumers believe that a brand is credible, a real commitment to the brand can develop over time and this credibility is magnified when it appears as a corporate credo (Stuart, 2012).

2.3.3 The impact of the narrative

Narrative has the power to engage and inspire consumers and as Price (1978) suggested it goes to the very heart of human motivations: *"A need to tell and hear stories is essential, second in necessity after nourishment and before love and shelter. Millions survive without love or home, almost none in silence; the opposite of silence leads quickly to narrative, and the sound of story is the dominant sound of our lives."*

2.3.3.1 Consumers taking a role inside the story

Academics have been increasingly interested in the narrative features of branding (Jensen, 1999) that have the ability to carry a message of the inner core values of the organisation or the product. In this way, Jensen argued that the brand-owner becomes a storyteller, and the market place becomes its audience. As follows products, communications and marketing campaigns all continue to mesmerise consumers' senses, touch their hearts, and stimulate their mind (Schmitt, 1999) attempting to "re-enchant" commodities. Consequently, organisations are continuously trying to tell trustworthy and sustainable stories. But is the old adage of '*engage your audience with a story and they will fall in line'* still valid or does the audience now want to play their own part - a broader perspective within it (Lundqvist et al., 2012)?

As Huang (2010) outlined, many successful brands communicate with consumers through brand stories, as the story plays an important part in helping consumers make sense of the brand. Indeed Lundqvist et al (2012) suggested that stories fascinate people and, as such, are often more easily remembered than facts and that, crucially, consumers who were exposed to the story described the brand in much more positive terms and were even willing to pay more for the product. As Wipperfurth (2005) suggested, rather than the more traditional stance of companies being merely product owners, they must become story owners and that the path to understanding and loyalty is through stories. In this way the researcher finds that everything becomes part of the story – the culture, history, mission logos etc.

Jensen (1996) predicted that *"the information society",* a place where data is king, would be superseded by *"the dream society",* a place where storytellers are king, and that those in the greatest positions of influence would be the storytellers living in a society focused on dreams, adventure, spirituality, and feelings. He added that as communications become easier, then the key would be content, and content laced with emotion (Chaffey and Mill, 2012). In this way it is the story that shapes our feelings about a product, becoming an enormous part of what we buy, why we buy, and when we buy it. As Martin (2002) added, brands are engaged in rewriting scripts and provide props for consumers (and employees) to engage and understand. It is essential in this aspirational/individualistic society to guide them along the journey and a consistent story *(a brand experience)* can support this.

Emotional bonding really emerged with the art of advertising and the seeds of this art can be located in the work of Jung (1915), where he proposed that a personality could conceal itself beneath a persona – a mask that can be adopted to facilitate social interactions. This was based on Jung's idea that we rarely act as we do on the inside, and therefore develop a persona for public consumption that fits with norms and expectations set by the world around us. At this point persona and product were seen as equal bedfellows in influencing purchase decisions and the brand rapidly became the icon of the homogenized international language of goods, creating meaning in the new social world of consumption (Thompson, 1990). However, something went bang and that was the internet (Lewis and Bridger, 2000), as it really played a pivotal role in disabling the *emotional bond* dial. All this is happening when our world is bulging at the seams with *stuff* (Appleyard, 2005) and we are now able *(greater and easier information)* to make more considered purchase decisions.

Jenking (2006) suggested that a new consumer has emerged demanding authentic experiences and brand stories that are more dynamic and fluid than ever before, contributed to and shaped by all stakeholders (internal and external) all of the time. This illustrates a demanding, all seeing consumer, who wants to be part of the brand's narrative. As Zaltman (2003) proposed, stories are bought and sold, shared by consumers, indeed are part of the

media of exchange and in doing so become vehicles for all other goods and services. In this way, a brand filled with stories becomes a robust living entity that gets bent and shaped as consumers become a part of it (Scholes, 2012).

2.3.3.2 A story written by all stakeholders

Chouinard (2006) captured the story of outdoor lifestyle brand Patagonia, a company that lets its staff go surfing when the weather is good and every year gives a percentage of its profits to environmental concerns. It also allows consumers to crash test every sporting good they make before general release and states that it sees its bottom line as *doing good over profit*. This unique all embracing culture has built up a global and burgeoning band of loyal followers who love what the company stands for and talk about it (Batra et al., 2012). Patagonia is a brand first and foremost with an emotionally overflowing and open-book story (Walter et al., 2012). This co-creational narrative approach has been investigated by Burnett and Hutton (2007) who suggested that companies should firstly create a master narrative that reflects its core values and then shape brands that people can relate to and engage with. Importantly they identified that corporate transparency is the key and see successful brands as ones that invite consumers in to participate in the narrative.

Wachtman and Johnson (2009 p. 29), delivered a key literature insight (supported by Dowling and Weeks, 2011): *"Every day we face the daunting challenges of finding a competitive edge, discovering new ways of reaching people, capturing their attention, and most importantly persuading them to take action. In order to get people to act, we must engage them emotionally. A highly effective way to do this is through the persuasive power of stories."* In their research Wachtman and Johnson (2009) surmised that the key factor that makes some stories more powerful than others is the emotional connection a story creates with its audience. Therefore, to get consumers to behave in ways that benefit the brand or product, an emotionally compelling story needs to be delivered. This links to the works of Ind (2007) and Gad (2000) in regard to the key tenets of brand essence. In addition Wachtman and Johnson (2009) devise a model for creating a powerful story hung around

message, meaning and myth (Appendix 1). This compares with the practitioner work of Wilson (2009), who sees the critical role stories perform in creating strong and lasting bonds with current and potential customers.

Chronis et al (2012) highlighted the power of consumers absorbing into the story and so in this way it is about capturing their imagination and speaking to their hearts and mind. Researchers (Chiu et al., 2012) indeed concluded that narrative (and stories) is the fundamental way of providing this emotionally persuasive conduit to the brand. Fisher (2012) also accentuated that the branding secret is all about telling the right story to fully engage. All these researchers agreed that adopting this approach is essential in creating ever tightening bonds with new and future consumers. It is a hearts and minds game (Stahl, 2012) more than ever before and suggests that the *branding model* needs reworking for modern conditions. This relationship-building effect that stories offer is supported further by Kolesar and Galbraith (2000), Wang et al (2000) and Rowley (2005) who suggested that the secret is communication flows between *all parts of an organisation and all consumers at all times* – not as is now, in short super focused bursts that traditional advertising has suggested and mixed together with the now familiar yearly brand manager targets. Herstein et al (2011) built on this, further describing the enormous daily pressures on brand managers to the detriment of long-term affinity. This is even more pertinent now that online channels have created a new relationship medium that is more two-way than ever before (Szmigin et al., 2005), so the need to be open and listen is crucial and preferable to being introspective and solely focused on the here and now.

Brandweek (Facenda) announced in 2007 that according to research by the American Research Federation, storytellers simply succeed. They claimed that results of a three year study suggested that old marketing theories should be thrown away and that storytelling was the future of engagement. The research amalgamated from fourteen leading emotional and physiological research firms concluded that consumers interact with advertisements to "co-create" a meaning that is powered by emotion and rich narrative. A leading global advertising head reacted (Truss, director of brand intelligence at JWT, New York 2007) that the storytelling theory is correct, but the industry still lacks a

way to prove it. *"Without the tools to measure and link back to business metrics, marketers and advertisers are not going to embrace the theory"*. One may deduce that this mindset is not new or without value. Bedbury (1997), believed that the future of brands lies in telling stories that inspire and move consumers –ultimately to the checkout.

More recently Huang (2010) discovered that many successful brands communicate with consumers through brand stories where it was found that the brand story plays a pivotal role in helping consumers make sense of the brand. Indeed storytelling's broader powers were researched by Gill (2011) who recommended the use of corporate storytelling as a valuable strategy to heighten employee engagement which, as well as improving internal loyalty to the corporate brand, would ultimately strengthen internal and external reputation and affinity. Whilst this is inspiring and not a new concept, there appears to have been very little framework or model shaping to emerge in academia. One footnote that appears in Mohan et al (2008) and Harrison (2007) suggests that storytelling has the power to engage but is but one tool in the toolbox.

The need for a perspective on the evolution of the story is also delivered by Bedbury (2007) who argued that a brand is a metaphorical story that's evolving all the time and that it connects with something very deep - *a fundamental human appreciation of mythology* - and believes that if companies can crack this conundrum then it can continually invoke something very powerful. He illuminated his point by focusing on the Levi's story that goes back to the Gold Rush and suggested that it reminds us of the original story, the rich history of the product *(truth)* and also of the broader company. This reflects the power of not only a colourful story but also the value of history and tradition (Abosag et al., 2012).

Martin (2010) added that the story and the narrative help us connect with the brand and also to connect emotionally with other people – a digital perspective. The literature does suggest that stories do create connections for people and Martin (2010) argued stories create the emotional context people need to locate themselves in within a larger experience. Heilbrunn (2006) argued that

brands do not consist of single signs or words, but of complex stories – and it is the story or being part of it *(the experience)* that creates the bond. It is apparent that the literature points to the fact that stories can, under the right circumstances, deliver fertile conditions for affinity. Indeed, as Ambrosius (2010) recommended, it is important to tell your brand story in every element of the marketing mix, but - as Sachs (2012) suggested - allow consumers to play an integral role in shaping it, as it was forewarned that those who tell and live the best stories will "rule the future".

2.3.3.3 Framing the impact and influence of story

The framework developed by Matthews and Wacker (2008), focused on why businesses need to tell stories and why stories are powerful, persuasive and integrative tools for sense-making amongst all the stakeholders (Appendix 1). In addition, Chiu et al (2012) suggested that the key attributes to a powerful brand story are authenticity, conciseness, reversal, and humour. Ind (2006) similarly pointed to a framework that recognizes the relationship between an organisation and its customers has to be dynamic, non-linear, non-controllable and difficult to predict. He called for greater concentration on a direct dialogue, which ensures the continued relevance of the brand to its core customer base (and the evolving consumer franchise). Fournier and Avery (2011) called this 'open source branding', where the brand relinquishes control. This adds up to a step change in thinking and a rich stream of fresh research. To understand the framework is as critical as understanding the power (Holtje, 2011). Indeed, storytelling has the potential to captivate, convince and can convert any business audience, but there is a real need to present a practical structure (Holtje, 2011).

Any framework has to embrace both the emotional and functional aspects of the brand as Clifton and Simmons (2003) suggested, and marketers need to establish a storytelling approach that is therefore both verbally and emotionally rich. Learned (2007) also accepted that storytelling was the new brand differentiator and agreed that, although facts, figures, specifications and price all still matter, it now takes stories to connect with customers on an emotional level. This was reflected in the work of Gargiulo (2006) who uncovered that the

most profoundly social form of human interaction and communication was that of the simple story. This theory of consumers contributing to the story with positive affinity effects was developed and presented on the Harvard Business Blog (2009) with their concept of 3D branding. This, it is suggested, begins with the idea that a great story is at the core of all human motivation and also of strong brand relationships and hence there is a real emphasis on brand owners to link all customer interactions into a seamless web of experience.

The 3D approach also realizes that brands grow as people interact with them and contribute to the overall story – thereby building the story together over time. Harvard recommended that with the social web, the job of a *3D company* is to give their audience the best, most fun, and simplest tools to add content and create connections with the broader world. The *influence of experience* (also Rageh et al., 2011 who examined the impact of customer experience on brand loyalty) is becoming a more vocal contributor to consumer attraction and their recommendation that brand owners should, as part of a new framework, hand control over to consumers will be - for some organisations - a really uncomfortable concept.

2.3.3.4 Story and narrative as an essential part of organisational culture

The engaging qualities at the heart of story and narrative, are delivering real insight into marketing and branding.

 "when customers create meanings for brands in a narrative way brands become more valuable and connected to their sense of self"(Escalas, 2004 p.307).

Peters (2003) also argued that good stories are the keystone of modern business success and that stories have the capacity to create the *"waves of lust"* that will throw buyers and sellers together. Boje's (2001) original analysis of narratives also demonstrated the emotive impact on consumers from discovering new aspects of companies and brands - *letting them in and letting them discover.* Elliott and Yannopoulou (2007) and Kaufman (2003), emphasised that through its application they have seen growth in bonding, consumer awareness and attachment. Love (2008) and Hansen (2008)

described how Microsoft had taken this issue head-on and employed their own corporate storyteller, again for one simple reason – story has the power to create formidable emotional connections.

Herskovitz and Crystal (2010 p. 25) suggested that the seeds of affinity through narrative lie in firstly creating a powerful brand narrative, *the persona (a rich personality)* - in essence the articulated form of the brand's character and personality. They saw this as the connection between what a company says and what it does. This brand persona then creates a long-lasting emotional bond with the audience because it is instantly recognizable and memorable (Wilson and Morgan, 2011). The researchers have shown that storytelling strengthens the connections consumers have to brands, so to a great extent, *"what a brand means to a consumer is based . . . on the narratives he or she has constructed that incorporate the brand."* Importantly more of the communication today via the web is from consumer to consumer (especial amongst younger consumers – Valkenburg, 2011), rather than from company to consumer. So it is important to get it right, let it all stack up and your advocacy score will rise amongst consumers (Laroche et al., 2012).

Fog, Budtz, Yakaboylu (2005) and Godin (2005) have studied storytelling's effectiveness on brands and branding and recommended important future structural rules of engagement. Godin (2006) also demanded real change in the paradigm of how ultimately ideas spread (via the narrative). Abimbola (2009) suggested that businesses need to tell their stories and differentiate themselves to stakeholders such as employees and consumers. The researcher saw stories as powerful, persuasive and integrative tools for sense-making amongst the many varied stakeholders, but that it was important again to *let consumers help write them*. This all resonates with the age of user defined context, brand communities and social network environments such as YouTube, Facebook, Twitter and others. Letting consumers co-create the stories (Randall et al., 2011) appears more likely to foster meaningful dialogue rather than monologues between firms and their stakeholders.

Indeed as Ind et al (2012) suggested, co-creation is about participation, openness, and transparency and has the power *to empower* and hence

engage. The literature really supports that storytelling has power and impact, even on building brand experiences and brand associations (Lundqvist, 2012). It suggests that developing a framework that encompasses building a rapport, a narrative, with consumers can help fix this breakdown in affinity (Hakala, 2011).

In reality however the message does not appear to be getting across in the practitioner arena, with organisations appearing to be applying just the foundational principles of storytelling, notably Mathews and Wacker (2007) and Wilson (2009), that is, how to craft a brand story (Appendix 1). The broader literature would suggest a deeper integration of storytelling and with it a culture of narrative into the essence of the brand (Fog et al., 2010) and that an intimate narrative development between consumers and brand (Visconti, 2011) is the optimum strategy. A final perspective on the power of narrative from Holmes (1998) who presented the early case that the power of narrative, through real positive engagement, can almost entrap consumers and the more engaging it becomes (co-creational) then the harder the trap holds (ref: power of social networks in being part of the narrative – Hanna et al., 2011). So with the best intentions even the darker side of narrative appears to have the potential for adding traction to the branding dilemma.

2.3.4 Nostalgia – an emotive role in the narrative
2.3.4.1 An emotional connector

According to Muehling et al (2012), the contemporary marketing and advertising scene is prevalent with nostalgic representations of the past. It is suggested that this tends to elicit more favourable consumer responses where both personal and historical nostalgia have powerful influences on consumer brand attitudes. Muehlling et al (2004) have also suggested that nostalgic cues in advertising do influence the type of thoughts toward the brand consumers have during ad exposure, adding layers to its story (Grant, 2011). Nostalgia is a re-occurring theme that emerges through the academic literature (Chou and Lien, 2010) and has certainly manifested itself in a new wave of advertising creative, such as bringing back Mr Kellogg's (Orth and Gal, 2012), Thornton's opening up their on-line virtual old fashioned sweet shop, Honda delivering an

advertisement that illustrates the brand's colourful and innovative history (Kilbourne, 2012), Fairy Liquid running advertisements from the last 50 years and even Hendricks's Gin allowing us to taste the "*good olde Victorian spirit*". In addition, Pascal (2011) and Powell (2011) researched the positive effect nostalgic cues embedded in advertising had on consumer engagement - essentially by placing the consumer's past in the story, their own narrative builds the mutual bond.

Kessous and Roux (2008) also highlighted more companies using nostalgia to position, promote and market their products. Indeed the literature supports the use of this narrative tool in the branding arena for brand attachment (Thomson et al., 2005), and brand preference (Rindfleisch et al., 2000). Nostalgia (Holbrook and Schindler, 1991) is a colourful yearning for an experience, product, or service from the past (when we were younger) when it seemed to smell, taste or look so much better. Indeed these attributes reflect the resonance, relevance and trust it engenders (Merchant and Rose, 2012) and why so many products, store interiors and architectural design are increasingly used to evoke a "yearning for yesterday" (Reisenwitz et al., 2004). As Greimas (2002) suggested, nostalgia has the sense of that back then it was better - a powerful emotion that has literature support (Marchegiani and Phau, 2011; Muehling, 2011; Mortimer and Danbury, 2012) to sit at the very heart of modern branding, imbued within the story and its narrative.

Cattaneo and Guerini (2012) supported the broader literature position in their study on retro branding, where they drew a link between consumer preferences for retro brands and nostalgic brand associations. Their study of the Fiat 500 case, which is set against a backdrop of an economic crisis that severely hit the car industry (Aldred and Tepe, 2011 and Hagiu and Ungureanu, 2010), highlighted its outstanding success. Like the Mini Cooper (Hall, 2009), they have history and rich nostalgic cues and leave an indelible mark in the prevailing consumer consciousness that has the potential to be re-awakened. The Fiat 500 has always exuded Italian passion (Sanders, 2007) and the heavily nostalgic communications still add colour to the narrative (Anderson and Warren, 2011).

Using nostalgia in particular, Lundqvist et al (2012) found that stories offer a way to differentiate the brand by adding an emotional component and that using a brand's heritage accentuates the depth of story by lacing it with tradition. Consumers can empathise with the story; they trust in stories (Laer and Ruyter, 2010) and hence empathise with the brand due to its rich foundation and the fact that it has been born from a period when 'people cared'. Sultan (2010) also regarded nostalgia as focusing on first and unique moments, landmarks, allowing the future to be framed. These landmarks are regarded as a significant pillar of strength in brand recall, empathy and affinity.

In accepting the power nostalgia can play, a model to apply it in a communications context was developed by Belk et al (2003). It suggested four possible marketing strategies to engage its influence, encompassing: evoking previous states of bliss (Floch, 1988 and 1990), use on ritualistic occasions (Askegaard, 2003), momentous life events, and life transition periods (Havlena and Holak, 1991). It is apparent how this research has now crossed over into the practitioner field (Muehling and Pascal, 2012 and McDougall, 2011). Nostalgia, and its narrative advantage (Vermeulen, 2012), is a powerful and emotional tool for marketing communications (from Stern, 1992 to Morley and McMahon 2011) and it is certainly being used to colour brands' stories (Brown et al., 2003), establish their place in history (Muehling, 2011), add credibility and honesty (Wiedmann et al., 2011), and exude the confidence that it is time honoured (Ying et al., 2010). It clearly has a role to play in affinity (Powell, 2011) and the notion of "anchoring" a brand in the past delivers as a coping mechanism for the ever-changing mindset of consumers.

2.3.4.2 Nostalgia – the watch outs

Nostalgia, by its very nature and as an emotion, contains both good and less attractive components. This *"bittersweet"* quality (Havlena and Holak, 1991) of the emotion is a distinguishing characteristic as it generally refers back to an earlier period in the individual's life and draws on *biased or selective recall* of past experiences (Marchegiani, 2010). Harnessing this emotion in marketing communications is a powerful tool but, as the literature warns, a degree of caution is required as a consequence of the hyper connected world we now

live in (Visconti, 2010). The danger is relying on the *rose tinted* of the past when the reality might not meet expectations and can be rediscovered and illuminated via the Internet. Rose (1948) originally defined nostalgia as *"The Happy Days",* however the internet might confirm that these days did not quite exist as the tapestry we have woven around them might display (Olick, 2011).

Nostalgia really has power to move the consumer emotionally and to add to a brand's rich tapestry (Borghini, 2009), but in this current age of web based scrutiny (Jones et al., 2009) it also means we are able to examine the past objectively and ask if the nostalgia is based on brand truths. The literature has left a space to understand what the foundations are for establishing nostalgia within the broader brand's narrative (Dahlen et al., 2010).

2.3.5 The changing role of the marketer

Increasingly, the literature is suggesting that organisations must redefine the ideals of corporate control.

As the brandscape becomes more visual and sensory, the idea of corporate control becomes more volatile (Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård, 2004 p. 237).

Berry, Shostack and Upah (1983) recommended that marketers should move away from transactional marketing and build longer term *open relationships* with their customers, focusing on building trust between buyer and seller so that loyalty can develop. That ideal of building a solid open foundation for a relationship is more frequently identified in the literature today (Kitchin, 2009; Aaker, 2011; Ind, 2011) and illuminated further by the impact of the web, the fluidity of markets and the power of communities (Lee et al., 2011; Jensen et al., 2009). Indeed brand management has never been so complex or critical (Stuart and Jones, 2004; Christopher et al., 2012).

Gronroos (1994) was originally of the opinion that relationship marketing was all about identifying, establishing, maintaining, enhancing and, occasionally, terminating relationships with customers. However, Gronroos also recommended that organisations should be constantly aware that just because

an organisation wants a relationship with a customer, does not mean that the customer wants a relationship with the organisation. Marketers, then and now, have to work hard at getting and keeping customers and achieving their loyalty. In the online environment, Vivek et al (2012) suggested that now marketers have to go beyond nurturing the traditional sphere of relationship building to fully engage the modern day consumer.

There is growing research that brand owners are opening up to their consumer bases. Indeed, Gabor (2009) suggested marketers and the broader organisation embrace consumer collaboration, which they suggest will feel unsettling for most organisational leaders and will invariably create disruption, but to ignore the concept is a significant management flaw. The conditions for practitioners are complex because of all the different elements the internet brings (Morgan-Thomas and Veloutsou, 2011) and there is certainly a requirement for practical insights.

2.3.5.1 Developing an open relationship with consumers

Friedrich et al (2011) suggested that as consumers evolve, an essential way the organisation can engage is through a more open relationship. The research suggested that successful organisations do manage a continuous state of change and fluidity (Randall, 2011; Yakimova and Beverland, 2005; Weick and Quinn, 1999). The traditional consensus on brand strength has all been about consistency (Jones, 2010) and as we are now in an age of enormous fluidity (Chan-Olmsted, 2011), of economic fragility (Skidelsky, 2012) and at the beck and call of communities (Lee et al., 2011; Jansen et al., 2009), then the art of brand management has never been so complex or critical (Stuart and Jones, 2004).

It has been suggested that if organisations are generally *"up front"* then customers are more likely to engage (D'Arcangelo, 2008; Salzer-Mo¨rling and Strannega°rd, 2004). It has also been highlighted by the researchers that branding is often described as a process of expressing core values through the use of persuasive stories and they challenged the idea of brands as stories crafted and controlled solely by the corporation arguing *more of a co-creation*

exercise - a real shift in emphasis for the modern day marketer. Researchers are now illuminating the advantages of this open relationship, embracing even collaborative innovation (Leavy, 2012).

2.3.5.2 Co-creation in branding

What constitutes a modern day brand and who owns and shapes it, was captured by Ind and Bjerke (2007 p.2): '*Brands are about people...customers benefit from a seamlessness of experience that suggests organisational unity…customers and other external audiences as well as managers and employees are all active participants in defining and developing the brand.'* This position was developed further in Ind's "Living the Brand" (2007), where the researcher emphasised the influence on the brand of both the internal (organisation) and external (broader consumers) factors. This concept of broader influence and control was explored by Simmons (2001), where it was declared that the earlier days of corporate command and control were being superseded and that persuasion and motivation should be the new business language. It was recommended that the corporate role was to influence, persuade, motivate and inspire through the story – *the co-created story.*

More recently Muniz and Schau (2011 p. 209) presented that the story has all the essential ingredients of effective communication, *"sensory experiences, personal under tones, emotional vibrations, fictional notes and vivid and colourful language",* and that if a story weaves in these common needs and hopes then the organisation can mesmerise and engage the audience and allow them to shape the story. So in this way (Booth and Matic, 2011) consumers can picture the brand story presented by the organisation as like an iceberg – the audience sees the tip and the great body of it is to be discovered and shaped. The benefit and take out is that being a part of the story gives ownership and affinity to the brand (Fournier and Avery, 2011); after all it is the consumer's. Indeed, in the practitioner world, Marketing Week (2011) ran a feature where they argued that for managing the complexity of modern marketing in an interactive, multi-platform, multi-channel age, brand storytelling should be seen as a powerful, intuitive and engaging tool and that part of the relationship should be a co-creational chapter.

Ind et al (2007) differentiated between the two clear roles storytelling and narrative can play, both in the structure of a brand and its marketing activities and by way of corporate storytelling that illustrates company values in a compelling way. They suggested incorporating storytelling and narrative into both processes, but importantly reflected that the consumer has a critical role to play in both. Essentially the basis and premise are laid out by the organisation and the consumer then makes it their own – creating real connectivity and share of mind (Martin and Todorov, 2010). In a one on one meeting with Ind (May 2010) to discuss this research, he described a new dominant consumer relationship landscape (also Aronczyk and Powers, 2011) which highlighted the rise in consumer democracy (carrotmob; where consumers band together to achieve better discount terms - Hoffmann and Hutter, 2012), the emergence of sustainable thinking (Greenpeace; pressurising Apple to up their green credentials Burrows, 2009), increasing openness in the world (Lego; allowing consumers to build and share their own code for Mindstorms, Hatch and Schultz, 2010) and brands realising that trust is the ultimate driver in building affinity (Rabobank; allowing any consumer to pop in and use their HQ, Ind, et al., 2012). In Ind's world, brands have to accept the idea of consumers playing a lead role and *living the reality* of the brand together – the smoke and mirrors have dissipated (Terblanche, 2011).

Round and Roper (2012) suggested that indeed *they (the brand owners)* have become us and that brand owners had to release greater control to consumers in an increasingly chaotic environment (Fisher and Smith, 2011). Prahalad and Ramaswam (2004) also supported this idea of co-creation experiences, seeing it as the next practice in value creation. They called for recognition that a brand is co-created with others and that managers should spend more time with democratisation, working with diverse views and shaping them into an always-evolving idea. They highlighted that the conditions for this have to be grounded in openness, trust, humility and adaptability and must encourage spontaneity and creativity (also Berthon et al., 2012).

This is a powerful message and difficult for most organisations to embrace when, contrarily, the economic turmoil is seeing brand owners baton down the hatches - but as researchers see it, a brand must be willing to engage in

dialogue (Yan, 2011), learn to cope with uncertainty, enjoy taking risks and above all embrace connectivity (Thorbjørnsen et al., 2002).

2.3.5.3 New rules of consumer engagement

Consumers today have infinitely more choices of products and services than ever before (particularly younger consumers – Shim et al., 2011), but they seem dissatisfied and, as has been highlighted earlier in this section, are displaying much less trust and more promiscuity (Hayes-Roth, 2011). Prahald et al (2004) saw allowing individual customers to co-create unique experiences with the company as the key to unlocking real competitive advantage and engagement. It must be genuine and consider all individuals in the collective (Spotswood et al 2012) and must give all willing participants a dialogue where their views, desires and actions are all considered. An example of this is the MyStarbucks initiative, which has courted willing consumer engagement particularly through the customer experience, and manifested in c30,000 new product concepts from consumers and ultimately laid the foundations for a continuous and mutually beneficial dialogue (Dharma et al., 2011). In this example *the experience* is the brand itself and *the brand* is co-created and evolves with the experiences. Certainly Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004) pointed to a new direction in managing customer relations and building affinity. Fig 2.3 captures the key tenets in the engagement manifesto proposed by the researchers.

Proposing a new era of brand and consumer management

From
- One-way
- Firm to consumer
- Controlled by firm
- Consumers are "prey"
- Choice buy/not buy
- Consumers must "fit into" firm's offerings

Collaboration
Co-creation
Experience
Dialogue

Transparency
Access
Two way street
Forum

To
- Two-way
- Consumer to Firm
- Consumer to consumer
- Consumers can "hunt"
- Choice wants and can impose their views
- Consumers invited in to co-construct

Adapted from Prahalad & Ramaswamy (2004).

Fig. 2.3 Breaking up the status quo with a new consumer

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The literature has also illuminated how technological developments in the last ten years have thrown all the rules of engagement up in the air (Pita, 2012) and is forcing brands to pay even more attention to what their customers are telling them. This is just one of the hugely influential impacts on the role social media plays in reshaping the branded ecosystems (Kim and Ko, 2011). Researchers have recommended (Rappaport, 2011) that brand owners have to listen and react to consumers and that it is simply not good enough to pull down the shutters (Griffin, 2011). Park et al (2012) sent out a warning that likewise, brands can now also be created and destroyed in the blink of an eye as companies are losing control of the information exchange and the opinion forming that actually go on to create their brands.

The growing impact of *people power (Fig. 2.4)*, all fuelled by the web, again underlines the growing influence consumers now have on the brand (Kietzmann et al., 2011), none more documented than the American Airlines fracas with a disillusioned passenger whose guitar was broken. The public backlash resulted in a 10% stock market loss (Aula, 2010). Gap also had to revert to their old logo (Notter and Grant, 2011) after a twitter social media campaign forced an about turn. These lessons from both the literature and practitioner worlds highlight that in the modern interconnected world, you ignore consumers at your peril, but engage and you can blossom (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). Most of the key literature suggests that organisations now have to achieve a dialogue with consumers (Peppers and Rogers, 1995; de Kerckhove, 2002 and Baird, 2011) allowing them to make sense of the brand and ultimately shape it. Indeed, Fig. 2.4 illustrates the current research insight into how, via the present technological revolution, consumers have more power and an increased voice. Ultimately this is not only affecting organisational reputation but also the role consumers play, i.e. a more interconnected one.
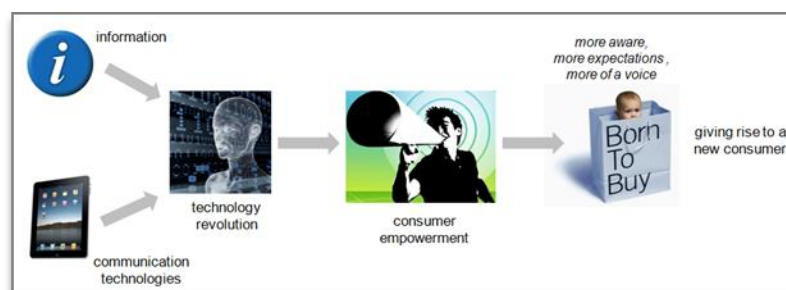
Fig. 2.4 Emergence of the digitally enhanced consumer. Source: Original

The additional insights required centre around the key foundation stones that need to be in place to establish a positive and intimate dialogue. Fog et al (2010) believed (like a growing number of others, Smith, 2011 and Golant, 2012) that the premise for this dialogue is predominantly through the lens of the shared story and that brand and corporate executives must capture their own distinct (and, importantly, authentic) craft for telling their own stories (Boje and Baskin, 2011). Supporting the trust and authenticity agenda previously discussed, Fog et al (2010) suggested that this dialogue should be built on the real life stories (e.g. the founder, the turmoil's, the adventures) and told by the employees, customers, and working partners – in fact all the influencers and stakeholders of the brand (also Buckingham, 2011 and Ind, 2007). They recommended the organisation to not only live the brand but also to let consumers live it their way, on their terms and together with them.

Branding is the Goal – Storytelling is the Means

- A strong brand is created by a strong corporate culture.

- A strong brand is built on a emotional connection with the consumer.

As a concept, storytelling has won a decisive foothold in the debate on how brands of the future will be shaped.

Branding

Target Group

Storytelling

- The target group e.g. customers or employees grasp the company's values and message.

- The target group empathises with the company.

- A story communicates values in a way that we can all understand.

- A story speaks to our emotions.

Reworked from : K Fog. , C Budtz , P Munch , S Blanchette (2010)
Storytelling Branding in Practice 2n Edition Springer Heidelberg Germany

Fig. 2.5 Building affinity through the story and narrative

The literature showed that in this way the stories and narrative would be, in the first instance, anchored in the corporate culture, thereby creating a solid and authentic brand for the company to develop from. Fig 2.5 reinterprets the framework identified by Fog et al (2010) and pictorialises the researchers' understanding that, when done with integrity, reality and sympathy, real affinity can be achieved.

This, in a significant way, reinvents the traditional role of brand manager to one of brand orchestrator, taking the values of the organisation, manifested as the many layered stories, encouraging employees to initially live and develop those values (Bansemir et al., 2012) and allowing consumers to engage, empathise and build them (Smith and Milligan, 2011) ultimately defining a shared affinity. The premise of the Innocent Drinks story (Hogan et al., 2003) illuminates this consumer engagement agenda. In this, the three founders openly allowed consumers to try their product and subsequently let them vote if they should give up their day job and make the smoothies full time. At the end of the day, Innocent had become a reality and this notion of letting consumers in to take ownership of the company has been a core business premise of Innocent moving forward (Shankar et al., 2012 and Weyland, 2011).

2.3.5.4 Getting the story across in a new media landscape

Stories like Innocent and the outdoor sportswear brand Patagonia (Chouinard, 2006) illustrate how both the co-created story and truly engaged consumers can help shape and develop a brand with pace in this new media age. More so is the case that this story unfolds using nearly every media devise in an ever-growing toolbox (Alexander, 2011). The story, in this new horizon, can be played out in so many arenas which, according to the more recent literature (Burton, 2011), should be all working together to develop a multi dimensional narrative.
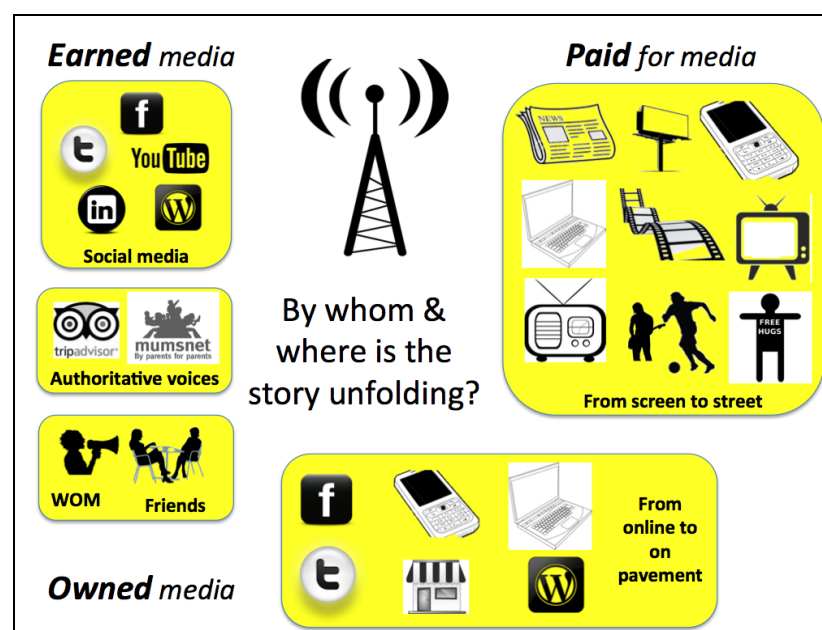
Fig. 2.6 Where narrative is co-created. Source: Original

Fig. 2.6 captures the real scale and scope of where communication platforms have moved. More traditional (Berman et al., 2011) paid for *(TV, Radio and poster)* and owned media *(web sites / shop fronts / blogospheres / twitter feeds)* have been almost outpunched by what practitioners term 'Earned Media' (Stephen and Galak, 2012). This is media that can support and shape any brand story but is, in the main, the *chatter of the masses*, which in a positive sense can support and develop the brand's cause (Sunshine, 2011).

In this way blogs, forums, twittersphere, and broader word of mouth are all essentially becoming the new authoritative mouthpieces for brands (Jensen, 2011). This is the area Prahalad et al (2004) touched on in describing the new (digitally connected) arena of brand management. This all-powerful medium is where the authority and trust debate appears to be waged and where brand owners have to embrace the new landscape (Eid et al., 2011). The literature describes how the Internet is re-writing branding rules as a consequence of the new way consumers interact with (Sashi, 2012) and ultimately shape brands. Sashi (2012) also states that practitioners are seeking guidance as the change is moving at a pace no one could have envisaged. This research will seek insight into these phenomena from both consumer and brand owner perspectives.

2.3.6 Managing brand meaning and branding values

The subject of semiotics and its branding application to this research has gained clarity from one of its original founders, Saussure, who argued that it was *"possible to conceive of a science which studies the role of signs as a part of social life"* (cited in Krampen, 1987 p. 244). Saussure argued that a semiotic analysis could be applied to a vast array of texts including human activities such as music, architecture, fashion and advertising (Culler, 1988). He put forward the theory that the sign was a two-sided entity consisting of the key components – *a signifier* (the physical form of the sign) and *a signified* (the mental concept of the sign). Significantly these form the two clear aspects of a brand (Keller, 2003).

2.3.6.1 Brand as a sign system

The literature review not only uncovered the semiotic influences manifesting and placing influence on the fragility of today's brands, but also the crucial role it can play in building a brand's story, and ultimately brand value (Oswald, 2012). Thellesfsen, Sorensen and Andersen (2005 p. 39) saw brands as a construction of identities for commercial products and services and that a brand is laden with symbolism: *"... a sign system... that becomes an inseparable semiotic feature of the product... a supra symbolic layer of meaning into a singular sign".* They noted that over time, brand owners had regularly grafted symbolism onto products and strive, through communications, to establish a *"common meaning agreement"*. They forwarded that turning a product into a brand morphs it into a sign that taps into the social meaning systems that govern lifestyle, values, and beliefs (also Berger, 2011). They concluded that if a brand is a sign in the semiotic sense of the word, then branding is a sign process*: "a process by which a product becomes imbued with a particular set of meaning values that are in part built into by the brand mark and later assigned to it by consumers, even if not intended by the brand makers intentions"* (p.60)*.*

Today, Thellesfsen et al's (2005) work is played out against a fragile brand-scape (Rahman and Cherrier, 2010) where consumers are more influenced by the ease and availability of information and, on a growing number of occasions, are discovering that the story (and symbolism) they were told simply does not add up. For example, Stella Lager fell out of favour with consumers when their not wholly authentic story (Gunlach and Neville, 2012) and the perceived strength and brew provenance imbued the brand with negative associations. Thellefsen et al (2005) called this effect 'the inner branding process' which is crystallised during brand use and magnified through the brand story being played out by both consumers and non-consumers (Power and Jansson, 2011).

The fundamental sign is the semiotic centre of a user group. It is the signifying glue that maintains the values added to the product and thus the overall social group based meaning of the brand (Hatch, 2010) and indeed across the

different stakeholder meanings of a brand (Merrilees et al., 2012). Literature would suggest that there has to be an acceptance that the brand rests on the existence of a common discourse between brand maker and brand user which can be broken if the product doesn't live up to the values which have been grafted (Chen and Leu, 2011). The work of Thellesfsen et al (2005) highlighted the role consumers play in the creation of what a brand stands for and that ultimately they have the power to constantly change, alter, force and support, or harm as the consensus sees fit (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2010).

As communities grow and multiply online, the fragility of the *desired brand* magnifies (Copulsky et al., 2011) and if brand owners get their *story* and its symbols slightly at odds with consumers then the power of the people can manifest itself quickly (Agyemang, 2011). There appears a need to establish deep anchors in the brand make-up that firmly establishes a hook in consumers' (and communities) conscious and sub-consciousness and a supporting brand experience to realise this, – i.e. a narrative approach (Terry, 2011). Ketner (1981) had suggested that attraction occurs when a brand is able to arouse similar emotions in different people who are attracted to the brand. Indeed this concept is played out in today's communities, particularly on-line brand communities, who all share similar values (Cheung et al., 2010). Ketner (1981) argued that this sense of community generally revolves around one governing idea that can lead to real ownership by consumers and is certainly reflected in today's online pressure group / anti-brand communities (Kerr et al., 2012). Thellesfsen, Sorensen and Andersen (2005) ultimately saw branding as a socio-cognitive semiotic process and the ultimate success of the brand is its ability to tap into these allusions and awaken emotions that can create a common sense / brand community – the *consumer's new identity* (Wang et al., 2011).

In this way we can anticipate that the brand becomes almost detached from the brand maker and develops a *"life of its own"*. This detachment is where the brand becomes the consumer's to bend and shape and give its own personal symbolic meaning (Ind, 2007). The literature suggests we hand over brand control to consumers, to do with as they see fit (Aitken, 2011), and work with the symbolism they develop: *"imagine the passengers on the ship just got their*

own boat" (Rosen, 2006 in Nightingale, 2011).

2.3.6.3 Allowing consumers to create their own meaning

Stories, consumption and branding are all entwined (Denning, 2011) and earlier Bruner (1991) had suggested that stories are critical in sense making and sense giving. People tell stories and construct narratives to account for their experiences, both for others and themselves (Shankar et al., 2001) and this crosses the corporate world as well as the social. Indeed the literature outlined that stories and storytelling may well lay the foundations for building the social glue and social currency needed to bind consumers with brands (Oswald, 2012). Not only externally, but also internally as the literature confirms that stories have a real impact in creating myths and a credo within the organisation (Gill, 2011).

Hatch and Rubin (2006) plotted the influences and effects multiple stakeholders can have on shaping the brand essence and how this can play a role in defining its ultimate success (Ind and Ryder, 2011). Importantly Hatch and Rubin (and Aggarwal et al., 2009) put forward that brands are symbols in popular culture and that consumers may resist the original brand meanings devised by managers and imbue their own stories and meanings onto those original ones. In this way, the bourbon Jack Daniels has powerful associations with rock and roll (Hector, 2012), largely created not by the brand owner but through its very public love affair with the band Guns N' Roses (Hector, 2012). Hatch et al (2006) suggested that even though changes may occur in what a brand signifies, or the stakeholders it engages, a brand often retains a trace of its original intention, which becomes part of its history and its story. They (and Gray and Gomez-Barris, 2010) suggest that brands do have histories and that these remain as part of their rich story (Hakala et al., 2011).

Holt's (2002) study also showed how consumers create new meaning by complicating, resisting and reshaping brand narratives. Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003 p.30) added that: *"brand stories are partly composed of the meanings and associations emanating from advertisers and marketers, however, they are also constructed by the mass media, press releases, news*

stories, and related celebrities". All suggest brand meaning is acquired over time by multiple audiences and through collective interpretations and that a brand's *'kernel of meaning'* in psychological terms is exactly what you can never have but always desire. Consumers are creating their own meaning and organisations have to embrace this (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2010).

Researchers concur that brands have value not only because they are used symbolically to make and communicate meaning, but also because of the variety of interpretations they evoke across time and place, and across different people (Berthon et al., 2009). Olins (2003) found that brands have allowed consumers to create such a sense of self in postmodern society that people become almost walking brand billboards (Phan et al., 2011 and the study of Burberry) – truly individualising the story into their own reality, not necessarily to the pleasure of the brand owners. The symbolism held, shaped and portrayed by consumers and bestowed on brands leaves the management of them a hugely complicated and an ever-changing dilemma – branding is a truly complex phenomenon (Maurya and Mishra, 2012). This was reflected in the work of White (2009) and Stauffer (2012) who concluded that the biggest threat to consumer connection is through brand management's sheer negligence and this is complicated further within the digital, social landscapes.

Branding is almost out of control for the organisation (*consumers hold brand control* – Fournier and Avery, 2011) and reshaped at will by consumers, but the literature has suggested this should be embraced as a real opportunity. Kotler (2003) wrote about companies clearly benefiting by making gains in mind share and was more recently supported by Srinivasan et al (2009), who found that building share in customers' hearts and minds definitely translates into improved market performances. The need to build affinity and allow that shared ownership to flourish appears critical to future brand success (Aitken and Campelo, 2011).

Finally Hatch and Rubin (2006) saw brands acquire *'collective interpretation'* as numerous stakeholders with multiple narratives all contributed to the brand

meaning. This encompasses both the internal and the myriad of external stakeholders – a phenomenon that should be embraced (Golant, 2012).

2.3.7 The changing consumer role
2.3.7.1 Involve, Engage and Individualise

Customers today have more choices about how and when they will interact with companies and this has forced companies to invent new methods of interacting with customers (Murugesan, 2011). Customers have simply become much better informed, which has also significantly increased their expectations (Bright and Daugherty, 2012).

Many companies are also moving from mass production to mass customization like the Nike ID and Adidas programmes (Piller et al., 2012) and the need to customize or modifying individual customer requests has become a vital element to the corporate armoury. To have a relationship with consumers has meant getting to know them deeply and, by inference, to understand the digital space, as this medium is being integrated into their everyday lives (Ryan and Jones, 2012). Whilst shown to have engagement attributes, Chernev et al (2011) warned that this potentially opens up the scope of competition from other non-related product categories all looking for a share of a consumer's identity and their finite need for self-expression through brands. The researchers underlined the need to engage and involve but observed that this is not a bottomless pit. In essence consumers want engagement but there is a limit to how much they can give and to how many brands – not withstanding it is the experience that is essential (Tantak and Chavan, 2012).

In support of this literature and in an attempt to understand the current practitioner consensus, two leading figures were met to gauge the parameters of the review. Firstly Fergus McCallum, CEO of global advertising agency TBWA was interviewed (2009) and his perspective mirrors that of a changing consumer mind-set outlined by Akande (2009) where the drive philosophy centres on the concepts of Collectivism and Individualism. Collectivism describes any moral, political, or social outlook, which stresses *human*

interdependence and the importance of the collective rather than separate individuals. Collectivists focus on community and society, and seek to give priority to group goals over individual goals. Individualism stresses *independence and self-reliance* and individualists promote the exercise of one's goals and desires, while opposing most external interference upon one's choices, whether by society, or any other group or institution.

McCallum argues for *Individualism* (backed up by DataMonitor, 2009) as he believes today's increasingly individualistic consumers place considerable value on self-expression (Chernev et al., 2011) and asserting their individual identity, which also includes exerting their power and control as consumers over what brands stand for in their minds (Sebastani et al., 2011). He supports that consumers are looking for greater influence over the brands they seek to engage in and suggests products will continually emerge to satisfy this mega trend (*also* Ho and Lee, 2011). The role of his advertising agency is to understand that dynamic but also to create real media and messaging disruption in order to engage the emerging consumer typology.

Secondly Paul Wilson, founder of MakeBelieve (Brand Story Consultants), was interviewed (2010) to access his unique practitioner perspective on brand storytelling. His book, The Dark Art (Wilson, 2009), lays out a framework for brand engagement and brand communication using storytelling as a key driver. He focused on both the internal and external brand stakeholders and accepted the broader consumer desire to *understand and engage more with brands*. He saw storytelling as the catalyst to establish deeper relationships and seeks to engender the conditions to allow co-creation of the unfurling narrative. In Wilson's mind, ownership (involve and engage) has a key role to play in building trust amongst consumers (*also* Brakus et al., 2011). In essence, both practitioners and academics are seeing this changing consumer, and insight is required to assist in building the narrative wherein achieving affinity is the successful outcome (Singh and Sonnenburg, 2012).

2.3.7.2 Everyone should be living the brand

A recent movement in the literature has been with the idea of consumers and brand owners both *"living the brand"* (Ind, 2007). The idea is that all stakeholders are sharing, building and contributing to the brand values, beliefs and essence – sharing identity within a brand community (Wang, et al., 2011). It is suggested that this can play a significant role in establishing strong foundations for brand affinity (Gyrd-Jones and Kornum, 2012). Baumgarth (2010) and emphasised the importance of shaping consumer relationships with a brand, in the first instance, by an internal implementation of the branding concept and brand orientation within the company, its values, norms and artefacts. The researcher saw this as providing foundations for consumer engagement in that *"brand identity"* may belong to the company, but *"brand image"* does not, and if one does not live the brand then consumers will not have a roadmap to follow in their shaping of the image. Escalas (2004) had concluded that *living the brand* can and should be part of an ongoing narrative (also Grams, 2011) as individuals learn to understand and perceive the world through stories and, in this case, brand stories (Chiu et al., 2012). Escalas (2004) summarised that if the brand does not present its story, consumers would lack a channel to construct brand associations and may tend to evaluate the brand simply through the product itself.

The changing demands of consumers (Woodhouse et al., 2012) mean they seek out something to act as a spine to their knowledge – and the literature would suggest that *"the story"* could be that spine (Gill, 2011). Huang (2005) found that stories and a narrative could help people construct self-identities and further communicate with the outside world in a comprehensible way. They suggested that people might relate brand stories to their own and further construct the brand identity in order to tell others who they are *(associations)* and what characteristics they possess as individuals. In this way consumers are allowing brands to tell their stories but via creating their own version of the brand story – this is powerful symbolism (Wang et al., 2011). Beverland (2005) underlined the *"living the brand"* notion by identifying the role consumers are playing out and suggesting that what a brand now means is based on the narratives that the consumer has self constructed which incorporate the brand.

New Media Age (2011) captured the spirit of consumers immersing themselves in the story by highlighting a Facebook campaign for Oakley (*Sporting Ambassadors, You V's*) and described how putting the audience rather than the brand at the centre of the narrative *(and at the heart of the campaign)* can be very effective in building brand empathy. The campaign allowed consumers to be incorporated within a storyline – essentially making the story their own and then sharing the output to deliver their own narrative. There is a growing body of research confirming the notion that consumers express themselves, and construct their identities / self-concepts, through the brands they use (Lundqvist et al., 2012; Strizhakova et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2011; Hogg et al., 2000).

2.3.7.3 Learning from brand rejection and what consumers now seek

The literature provided understanding into why consumers are not only buying and engaging with brands but also the reverse – what is causing the disconnect? In fact, researchers have suggested knowing what consumers do not want is just as valuable as knowing what they want (Banister and Hogg, 2004). Bogomolova and Millburn's (2011) study highlighted that the key reasons for avoidance were brand related and not simply competitor activities – heightening the need for further brand/consumer insights. Lee, Motion and Conroy's (2009) research uncovered a multitude of reasons for brand avoidance, from unmet expectations, to symbolic incongruity, to ideological incompatibility.

Schultz (2009) also offered a broad insight into the changing emphasis on the consumer role and brand avoidance, citing that the change can be accredited to the failure of the dot-coms in the late 1990s and early 2000s.This was a period when huge amounts of money was spent in advertising, promotion, naming, logo designing and brand building. The issue according to the researcher was that no one delivered on their promises and the consumers disconnected, resulting in a vast amount of companies folding, investors losing millions and consumers losing trust in the broader brand world. Shultz saw brand loyalty coming from simply delivering on brand promises (Vincent, 2012)

and specifically *from brand experiences* – it just has to stack up or the consumers will fall away (Anker, et al., 2012).

In relation to brand avoidance, Stone (2009) suggested customers are becoming more actively engaged in advancing a social or general do-good agenda through their purchases, and consequently avoiding brands that do not fit their aspirations (Lii and Lee, 2012). In this way consumers are actively looking for ways that they can buy the essentials while still making what they buy meaningful by purchasing products that serve functional purchases yet also provide the emotional satisfaction of doing good. This is being reflected in the growth of brands that help consumers achieve these goals (*Social responsibility drives affinity* - Hyllegard, 2012) especially in categories where consumers are emotionally connected to the outcomes. Take Pampers (nappies) for example – one of the most powerful campaigns in recent years allows consumers to actually save a life via UNICEF, with purchase (Vanhamme et al., 2011).

So from the literature it can be deduced that consumers now want not only a role, but also a voice in the brands they choose (Wang et al., 2011) and consequently impact not only on what the brand stands for but also how it behaves and what it does (Ind et al., 2012). It is a power play and it is apparent that there is a real need for an academically grounded route map.

The next section attempts to distil the literature review to identify the research gap in knowledge and to achieve this, a thematic process has been developed.

2.4   The process for uncovering the research gap

After the initial "*light touch*" literature review had highlighted the wide range of macro and micro influences at play in this perceived disconnection and deterioration of brand affinity, it was necessary to *drill down* within the literature to dig, compare, and contrast and to come to terms with the ultimate focus of the DBA research question. The preliminary search was expansive, as the modern world of branding and marketing communications touches and runs through so many academic veins, but it attempted to understand the

scope and scale of the key drivers and with a keen eye on the issue in hand, the practicalities of the task.

The object at the early stage was to not only get a pre research flavour for the key cogs of influence (themes) but also to identify where practical insights may be drawn from. Fig. 2.7 highlights the system adopted for capturing the key themes that emerged through the review.

Theme	Sub themes			
The economic crisis / Branding theory	Comms overload	Global audiences		
Innovation - Rewriting the rules in digital age	New business models			
Brand associations & meanings	A brand's life	Brand openness	Influence of internal stakeholders	Heritage & tradition
Authenticity / Consumer trust collapse	Promise / reality gap	Why we buy	Surplus society	Apathy
Narrative & dialogue	Storytelling	Association disconnection	Messaging	Nostalgia / Market noise
Role of the marketer	Living the brand	Brand experiences	Brand release	power to the people
Brand back story	fragility of brands	Symbolism - brand persona	brand worth decline	Brand failures / Reputation & persona
The new consumer / Consumer disconnect	Individualism v collectivism	Brand immersion		
Communities / Impact of the web	New society	Connectivity	Communication channels	

Fig. 2.7 Route map for the literature review – major themes uncovered. Source: Original

The framework included a colour coding system that represented distinct themes that, married to the literature, had shown to be potential contributors to the consumer/brand disenfranchise. The processes involved: reading and reflecting; interacting with the literature and individually commenting on it; identifying and highlighting key themes and attributing colour codes to them; extracting from the codes "signature" quotes; linking similar insights to create broader literature theme pots and ultimately identifying any contradictions in researcher arguments.

At this stage the theme pots were purposefully broad to sustain sub themes and this catered for a manageable appropriation of the key literature under theme headings (Fig. 2.8).

Key insights and themes from the Literature Review

Author(s)	Year	Source type	Summary and findings	Pot
Day & Montgomery	1999	Journal of Marketing	Traditional models of marketing theory not now as appropriate in modern world	
Clark	2009	*Practitioner journal*	Accentuates that no brands today are safe from what appears a total and widespread breakdown in consumer confidence	
Sheth & Parvatiyar	2000	Academic book	Need for new paradigm of marketing is required that encompasses new relationships	
Jenson	1996	Academic book	laid out a case for emotional connectivity and how consumer and brand can engage through story	
Hosein	2010	Neimans Foundation Harvard Journal	Relationships can be forged if we inject the channel with story, authenticity and emotion. Trust has to be grounded.	
Jamieson	2011	*Practitioner 1 on 1 research boundary interview*	Brand managers taking far too short-term view rather than a more longer perspective of sustaining brand value	
Ridderstrale & Nordstrom	2000	*Practitioner Book*	Markets are (over) filled with products and services giving a surplus of very much of the self same – how to differentiate?	
Ewing et al	2009	Journal of Business Research	Brand demise is a natural part of a brand's developmental process, instigated by consumers	
Collins and Porras	1996	Harvard Business Review	Maintaining core values and purpose while adapting to environmental changes has significant impact on brand value	
Schultz	2009	Academic Book	There appears a huge difference in what brand promises and what brand delivers – resulting in trust meltdown	
Crutchfield	2009	*Practitioner journal*	After toxic banks and defective goods, brands that don't embody all the elements of engaging narrative will fail to thrive.	
Brymer	2004	*Practitioner journal*	Brands exist in an increasingly noisy space (WWW) & now must continually work on what makes them *special*	
Clark	2009	*Practitioner Journal*	Brands that can deliver their promises and maintain trust are the ones that will succeed – misinform at your peril	
Beverland	2005	Journal of Product & Brand Management	Loyalty and trust need to develop over a long period of time - a brand's words and deeds need to be matched -be true	
Brown, Kozinets & Sherry	2003	Journal of Marketing	Authenticity is often "made-up" and now the digitally connected world leaves no hiding place for these deceptions.	
Ind	2007	Academic Book	Lack of authenticity has reduced consumers' faith in marketing, resulting in total lack of engagement.	
Haig	2008	*Practitioner Book*	Brand fiction has lead to lies & in an age where markets are increasingly connected, consumers just can no longer be deceived.	
Forden	2001	*Practitioner Book*	Highlights the commitment to a consistent brand story allows the story to stick.	
Huang	2010	Journal of Family & Economic Issue	A brand story with high authenticity tends to be perceived with more positive brand image than one with lower authenticity.	
Schultz	2009	Practitioner journal	The consumer must receive constant brand experiences and any route map has to be based on truth.	

Fig. 2.8 Capturing themes from the literature. Source: Original

Following this broad literature review a number of key themes emerged and formed the basis of this chapter's sub sections. Each theme has a number of supporting literature perspectives and researcher opinions, which were

captured in long list form (Fig. 2.8). This allowed for themes to be correlated and corroborated and ultimately interrogated, allowing for a structured debate and ultimate identification of the research gap. After the key literature insights were apportioned into the long list (Appendix 2) this allowed for a more focused analysis and apportionment.

In this way all the key literature themes were *pushed into* approximate *(like minded)* territory pots to simplify filtration. Fig 2.9 reflects the final theme pots that were uncovered this way. For example, themes such as 'the difference between the promises of advertisers and the product reality' and 'broad consumer apathy and reasons why we buy' all surrounded the broader theme of Trust and Authenticity. Likewise subjects including consumer connectivity, social communities and consumer/organisational interconnectedness sit comfortably under the Community and the Web theme. By the very nature of the subject area, some themes were close and had the potential for overlaps. Although a concern, they did establish a strong framework to help identify the gap.

Colourful themes emerging
from the literature

Authenticity	New society	Individualism v collectivism	Storytelling	Symbolism - brand meaning & persona	Empowerment to the people – lose control
Promise / reality gap/ trust	Impact of the web	Rewriting the rules in a digital age	Market noise	Deterioration of brand worth	Brand release
Why we buy	Connectivity	New business models	The economic crisis	Reputation & persona	Heritage & tradition
Surplus society	Communication channels	Narrative & dialogue	Global audiences	Brand failures	Influence of internal stakeholders
Apathy	Consumer disconnect	Association disconnection	Comms overload	Role of the marketer	Brand openness
Consumer trust collapse	The many faceted consumer	Messaging	Branding theory	Living the brand	Brand associations & meanings
Communities	Brand immersion	Nostalgia	Semiotic fragility of brands	Brand experiences	A brand's life

Fig. 2.9. The focus themes emerging from the literature. Source: Original

To establish a structured approach and set some research boundaries, a mind map of consideration was created and referred to as the *"Funnel of Focus"* (Fig.2.10). It provides a helicopter view of the research premise, key headline themes that flowed through the literature review and research, and the researcher's ultimate ambitions, all of which deliberately ground down to a research opportunity area that has the potential for impact.
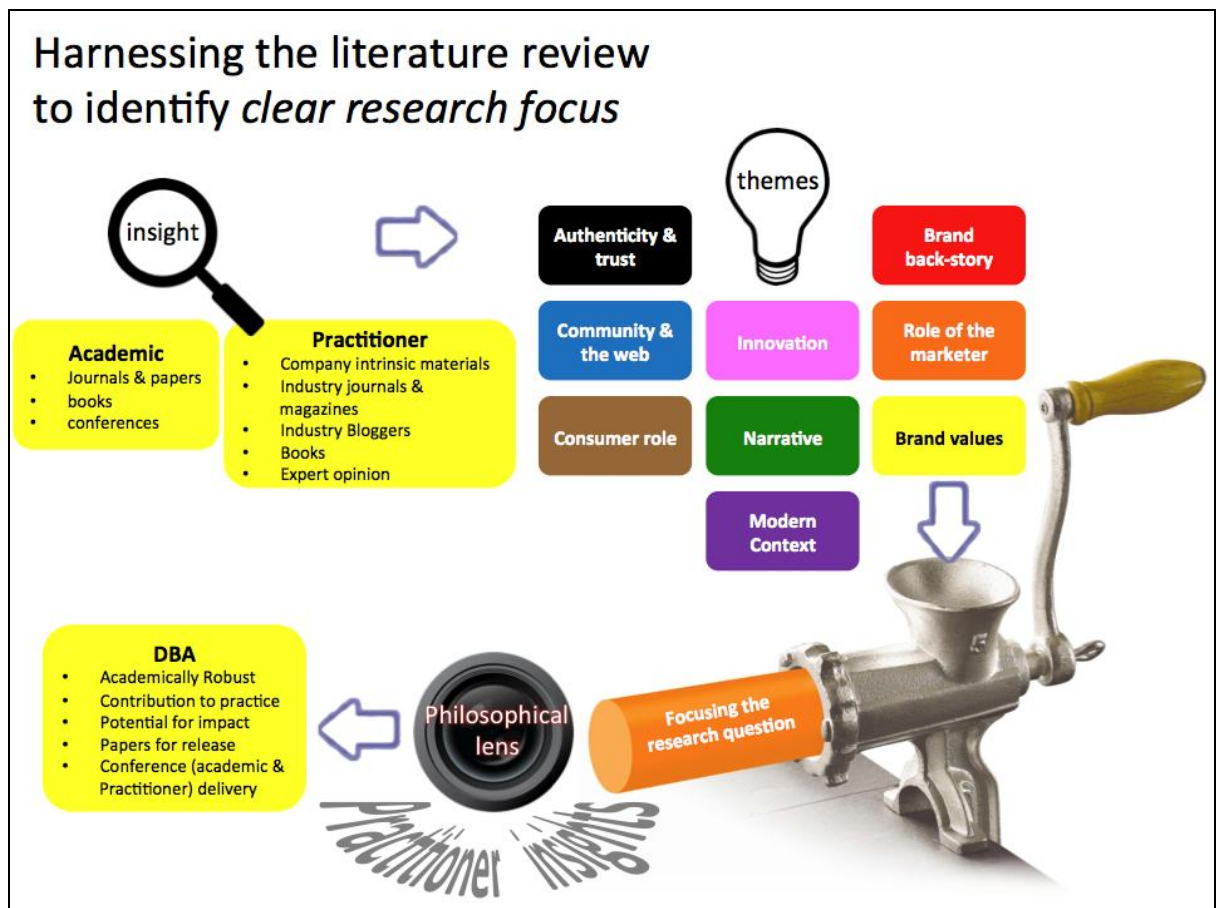
Fig. 2.10 The Funnel of Focus – identifying the gap. Source: Original

Finally, from the original body of literature reviewed, the output was triangulated with a combination of the pre mentioned *Talking Heads –"industry and academic one-one-one interviews"* and through supervisory team interrogation in order to establish the outer limits of the research boundary.

Theme pots were then either removed (such as brand positioning and brand iconography insight) or amalgamated to establish the final themes used to identify the gap. The "Funnel of Focus" captures the depth of literature pots that have been considered and been put through 'the mincer' to drive real focus. Ultimately it will become apparent that this process has enabled a

practical research question to be landed and one that sits at the very centre of the modern day branding zeitgeist (Smith, 2011).

2.5 The gap

The literature identified the requirement for a two way narrative in today's interconnected world and also, with this, just how seismically power and control has *and needs* to shift to the consumer. The literature highlighted the complex web-enhanced worldview of brands that consumers have and how, individually and in communities, they are building brand associations that are (potentially) problematically not in line with brand owner's intentions: also referred to as *the disconnect*. This breakdown is a mismatch of brand desire and perceived brand reality and according to the literature is where this disconnect emanates from. Organisations and brands certainly need practical insights in this area to act as a new signpost in creating a more emotionally receptive brand management paradigm. The literature highlights the need for narrative and the sphere of its influence in the persona of brand, but there has been scant research into what are the foundations for this narrative based relationship – what is important to consumers and ultimately what pulls, bonds and drives them together with the brand?

This is the research gap *and a gap with real practitioner potential*

A story rich dialogue with a co-created narrative could, it is hypothesized, be the key to reigniting consumer intimacy with brands and hence there exists a clear research opportunity and contribution to be made in not only delving further into *the why* but also crucially for practice – *what* foundations are required and *how* do we apply this learning to the management of brands? A real gap exists in understanding what conditions have to be in place to enable organisations to build consumer engagement and consumer brand affinity through a shared narrative. Understanding is needed in identifying what is important for consumers, why they want to engage and what can drive the dialogue. This is where real academic and practitioner value exists.

2.6 Summary

From this literature review it is evident that there is a widespread breakdown in the consumer/brand affinity relationship. It uncovered the "power shift" role consumers (via the web) are now playing in shaping the brand and its associations and that the classical models of corporate control are diminishing. Importantly, it also illuminated how organisations that embrace this new brandscape are delivering progress in brand affinity and engagement. The expansive review undertaken (*overviewed in the Funnel of Focus*) has uncovered rich gaps in the research that could deliver practical and well-needed insights. Academics have lain the foundations to what phenomena are influencing today's brands and consumers, but there appears to be a lack of rigorous literature that describes how practitioners in the field should address this.

In the next chapter, the research methodology used to help uncover insights within this under-researched area will be discussed and will lay the foundations for a support mechanism for practitioners.

Chapter 3 - RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This DBA journey was born out of a burning desire (and need) to make not only a practical contribution to the marketing and branding industry, but also to act as a conduit between two diverse (academia and practitioner) spectrums, enabling practitioners to apply new theories and learnings more readily. In compiling this thesis, the *practical application issue* has been a constant consideration and indeed a cornerstone of the research methodology. Kelemen and Bansal (2002) recognised the sometime failure of management research to communicate with practitioners and highlighted how relatively little management research is published in practitioner journals. They identified that it is possible that the researchers' interests may not always coincide with management practitioners', and that academic research tends to be written in a style (*functionalist*) that alienates most practitioners. Keiser and Leiner (2009) also demonstrated that it is extremely difficult to integrate knowledge that has been generated in the different contexts of science and practice.

It is therefore imperative that the knowledge that is created engages with and has some form of impact on managerial practice (Tranfield and Starkey, 1998; Hodgkinson, 2001). The trend now appears to ensure that crossover permeates (Starkey and Madan, 2001) a marriage of academic and practitioner approaches, and this movement is gaining momentum as the research community attempts to resolve complex problems facing contemporary organisations in such a fluid world. This type of research is typically labelled Mode 2 research (Tranfield, 2002) and whist keeping an eye on rigour and relevance (Hodgkinson et al., 2001 and Swan et al., 2010) it does have support for laying the foundations for better knowledge exchange (Starkey and Madan, 2001). The *practitioner pull* was underlined by Skapinker (2008) who researched the overall accessibility of business research and argued for a more inclusive styled approach from researchers that would engage modern day practitioners more readily. This notion sits at the very heart of this researcher's motive and is a key driving factor in developing the line of inquiry and vision of achievable knowledge. Mode 1 knowledge is

defined as adopting the principles of *"normal science"* (Gray et al., 2011) and one that generates results, the main beneficiaries of which are the academic community. It is the traditional, discipline-based largely theoretical work aimed at understanding how the world works, while Mode 2 knowledge is transdisciplinary (Gibbons *et al.,* 1994) and is concerned with getting things to **work in practice**. Mode 2 ideology really captures the premise of the DBA (Bartunek, 2011) and is all about what Mohrman and Lawler (2011) would term *really useful research*.

With *mode 2* tenets at heart, the methodological exploration can develop through this chapter. Firstly, methodology has been defined as the "*theory of the method, including its epistemological and ontological assumptions*" (Jamal and Hollinshead 2001: 70) and really asks the researcher how they can find out about what is known. Next, methodology, intellectually, has to come before method, which is the best way we can *practically* tackle the issue (research question), and finally method is grounded in a distinct methodology *(and should influence)*. Cresswell (2003) also defined methodology as the logic of inquiry and the generation and justification of new knowledge.

This chapter firstly establishes the researcher's philosophical paradigm and ultimately explains the rationale for adopting a qualitative, interpretive, case study questioning design for this research and hence what is believed can be known and divested. It will outline the methods adopted in achieving the research aims.

3.2 Research Aims, Questions and Introduction of Impact Themes

The premise of the research undertaken is to analyse what, how and why narrative impacts on the level of emotional engagement consumers have with brands and the aim is to develop a framework that guides practitioners to the optimum application of narrative within brand building. With such a framework it is proposed to define the foundations and drivers, which once established, can assist brand owners (*marketer/agencies and organisations*) in building consumer affinity. The research is about uncovering practical insights in line

with the modern day *brandscape* (Rahman and Cherrier, 2010) described previously in the literature review.

The literature review (which covered modern branding theories, the consumer trust breakdown, understanding authenticity, the power of the narrative, the role of nostalgia and the changing marketer and consumer roles) shapes the direction of this research and formation of the research question:

How can organisations build consumer engagement and
consumer brand affinity through a shared narrative?

 Additional sub questions related to this primary question will be:

- What are the factors influencing the consumer/brand disconnect?
- What are the building blocks of brand authenticity?
- What are the emerging drivers of a positive and beneficial shared narrative?
- How can an ongoing dialogue be cultivated by organisations?
- What framework may be applied to assist organisations in building brand affinity?

The literature review delivered a number of factors that were contributing to the breakdown in consumer trust in brands and therefore it was proposed that unlike utilizing a focused grounded theory approach (de Chernatony and Cottam, 2008; Strauss and Corbin, 1998) where one core concept is continually compared or reduced, this study began by looking at how each of the impact factors related to (and influenced) the core premise of brand affinity. The research design was shaped to illuminate and expose the extent to which each factor influenced or impacted on the depth of brand narrative and affinity achieved through the lens of each organisation studied. Influencing factors emerged in the process and it was qualitatively established what the importance of every factor was to the overall success of building affinity. These factors were finally focused to deliver an insight-based framework for building affinity through establishing a shared consumer narrative and an appreciation of the conditions that ideally should be in place.

3.3 Research Paradigm

A theoretical paradigm has been described as *"the basic belief system or world view that guides the investigation"* (Guba and Lincoln, 1994, p106) and essentially it identifies the basis to orientate one's own research (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982). It established the starting point of the research journey and became the premise for designing and conducting this research. A paradigm as seen by Malhotra and Birks (2003, p136) is *"a set of assumptions consisting of agreed upon knowledge, criteria of judgment, problem fields and ways to consider them."* It is the fundamental belief system that guides the research process (Guba, 1990; Sarantakos, 2005), and is born out of a framework characterized by the responses to three fundamental questions: ontological (researcher viewpoint), epistemological (attainment of knowledge) and methodological (research design and interpretation) (Creswell, 2003; Denzin and Lincoln, 2005; Saunders et al., 2007). Guba (1990) lays down a definition for these 3 aspects

1. **Ontological** - "What is the nature of the knowable? What is the nature of reality?"
2. **Epistemological** - "What is the nature of the relationship between the knower (the inquirer) and the known (or knowable)?"
3. **Methodological** - "How should the inquirer go about finding out knowledge?"

Selecting the applicable research choice and use of research methodology is derived from the research paradigm itself (Collis and Hussey, 2009; Creswell and Clark, 2007). The process of arriving at *the self certified* research philosophy was a logical process and was shown to be fundamental in influencing the research methods – whether one goes down the qualitative/quantitative or mixed techniques. This *path to enlightenment* (fig.3.1) is a linear process that crucially led the researcher into defining what methods he would engage to achieve the aims.
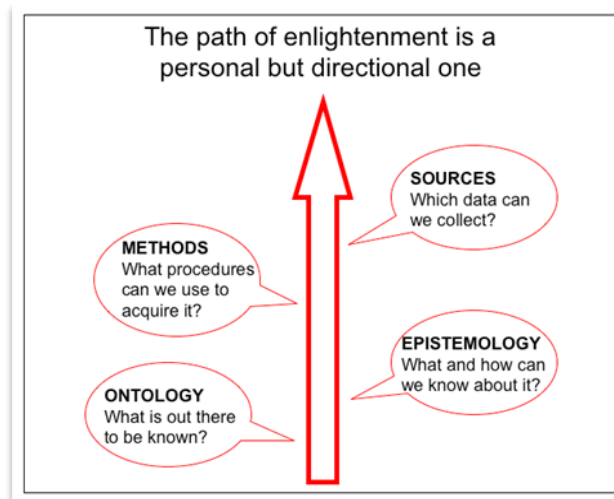
Fig 3.1. Path to enlightenment. Source: Original

3.3.1 Defining what can be known

There are known knowns. These are things we know that we know. There are known unknowns. That is to say, there are things that we know we do not know. But there are also unknown unknowns. There are things we do not know we do not know.

Donald Rumsfeld*, 2002, Department of Defence news briefing*

It is essential from the outset to establish where one's research philosophy sits - allowing this thesis to be consumed on the premise of its philosophical building blocks and understand through which paradigm prism it should really be viewed. The key elements to address as have been highlighted are Ontology - the researcher's view of the nature of reality or being (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill 2009), Epistemology (Audi, 2011) - the researcher's view of what constitutes acceptable knowledge, and, finally, Axiology (Creswell, 2007) – the researcher's view of the role of values in research. Paradigms have been defined as *"world-view"* positions (Sandelowski, 2000, p. 247) and lead to the view of the appropriate mode of enquiry - the methodology. Ontology has to be the starting point in clarification (Grix, 2004) and can be located within the somewhat sliding scale between the two axis of Positivism and Constructivism/Interpretivism – from the aspect of the purity of the natural scientist to the aesthetic of the post modernist (Rosenau, 1992). It is possible to take many philosophical paths at once, for example, one might be post modernist in one's art and fashion preferences and more empirical when it

comes to science (Collier, 1994). For the purposes of this thesis we will draw on the standpoint taken from the academic and practitioner worlds.

These two major social science opposing paradigms 'positivist/functional' and 'constructivist/interpretivist' approaches have been endlessly debated regarding their relative superiority in research (Schram, 2012) and to research in management (Robson, 2002), but the reality is how you see the world and what you believe is knowable is vital and hence has to be personally and individually embraced. The next section hones down into which lenses this thesis should be viewed through.

3.3.2 Positivist/Functionalist vs. Interpretivist/Constructivist
3.3.2.1 Understanding the positivist perspective

Positivists (also referred to as functionalists, conventionalists, traditional, scientific) and the Constructivist (Interpretivists) are the two ends of the spectrum in the huge expanse that is the research paradigm (Miles and Huberman, 1994). Positivism is a term born out of the work of Auguste Comte (1798-1857) and is formed around the power of science and of rational thought in order to gain understanding. The premise is grounded in gaining knowledge in order to ultimately control the world, i.e. in a positivist view of the world, science is seen as the way to get a truth - to understand the world well enough so that we might predict and control it (Moutinho and Hutcheson, 2011). It is *"control by laws"* that are empirical generalisations and are seen to be (mainly) independent of time and space, neutral and value-free (Steinmetz, 1998).

Indeed for positivists, the observation that two variables are strongly correlated is often understood to signify a causal relationship (Prowse, 2009). Characteristically, subjectivity is thrown out the window (*indeed the self is removed* – Kress, 2011) and only the tangible – the observable and quantifiable are acknowledged. It values laws and aims to develop a step forward body of knowledge and typically researchers adopt the role of the characteristic value-free natural scientist (Bechara and Van de Ven, 2011). In this way mathematics, statistical modelling and rigorous attempts to get to the

heart of the data (reductionism - *"processes are reducible to physiological, physical or chemical events"* - Bullock and Trombley, 1999) generally leads to quantitative methods being employed.

In addition, positivists appear to believe in working with only the observable social reality that finally directs them to the gathering of facts and the assimilation of hypotheses. Ultimately they create theories and present it to academia for further testing and invariably there is generally an overall passion for facts rather than impressions. In their search for detail and truths Positivists focus on observing, measuring and duplicating tests, seeking out constant relationships between entities or events until a *cause and effect* is positively determined. Positivism *generally* relies on quantitative data collection and analysis (Tenenbaum et al., 2011) and strives for pure objectivism.

3.3.2.2 The movement towards interpretism

The lack of a more emotive "*why*" dimension to this paradigm is a major issue from the researcher's perspective and supported by Moilanen (2001) who suggests that it is imperative that the core concept of what is measured be understood. Chung and Alagaratnam (2001) outlined that the functionalist paradigm has been so prevalent in marketing research that there had begun a movement away noting a number of leading researchers who subscribe to a more interpretive paradigm. This is where it is thought that only through these more holistic studies can researchers achieve a better grasp of the fundamental process. Indeed, and in retrospect, Hirschman (1986) noted that in three decades leading up to 1986, only one research study published in the Journal of Marketing was non-positivist. More recent times have indeed seen the movement towards constructivism, indeed a report by Scholl (2011) presses the idea that constructivist philosophy really enriches research.

From the researcher's more interpretive stance it is very difficult to accept the positivist paradigm. Social life, which is where the study of brands really sits (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998), has an uncanny way of dealing an unpredictable hand, particularly in the virtual world and where the ultimate aim

of the positivist is control, this appears somewhat hopeful and unachievable. The world has never been so complex, ever changing (Kroeze, 2012) and fluid and the power of the people never more visible (Kerr et al., 2012) - a positivist approach may allow us to capture a moment in time but is this enough? Will it allow us to confidently predict? Will it be able to say *why* with much confidence? Will practitioners welcome the lack of actionable vision? These perceived limiting factors, however, have seen a movement to stretch the scope of positivism and an attempt to re-calibrate it for a modern social perspective (Brinkmann, 2012).

3.3.2.3 The growing potential of the post positivist/constructivist

Trochim (2000:2) states that *"post positivism is a wholesale rejection of the central scientific based tenets of positivism"* and it takes a much more interpretive stance in assuming that it is possible to be approximate, but never really possible to fully know reality. Post positivists see knowledge as somewhat conjectural and that invariably it is supported by the strongest evidence that can be assimilated at the time (Lehmann, 2011). This philosophical acceptance of fallibility has a direct impact on the methods employed to achieve a somewhat clearer understanding of reality (Phillips and Burbules, 2000) and in this way a triangulated approach may also be adopted – allowing us to see the picture from many different angles. Post positivists do tend to apply research within a relatively controlled environment (Fischer, 1998) – such as focus groups – and importantly attempt to elicit the insiders' viewpoint (Sparks, 2002). It can therefore be appreciated that in the researcher's area of study, a much more interpretive stance appears more applicable to the understanding of phenomena that is being sought, and importantly, to understand what is underlying and occurring.

In comprehending the other dimension – constructivism - the work of Scapens (2011) supported a need to focus on subjectivity, a concept that really only an interpretive position can accommodate. This position was backed with previous rigor by Crotty (1998, p.42) who defined constructivism as *"the view that all knowledge, and therefore all meaningful reality as such, is contingent upon human practices, being constructed in and out of interaction between*

human beings and their world". As Golafshani (2003) forwards, Constructivism values the multiple realities that people have in their minds (and nowadays it could be included – the *virtual* realities). Indeed in moving through the constructivist paradigm, the growing acceptance of people attaching meaning to their surroundings and situations can be sensed and that recollections and behaviours are consequently influenced by, and are dependent upon, these unique meanings and interpretations.

Denzin and Lincoln (2005), argue that a constructivist research design is infinitely better and allows for the collection and analysis of information gathered from multiple perspectives and can assess the more emotional factors more astutely. The constructivist approach is characterized by an interaction between the participants and the researcher (Mingers, 2001), and tends to use research methods such as interviews and observations. Krauss (2005) illuminated the constructivist position in that *"the knower and the known are co-created during the inquiry"*. It is about setting out on the journey and letting the themes emerge subjectively and being open to interpretation. This more interpretive approach is seeking greater commitment in the practitioner world (and associated academic world – Pillai, 2012) with companies such as Kimberly-Clark and Patagonia finding that research that delves deeper into individuals' lived worlds provides a better understanding of what drives their behaviour (Lieber, 2007).

However, Yih-Tong Sun and Scott (2003) also supported the view that in a rapidly changing business environment, there is the requirement of an optimum balance of quantitative and qualitative measures to establish a greater understanding *of why* and gain *insights* into how to develop real competitive progress. Finally, and in an interpretive paradigm, Järvensivu and Törnroos (2010) argue that case studies capture *the dynamics* of the studied phenomenon and provide a *multidimensional view* of the situation in a specific context. To that end constructivists would suggest a more realistic/interpretive stance brings more meaningful, actionable and *interesting* (Goldkuhl, 2011) recommendations that are much more applicable to today's complex society.

3.3.2.4 Accepting the limiting factors of a more Interpretivist standpoint

As the constructivist paradigm resonates more with the researcher's philosophical standpoint, potential drawbacks must be laid out and accounted for. A key concern is the tendency to be overly subjective and idealistic (Mackenzie, 2011) as it is suggested the researcher can never assume they are adopting a value neutral stance. In fact it is contested they will become merged/fused to the very essence of the phenomena being studied (Goldkuhl, 2011 and Orlikowski and Baroudi, 1991). This, in effect, co-creation delivers another problem in that it is also socially constructed from the researcher's perspective, which can be construed as lacking an objective reality (Walsham, 1993). In this way researchers argued that constructivists can never be right (Guba and Lincoln, 1994) or offer proof (however, is this necessary? - Boden, 2010).

In view of the field of this research, Golafshani (2003) offered a pertinent perspective in that Constructivism values multiple varied realities, which people have in their minds, and as has been discussed in the literature review, a brand captures the varied mental associations consumers bestow on it (von Hippel et al., 2011) – hence it appears a paradigm in tune with this arena of investigation. Identifying the researcher's paradigm within the continuum of constructivism appears at one with the researcher's acceptance of self but also presents a research approach allowing new findings to be delivered based upon subjective interpretive data. Figure 3.2 reinforces from the literature, that interpretivism as opposed to positivism is the preferred paradigm for addressing the research questions and in defining the format of this study.

Basic Belief	POSITIVISM (reductive)	SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM (interpretive)
Ontology asks 'what is the nature of reality?'	There is a single reality – which is knowable - a somewhat naïve realism.	There are multiple realities. Relativism – local and specific constructed realities
Epistemology concerns the acquisition of knowledge and the relationship between the researcher and the respondent.	Dispassionate / Dualist / objectivist – a detached observer of truth: findings true / research is independent of subjects.	Transactional/subjectivist – interviewer and respondents are linked and knowledge is divested from the interaction.

Methodology – process of research by which knowledge is obtained.	Experimental/manipulative / observation, quantitative, statistical. Verification of hypothesis.	Participative - Values are inherent in the context of the study – Qualitative and Interpretive.
Axiology: the researcher states roles and values that validate the research	Truth, Prediction - Value free objective and universal.	Researcher values affect the study. Understanding and describing are key.

Figure 3.2 Philosophy is grounded between Positivism and Constructivism
(Adapted from Fisher, 2007)

3.3.3 Establishing whether a deductive or Inductive approach

Fundamentally there are two broad perspectives (a continuum) on the approach to be taken in understanding research data. These are *deductive,* based on testing a certain developed hypothesis and by working from the general to the specific (Bryman and Bell, 2003 and Saunders et al., 2007), and an *inductive* theory building approach where a framework of the underlying structure of experiences or processes, that are evident in the raw data, are developed. As opposed to deductive, it is a journey from the specific to the general, such as an observation made by the researcher that eventually leads to broad generalization and theory (Thomas, 2006; Collis and Hussy, 2003; Saunders et al., 2007). The approach selected can depend on criteria such as philosophical standpoint, availability of materials, time availability, and audience under scrutiny (Cresswell, 2003). This research uses a more inductive approach (accepting that the position is along a continuum), which has allowed for real depth of exploration and analysis and flexibility to fully understand the situation along the research journey (Bryman and Bell, 2007).

The inductive approach tends to create clusters of data where patterns begin to emerge and from which data themes can be generated (Jenkins, 2011). Newman (2003) suggested that an inductive approach can be affected by the opinions (subjectivity) of the researcher, however, as the researcher has intimate experience of this subject area (long serving practitioner) then it is argued this effect may actually be positive, (albeit it taking sufficient energies in reflection) given the nature of the phenomena being studied (Diefenbach, 2009). In view of the nature of the subject of inquiry and a qualitative methodology, then on the inductive/deductive continuum a more inductive approach appears most suitable to help elicit the subjective data and uncover

and identify the necessary themes in order to deliver insight for practitioners (Parker et al., 2011). As suggested, the path is a continuum and it will be illuminated that the researcher used deduction to base the research around the themes emerging from the literature review and then expanded on these through the interviews. It will be shown that this acceptance of a degree of deduction, whilst sitting within a critical realist paradigm, allowed new patterns to emerge from the data.

3.3.4 Honing the philosophical position

In determining the drive paradigm, the researcher's personal philosophical tenets were measured against a number of academic models, namely Fishers' (2007) framework, which hones the key differentiating philosophical assumptions and the impact they have on design, and Burrell and Morgan's (1979) matrix, which was useful in analysing competing paradigms. In moving along this interpretive paradigm continuum to determining the researcher's own philosophical standpoint (*and through a high level of personal reflection*) the nature of the research question, aims, and breadth and depth of insights desired, assisted in channelling decision making. The process was entered into with no *rules of engagement* and ultimately this resulted in greater clarity and confidence with the final shape of the design.

The essence of the research centres on establishing some fundamental insights (Jefferson and King, 2011) that may assist practitioners in counterbalancing the observed breakdown in consumer/brand affinity through a deeper mobilization of narrative and storytelling. Considering both the nature of what is being researched and the researcher's philosophical/ontological position, then it has been established that a more interpretivist, inductive approach sits most comfortably.

The primary aim is to uncover rich insights (Easton, 2010) into phenomena existing in the social world and hence the researcher will rely heavily on subjectivity (expert personal view that is triangulated) and interpretation from rich observations (Harper, 2011).

3.3.4.1 The researcher position

The researcher's philosophical standpoint has ultimately guided the methods adopted and the scale and scope of desired findings. During the literature review a number of key inner most beliefs have dominated, namely: it is not possible to truly know the world (Callahan, 2010); it is critical to challenge the status quo (Cozette, 2008) and to break down the orthodoxies; an appreciation that things change and hence nothing stands still (Benton and Craib, 2001); a comprehension that the social world is a product of human action; there is a need to understand why things happen; a desire to look at reality from different perspectives as it is stratified (Bhaskar and Hartwi, 2010); and there is more than one way of looking at something and many methods for achieving that. Finally, that social phenomenon can exist independently of their identification (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000).

The researcher also has a strong desire to investigate how ideas held about society may be compromised by some underlying structures (Roberts, 2001 and Heath and Feldwick, 2007) and a sense that the industry the researcher represents has a certain degree of stoicism when it comes to understanding the dynamics of branding. It consequently became apparent that to develop some practical new knowledge (with authority) certain consensus views would have to be rebuilt. It was against these beliefs that a philosophical position was established.

3.3.4.2 Establishing the philosophical position against other relevant models.

Essentially these philosophical tenets lead to **an interpretive axiology with Critical Realism –** ontology and epistemology. Fig.3.3*.* Reworking Easterby-Smith et al., (1991) and Symonds (1994) illustrates the paradigm possibilities that were considered. This clearly seats the researcher across the interpretive continuum.

Fig 3.3 Establishing the paradigm – Easterby-Smith et al (1991), Symonds (1994)

Additionally, Fishers' framework (Fig 3.4) started to resonate when considering epistemology, as it is accepted there can be extreme knowledge value emerging from the researcher/participant interaction.
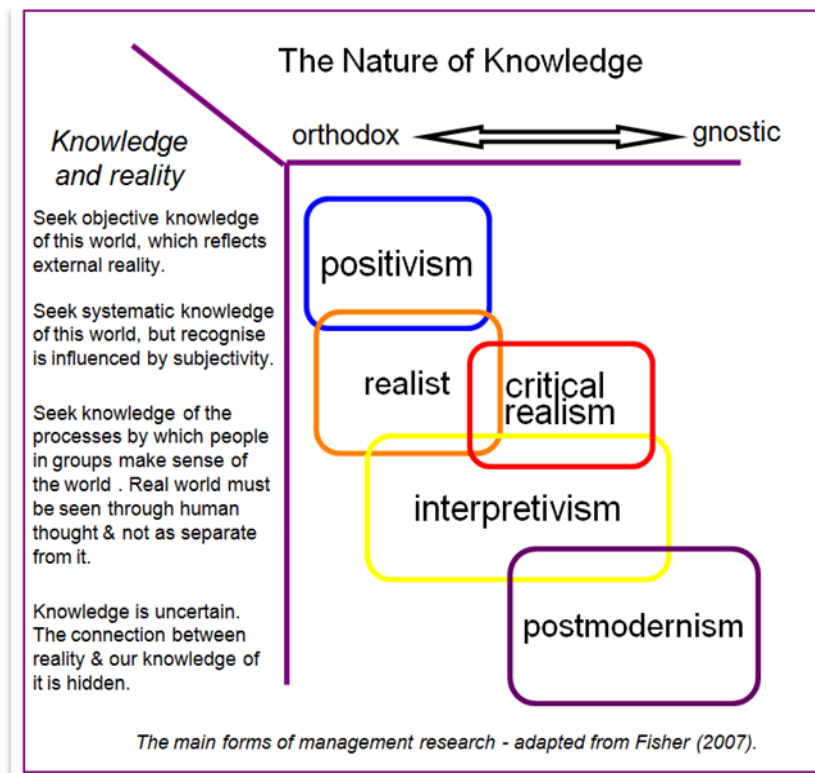
Fig. 3.4 Plotting knowledge and reality. Adapted from Fisher (2007).

Indeed, the researcher believes that to fully understand the research and the process, then one has to live inside it. In addition to this benchmarking of what paradigm the researcher proposes to take, the epistemological positioning is also backed up when finally cross-referencing the model (Fig. 3.5.) developed by Burrell and Morgan (1979).
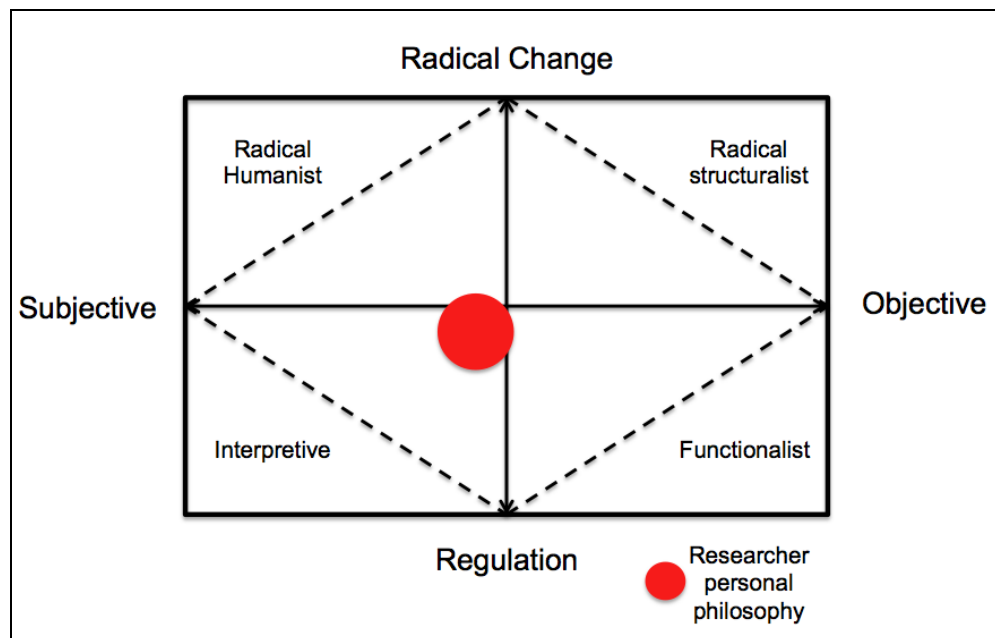
Fig 3.5 Existing sociological theories through four major paradigms
Adapted from Burrell and Morgan's matrix (1979)

Each of the quadrants of the matrix has important methodological implications. Firstly on the objective and subjective axis, objectivists search for concepts and universal laws to explain reality – a more functionalist paradigm. Subjectivists focus on how individuals interpret the world and see things - a more interpretive stance. On the other axis, regulatory is about describing events and suggesting minor amends – it is not a judgment call. Radical is all about larger judgments and how to achieve progress.

In view of the researcher's perceived ontology, this model was used to plot the position taken and used to allow for a logical development of how the research will be constructed. As interpretivism appears the drive stance, then this allows the rest of the philosophical debate's methodological structures to be considered through the appropriate lenses.

3.3.4.3 Understanding the roadmap that philosophy signposts

Different philosophical standpoints do have different strengths and weaknesses and different types of knowledge will be uncovered using the different methods. Fig. 3.6 illuminates the possibilities investigated – but with the understanding that *no one* is better than the other (Yin, 2011).

	Positivism	**Empiricism**	**Realism**	**Idealism**
Conception	World is independent of our interpretation of it.	World is independent of our interpretation of it.	There is a need to understand how people interpret the world.	We can only understand the world if examine people's selection and interpretation of events and actions.
Nature of reality	Objective	Objective	Objective/Subjective	Inter- subjective
Theoretical approach	Deductive data and theory driven.	Deductive Data Collection – ltd theory guidance.	Inductive/Deductive. Theory used to explain social world observations.	Inductive. Theory evolves from observation.
Response	Reaction	Reaction	Action and Reaction	Action
Aim	Reflection of everyday world.	Reflection of everyday world.	Reflection of conditions which make everyday world possible.	To understand process of interpretation and associated rules.
Preferred Methods	Quantitative	Quantitative	Triangulation / mixed methods.	Qualitative

Fig 3.6 Adapted from philosophical position - Developed from Symons, (1994; Evered and Louis, 1991) Easterby-Smith et al., (1991)

This table underlines that the Realism spectrum sits more in the researcher's realm. As it is argued that the fundamental conception confirms there is a need to understand the process by which people understand the world, then this understanding is highly significant to the knowledge attempting to be delivered from this thesis. This is where the paradigm of Critical Realism could in many modern researchers' perspectives and specifically in this, give a more colourful picture (King, 2006). Critical Realism engages both the positivist and interpretivist paradigms, sharing a foundationalist ontology with positivism but,

importantly, allows for interpretivism in research (Grix, 2004). Crucially, critical realism attempts to explain the social world and, in doing, attempts to make causal statements and identify causal mechanisms. Eaton (2009) also stated that case study research *(prominent in critical realism)* is now the most popular research method for researchers in industry and so has salience for this study. His paper proposed critical realism as a research method as it provides helpful implications for both theoretical development and the research process, and that a case study approach can provide a great deal of insight into the nature of phenomena.

3.3.4.4 The Critical Realism lens

Critical Realism was arrived at as the drive philosophical position (ontology and epistemology) whilst engaging an interpretivist/constructivist paradigm. It is the lens through which this study should be viewed and, consequently, influences which methods should be employed to meet the aims of the research. This, through reflection, is fundamentally the end game sought – understanding the social world to provide a route map for practitioners. Taking a critical realist standpoint was accepted as mirroring the researcher's personal research ideals and perceived as having the grounding for delivering the richness of insights and practical signposts for practitioners.

In defining the position of critical realism, it is important to state that it is not about what is good or better in terms of a particular research philosophy, but it is all about accepting a philosophy and choosing a research method that fits the purpose (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2010). Hence it is apparent that an interpretivist philosophical perspective fits with the ambitions and, more importantly, with what insights can be uncovered and the new learnings that could be generated.

This is a critical realist worldview (Fleetwood and Ackroyd, 2004) and Fig.3.7 summarizes how the position taken will ultimately determine the study approach and desired and expected outputs.
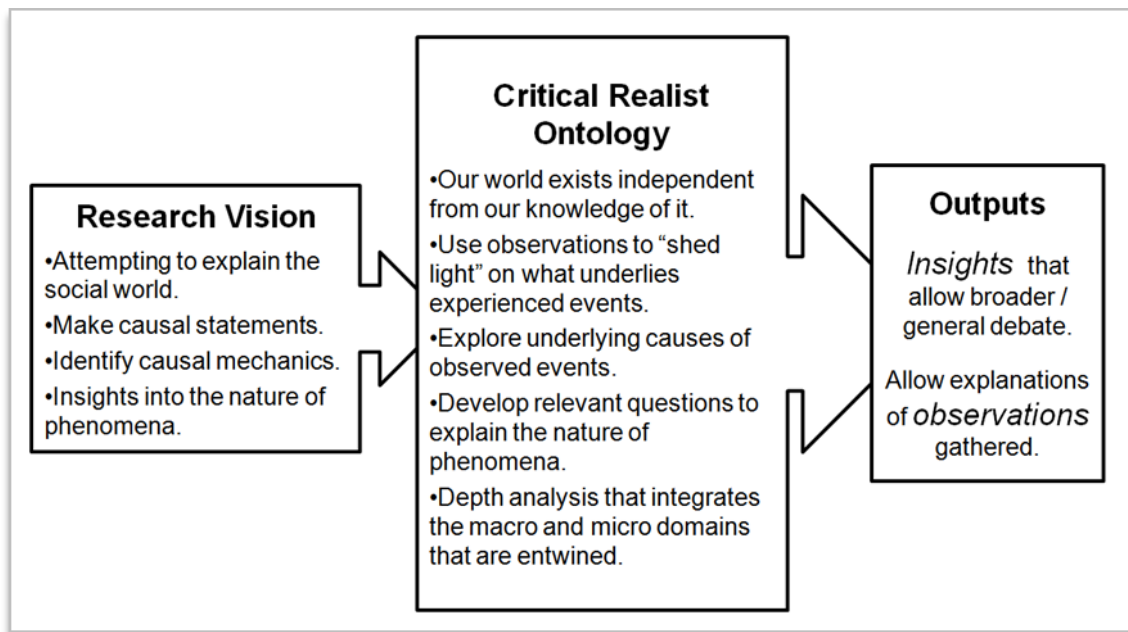
Fig. 3.7 A logical progression from philosophy to methods. Source: Original

The resonating premise behind critical realism is that we will only be able to understand, and so change, the social world if we identify the structures at work in those events and discourses: "*these structures are not spontaneously apparent in the observable pattern of events: they can only be identified through the practical and theoretical work of social sciences*" (Bhaskar, 1989:2). So, as a critical realist stance was identified then the consequential methods, according to the literature, might take the following shape.

3.4 Choosing the methods

Critical Realism requires a fairly structured ontology (Ackroyd and Fleetwood, 2000) as Fig 3.8 outlines. It asks us to focus the research in 3 key dimensions (Easton, 2010) – *the deep* and more macro factors such as the economic and social influences at play, *the actual* or the effect of macro on the organisation / brand and *the empirical* – the resulting effects on individuals.
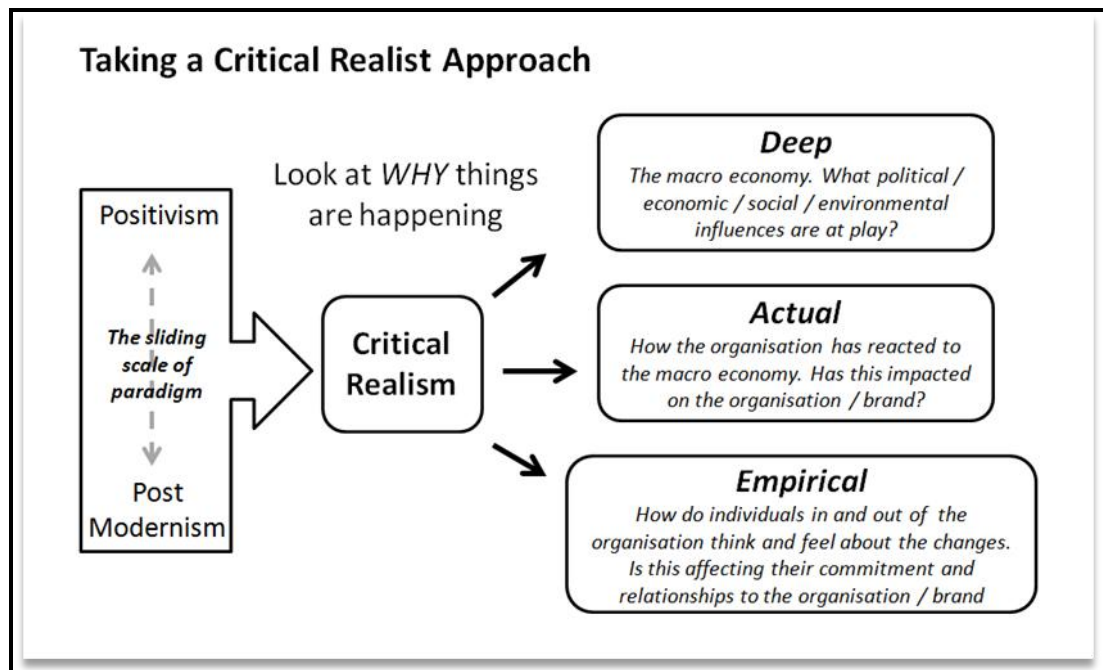
Fig. 3.8 The demands of critical realism. Source: Original

It delves deep and wide, and in order to achieve these broad levels of inquiry additional techniques such as triangulation will have to be employed by the researcher. Triangulation refers to the application and combination of several research methods in the study of the same phenomenon (Bogdan and Biklen 2006) and it is suggested will ultimately give researchers a more holistic set of results (Modell, 2009). Furthermore according to Berg (2004) it will ultimately provide greater strength to research findings. Its main purpose is *"to obtain different but complementary data on the same topic"* (Morse, 1991, p. 122) and hence to best understand the research problem.

Through reflection of the thesis aims and supervisory consultation it became apparent that to uncover any level of inspirational and rigorous insights for practitioner application, then the ultimate research design would have to accommodate this practical paradigm. As the research centres on branding then both the brand owner (*organisations*) and the brand consumer (*customers*) should be engaged to draw out the major themes that may emerge. This grounded the data collection method in qualitative and necessitated a requirement to triangulate any data (critical realist ontology). The suggested line of enquiry is outlined in Fig. 3.9 and illustrates the desired blend of qualitative techniques to uncover the necessary guiding insights.
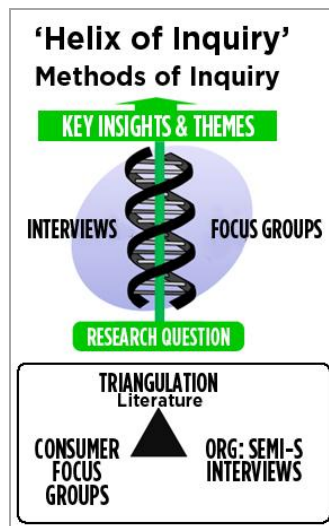
Fig. 3.9 Determining the method of enquiry. Source: Original

Having established the lens through which the study should be viewed, it is accepted this will lead the methods and finally the approach to data analysis and interpretation. In understanding the *connecting effect* that philosophy has on the research journey Fig. 3.10 captures, by way of summary, the interconnectedness.
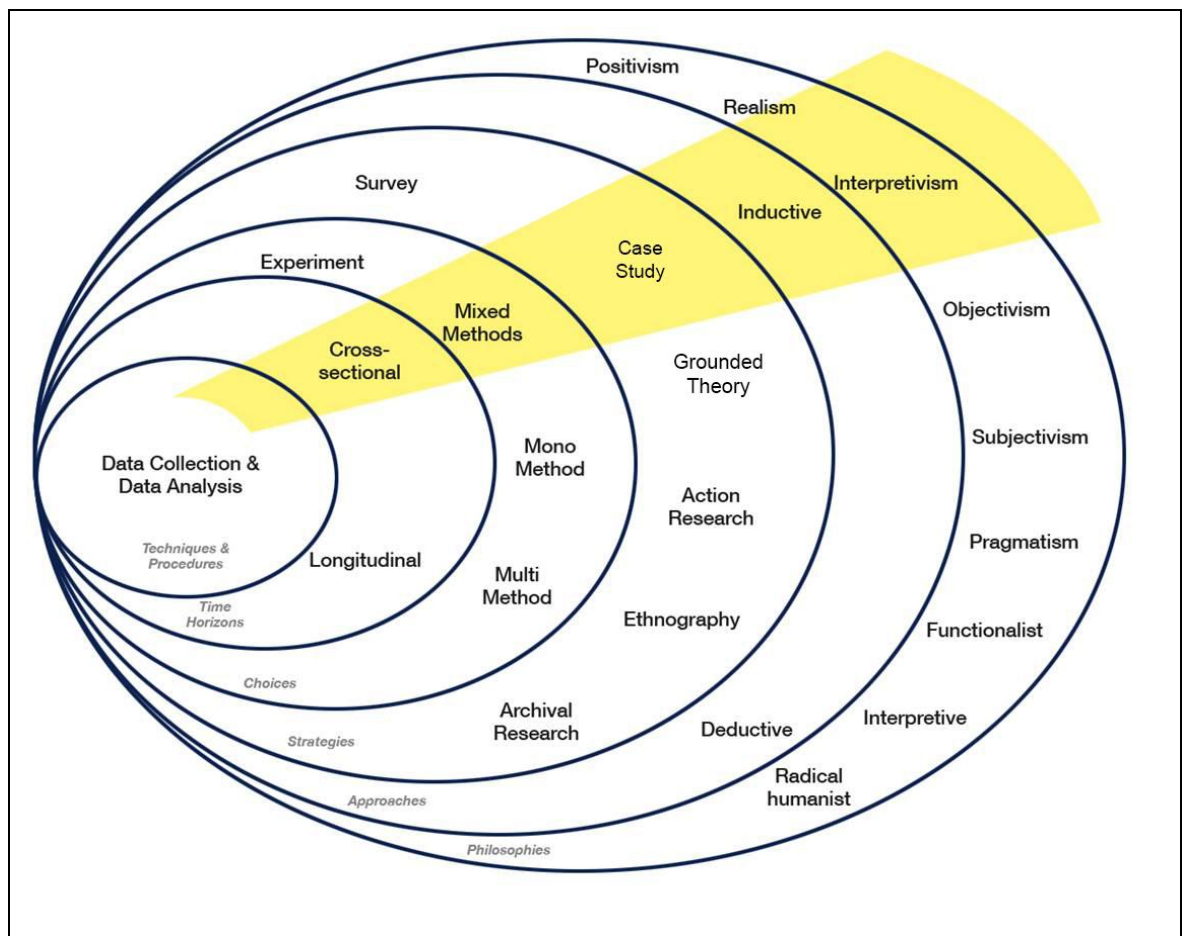
Fig. 3.10 Impact of methodological lens – adapted from Saunders et al (2006)

In re-expressing the work of Saunders et al (2006), this diagram reflects that an interpretivist, critical realist philosophical perspective on the researcher's understanding of what constitutes new knowledge was taken, and establishes the research as a predominantly inductive line of inquiry. This will embrace a case study analysis, using mixed methods to uncover rich insights. It is a logical progression that should naturally fit within the researcher's worldview and guide a structure to deliver insights against the research question.

3.5 Overview of the Research Design

Fig.3.11 gives an overview of the methodology and resulting methods applied and can be used as an *aide-mémoire* for the remainder of this chapter.
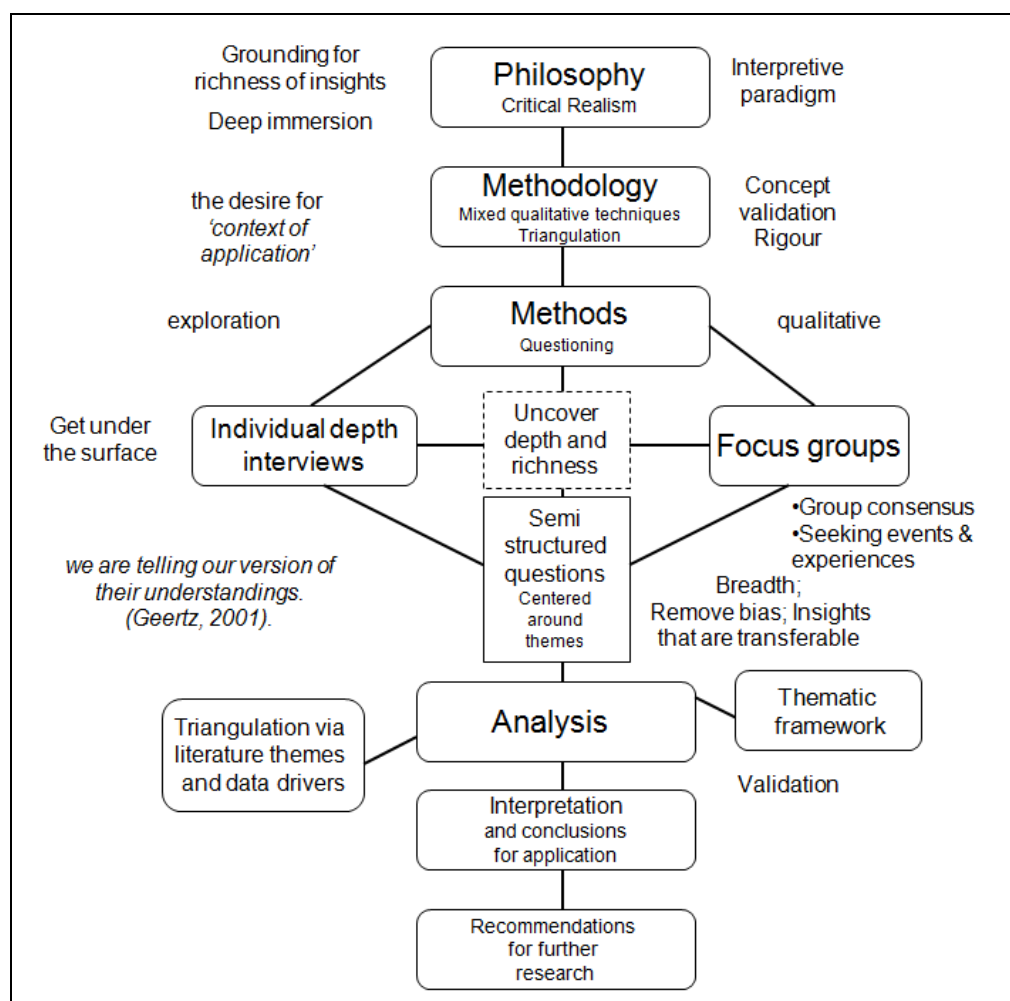
Fig. 3.11 Helicopter view of the research roadmap
Nb. both axis of the qualitative research are borne out of questioning. Source: Original

Using this as a framework, an overall research model was developed to achieve the level and depth of insight (*breadth of comparative cases*) and academic rigour (guidance from Yin, 2005, and Kruger and Casey, 2000) and Fig.3.12 shows the overall research design manifested through the methodology. Central to this design was taking a case study approach. A basic case study design normally involves a detailed and intensive analysis of a single case (Stake, 1995). However, the approach adopted used a "comparative case study design": that of using two or more contrasting cases (Bryman and Bell, 2007). It was anticipated that to understand this particular social phenomena, the aims of which were to seek explanations for similarities and differences, and to gain a greater awareness and a deeper understanding of social reality, then a design that studied two or more cases would deliver the richest insight. Bryman and Bell (2007) support this approach further in that it facilitates the distinguishing characteristics of two or more cases to act as a springboard for theoretical reflections about the contrasting findings.
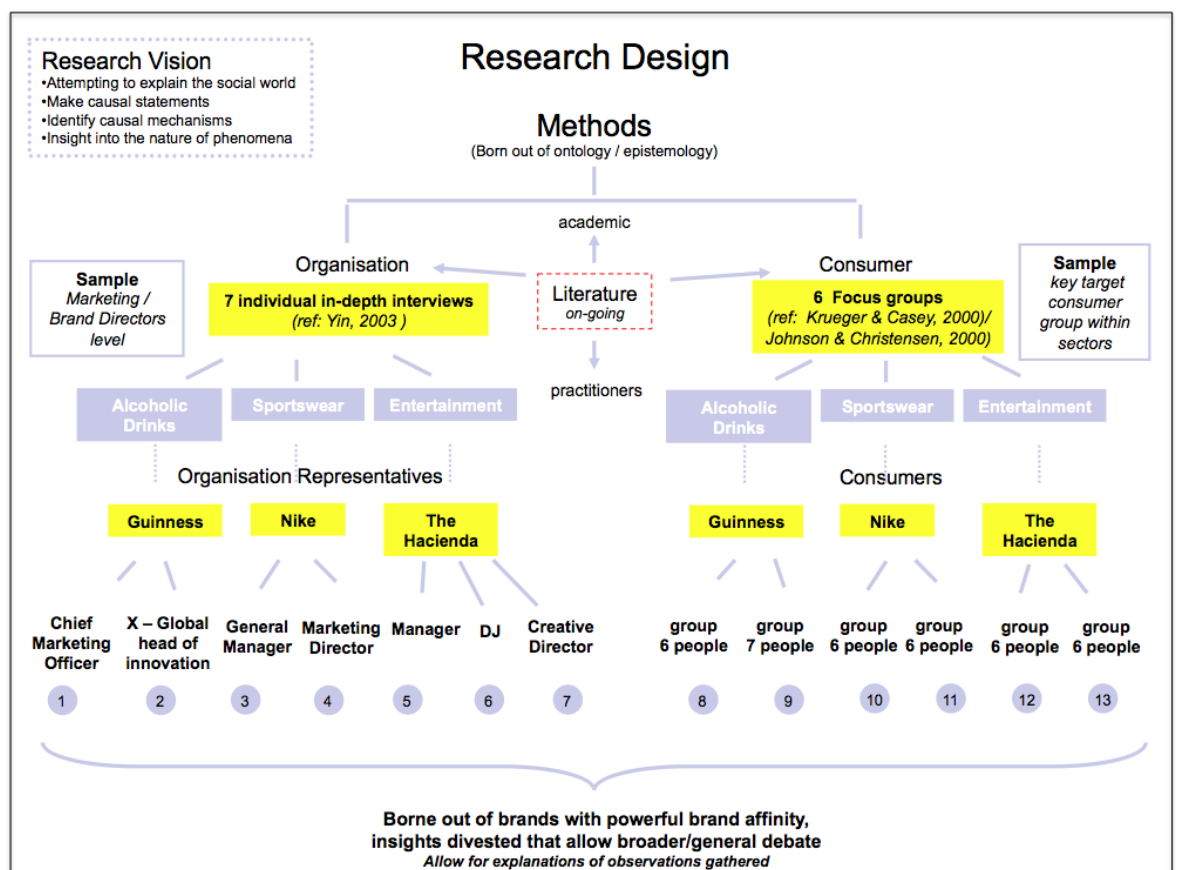
Fig. 3.12 Helicopter view of research design. Source: Original

The premise of this design also allowed for a degree of generalisation, making causal statements (Kasi, 2009) and understanding the phenomena at work to

generate practicable insights. This meant three different product categories (cases) were chosen: **Alcoholic Drinks**, **Sportswear** and **Entertainment**. The design was guided by Robson (2002) and Yin (2003), who defined case studies as involving an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context, using *multiple sources of evidence*. Additionally drawing guidance from Krueger and Casey (2000) and Johnson and Christensen (2000), the overall design played out as per Fig. 3.13.
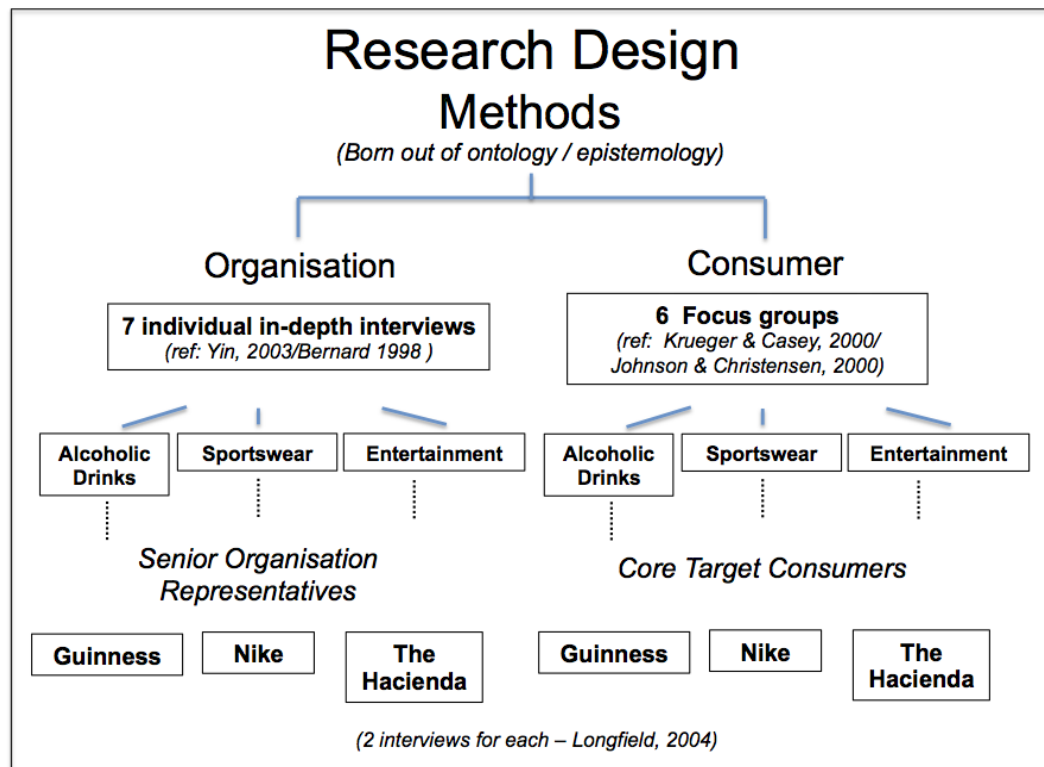
Fig.3.13 Top line shape of the research. Source: Original

Taking the lead from these academics, it was therefore concluded that studying multiple contemporary real-life cases would provide stronger evidence for any conclusions made.

3.5.1 Analysis of research design

Any research design provides a framework for the collection and subsequent analysis of data and through broad considerations of the options available, the need to find parity with the researcher's epistemology and, crucially, the nature of the research question. For this study, questioning therefore was taken as the most appropriate. Taking Lancaster (2005) and Bryman and Bell (2007) as key references, they define the key advantages of questioning as: depth uncovered in particularly complex issues; the flexibility in adaptation during

fluid interviews; opening qualities – simplicity and a semi structured approach allows consumers to open up and potentially uncover rich data; validity achieved from verifying immediately with respondents and the speed and pace of data collection makes the approach ideal when implementation horizons are short – such as the current DBA.

Lancaster also highlighted some potential limitations with this approach; bias may become a very real issue particularly with the close proximity of the researcher (Axiology - researcher biases by world views, cultural experiences and upbringing, Saunders et al 2009). Respondents may feel inclined to *help-out* the researcher or be influenced if certain recording materials are introduced. Data analysis can become a huge problem with the scale and potentially unstructured nature of output – a sizeable amount of time should be put aside to collate and analyse - then doubled. Finally lack of consistency will tend to emanate as a consequence of the differences in the ebb and flow of the sessions. This again will necessitate diligence in final data analysis and summarizing.

One final *watch out* to cover has been termed 'the Hawthorne effect' (Roethlisberger and Dickson, 1939). Essentially, this relates to how the inherent researcher biases can affect the outcome of findings – the experimenter effect. A broader picture of the strengths and potential pitfalls are captured in fig. 3.14. These were further considered as data was finally analysed.

"Questioning" Research Design *The Good*	"Questioning" Research Design *The Watch outs*
Valuable in getting real depth and richness from a limited number of cases.	Data analysis can be hugely time consuming.
Great for conducting cross-case comparison and analysis.	Need to consider how you can realistically generalize.
Understanding and description of people's personal experiences of phenomena.	Because of the fluidity it may be difficult to predict on the basis of the distinct data.
Allows for qualitative method of "grounded theory" to generate inductively an initial insight about a phenomenon.	Institutional stoicism believes that it doesn't stack up to quantitative research.
Proximity to emergence of data and naturalistic setting gives added insight.	Data collection can be very time consuming.

Allows for real responsiveness at source and allows for fine-tuning.	There is a real danger that output can be influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies.
Ability to investigate reconstruction of events / retrospective interviewing.	Perceived lack of transparency – how did they arrive at that?
Potential to deliver *more interesting* papers from process.	Potentially costly process herding individuals to certain places at certain times – normally after work.
Gives respondents the ability to open up and describe phenomena in their language.	The proximity and humanity to the source data can influence what is said – the researcher effect cannot be under estimated.

Fig. 3.14 The Quality in Qualitative

Adapted from Bryman and Bell, 2007; Barley, 2006; Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2004

3.5.2 Use of In-Depth interviews

In the plan (fig. 3.12.), it is highlighted that the research question will be addressed from two perspectives and *Questioning* will be used as a means of data collection. From an organisational perspective it is proposed to run a minimum of six individual semi-structured interviews engaging three distinct visions of brand affinity. Yin (2005) suggested six was a valid number to base a design around and realistically is a manageable amount in the scope of the DBA (time, expense). Individual depth interviews would also appear more appropriate for research situations like the one in question, where there is a specific, well-defined issue (Bickman and Rog, 2009). Individual depth interviews can demonstrate a superior ability to get at the important underlying issues and have the ability to get under the surface and expose important attitudinal data (Stokes and Bergin, 2006).

The relative strengths, weaknesses and measures the researcher took in order to minimise these potential difficulties have been outlined in Fig. 3.15.

ONE - ON - ONE INTERVIEW ANALYSIS	*Highlighted potential hurdles*	*Researcher awareness and action*
Strengths of One-on-One interviews	**Problems and criticisms associated with use**	**Measures taken to overcome problems**
Ability to uncover and obtain more thorough and detailed info.	Time and cost consuming – number needed and seniority of individuals chosen.	*UK wide interviews managed around practitioner work*

		commitments.
Ability to deviate when necessary to maximise insights – *need for flexibility.*	Huge amounts of data to analyse through scale of opinions and attitudes.	*Theme/coding template allowed for efficient categorising of data.*
Semi structured approach allows respondent to feel at ease and open up.	Pre identified key issues are seeded in semi-structured questions.	*All key points were allowed to flow from discussions not from leading questioning.*
Interviews are naturalistic and conversation feels natural and not forced.	Respondents can become obsessed with set topics / pet hates.	*Set interviewees homework to allow off the chest issues to be cleared up early.*
Intimacy can drive depth of data.	Senior individuals can dominate a session, drive through their personal agendas.	*Keep an eye on the semi structured questions and literature.*
Ability to overlay social cues, such as voice, intonation, body language etc. of the interviewee.	Tendency to ramble or head off on tangents.	*Encouraged as there is potential to gain insight into what interviewee see as important.*
Directly react on what the other says or does.	Need for expert researchers as tendency for fluidity with semi structured approach.	*Practitioner experience brings real benefits on focus, time and stimulus.*
Interviewer has a lot of possibilities to create a good interview ambience.	Not replicating same template with each interview.	*Initial questions give sense of structure but drive is for richness in the session.*
Ambiguities can be clarified and incomplete answers followed up.	Skill of researcher can over reach the depth of data collected.	*Need for and application of ethical sensitivity.*
Interviewees are not influenced by others as in the focus group scenario.	Ensuring that the same general areas of information are collected from each interviewee.	*Semi structured questions divested from literature and retuned from pilot.*
Ability to include physical prompts such as products and pictures.	Difficult for researchers to extract similar themes or codes from the interview transcripts.	*Attention to questions / literature themes and silent exercises.*

Fig. 3.15 Analysis of individual depth interviews - adapted from: Adams and Cox, 2008; Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2007; Bryman and Bell, 2007; King, 2004; Easterby-Smith et al., 2008.

Fig. 3.15 supports the idea that depth interviews can, when executed with real interviewer skill, generate a vibrant and rich source of data. The researcher,

coming from an experienced qualitative researcher background, tried to apply learnings (to overcome the highlighted potential problems and criticisms) to maximise, as the next chapter will illuminate, real depth.

3.5.3 Use of Focus Groups

Gibbs (1997, p. 1) defined a focus group as "*a group of individuals selected and assembled by researchers to discuss and comment upon, from personal experience, the topic that is the subject of the research*". Krueger (1988) recommended that a group has between six and ten participants and that the key driver, a Moderator (researcher) steers them into predetermined areas of interest usually through the use of a prompt or some sort of stimulus introduced. In this way group interaction is encouraged to try and establish group feeling or consensus. They are seen as highly relevant for this research question as they are useful for exploring attitudes, perceptions and feelings and **may reveal data that the individual interviews might not have** (Rossman, 1999). Focus groups have been described as less threatening to many research participants and this environment is helpful for participants to discuss perceptions, ideas, opinions, and thoughts (Krueger and Casey, 2000). As discussed, it has the propensity to deliver real depth of insight but the premise has to be grounded in the criteria of individuals selected. This stems from the goal that focus groups should include enough participants to yield diversity in the information collected, yet they should not include too many participants because large groups can create an environment where participants do not feel comfortable sharing their thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and experiences (Johnson and Christensen, 2004).

Cowley (2000) added that groups most often have eight respondents but this can vary between four and twelve. He advises that group participants are usually recruited via a screening questionnaire, to form a homogeneous group to promote equal participation. In that way the group contains people equal in status, rank, age and often of the same sex and social grade. The word, "focus" also indicates that the group will talk about a particular area of interest rather than be too lateral. Krueger (1988) suggested that they may argue, persuade each other, agree or disagree, ask each other questions and

generally discuss the topic in an open and usually friendly manner. This results in a broad breadth and depth of discussion and normally with the generation of large amounts of data in a relatively short time frame. This quasi-unstructured group interview technique where the group leader actively encourages discussion among participants has been presented as being some of the most effective ways of collecting data in the social sciences (Easterby-Smith et al., 2002).

Taking the design forward and looking from a consumer perspective, the same brands were incorporated into six focus groups with a minimum six participants in each (number supported and verified by Johnson and Christensen, 2000 and Lancaster, 2005). Each brand had two focus groups specifically focussed upon them and the research subjects were consumers that were cited within the core target consumer profiles (referenced through the respective brand marketing directors interviewed within the individual depth interviews). Focus groups were chosen as a method for the following reasons outlined in Fig. 3.16. The table illuminates the potential problems and criticisms and ultimately **how the researcher alleviated the potential issues.**

FOCUS GROUP ANALYSIS	*Highlighted potential hurdles*	*Researcher awareness and action*
Strengths	***Problems and criticisms associated with use***	***Measures taken to overcome problems***
Concentrated amounts of data/insights and ideas on chosen subject - *real focus.*	Tend to have less control over a group than a one-on-one interview.	*Learnings from pilot, use of pre-arranged exercises to add degree of structure.*
Quick and easy - economical, fast at getting large swaths of data.	Data can be tough to analyse as the feedback can meander with other group members.	*Semi structured questions established from literature gave focus points.*
Efficiency in gathering large amounts of data v individual interviews.	Observers/moderators need to be highly trained, to lead and direct a variable group.	*The best facilitators are unobtrusive and chameleon like.*
Group interaction provides insights into individual opinions.	Need to be repeated to achieve more validity.	*Number of sessions ran on basis of literature guidance.*

All about uncovering and gaining insights.	*Observer dependency*: the results obtained are influenced by the researcher. Ref: Heisenberg's Uncertainty Principle.	*Use of triangulation for validity, in session individual tasks set to alleviate group consensus.*
Rich data mining ability from the group dynamic.	The design of the focus group study can affect the answers obtained from respondents.	*Post pilot reflection and retune.*
Focus groups are naturalistic in that members use *"language closer to everyday speak".*	The formality of the setting can stifle respondents.	*Creative, bright room used for all groups – refreshment and comforts provided.*
Focus groups are less threatening to participants, and this enables participants to discuss ideas, perceptions, opinions, and thoughts.	Lack of anonymity. Individuals not willing to share deeper thinking within peer group.	*Individual tasks included in session and triangulated with main group outputs.*
To identify more salient dimensions of complex social stimuli.	Respondents often aiming to please rather than offering their own opinions.	*Homework set to capture off the chest feelings and solus exercises applied.*
The sense of belonging to a group can increase the participants' sense of cohesiveness and to feel safe to share information.	Data often cherry picked to support a foregone conclusion.	*All data analyses through same framework lens (via literature). No pre-agenda – only seeking insights.*
Can create the possibility for more spontaneous responses.	Group consensus can mean no one agrees.	*Individual exercises within session and triangulation.*

Fig. 3.16 Analysis of using focus groups - adapted from: Walvis, 2003; Rushkoff, 2005; Campbell and Stanley, 2006; Morgan, 1996,1997; Saunders, Lewis, Thornhill, 2009; Zikmund, 1997; Krueger and Casey, 2000; Lunt, et al; 1996; Peters, 1993.

3.5.3.1 Strengths of this method

Drawing back to the ultimate research design put forward, the main method proposed is the use of semi-structured questions. With semi-structured interviews the questioning centres on the researcher guiding respondents through topics (themes) in a fluid and flexible style, engaging steering techniques to address the research question. The ultimate aim is to uncover and gain insights. Zikmund (1997) summarised the advantages of such group discussions as "the 10 S's": *Synergy*, where the group dynamic uncovers real depth of data; *Snowballing*, where interaction allows ideas and thoughts to be continually built on; *Serendipity* – the semi structured nature can create an atmosphere to allow random insights to emerge; *Stimulation* – the group generates its own momentum; *Security* – there is less pressure in a group environment and this engenders a more friendly environment allowing individuals to open up; *Spontaneity* – openness and fluidity generates a spontaneous culture which can drive further insights; *Specialisation* – a session allows a number of target consumers to be interviewed at once; *Structure* – moderator can keep returning to the topic or themes to ensure sufficient depth is achieved; *Speed* – the research can be actioned much quicker than through a series of depth interviews; finally *Scrutiny* - it is much easier to observe and validate as the researcher (and support) presence is less intrusive than when in one-on-one sessions.

These benefits are supported further by Krueger and Casey (2000), who see the deeper benefits of focus groups deriving from two features: group interaction and the replication of social forces. Green et al (2003) also supported this rich data mining ability from the group dynamic. The group effect is also dramatised in Lindlof and Taylor (2002, p. 182): *"a kind of 'chaining' or 'cascading' effect; talk links to, or tumbles out of, the topics and expressions preceding it".*

3.5.3.2 Weaknesses to counterbalance

On the limitations side, Griggs (1987) broadly warned that group consensus should be viewed with caution, as consensus may mean a view that nobody

disagrees with, but equally that nobody wholly accepts. In this case it is argued (Stokes and Bergin, 2006) that individual depth interviews can demonstrate a superior ability for getting at the important underlying issues that can shape and as a consequence, as individual depth interviews are free from group pressures, they can demonstrate an ability to get under the surface and expose important attitudinal data. A further limitation of the group interview – particularly from an interpretivist position - is that generalisation is inevitable (Williams, 2000) and that ultimately they draw conclusions from their data about the necessary relationships that exist amongst categories of phenomena. Again, as cited by Zikmund (1997), the free flowing nature means that the researcher has less control over the group than perhaps a one-on-one in-depth interview may have.

A fundamental difficulty with focus groups is the issue of *observer dependency*, i.e. where the results obtained are influenced by the researcher, which ultimately can raise questions of the overall project's validity. Heisenberg (Walvis, 2003 p. 403) in his *Uncertainty Principle* said, *"What we observe is not nature itself, but nature exposed to our method of questioning."* He argues that, the questions asked, how they are phrased, how they are posed, in what setting, and by whom, affects the answers obtained from respondents. He also highlighted that the researcher cannot be detached and it is therefore essential that researchers take this into account when developing their analysis. Another issue raised by Walvis (2003) concerns the actual setting itself, where an environment (such as significant workplace) might make the participants either hold back on their responses or answer the moderator's questions with answers the participants feel that they want to hear.

Rushkoff (2005) went further by suggesting researchers tend to cherry pick data to support their argument and then add weight to views expressed in the groups. He also suggested that another tendency is to over represent the central view of the group – a view that belongs to nobody and can be the blandest of out-takes. Stokes and Bergin (2006) found that the researcher had considerable influence on the consensus view expressed in focus groups, which may not be representative of respondents' individual views and they

also suggested that groups were not able to match the depth/detail offered by individual interviews. These are significant issues to consider when running and analysing the group and will necessitate a significant period of reflection to act as a counter balance (see Fig. 3.16 for measures taken). This also supports the overall research design taken where both interviews and focus groups will be triangulated to establish greater confidence in output recommendations.

3.5.3.3 The power lies within the facilitator

In general, focus groups are naturalistic in that members use *"language closer to everyday speak – such as storytelling, joking, arguing, boasting, teasing, persuasion, challenge and disagreement"* (Wilkinson, 2003, p.185), and therefore clearly the best output, with the minimum of limiting factors, is wholly down to the facilitator. Wilkinson (2003) added that the best facilitators are unobtrusive and chameleon like and that they deftly guide and interject and remain non-authoritarian and non-judgmental. It is worth highlighting that even though the researcher has experience in facilitation, a practice session including a full pilot was used to test drive the questioning and noted this should be seen as part of good practice (Lancaster et al., 2004).

3.5.4 A footnote on triangulation

Triangulation in this context requires using more than one method or source of data in the study of social phenomena (Bryman and Bell, 2007). Here it is about triangulating *methods* not, as Bechara and Van de Ven (2011) suggested, triangulating *philosophies*. Defined by Webb et al (1966) as an approach in the development of measures to give greater confidence in findings and to overcome the weakness (Riege, 2003) or intrinsic biases that come from qualitative methods where the data is derived from a small number of observations. Hence it has become very common within qualitative research fields and has been incorporated into this study. It does allow for a certain degree of cross checking and, as will be discussed in the data analysis chapter, also permits the researcher to access different levels of reality. It takes the view that more can be gained by employing a mixture of methods

and thereby avoiding the limitations of any single method. Ultimately the researcher will attempt to achieve levels of reliability and validity (traditionally positivist ideals) and triangulation has a role to play in this arena (Golafshani, 2003). The objective of this thesis is to obtain rich and not soft data from both the academic and practitioner world, and therefore a certain degree of rigidity has to be sought. It has been previously suggested that the methods chosen will dig deep into the social phenomena outlined in the research question, uncover some general lessons and directions for future research and be sufficiently generalist to engage a wider practitioner audience with actionable insights or, as Harrigan and Hulbert (2011) described it, a *"new Marketing DNA".* Triangulation supports this vision.

3.6 Sampling

This section details the cases that were chosen, and the individuals that were identified, selected, engaged and questioned as part of this study. Particularly in the depth interviews it is important to highlight the extremely high profile of the respondents and richness and stature it gives to the thesis. Fig. 3.17 outlines the overall sampling frame and is discussed in detail.

Research data subjects			
Brand **Research**	**Guinness** *Alcoholic drinks*	**Nike** *Sportswear*	**Hacienda** *Entertainment*
One on One interview Key Brand Leader	**Kenny Jamieson** •Ex Marketing Director *(Guinness Ireland)* •Global Head of Innovation *(Diageo)*	**Caroline Whaley** •General Manager, Creative Development *(Nike)*	**Graeme Park** •Resident DJ *(Hacienda)*
One on One interview Key Brand Leader	**Andy Fennell** •Chief Marketing Officer *(Diageo)*	**Ben Gallagher** •Insight and Creative Strategy Director *(Nike)*	**Trevor Johnson** •Creative Director *(Hacienda)*
Additional one-on-one			**Jon Drape** •General Manager *(Hacienda)*
Focus Group Core target Consumer	Session 1 *6 respondents* Session 2 *7 respondents*	Session 1 *6respondents* Session 2 *6 respondents*	Session 1 *6 respondents* Session 2 *6 respondents*

Fig.3.17. Helicopter view of the sampling frame

3.6.1 The sampling cases

In selecting the sample cases, three products and categories (Alcoholic Drinks, Sportswear and Entertainment) were chosen on the basis of their

perceived high levels of consumer emotional connectivity (as Bradley et al *(2007)* might phrase them – *lovemarks*): **Guinness** with its iconic advertising (Simmons, 2006) and cherished provenance (Murphy, 2003); **Nike** with its global strength and stature (Davis, 2000) and the emotional connectivity of espoused advertising line – *just do it* (Beverland et al., (2006); and **The Hacienda Nightclub**, the ground breaking, tribal entertainment environment (Young, 2010) and the place where the powerful and influential youth movement "Madchester" emanated from (Addison and Jones, 2005).

Hence within the three sectors three brands were selected (*to support Yin, 2003, demand for a robust number and the desire to assume some level of generalisation*). Each brand was chosen on the basis of a number of criteria - exhibiting strong brand affinity (with predicted and associated richness of data), standout icon of the sector and attainability of research subjects. Whilst not attempting to propose broad generalisation against any potential findings, the researcher decided to select three differing sectors to investigate and to choose one of the more widely known names from each category. The diversity of this selection was chosen in order to not only uncover cross case findings from unconnected cases, but also to include brands, who by reputation would engage a broader practitioner audience. It was anticipated that delivering research on such high profile brand names would potentially engage a wide readership for the final thesis. Whilst three is a relatively small sample size it has academic credibility (Yin, 2003 and Bernard, 1998) together with practitioner impact from the stature of the cases and seniority of respondents. It is also important to highlight that whilst Guinness and Nike are contemporary brands and at the cutting edge of today's branding debate, the Hacienda occupies a very different position. Indeed its dominant period was during the 1990's and so the age of this case might well be perceived as a limitation. However, the researcher contests that its very unique approach to branding, organisational structure, innovation and finance gives this case a very rich set of premises to investigate. It was also from a pre-digital era and it is suggested this difference alone could deliver a rich comparative platform. Combining The Hacienda with contemporary cases is a potent combination - it is important to learn from the past, to understand the future (Grant et al, 2009).

3.6.2 The Sampling Frame – Focus Groups

The *'sampling frame'* is the reference point that will allow the researcher to select appropriate people for the study (Adams and Cox, 2008). However, it is accepted that whatever sampling frame is used it will bias how representative the sample is of the wider population. With research limitations taken into consideration (e.g. time, cost, opportunity) an ideal sample, it is argued, can never be achieved, therefore measures were put in place to ensure an academically rigorous starting point. Krueger (1994) suggested that participants should share similar characteristics: gender group, age-range, ethnicity and social class. Kitzinger (1994) alternatively advocated the use of pre-existing groups, as acquaintances could relate to each other's comments and may be more able to challenge one another. Having debated this with the supervisory team, it was agreed that the optimum sample is amongst those precisely defined by each of the case organisation. For example Guinness in the UK's target (via Kenny Jamieson ex- Marketing Director of Guinness Worldwide) is established as male, ABC1 socio-economic classification (not C2DE) with a defined B, in the age group 21-35 year with an on target of 28. This approach was replicated with the other brands under scrutiny.

With regard to the ultimate number of groups required, Krueger (1994) suggested it may be necessary for only three or four and for the optimum number of participants Krueger and Casey (2000) and Yin (2009) suggested between six and eight. They also advise that non–attendees (in groups) may be an issue so encouraged over recruitment by approximately 10-15%. Their final recommendation is that the session should last between one-two hours.

3.6.3 The Sampling Frame – In-depth interview individuals

Within each of these *brand cells*, two significant individuals were selected (Fig. 3.17); one on the basis of having senior brand leadership (internal and external organisational) and the other to give a broader perspective on the brand's consumer relationship and interface. This approach mirrors the senior calibre of the individuals interviewed in the branding study by Reyneke et al (2012). Indeed the relatively few cases required (*sample size*) in qualitative

case study research still allows for greater in-depth understanding of the phenomena being investigated. The desire is to investigate senior people, in senior roles, with direct impact on the brand – these information-rich cases offer real insight (Noor, 2008). Before conducting any interviews or collecting, analysing and interpreting data, it was imperative to secure access to the richest of data subjects (Yin, 2003).

The respondents were purposefully selected as experts in their area (seniority and experience) so as to have the most informed insight into the phenomenon under study (Harker, 2008). As discussed, pure positivists would prefer totally structured interviews with a large sample of the population in order for the results to be comparable and generalisable. However, the interpretivist stance taken by the researcher would argue, to the contrary, that smaller numbers of respondents do provide greater depth and understanding and a contextual view of the phenomena under consideration. Indeed, information-rich cases offer a great deal regarding issues of main importance to the purpose of the research (Morrow, 2007) and so it was decided to aim high within the target organisations and select those individuals who had either ultimate (CEO / Marketing Director) or absolute direct (Creative Director) influence on the focused brand.

The researcher's practitioner background, through reputation and network, established a route map to the top of these organisation including: Andy Fennel, CMO of global drinks company Diageo; Caroline Whaley, Head of Creative Development at Nike Inc.; Ben Gallagher, recent Managing Director at Nike; and Graeme Park, world famous Club DJ. Appendix 3 presents resumes of those interviewed and captures specifically both the power of their practitioner stature and their direct and insight-rich experience of the brand (case) under investigation.

Finally, access appears not to be a topic that is often explored in the marketing research literature. However, as van de Ven (1995) suggested, unless access to senior people who can provide insight into phenomena is sought and achieved, much process research will remain pure conjecture, and the goal of placing ourselves in the "temporal and contextual frames" of respondents will

continue to elude us. Consequently much effort was placed on first identifying and secondly locking in the senior individuals for depth interviews but also to ensure those in the focus group were within the clearly defined consumer profiles and, importantly, those with anticipated real insight to give. Hence a homogenous sampling approach was taken to identify the key attributes (Onwuegbuzie and Collins, 2007). Within the focus groups each of the individuals were selected on the classification divested from the literature but also cross-referenced within the prior in-depth interviews. Appendix 4 also outlines the resumes of those interviewed and highlights their appropriateness.

3.6.4 Applying learnings from the pilot study

A pilot focus group was run questioning Guinness core target market consumers (the main study sample) to understand if the research instrument as a whole was functioning well (Bryman and Bell, 2007), i.e. to establish how appropriate were the methods. Fine tunings were incorporated into the final research model covering:

1. *Timings* – needed to re-address the Critical Timing Plan, as it takes much longer to assimilate people (over invite 50%) and analyse data, than predicted.

2. *Playing Up* - understand and make allowances for some respondents playing up to the recording equipment (Bell, 1996).

3. *Stimulus* - appreciate stimulus sheets can act as stimulators, energisers and deliverers of depth but avoid leading on the respondents.

4. *Homework* – very positive feedback as this got the group opening up from the first few minutes – they had time to consider and got it all off their chests from the start.

5. *Data collection method* – originally it had been planned to video all interviews but the pilot showed the problems this can manifest –

additional time in recording, set up, playing up or withdrawing from the camera. It was decided to rely on just audio recording equipment and researcher in-session notes to capture the subtleties of behaviour and body language.

6. *Questions born from literature* – the scale and breadth of these questions proved adequate in covering the ground at depth within the allocated time. Indeed the stimulus helped the transition and kept energy and focus high.

3.6.5 Recruitment for Focus Groups and Individual depth interviews

There are a number of different recruitment techniques depending on the nature and goals of the research, the sample population, and proximity to the research setting (Peek and Fothergill, 2007). Of these techniques *Researcher-Driven Recruitment* is perhaps the most appropriate strategy for this thesis as the researcher is solely responsible for finding a way and for recruiting the research participants (remembering that in the in-depth interviews seniority is the key – traditionally the hardest sector to achieve commitment). For the in-depth interviews the researcher firstly identified individuals by using his own business network (LinkedIn) and composed a "*check in and ascertain propensity*" email to take part. Once a degree of commitment was highlighted a full invite was emailed to the respondents outlining what, where and why, to give them a sense of the researcher's expectations.

Appreciating that senior individuals have an extremely tight diary, a number of dates were proposed, including breakfast and lunch slots, to ensure the researcher was being as accommodating as possible. In addition to this the researcher has a full time career running a large marketing consultancy across two cities, so time frames were opened up to accommodate all eventualities. The breadth of respondents also meant travel (on a number of locations) to London, Manchester and Birmingham to hold individual sessions.

With focus group recruitment a similar strategy was adopted, however, this time mining the researcher's own social network. The researcher initially

shortlisted those individuals from his immediate network (Facebook) that had *the propensity* to have a network of on target consumers associated in their own network. Then with the aid of a key criteria checklist (the respective target consumer profile), asked these individuals to select from their own personal contacts those that matched the defined consumer profile and, importantly, that have no direct contact or knowledge of the researcher. The individuals were again contacted to *ascertain propensity* to take part and were then sent the full electronic invitation (Fig. 3.18).

Fig.3.18 Example of respondents personalized invites (see Appendix 6) Source: Original

Thanks so much for agreeing to take part in the focus group, where we'll be discussing amongst other things, the world of The Haçienda. It will be an informal session with up to 8 people taking part who are all pretty similar to you. I will be simply setting questions about your experiences of the Haçienda, and allowing you, the group, to openly discuss. Refreshments will be served – maybe even a pint.

To capture the conversations and help in writing the report I will be recording the session, and if this were something you would prefer not to happen then please email me ASAP.

To kick the session off I would like you prepare a short piece of homework – don't worry it should only take you 15 minutes.

Homework exercise.
1. Think about and capture the 5 things that you loved about the Haçienda.
2. At the time clubs like Cream and the Ministry of Sound were big – what made the Haçienda different?
3. Bring along something that reminds you of those days

If you have any questions about the session please drop me a return email or call me (07803 887 504)

Thanks again and see you on Thursday 1st September

Cheers, Mark Fowlestone

The key details are:

Date : Thursday 1st September 2011   Time: 6pm   Location: 54 Marshall Street London W1F 9BH
Duration: 1h 30 mins

The invite gave all necessary details for attendance, the background to the research and a short piece of homework so as to ensure the respondents arrived primed to engage and deliver data. This is a technique taken from the practitioner world and certainly ensures subjects are switched on and committed to the task in hand. It does, however, reduce the numbers attending because of the initial effort required from respondents. In addition, the focus group individuals were paid a small donation (Burns and Grove, 2001) for their time (£20) and informed they will be given snacks and refreshments during the session. Keeping an eye on the need to establish informed consent, Tyldrum (2012) added that it is credible to understand that a certain degree of social pressure may be exercised in this process but it is suggested that as long as measures are in place to alleviate bias, then the approach is valid.

Finally, respondents were advised to block out a maximum of two hours for the session (Stewart and Shamdasani, 1990) and that recording equipment was to be used. The process gave the respondents a clear framework in which to confirm their attendance, ask any questions, do the necessary preparation and sits well with the necessary (*Edinburgh Napier University*) ethics requirements (discussed later). Finally, in ultimately ensuring the *right sample* was achieved, it was deemed equally important to identify those that can deliver richness. Participants were therefore sought who are, as Krueger and Casey (2000) defines as, *"information-rich",* i.e. people who are likely to have the greatest

amount of insight on the topic. Bearing in mind their recommendation of ideal focus group respondent numbers, approximately twelve candidates were targeted (and briefed, reminded and finally prompted) thus allowing for no-shows.

Focus groups are intended to promote self-disclosure among participants and this is most likely to happen when the participants perceive that they are alike in some way and when the environment is permissive and non-judgmental (Bryman and Bell, 2007), therefore extreme care and attention was taken in the overall briefing and engagement of all individuals.

3.6.6 Establishing parity in the sessions

In total the researcher carried out seven individual depth interviews (one extra and discussed later) and six focus groups (with a minimum of six respondents in each) over a period of approximately eighteen months. Each of the sessions lasted between one and a half and two hours (Krueger, 2009) and followed a pre outlined format that commenced with respondents being asked a pre-session homework question via their personalised electronic invitation. Fig. 3.19 gives a brief overview of a typical session breakdown and this was used to establish time management and keep parity within all sessions.
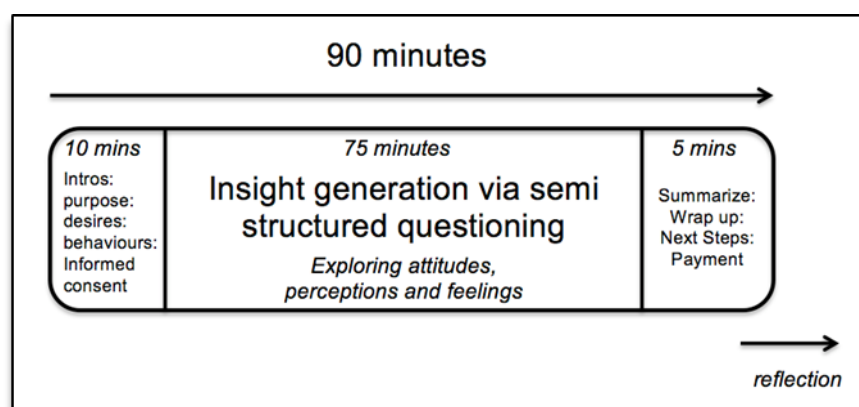
Fig. 3.19 Helicopter view of projected session time breakdown – acted as guide to establish uniformity within the different sessions. Source: Original

In addition, before each of the sessions (Depth and Focus) a "*principles checklist*" (Fig 3.20) was draw up and used as another signalling prop pre, during and after.

Setting some principles

1 Participants.
- Aim for equal participation / let them talk.
- Display respect for others.
- Keep focused.
- Maintain momentum.
- Get closure on questions.

2 Introduction.
- Record location, time, date.
- Welcome participants.
- Review goals of the session.
- Introductions.

3 Establish agenda: why are we here & what will we do?
- Review of agenda.
- Review of purpose: why are we here?
- Review of activity: what will we do?

4 During the session:
- Bring everyone in
- present q's carefully & slowly

5 During the session: monitor & control.
- Promote even participation.
- Keep energies up.
- Keep on brief & positivity high.

6 Closing the session: wrap up and thanks.
- Record duration of the session.
- inform we'll be in touch with outputs if required.
- Summarise output.
- Thank participants.
- Close the meeting.
- Capture reflection notes immediately post session.

Fig.3.20 Research session principles. Source: Original

It is vital to keep parity between the interview sessions (Krueger, 2009) and laying down this template certainly assisted with this prerequisite.

3.6.7 A logical progression

The principles checklist was also contained within a guidance manual that laid out a process for all the session stages – pre, during and post. It ensured that all the steps were covered, again providing for consistency.

These three procedural documents were drawn up (fig 3.21/22/23) showing the logical progression for all focus groups and a variant was also produced for the depth interviews.

Pre-session procedure

1 Sample
- 6/8 individuals.
- Target consumers (adorers from Diageo classification).
- Target through social/work network.
- Key q's to identify people (Age/ Guinness drinkers/Brand Supporters).

2 Invite
- Time.
- Place.
- Duration.
- Top line subject matter.
- Homework.
- Payment.
- Confidentiality.
- Ethics (recording).
- Acceptance rsvp.

3 Homework
- Get them in the research space.
- Think about their favourite brand – come prepared to talk about why they like it.
- Positioned as an ice breaker and to ease them into the session.
- Issued a week before.

4 Venue
- Use a breakout room at researcher's office.
- Airy comfortable and bright.
- Group supplied with refreshments.

5 Stimulus
- Crib sheets of previous marketing Comms materials.
- Other repertoire drinks brands (Jack Daniel's / Smirnoff).
- Individual exercises.

Fig.3.21 Analysis of pre-session tasks - efficient planning and running. Source: Original

To counterbalance some of the qualitative weak points outlined in Fig's 3.14 to 3.16 these procedures ensured a high degree of interview parity at all levels. This meant (Fig. 3.21) sample size, pre information pack, homework, venue and stimulus all stacked up. Fig.3.22 reflected how uniformity was also established (as much as qualitative can) in the flow and structure of the session – from welcome and introductions to the inclusion of stimulus and exercises and through to the scope of questions to the final harvest. Finally Fig.3.23 covers the process of ensuring consistency after the session – ensuring all data is collected, ethics adhered to, reflection time allocated and findings captured.

In-session procedure

1 Welcome & Intros.
•Ice breakers.
•Introductions.
•Informed consent.

2 Agenda.
•Why?
•Process.
•Rules.
•Hopes.

3 Homework.
•Kick start group involvement.
•Build & shape thinking.

4 Questions.
•Let them flow.
•Orchestrate to move through themes.

5 Stimulus.
•Supply with each theme area.
•Get them commenting and building.

6 Exercises.
•Individual & group exercises (assist in future triangulation).

7 Harvest.
•Group consensus achieved through identification of drive themes.

8 Session end.
•Thanks.
•Next steps/value.
•Payment.

Fig.3.22 Analysis of in-session flow - efficient planning and running. Source: Original

Post-session procedure.

1 Collate all data.
•Signed consent forms.
•Individual's worksheets and notes.
•Theme Ranking Sheets - individual and group.
•Interviewer notes.
•Audio check.

2 Personal reflection.
•Overall impressions.
•Good/bad - thoughts on improvements.
•Key take outs.
•Ethics.

3 Data capture.
•Transcribing/consider group dynamics/Hermeneutics/ Paralanguage.

4 Data analysis.
•Familiarization; identifying a thematic framework; indexing; charting; mapping and interpretation.
•Isolating themes & capturing killer quotes.
•Triangulation – transcript/worksheets/research preconceptions/literature.

5 Report writing.
•Learnings.
•Processes.
•Reliability.
•Pitfalls.
•Richness.

Fig. 3.23 Analysis of post-session flow: efficient planning and running. Source: Original

Ultimately this process ensured the right people were engaged, ethics were adhered to, individuals were in the optimum headspace and logistically it could be managed efficiently and that the data captured was in its richest of formats.

3.6.8 Interview Questions

Taking a semi-structured approach to questioning as described by Wengraf (2001), both the focus group and individual depth interviews featured *question themes* that were born out of both the literature review and learnings from the initial pilot study. A number of semi-structured, open-ended interview questions were prepared and crafted in order to gain the desired rich understanding. The principle was to guide the individuals through the previously identified a priori themes which had shown value in the brand/consumers affinity debate. The semi-structured open-ended question format really allowed for flexibility for the interviewee to verbally meander or indeed accentuate a point or build further themes (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006 and Kvale, 2007).

The researcher conducted every interview and hence, because of the intimacy with the methods, the researcher could easily amend the flow of the question, dig deeper, probe further or expand more on a question live in session. This was particularly pertinent after the pilot study learnings. Fig.3.24 gives a suggestion of the range and types of questions/themes covered (expanded further in the data analysis section).

Questions drawn from the literature & shaped around the research aims

Questions	Themes	Justification
•How do you feel about Guinness? •What emotions does the name evoke? •What's the Guinness story? •Has your feelings towards it grown over time?	Emotional bonds	Identify what role & influence stories have in brand affinity
•What does trust mean with brands? •Who exhibits : who doesn't •Do you trust Guinness - how and why?	trust	Gauge the influence trust has on brand affinity
•Nostalgia appears to be popular in advertising at the moment - what do you think is going on? •How do you feel about the use of nostalgia?	nostalgia	What cues can be divested from the rise in nostalgia?
•Would you describe Guinness as authentic - what are the key factors and signs? Does this benefit a brand ?- if so how? •Introduce **Brew Dog** Stimulus for further authenticity discussions	authenticity	How authenticity shapes narrative

Fig. 3.24 Example of semi structured questions employed in the interviews.
Source: Original
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Importantly each of the questions had robust justification as initially they were born out of the identified themes but crucially delivered with cross reference to the research aims and research questions. The semi-structured questions were also kept purposefully short and sufficiently ambiguous to allow respondents to free flow and craft their own stories. Indeed much of consumer's thinking occurs in their subconscious and according to Gretzel and Fesenmaier (2010) only surfaces through metaphors and stories. Therefore the door was metaphorically left open with such a semi-structured approach. For each of the distinct brand sessions the questions were tailored to accommodate the subtleties of each brand and its competitive landscape.

Finally both individual and group sessions were audio digitally recorded making it possible for the researcher to capture every word and nuance from each respondent, which assisted in the categorization and eventual analysis of the collected interview data.

3.6.9 Use of Stimulus

The power of interjecting visual stimulus has been investigated by numerous researchers (Onwuegbuzie, 2009, Donoghue, 2010 and Krueger and Casey, 2000) and it proves to be very powerful in increasing the richness of data and the researcher's specific learnings were incorporated into this thesis. Within both focus groups and depth interviews, participants were given wide ranging stimulus that covered the brand in question and its broader competitive set, together with specific stimulus to support each semi structured question.

Fig.3.25 and Fig.3.26 reflect the scope of stimulus engaged. Stimulus boards, which in the main contained imagery, were interjected roughly every fifteen minutes and time was given for all respondents to understand, consider and discuss. They provided for rich springboards and their intrinsic energizing qualities provided for deeper data to be divested.

Example of Guinness , The
Hacienda & Nike stimulus

Fig. 3.25 Examples of stimulus presented to the groups (ref: Appendix 10)

Source: Original

Fig.3.26 Examples of the general stimulus (ref: Appendix 10) Source: Original

As suggested, the stimulus proved invaluable in raising group energies, provoking broader and deep discussions (Donoghue, 2010) and allowing respondents to illustrate their points. In addition to group stimulus, respondents were also individually set exercises to complete on their own. Fig.3.27 illustrates both the exercises, firstly "word association" which required each participant to offer words they would associate with the brand in question. It allowed the group dynamic to be eased for a moment and (as will be discussed) facilitated a triangulation of the data within the group and ultimately with the group versus the individual.
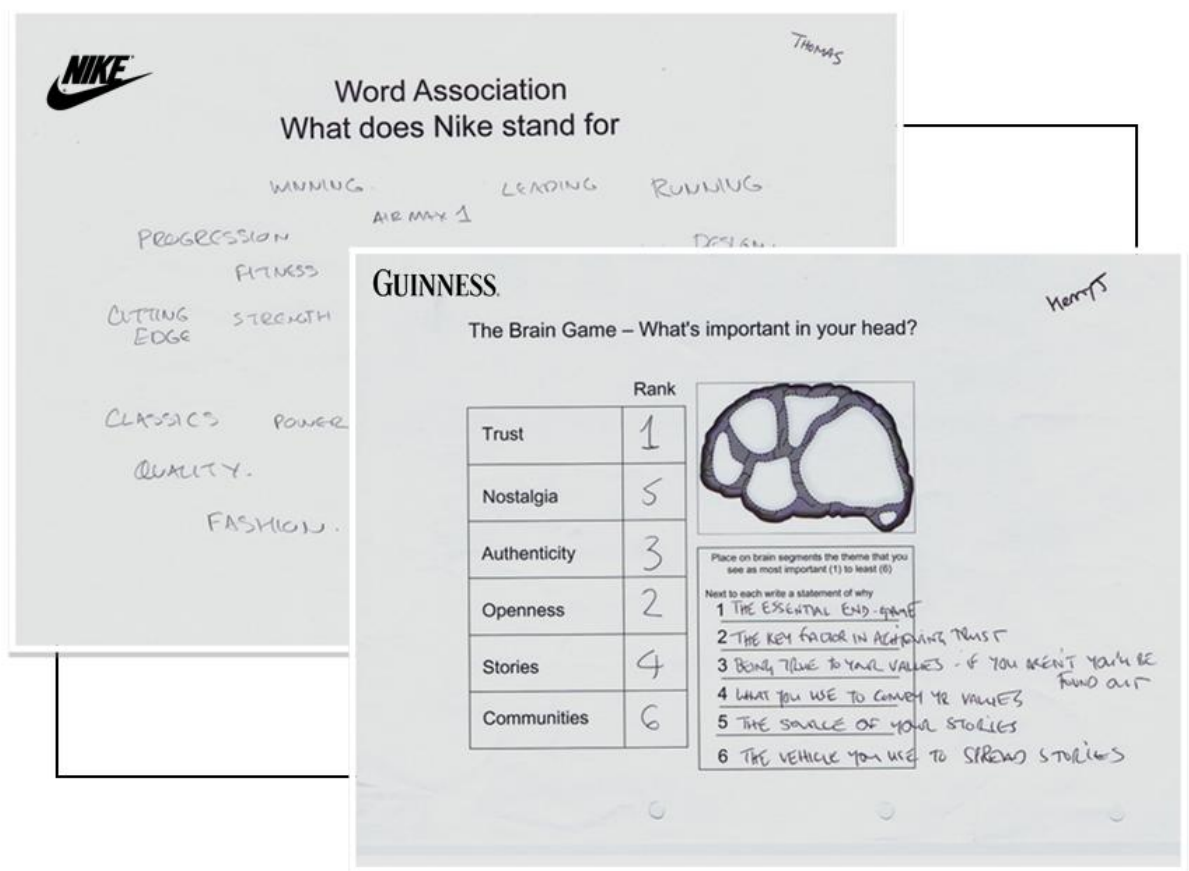
Fig.3.27 Individual worksheets – Brain Game from Guinness depth interview and Nike Word Association from focus group (ref: Appendix 7) Source: Original.

Secondly, the "Brain Game" exercise was used which asked individuals to rank the factors (from literature) in order of their importance to brand affinity and place a supporting statement next to each. Particularly evident in the groups, this gave individuals a moment of solace and privacy to get their points across.

Finally the notion of giving individual exercises is actually documented well within a feminist paradigm method (Wilkinson, 1998). It is often not accepted that focus groups are more naturalistic than individual interviews because in the main the social setting is somewhat contrived (Morrison, 1998) and even the act of filling in an individual questionnaire might feel more natural. Feminist researchers have a tendency to treat the individual as a separate entity in the social context. Whist not subscribing to the feminist paradigm this technique certainly evoked a depth of data. Indeed it can be suggested that participants' views are more likely to be revealed in these less than traditional ways.

3.7 Ethics

The premise of all the research work undertaken within this thesis has been in adherence *(and in spirit)* with both the Edinburgh Napier University (2007) Code of Practice on Research Ethics and Governance and the Marketing Research Society (MRS 2010) Code of Conduct.

The heart of the ethics agenda is that all respondents were required to understand, comment and subsequently sign the informed consent form (Bryman and Bell, 2003). This demands respect for the rights of others who are directly or indirectly affected by the research and as such informants should be fully informed and consent obtained. At all times participants' rights of privacy were guaranteed, with safeguards concerning all aspects of confidentiality. Written consent was obtained (Fig.3.28) and all participants were fully informed of the nature and the purpose of the research, how it will be conducted, the expected outcomes, and how the outcomes will be disseminated.

This was run through prior to the session and re-addressed at the start of each interview. In the signing process all key aspects of the form were illuminated: the purpose, importance of transparency and confidentiality, the audio recording of sessions, the right to remain anonymous or, in depth interviews, to use their details verbatim in the report – in which case their express consent was achieved.

Please tick boxes to confirm you agree with the statements

I confirm that I have read the introduction notes above regarding the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary & I am free to withdraw consent at any time, without giving a reason, without my legal rights being affected. ☐

I understand that many comments & opinions may be looked at by responsible & authorised personnel from Napier University. I give permission for these individuals to have access to this information. ☐

I understand that the research group will be recorded and clips used in the compilation of the findings paper. I give permission for this and its usage as detailed in the introduction. ☐

I agree for my comments to be specifically referred to and highlighted as my own within the final thesis. ☐

I agree to being contacted in the future about further studies relating to this research topic. ☐

Signed participant: _____ Dated: _____

Fig. 3.28 Snapshot of the informed consent form (ref Appendix 9) Source: Original

Data protection was always of paramount importance. This was again clarified with all research subjects, their wishes absolutely taken and their right to withdraw at any point, accepted. Each and every interview was digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim to assure accuracy. Interviewers were also informed that the researcher understood that the individual's answers or comments made in response to questions were considered the opinion of the individual interviewee, and not necessarily the official stance of the institution and that, particularly in the in-depth interviews, their specific views will be highlighted and drawn upon.

Finally for security and researcher peace of mind, all data was stored with both password protection and encryption in all locations including the researcher's home and work hubs and the work-in-progress USB pen drive.

3.8 Validity and Reliability

Generally questions of validity and reliability emanate more from a positivist philosophical standpoint. This sits with a more quantitative vision of inquiry and the measures are generally described as construct validity where they are looking for replicability and absolute accuracy of measurement. In this way any involvement of a researcher is seen as having the very real potential to greatly reduce validity (Golafshani, 2003).

However, in a more interpretivist piece of research, where qualitative data is generally at the heart, then the means of checking validity and reliability are instead: *precision* (Winter, 2000), *credibility* and *transferability* (Hoepf, 1997). These ultimately allow for the means of evaluating the findings (Krauss, 2005). Indeed, as outlined in this methodology chapter, and as a consequence of the lens through which the researcher sees this study, it is accepted that ultimately every interview will differ from each other, the responses will vary and the debate, especially in focus groups, will be of differing depths. It is a social science and the very nature of open-ended questions magnifies this. Indeed Bhaskar's (1993, 1998) philosophy of Critical Realism is a realist philosophy that claims the world outside is independent of our conscious perception and that only some aspects of this world are **objectively knowable** via our senses and that we can misinterpret sense data. This is exacerbated when one delivers, as previously highlighted, a perspective that has three views on reality: the deep, the actual and the empirical.

Indeed for Critical Realists observing the event relating to the research question and explaining the underlying causal mechanism is the point of the research. However, being so up-close and personal with the research brings its own potential issues. It consequently demanded that certain measures were considered as much as is feasible and knowable. In addition and with reference to validity, the measures tend to centre around terms such as quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Davies and Dodd, 2002 and Johnson, 2007).

Consequently, in search of validity and reliability (Kirk and Miller, 1986), a number of benchmarks were set and again have been illustrated throughout this chapter. In way of summary therefore:

1. *Consistency was key* – all aspects of the interviews were absolutely consistent: selection process, sample, invitation, duration, environment, semi structured questions and themes, stimulus, worksheets and time for reflection. In addition the researcher is a trained research facilitator which added to consistency of questioning, data collection and analysis.

2. *Replicable* – the methods used were and are totally replicable (Joppe, 2000) and the format has been described for future researchers.

3. *Piloting and Internal consistency* – a flow template of the sessions was created and used as a checklist and was honed via the pilot. Any discrepancies or concerns were highlighted and rectified before the main study commenced.

4. *Triangulation* – all the data was triangulated (Mathison, 1988) to add strength (Patton, 2001) with individual worksheets (allowing for private, solus time) and with the literature. Data was also triangulated (cross analysed) across the cases and against the researcher's preconceptions (born out of practitioner insight).

5. *Generalisable* – the study covered three brands in three sectors and whilst universal generalisability (Stenbacka, 2001) is not suggested it does allow the breadth and scope of insight to be presented against other sectors for consideration. This follows the direction proposed by Healy and Perry (2000) who suggest the involvement of triangulation of several data sources to allow for generalisation and recommendations for future research.

6. *Ethics* – the thesis has been rigorously placed against the template set out by Edinburgh Napier University. At the heart of this is informed consent and, particularly in view of the stature and profile of respondents, express approvals for data use had to be achieved.

7. *Predictive Value* - The research was conceived to provide a framework for guidance to practitioners. It was crafted to uncover insights (deeper knowledge of patterns and mechanisms) that may prove to be useful to broader marketing consultants and brand owners. Whilst these insights

may have broad application it makes no attempt to predict future occurrences. It does, however, gain strength from applying multiple sources of data.

8. *Analysis precision* – all data was analysed using the same thematic framework, transcribed, analysed and placed into themes within two weeks of data collection - a model rigorously adhered to.

9. *Literature validity* – initially the impact/influence factors were drawn from the extensive literature review and obtained from valid and reliable sources.

10. *Trustworthiness* – the researcher adopted total neutrality (Seale, 1999) to build credibility and ensure consistency. Being a practitioner meant holding back from judgement and allowing the data to flow.

3.9 Summary

This chapter has outlined how epistemology and ontology drive methods and the ultimate scale, scope, design and application of the research. Having adopted an interpretivist (Critical Realist) approach with an inductive style of enquiry, a more flexible and fluid research design has been outlined. The chapter detailed the proposed methods, critically evaluated the approach and presented a structure for the research. The researcher accepts that employing any method comes with its own limitations and challenges (these have been outlined in detail), but realises that with clear planning, exhaustive preparation and rigorous piloting, thesis rigor can be achieved.

The research set out to ultimately assist practitioners in the consumer/brand affinity battle and the next chapter details the richness of data drawn from the research design and, via a comprehensive analysis, delivers practical insights and concludes by offering a framework for application in industry.

Chapter 4 - CASE ANALYSES AND FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

Chapters 2 and 3 illuminated where the gap in the research exists and defined the research framework and methodology that should be adopted in order to investigate this gap. The process was shaped to examine the constituent parts of the reported breakdown in consumer and brand affinity and also to uncover what factors appear influential in building trust, establishing authenticity and ultimately delivering and developing constructive affinity. This chapter briefly discuses the background to each case and then individually explains the research findings before culminating in a cross case analysis to uncover guiding insights to ultimately assist practitioners in shaping, nurturing and developing their respective brand journeys. Before an analysis of the data is undertaken it is important to reflect again on the focus of the research:

How can organisations build consumer engagement and
consumer brand affinity through a shared narrative?

As such the aim is to uncover those disconnect factors and to gain insight as to what the drivers may be, in order to create a positive and beneficially shared narrative between consumers and organisations (brands).

4.2 Introduction to the Structure

Based on the themes identified from the literature review, a series of semi structured, open-ended interview questions were prepared in order to get a rich understanding of branding, affinity and the impact of narrative in the marketplace. This was taken from two perspectives: firstly the organisational via senior brand owners across three cases, and secondly the customer perspective via their respective target consumers (identified from the preceding in-depth interview into the brand). As identified and discussed in chapter 3, a total of seven individual in depth interviews were carried out ranging in seniority from The Chief Marketing Officer of Global Drinks firm Diageo – Mr. Andy Fennell, and the Marketing Director of Nike – Mr. Ben

Gallagher, to the Creative Director of the Hacienda Nightclub – Mr. Trevor Johnson. These were carried out over a one-year timescale from July 2011 to July 2012 and varied in duration from 82 minutes to 125 minutes with most taking approximately 90 minutes. Each of the interviewees signed an informed consent form, which gave the researcher full permission for them to be referred to specifically and quoted in full. In addition to in-depth interviews two focus groups were run for each case, culminating in a total of six focus groups. Each of the focus groups contained a minimum of six and a maximum of eight individuals and, as discussed in the previous chapter, were all recruited on the basis of matching the reported core target consumer profile. The focus groups lasted between 85 minutes to 115 minutes with the average being approximately 90 minutes and the semi-structured questions were very similar (*same underlying themes*) to the in depth interviews.

In addition to the semi structured interviewing, both in-depth interviews and focus groups were asked to individually complete a "Brain Game" worksheet which required each to sequentially rank each theme (literature) in order of the perceived impact on brand affinity and to support this with a short rationale. This *quantitative* analysis provided a point of triangulation between the qualitative data and the literature as underlined in a critical realist philosophical standpoint. Finally all respondents from both data channels were required to individually complete a word association sheet specific to the particular brand in question. This presented each with the logo specific to their area of interest and necessitated them writing down all the words that immediately sprang to mind. Hence this acted as a qualitative support to the main semi-structure output data. Word association has been shown to provide (and on this occasion certainly delivered) an efficient and rapid method for gathering data on consumer perceptions (Roininen et al., 2006). It allowed them to "empty their minds" of the most immediate brand associations that sprang to mind.

Finally, as an aid to both the researcher in analysing the data and also to allow the reader to comprehend the themes that are emerging (and mirroring the literature), a colour scheme has been incorporated that is consistent throughout and in parity with the themes from the literature. It assists in pictorialising the themes as they emerged.

4.3 The Framework Analysis

Yin (1989) pointed out that data analysis consists of a number of stages, namely examining, categorising and tabulating. Krueger and Casey (2000) built on this concept and suggested that the purpose should drive the analysis and that all analysis should begin by going back to the initial intention of the study and never lose sight of the purpose. In addition, and to avoid any bias, they pointed out that the analysis should be systematic, sequential, verifiable, and continuous. So whilst the focus group and in-depth interviews might have had a free flowing and open nature, the analysis should be much more structured and logical. Krueger (1994) suggested a journey, *the analysis continuum*, from raw data to descriptive statements and ultimately interpretation.

This *'Framework Analysis'* as described by Ritchie and Spencer (1994) sees it as an overlapping process through 5 highly interconnected stages: 1. familiarization; 2. identifying a thematic framework; 3. indexing; 4. charting; 5. mapping and interpretation (See fig. 4.1). The appealing aspect of this *framework analysis* is that whilst it uses a thematic approach, it allows themes to develop both from the research questions and from the narratives of the research participants. It necessitates reading the transcripts in their entirety several times and reading the observational notes taken during the interviews and summary notes (in the reflection period) written immediately after the interviews, and then moving (fig. 4.1) towards assimilating a framework that gave the most open platform for interpretation.

The diagram shows the framework analysis adopted using the in-depth interview with Ben Gallagher (Nike) as a case study for illumination purposes. All the in-depth interviews and focus group outputs were analysed using the same procedures to deliver accessible thematic data for interpretation. Each commenced with an emersion into the data and then a systematic allocation of the data into relevant thematic pots that were born out of the a priori themes from the literature review – but not exclusively. Once assimilated, the pots were mapped and overlaid onto a "driving factors of brand affinity" template, which ultimately laid the foundations for cross analysis and broader findings.

Helicopter view of framework analysis adopted

Fig. 4.1 Framework analysis adopted – developed from Ritchie and Spencer (1994) and Srivastava and Thomson (2009). (Enlarged interpretation within each sub section)

The overarching aim of the analysis was to enable full immersion in the detail and get a sense of the sessions as a whole before breaking them into parts.

During this process major themes naturally began to emerge (fig. 4.2) and, adopting the **same theme colour classifications** as the previously completed **literature review** (*a priori themes*), this allowed comparisons to be made and findings to be assimilated. The themes were broad enough to incorporate a number of sub themes but focused enough to capture a district arena of data.
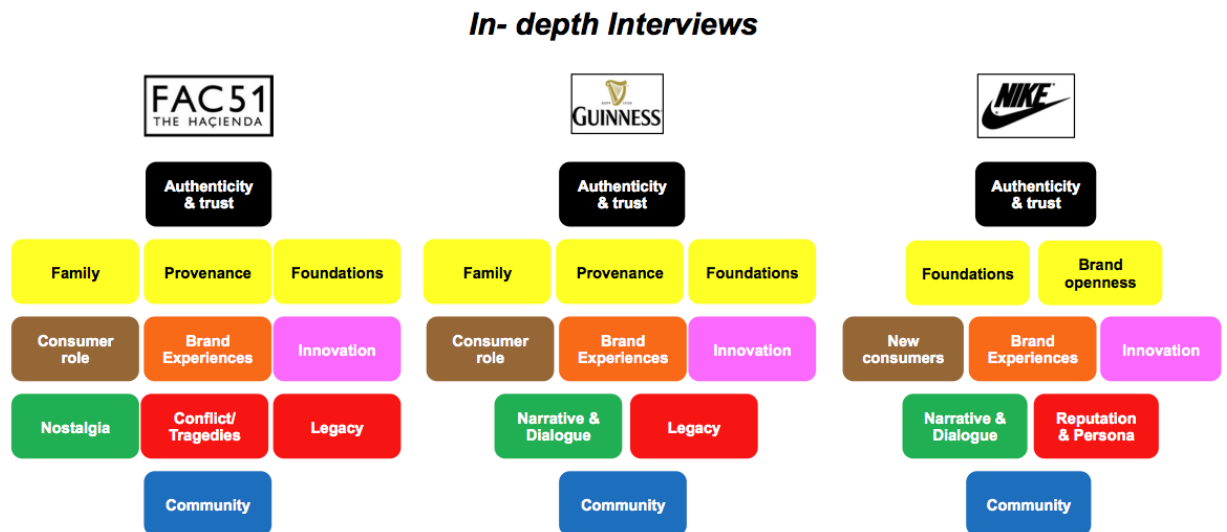
Fig. 4.2 Themes emerging from the focus group interviews
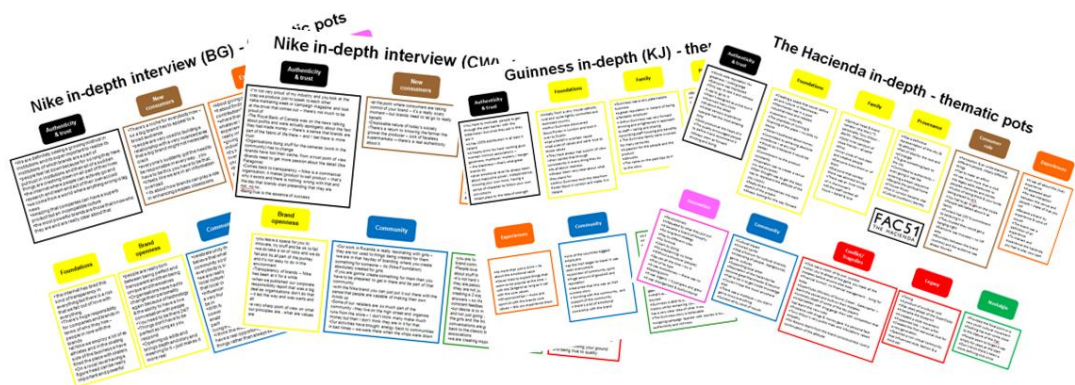
The next stage involves identifying a thematic framework by capturing phrases, ideas or concepts arising from the texts and begins by placing these into pots of relevance. The third stage, indexing, comprises sorting out quotes and making overall comparisons with the group. Next involves lifting key quotes from their original context and re-arranging them under the newly developed appropriate themes (Fig. 4.3).

Here, and for every theme pot, a catalogue of every supporting quote was assimilated to get a visual sense of the scale and breadth of feeling within the theme. In Fig. 4.3 *the dawning of digital* was a sub theme within *community* and, as such, all relevant quotes to this section were assimilated.
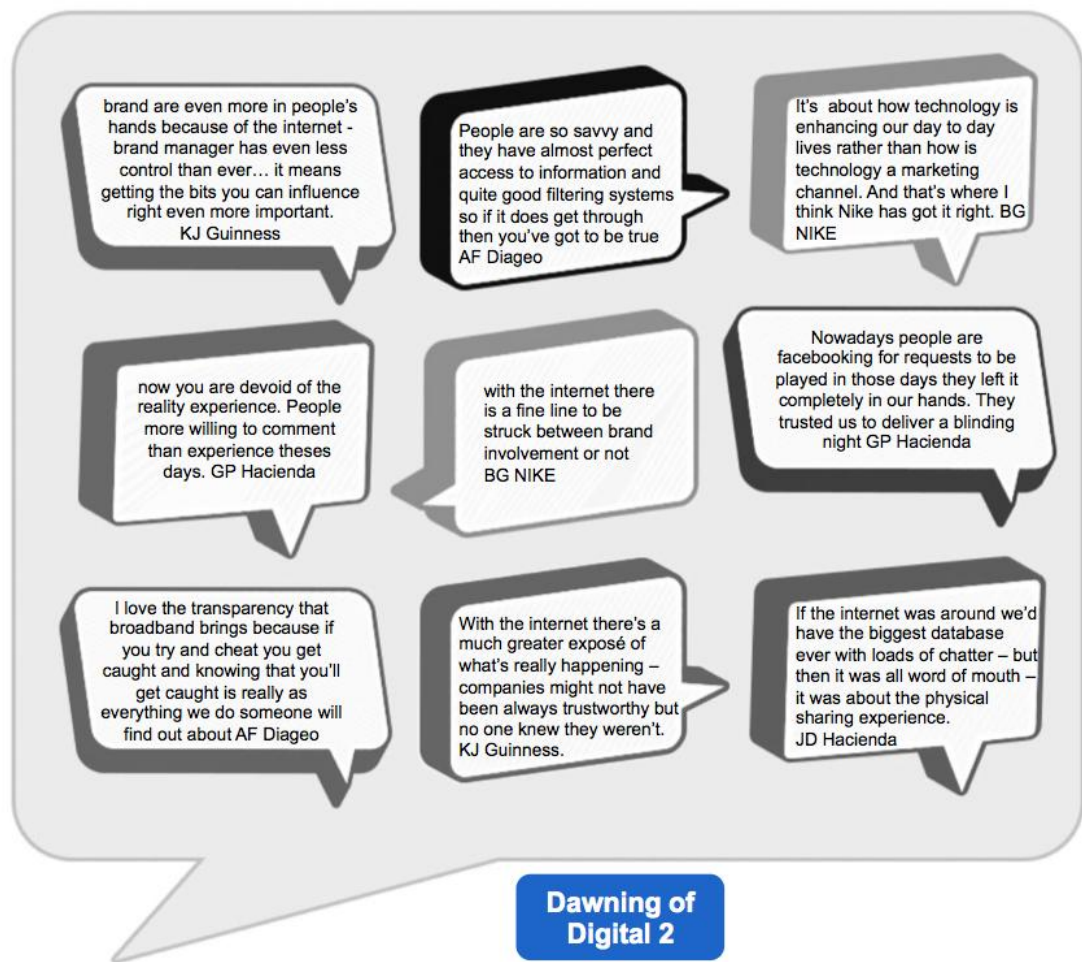
Fig. 4.3 Headline quotes capturing the individual themes. Source: Original

This logical process gave both a clear comprehension and a real depth to the themes generated within the qualitative interviewing. Sense making, according to Bryman and Bell (2007), is ascertained utilising mapping techniques *(cognitive and mind)* to allow theories and deeper insights to be drawn and these will be highlighted as the analysis progresses.

Finally, and in view of the need to alleviate any potential researcher bias (being a practitioner in this field), specific action was taken to counter balance this. In the personal sessions of reflection after each focus group or in-depth interview, any explicit feelings of bias or tendencies to be overly subjective were recorded (Cresswell, 2003). It was imperative that language was closely recorded as it was crucial that the respondent's own words were captured for the subsequent interpretation phases (Becker, 1996). As triangulation had a vital role to play, constant referral to the literature review was paramount, particularly in the theme building process (Berg, 2004). The audio tapes were

listened to a number of times (*together with reading the transcript*) to achieve maximum familiarity with the data and a greater understanding (and any subtleties) of the verbatim transcription (Kvale, 2007).

Finally, with regard to dissenters, or as Kitzinger (1994) referred to them - *"argumentative interactions"*, the data from these (particularly located within audio playback) were also captured and given priority, as it has been found that they can increase the richness of the data (Sim, 1998). In addition, analysing and interpreting information about dissenters has been shown to inform researchers in determining the extent to which the data that contributed to the theme reached saturation point for the session. In this case it is suggested (Maxwell, 2005) that information about dissenters will increase the descriptive validity, interpretive validity, and theoretical validity associated with the emergent themes, which, in turn, would increase understanding of the phenomenon of interest. As the quote below illustrates, authenticity is not simply a function of a historical timeline – new brands can have real authenticity, it is just born out a different driver.

> "Apple don't talk about authenticity, all they talk about is being cutting edge and sleek – that's their story"

Focus group dissenter capturing alternative spin on authenticity

In all, using this template analysis proved highly productive, as it allows the researcher to define and lay out themes (and their priorities) in advance of the analysis process (Brooks, 2012), referred to as "a priori" themes and to assemble a structure allowing findings to be illuminated against them.

4.4 Case study one - Nike Inc.

Since it was founded in 1964 in Oregan USA (*as Blue Ribbon Sports*), Nike has grown into the world's leading supplier of clothing, footwear, sportswear, and sports equipment. Its publicly quoted revenue is in excess of US$24.1 billion in its fiscal year 2012 (ending May 31, 2012) and as of 2012, it employed more than 44,000 people worldwide. According to Forbes (2010), the brand alone is valued at $10.7 billion making it the most valuable brand among sports businesses. As well as its Nike brand the organisation has many subsidiaries including Umbro and Converse and operates a worldwide retail

store operation under the Niketown brand with over 700 shops in 45 countries outside America. In the past its manufacturing has taken criticism for undesirable conditions and practices but in recent years has achieved accolades for its environmental/climate initiatives and through its groundbreaking work in the Nike Foundation (Girl Hub) which aims to change lives in Africa by playing a role in eradicating poverty.

Nike has also been at the cutting edge of branding theory and practice, particularly in the fields of interconnectedness and empowerment (Ramaswamy, 2008) and has shown (via NikeFuel / Nike ID) that it is embracing the ever-changing digital landscape. As discussed in the previous chapter, the in-depth interviewees each have extremely senior (and powerful) brand positions within Nike Inc. – from ultimate creative leadership to director of marketing. They were also very much engaged in the sessions, the subject of which they had coincidently recently been considering in their practitioner fields.

4.4.1 In-depth interviews – theme analysis

Following the in–depth interviews, the data naturally funnelled into a number of thematic pots (fig 4.4) which closely mirrored the literature review in terms of factors with real influence on the depth and intimacy of consumer affinity with the brand.
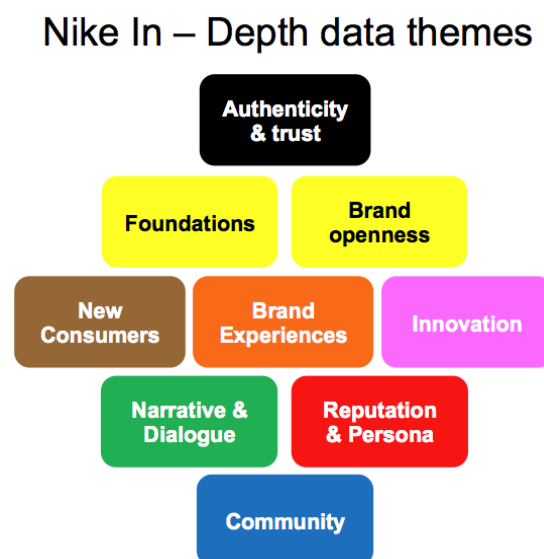
Fig. 4.4 Nike in-depth data falling into key thematic pots

The first umbrella theme from the literature that ran through the data related to the complexity and pace of change within which brands exist today, that is, the modern context.

4.4.1.1   Modern context

> "It's a balancing act as you leave a space to innovate, try stuff, fail yet at the same time open yourself up" (CW, NIKE).

Both Ben and Caroline highlighted the real complexity in branding today, where to progress you need to take risks but these are taken under the ever-inquisitive gaze of critical consumers (Kornberger, 2010). Caroline Whaley (CW) captured the sentiment that, "*It is really not a straight path and that mistakes are going to be made all along the way".* Brands realize they have to move forward and engage with ever-changing consumer needs, but mistakes will be made and as CW stresses *"that is fine; that is human".*

Customers are now informed (Bright and Daugherty, 2012), connected, networked, and empowered on a scale that has never been witnessed before, but Ben Gallagher (BG) warns that as much as we want to live in a purist world where there is no branding involvement in many areas, it is just not realistic. He discussed the Olympics and the negativity bestowed on Coke for their sponsorship – in his mind the Olympics simply would not have existed on such a scale without sponsors and whilst it might not be perfect, brands have just got to take and deal with this rising consumer voice (Wang et al., 2011). Indeed both respondents agreed that the marketing engagement *brand*scape (Rahman and Cherrier, 2010) had changed significantly over recent years making if far more complex for brand owners to co-ordinate their activities but that this should not hold them back from seeking progress because of a fear of failure.

4.4.1.2   Authenticity and Trust

The most revealing theme from the literature concerned the very real breakdown in consumer trust (von Hippel, 2005) and a linked perceived lack of authenticity amongst brands (Ind, 2007) – both key factors in the consumer/brand disconnect. This was one of the key driving forces in

undertaking this research – an attempt to close the research gap and deliver insights to assist in this detrimental divide.

> "We are definitely seeing a growing mistrust in institutions and it is super important to realize brands are part of the institution" (BG, NIKE).

Both BG and CW supported the insight that the decay in trust was very real (Visconti, 2010) and that an appreciation and acceptance of this phenomenon was vital in laying the foundations for building interconnectedness.

> "Brands have lost their cache, from a trust point of view, and brands are trying to work out what their role is in corporate social responsibility" (CW,

CW talked about a lack of pride in the industry in the UK and BG underlined the cultural trait of chastising everything (Jansen et al., 2009), which is magnified by an ever-eager press to make headlines with a thirst for schadenfreude. CW supports this emphasising that there is a real disposable nature to today's society, an almost frivolous relationship with brands that means the depth of engagement is shallow. Both see the starting point and key driver in rebuilding interest and trust is the simple and sometime forgotten need to deliver a quality product first and foremost. It is really back to basics, as they see the breakdown in trust as primarily driven by the global financial crisis (Quandt, 2012), and with reference to reputation BG adds *"they feel let down as they have put trust in the institutions and then all has come crashing down".*

For both, the element of McCarthy's Marketing 4 P's (Srivastava, 2012) - that consumers primarily connect with is the actual product - has not been given the absolute focus by organisations that it should have. For the Nike team, their vision of the dilemma brands face means that brand owners must stay focused on the ever-changing consumer and must absolutely and constantly understand their needs. This dilemma is now magnified, according to CW, as on top of this, organisations/brands are trying to work out what their role should be with corporate social responsibility (Langen et al., 2010). So as

mistrust is deep how can "*doing good"* be understood, expected and welcomed empathically by these newly critical and ever-changing consumers?

4.4.1.3   <mark>Foundations and Premise</mark>

The third key pillar from the literature centres around brand associations delivered through the organisation, its heritage or its openness (Hakala et al., 2011). The literature illuminated that the fragility of brands is exacerbated when these foundations are not rigorously established (Bahadir et al., 2008) and this was underlined in the research but also drawn to the heart of the organisation.

> "There are some amazing people at Nike and there is an opportunity to have an impact on the world beyond our world of sport and as a global business we have a responsibility to do that" (BG, NIKE).

Here the vision is grounded on the need to employ people within the organisation that care (Chouinard, 2006), who reflect the brand and have the passion to move things forward. This idea of people in organisations reflecting the essence of the brand is built later but this more than ever is acting as a key driver to consumer engagement (Burnett and Hutton, 2007). From Nike's perspective also, corporate social responsibility (CSR) is playing an absolutely vital and integral role at the heart of their activities. Consumers are demanding it (Langen et al., 2010) and are able (free and available information) to establish organisational credentials and commitment to it. CRS matters not only to consumers, but also to individuals within organisations; this is reflected in a growing corporate commitment to it (Hyllegard, 2012). In addition to this, CW highlights that there is "*a real responsibility in being a powerful brand and how you behave and take responsibility as you grow up."* Organisations have to be aware of the power they can exert and also sometimes use this power to do well by simply doing good (Lindner, 2011).

Finally and mirroring the literature again (Crutchfield, 2009), CW supports the idea of hardwiring narrative into the essence and foundations of the brand, *"You set out to create emotional connections and there is a hell of an emotional connection between sport and consumers but also with product and*

consumers". If the consumer desire is there it is vital that brands embrace this and develop the conditions to allow it to flourish.

4.4.1.4   Transparency and Brand Openness

From the literature, Fournier and Avery (2011) recommended throwing the doors open and letting corporate control go and allowing consumers to help shape the narrative. The research built on this suggesting that it is important to be transparent with the entire corporate picture not just what the brand owner feels is "on message":

> "Our approach is to lay everything open, warts and all; it's interesting to see how far we can push transparency. The transparency of brands is vital and we at Nike have been at it for a long while" (CW, NIKE).

The requirement for brands to open up (Gabor, 2009) and allow consumers inside was a key factor in the trust debate and BG suggests, *"It is about finding opportunities for meaningful contributions from consumers - where they can play a role - it enhances the overall experience of the output of product".*

The willingness for giving a role to consumers (Ind and Bjerke, 2007) is seen as paramount and as BG agrees *"Opening up adds and brings depth and story and meaning to it [the brand] – just makes it more real".* For Nike this is essential brand management. Indeed this phenomenon is played out as CW highlights in the resurgence of small (farmers) markets where *"seeing the guy that not only reared the chicken but is gonna tell you how to cook it – there's a real authenticity about it."* This approach does not come without a requirement for broader corporate support and a willingness not to be constrained by the need to hit yearly numbers – the annual brand plan*,* as BG recommends, "*at Nike we are having a learning experience of letting go but it has been hard".* As the literature confirms (Simmons, 2001), the traditional organisational approach of 'control' has to change for today's consumers. However, the route map is not straightforward.

4.4.1.5   New Consumer

Indeed the next theme from the literature review outlined the hugely different consumer that has emerged over the last decade, one that is more connected

with others and more empowered, but at the same time more disconnected with brands (Brymer, 2004). This insight was highlighted in the data and reflected the very real concern global brand owners have with a growing disconnection.

> "We are all able to communicate so easily and openly to each other and as individuals we start to expect that of the brands we engage with" (BG, NIKE).

For Nike, the interconnected and ever increasingly demanding consumer should not be feared but embraced within the organisation (Mangold and Faulds, 2009). It is a phenomenon that offers a powerful opportunity for bonding – get it right and you have a loyal and engaged consumer. BG goes further, *"when you are in the industry you sometimes think why would anyone be interested in asking them for feedback, but you don't realise you are part of their lives, an institution."*

Certainly the internet has broken down the corporate walls (Sashi, 2012), a point again highlighted by BG "*with the internet people can actively go and research and learn and act of their own accord and they look at the issues and say it doesn't really work for me anymore*". The data backed up the literature and, specifically with reference to Jenson (2001), confirms the paramount importance of real, emotional connectivity (Basini, 2011) amongst modern day consumers.

4.4.1.6   Living the Brand / Experiences

Ind (2007) and Baumgarth (2010) suggest that for brands to really connect in today's open narrative the organisation has to truly live the brand. The data backed this up and took the debate further – indeed the bedrock appears to build business around fans – inside and out of the organisation.

> "I think if you work in a place where the philosophy is living the brand it helps you to believe. At Nike we have filled the place with skaters and athletes and we feel comfortable" (BG, NIKE).

CW proposes that this philosophy must sit at the heart of the organisational credo: *"create a really clear vision and bring people working on that brand to share that vision, it brings consistency and people start using the same*

language and really start to live it". Taking this further, BG adds *"really enhancing people's passion through experience is how as a brand you can become culturally relevant and culturally resonant - you've got to live it for real"*. The important part of "living the brand" is "living it on brand" as BG suggests, it is *"amazing that companies can have a superb product but an incompatible culture – if they can nail that bit they can take it to another level."*

4.4.1.7   Innovation / Digital Age.

The literature highlighted that there is a strong influencing theme around innovation and the digital age (Leavy, 2012) and, in Nike's case, how the web is rewriting the rules of engagement in the modern *brand*scape.

> "It's about how technology is enhancing our day-to-day lives rather than how technology is a marketing channel and that's where I think Nike has got it right" (BG, NIKE).

In Nike's world the Internet is a fantastic tool for enhancing their relationships with consumers – getting closer to their world and making a real difference. Indeed as BG adds, technology is really a facilitator – it is about enhancements within consumers' lives and community (Szmigin, 2005)*.* Concepts like NikeFuel are facilitating a new proactive relationship with customers, using technology as a facilitator. For Nike, technology and innovation is at the heart of everything they do and for CW it has been an *"enabler for co-creation which has been a massive win".* The innovative heart of the organisation is captured by BG in that for them, via technology and innovation, *"we are trying to create stuff that is of culture rather than on message"* and that in today's interconnected and interdependent world they are seeking *"sustainable innovation"* (Aronczyk and Powers, 2011)*.* Consumers demand it. Therefore they (Nike) are aware that the innovation pipeline must be constant and in tune with consumer needs.

4.4.1.8   Narrative and Dialogue

Central to the Nike communications philosophy is *"enhancing performance through feedback"* (BG). It is a strategy that demands an open and fluid narrative and it is something they strive to manifest.

> "Consumers are coming back to us, creating a two way dialogue but they want answers – so the emotional connection is a constant feedback loop" (CW, NIKE).

The recent innovations – Nike ID and NikeFuel - have great appeal in terms of building a narrative because it allows consumers to *"build a relationship on their own terms"* BG (Terry, 2011). Indeed BG goes further: *"It is about understanding their world and what role you have a right to play in that world and that's finding the narrative".* This goes further than the literature as it really puts the power and focus in the hands of consumers (Fournier and Avery, 2011) and differs from the traditional organisational perspective. As CW proposes, "*you are living in a world of curation rather than brand control and that's a fascinating space".* Ultimately Nike take the narrative debate further with reference to the Nike Foundation and their work with women in Africa: *"our desire is to make sure the conversations and not just going back and forward between the girls and the brand but that those conversations are going between girls as well – back to the classic branding models of associations".* So the real power of narrative is seen as emanating outside of the organisational sphere but still having a huge impact on organisational affinity.

4.4.1.9   <u>Reputation and Persona</u>

In a world where reputations are under scrutiny, as reflected in the literature (Jones et al., 2009), very few brands appear by reputation to be able to do well (certainty no institutions can in the public's eyes - Pierre, and Rothstein, 2010). Consequently establishing solid foundations (Baumgarth, 2010) and nurturing these is paramount.

> "Stick to your consumer and create products for that consumer, create marketing for them and your brand becomes true and when the truth in the brand becomes real you have power" (CW, NIKE).

As BG maintains, *"as a brand you must become culturally relevant and culturally resonant".* Indeed the Nike leadership realises the powerful position the organisation holds in society: *"there is an opportunity to have an impact on*

the world beyond our world of sport and as a global business we have a responsibility to do that". CW takes a more grounded stance where she underlines the importance of consumer perception by placing ultimate focus *"in a determination to deliver a fantastic product - a great product sells itself and sells even better when you have fantastic marketing".* For Nike the key to gaining trust and authenticity is simply about *"holding your ground and being true to quality"* (Godin, 2005).

4.4.1.10 Community

The final theme emerging in the literature (Lee et al., 2011) and prevalent in the Nike in-depth interviews was community and the essential role brands must play to build affinity amongst target consumers.

> "Our desire is to make sure conversations are not just going back and forward between consumers and brand but between consumers as well" (CW, NIKE).

For BG it is about making real changes: "*getting involved in a community is about changing the attitudes and about how a brand behaves which is a more fruitful and interesting space to be in".* So as in the literature (Antorini, 2007) it is about getting involved in community, but as Nike see it there has to be real desire, commitment and honesty otherwise consumers will see through it and your engagement will ultimately be seen as superficial and marketing fluff (Prindle, 2011). By taking an active, enabling role organisations can really start to build the affinity desired: "*so we are kinda creating a community around Fuelband which is an enabler so you are kinda co-participating in something just by living the life"* BG.

> "Non brand savvy consumers get that idea that if you are gonna create something for them they you have to be prepared to get in there and be part of the community" (CW, NIKE).

In fact Nike highlighted the broader impact community activities can have: "*We have brought activities to a city that have re-energized the community - brought the energy back and taken a role in that city (Toronto)"* CW. The impact on brand affinity by nurturing such a deep cultural influence is critical to

their corporate strategy and testament to their ongoing efforts to play a deeper role in communities, particularly in Africa via the Nike Foundation. BG also accentuates the importance technology plays in the overall community debate: "*Fuelband reflects how technology is now at the very heart of engaging the community*". As they see it, this approach is vital in today's fragile economies (Rahman and Cherrier, 2010) where brands can play a real lifeblood role: *"Continuing to be active in a market when the chips and economy are down can breathe new life – normality is important."* - CW.

Over and above the oral transcripts, data was also divested from the worksheets supplied by the respondents. This gave another research perspective on how they felt regarding the key drivers of narrative.

4.4.1.11   Nike in-depth interviews – worksheets

As highlighted, all individuals within the in-depth interviews were presented with two worksheets (fig 4.5) to get a further perspective on what *(the influencers)* was essential to drive brand affinity. From the two sessions Trust and Authenticity were seen as the provisos – an essential to focus on absolute realness and this was closely followed by corporate openness and a willingness to shape a dialogue through bringing consumers inside the

Fig. 4.5 Understanding the drivers in affinity – Nike in-depth worksheets

organisation and developing the conditions for co-creation (Brakus et al., 2011). This was also reflected in the word association sheet, which categorically underlined the significance of these driving forces. The only theme that did not really feature broadly was that of nostalgia. Nike see themselves more about future potential released in consumers rather than establishing a dialogue through nostalgic messaging – this feels more like a tactical "glory days" piece of marketing communications rather than the focus for their strategy of long term connectivity. This ranking of 'associations expressed' married very closely to the researcher's predictions from the literature – what differed is the real strength of opinion regarding how narrative and openness must, via organisational culture, be made to flourish.

4.4.1.12   Nike in-depth interviews – summary

The interviews delivered real insight into understanding what is and what should be driving affinity and engagement. The building blocks are about establishing the drivers of authenticity that help build trust, but for them it is more about being open and creating emotional connectivity with consumers – by being an *empowering companion*. There appears two levels to the drivers: a corporate code entwined within a corporate philosophy, driving the fluidity between consumers and the organisation.

Fig. 4.6 Fan Mechanism pictorialises this insight, where the yellow circles are the corporate code – what's happening inside the organisation, such as a corporate ethos amongst staff that creates this affinity. At the intersections we have the philosophy – the corporate cultural forces such as *living the brand* and *believing in better and a desire to never stay still*, which establishes the momentum to delivering ongoing affinity with consumers. The triangulated literature/interview output theme pots sit within these sections (the coloured boxes) and within the five drive areas which together provide the real energy to ensure the wheels of affinity keep moving. It is a fluid and inter-related relationship (Merz et al., 2009) that requires a solid foundation and will be discussed further within the cross case finding section.
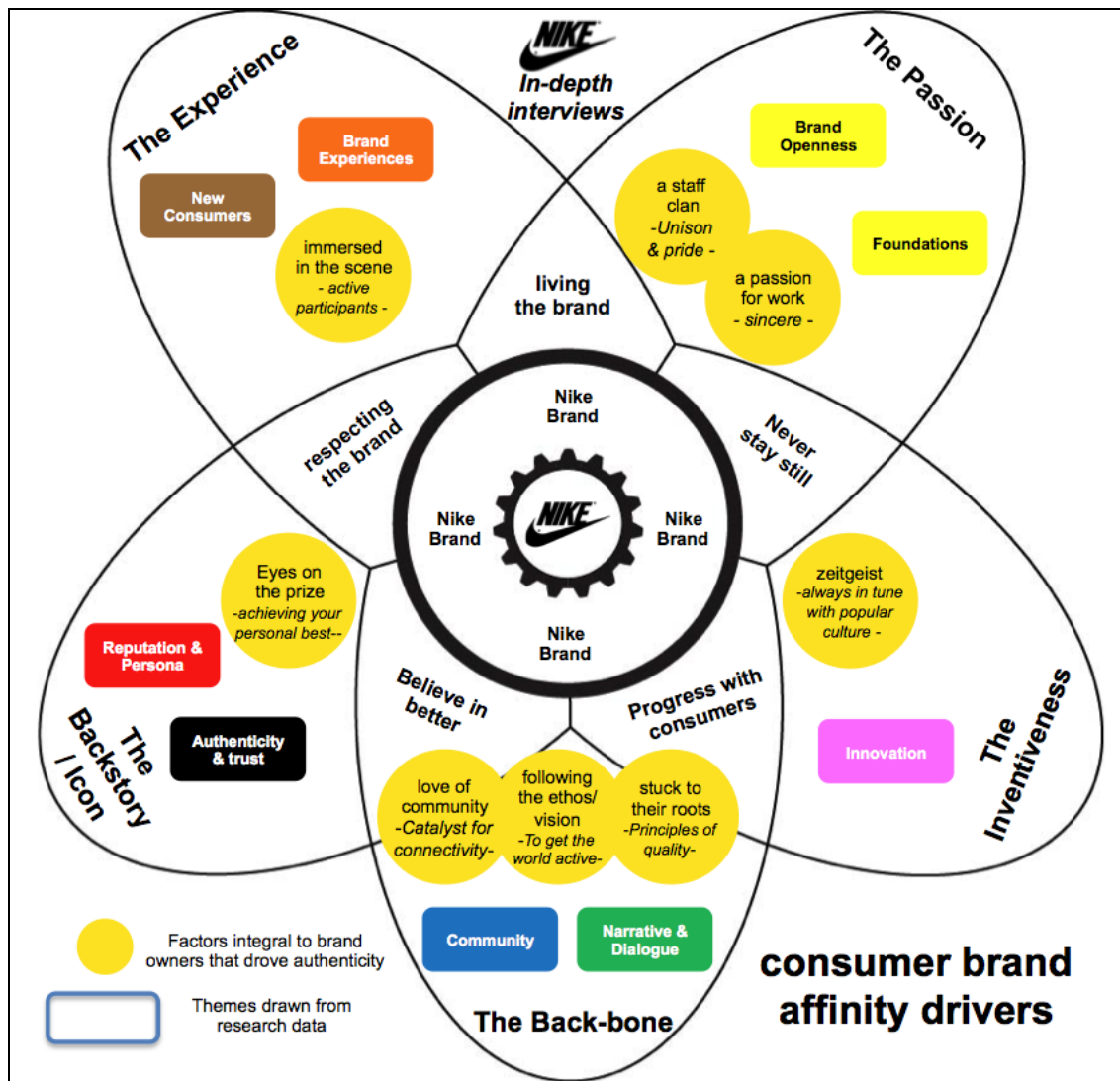
Fig. 4.6 Mapping the affinity drivers – Nike in-depth interviews. Source: Original

The diagram emphasizes the important roles all of the fan blades play: The Back-story, delivering authenticity; The Experience, delivering an immersive experience; The Passion, delivering a motivated workforce; The Inventiveness, ensuring the zeitgeist is embraced; and The Backbone, delivering the conditions for a rich narrative.

4.4.2 Nike focus groups – theme analysis

The two focus groups carried out with target consumers delivered a marrying of the theme pots from both the literature and the in-depth sessions (Fig. 4.7). A number of additional builds and insights were uncovered and have shaped the potential list of narrative drivers, which are detailed within the finding section at the end of this chapter.

Nike Focus Group data themes

Fig. 4.7 Nike focus group data falling into key thematic pots

In terms of ascertaining the respondents' modern perspective on marketing there was indeed a deep mistrust with brands (Langen et al., 2010) – from banking bonuses to retail exploitation, the weight of negativity and conspiracy was widespread (Campbell et al., 2011). In some respondents the level of *brand baiting* has almost become a national obsession, yet with brands they have affinity with they are willing to fight the corner – "*Strange that for such a massive multinational people still really warm to Nike and trust it*".

Without exception the quality of the products featured as the key foundation to building brand affinity within the focus groups. They were aware that they (sports shoes) can be worn at competition standard and this provides consumers with a solid bedrock of truth and authenticity. The product quality stacks up and preserves an acceptance of its premium pricing. There's a real truth about Nike and this established affinity: "*Nike are not cheap – then I suppose neither is Apple*". Interesting for the younger end of the target they are seen as having historical credentials: "*they are the original sporty brand*" and "*It is a brand I have grown up with and value*", both of which add layers to authenticity. This is supported in the notion that Nike has always been about sport which consumers consequently see as being "*true to their roots*".

Interestingly, and reflecting both literature and in-depth interviews, consumers appear to become more engaged as a brand opens itself up (Szmigin et al.,

2005). The Nike ID concept really resonated – an idea where consumers can personalize their own bespoke trainers and have it their way. Also, with reference to NikeFuel, one participant stated, *"I love the NikeFuel idea – really gives you something to aim for – It is like making your own health a kind of game – I end up going out for a walk late at night just to hit my daily target".* What is interesting is that when asked specifically whether this openness is a trait that builds affinity they tended not to support this – as if there is a deep seated belief that this is somehow connected to the dark art of the marketer (Godin, 2005) and may also be related to a desire not to be seen as being *"had".* This is also reflected when considering that more than ever consumers show a real interest in understanding what is going on inside the company: *"knowing the brand's methods, ethos and practices makes me trust it more".*

Certainly the brand experiences of Nike – the retail experience, the constant innovations, the localized marketing initiatives, and their ability to *keep with it* - have all supported the idea that Nike speaks '*my language'.* Again respondents would rank being part of a brand community as not that influential on brand affinity yet at the same time they are hugely supportive of the brands activities in this arena: *"Me and my mates are using Nike+, it's great to see how they are doing and obviously try and beat them."* The virtual running communities do have real cut through and definitely add kudos to the deliverer of this facility. In this way Nike are seen as the facilitator and even more so when being part of Nike activity does not require purchase of the brand. Some respondents talked about using the Nike+ running app and not having Nike running gear. *"I just put a hole in my old running shoe and slipped the chip in – brilliant".* Again Nike are seen as the facilitator (Visconti, 2012) but also as a brand that is not exerting too much corporate control – this certainly builds appeal: *"Nike just get stuff out there". "Their running communities are pretty much open to anyone – Nike customer or not – that's pretty sorted"* and *"their brand is accessible to everyman who lives and loves their sport".*

Finally, Nike's history of sponsoring top athletes and premium sporting events resonates with the target consumer and supports the brand's image as an industry figurehead with quality credentials: *"advice from peers and experts is important".*

4.4.2.1 Nike focus groups – worksheets

Both worksheets supported the need to establish credentials through authenticity and that this ultimately delivers trust. Again, and in conflict to the focus group outputs and literature, the sense of community (Wang et al., 2011) and openness were seen as the least important influential factors of brand affinity – yet as themes they dominated the focus group discussions and were certainly key factors in bond building (fig 4.8).

Fig. 4.8 Word association outputs – Nike focus groups

As the word association sheet underlines, both authenticity and indeed openness are key top of mind concepts and were supported by data collected in the main group sessions. Respondents are very aware of the Nike+ communities and users are aware of its broad functionality (encompassing music) and see it as a major facilitator of inter-consumer narrative. Others who are less active with the brand are happy with just a more straightforward *buy product* relationship. *"I'm not a super fan – I just think their trainers are good quality, credible and cool."*

4.4.2.2 Nike focus groups – summary

The focus groups and supporting individual worksheets underlined and mirrored the individual in-depth interviews. At the heart of affinity from the consumers' perspective sits an unwavering need to trust in the product and the organisation. Consumers see the authenticity in the Nike brand and the commitment to innovation as a desire to constantly evolve in the face of ever-

changing consumer needs. They comprehend the growing corporate openness and are comfortable with the measures taken to clean-up previous trading misdemeanours.
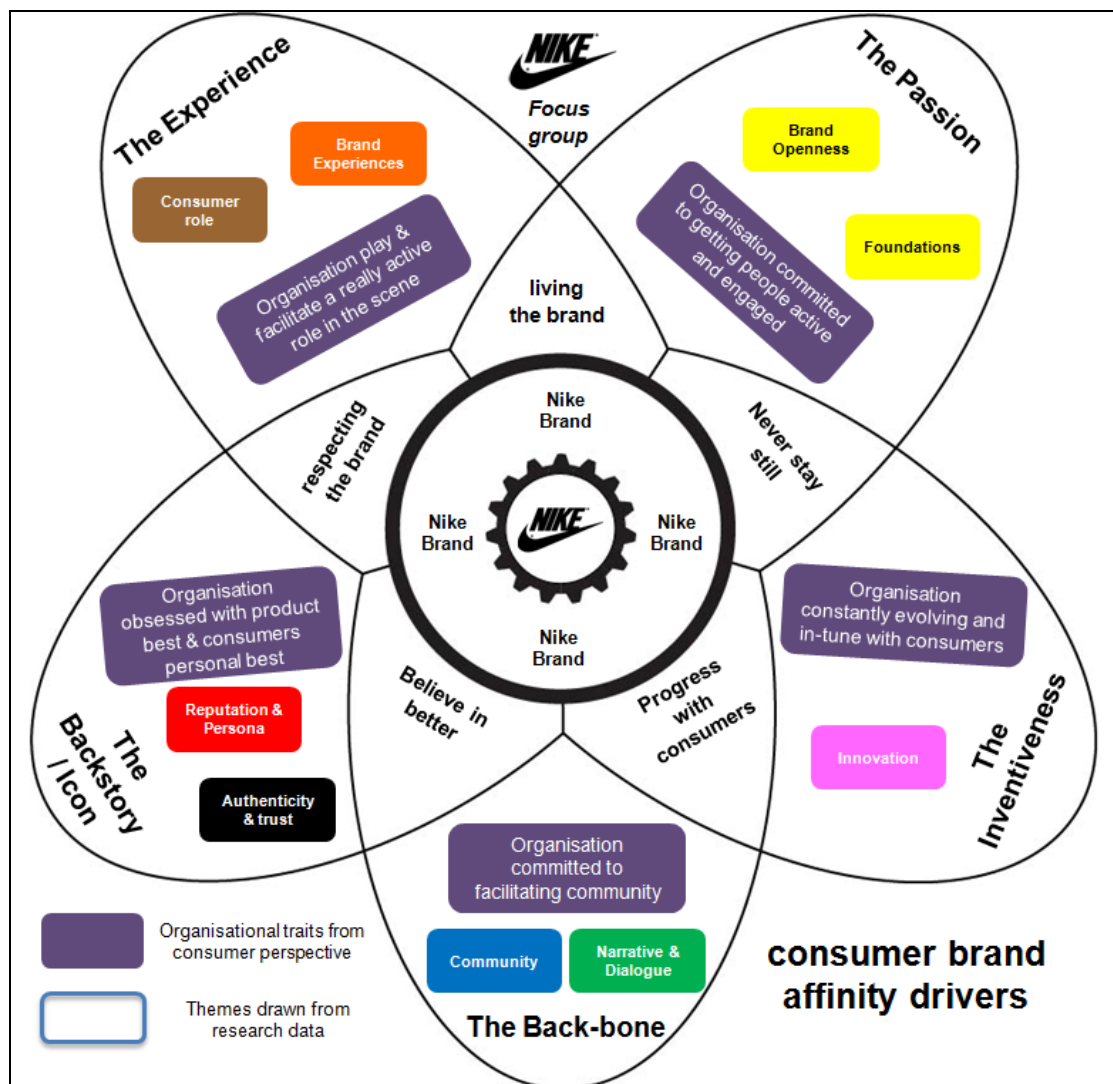
Fig. 4.9 Mapping the affinity drivers – Nike focus groups. Source: Original

What differs are the stated desire of consumers to engage with the brand and the community initiatives it delivers without being seen (by their network) as slaves to the brand. Many consumers are sceptical of brands' motives (Arnold, 2009) in today's environment of mistrust and suspicion, but what Nike consumers see and experience is a committed organisation with an ethos of providing the best and helping consumers achieve their personal best. Fig.4.9 captures the key affinity drivers taken from the data and overlays this with consumers' perceptions of the organisational drivers (in purple). These encompass: a passion for perfection in the product; a desire to build community; being in-tune with technology and how it can enhance consumers'

lives; a corporate ethos of getting consumers active and healthy; and a corporate commitment to employing the right people. The essence of connectivity centres on passion, progress, and a search for excellence. Like in the focus group, the blades cover very similar territories and really provide the ongoing energy to drive narrative and dialogue between brand and consumer.

4.5 Case study two - Guinness

Guinness, a dry stout, is a global alcoholic drinks brand that originated in the brewery of founder Arthur Guinness at St. James' Gate, Dublin, Ireland. In 1759 Arthur Guinness signed an unprecedented 9000-year lease on the brewery and since then the company has been brewing the world famous stout. Today it is also brewed in almost sixty countries, available in over a hundred, and its global sales amount to approximately 1.5 billion pints. Since its inception it has become synonymous with Ireland and still brews from St James Gate which also features the state of the art visitors centre – *The Storehouse* - capturing the brand's history, brewing processes, ground breaking advertising and a skyline bar where tourists can experience the product in its prime conditions. It has always been seen as a paternalistic employer in Ireland and still all ex employees can return each day to receive their free lunch. Now as part of Diageo, its headquarters are in Park Royal, London where its global brand marketing is orchestrated. The two individuals engaged within the in-depth interviews have played vital roles in the brand's more recent history - Kenny Jamieson who had the roles of Brand Marketing Director Guinness Ireland and Global Marketing Innovation Director at Diageo, and Andy Fennel who ran Guinness brand marketing for a number of years and is the current Chief Marketing Officer for Diageo (the corporation that owns the Guinness brand).

4.5.1 In-depth interviews – theme analysis

Following the thematic template developed from the literature review, the data from the in-depth interviews was plotted against the framework (fig 4.10). A number of powerful insights have been uncovered that accentuate each thematic pot and have been drawn together to uncover some real drivers of

narrative that deliver depth and intimacy of consumer affinity with the brand and encourage real dialogue.

Guinness In-Depth data themes

Fig. 4.10 Guinness in-depth data falling into key thematic pots

4.5.1.1 Modern context

Both sessions began with a discussion around the current marketing brandscape (Rahman and Cherrier, 2010) and how this had affected consumer affinity with brands. Kenny Jamieson (KJ) described a world where consumers have so much choice and a *brand promiscuity* that makes deep and solus affinity a difficult concept to achieve.

> "Nowadays people are much more promiscuous – much more likely to drink other categories" (KJ, Guinness).

KJ also highlights the institutional effect that belies brands: *"The big dynamic that drives the need for authenticity and the interest in retro has been the diminishment of trust – there is a lack of trust in institutions of which brands are one" - KJ.* Andy Fennel (AF) highlighted the problems associated with more in-tune consumers – one that can read an organisation and its messaging much more naturally today: *"Consumers are really attuned to authenticity with regard to being a good citizen in a community - so all we can do is behave authentically and behave in a true way and be open to scrutiny" - AF.* A point that is highlighted later, is that the interconnected world we operate in means it is now much more difficult for organisations to hide their, sometime undesirable, activities (Terblanche, 2011) and difficult to disguise

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actions, *"trust has to be earned"* KJ. As AF highlighted, trust is gained by simply being straight, *"if you have nothing to hide, then be open. "*

4.5.1.2   **Authenticity and Trust**

Both experts discussed the intrusive movement for everything to be questioned these days by an ever-sceptical consumer (Campbell et al., 2011) but that the brand has to be laid bare and owners have to be confident they are doing the right thing: *"trust is one of those things where it is given to you – you cannot claim it." – AF*

> "It's always been true that brands need to be authentic and that they need to build trust by being straight" (AF, Diageo).

KJ develops this fragility, "*How trust works is you give people trust until such time they let you down or lead you to suspect they are not being honest."* Both suggested that brands are democratic, that if you put your trust in them and they let you down then you can walk away, and that people are willing to give brands the opportunity to be trusted, but ready to walk away if they break their promises.

> "It's a human need to trust in things; if you cannot trust anything you live your whole life in anxiety, suspicion and nervousness – you look for something else to trust in and brands are one of those things" (KJ, Guinness).

Both underlined the levels of trust that accentuate the success of Guinness and are grounded in the quality of the product – the product simply delivers premium quality time after time.

4.5.1.3   **Foundations**

The next thematic area that proved vital in establishing affinity and delivered a constant dialogue related to Guinness's colourful heritage. Both talked about the Guinness tales that sit firmly in the public vernacular, such as health benefits, the Toucan, the Arthur Guinness story (Clifton and Simmons, 2003) and see these as being key foundation stones: "*Many authentic brands have been around for a while – they have a genuine back story that they can*

leverage and that's what makes them authentic – but whether you think its authentic is whether you believe it." - KJ. The truth in Guinness sits at the very heart of its story: *"Companies with a real back-story – where people are just trying to make stuff happen, well that creates real empathy." - KJ.* Especially with today's access to information this is accepted as a key attribute – get the basics true and laid out and let consumers make of them what they will.

> "They (Guinness) have always had a point of view – then carried that through consistently in everything they do. It's all about realness" (KJ, Guinness).

It is apparent that those associated with the brand have always embraced the foundations. The culture has been to understand and embrace them and build it into the future prevailing brand ideology.

4.5.1.4 Family

The paternalistic, caring, sharing aspects to the brand story have also shown resonance. This humanistic quality (Wilson and Morgan, 2011) have sat comfortably with the brand and its activities for centuries and still delivers the message that the brand cares.

> "Guinness is a very paternalistic business with a passion for the people and the product. It started with Arthur Guinness who was very forward thinking and enlightened in his approach to staff – caring and sharing" (KJ, Guinness).

As KJ highlights, *"Having a cause is one way of engaging consumers – it doesn't have to be a social cause or environmental – just having an ethos is crucial – and people will respect you if you are true to those values".* These paternalistic values are entrenched in the brand and do provide a launch pad for engagement. *"Arthur Guinness was a very forward thinking and enlightened person in the way he taught his staff, looked after his staff – even in the 19th century they were providing staff housing and benefits" - KJ.* Diageo put great emphasis on everyone associated with the brand really engaging with it and understanding where it came from: *"focus on what's cutting edge and current but sometimes you learn more by going to the archives - be inspired from either what people are doing today or by what we did 200 years*

ago" - AF. Keeping abreast of the stories that delivered such a powerful brand are of huge pride to the brand owners and, as the focus group will illustrate, creates great resonance in target consumers.

4.5.1.5 Provenance

Guinness and Ireland are absolutely and intrinsically linked (Simmons, 2006) – this provenance gives it a basic truth, layers of authenticity and, when applied by the brand team, really engages consumers.

> "Attaching trust to a person makes it all a bit more believable – the Arthur Guinness story is true – the Irish provenance, he was an entrepreneur, a philanthropist, a visionary, you can scrutinize him and he did exist and he did exist there" (AF, Diageo).

Key to authenticity is that nowadays claims can be scrutinized and in the main Guinness, its founder and the brand's historical stories do stack up: *"The stories about the Guinness brand became legend though the years. Guinness and Ireland are so intrinsically linked for a lot of people" - KJ.* In addition it is the homeland – Ireland proves the perfect shop window for the brand where it is omnipresent: *"Guinness is all about goodwill and the company getting a good reputation – that breeds affinity and loyalty – but also real pride that this was an Irish (country of origin) success" - AF.* The stories really create the premise for dialogue*.*

4.5.1.6 Consumer Role

This confidence that Diageo have in the brand's foundations (Muzellec, and Lambkin, 2007), together with its unquestionable historical, functional and community truths, have certainly delivered a confidence and willingness for the organisation to embrace transparency and reap the benefits: *"our openness is being rewarded by people engaging with us"- AF.* Both respondents have seen a growing desire for consumers to play a part in the brand's activities and never so much as in a period when consumers are so savvy: *"what's interesting is this generation can join it all up" - AF.* This is a period when the same consumers are so connected*, "The brand is even more in people's hands nowadays because of the internet" - KJ.*

> "People want an open dialogue, to participate in brand ideas, to contribute, co-create, magnify or bin them – but if you're not up for that fully then don't go there" (AF, Diageo).

This changing face of the consumer (Katsioloudes, et al., 2007) has required a new mindset adopted by brand owners: *"I love the transparency that broadband brings because if you try and cheat you get caught" - AF.* Diageo appear totally committed to embracing the changing face of consumerism, exhibiting a real desire to engage in co-creation and to build narrative and dialogue in the digital space.

4.5.1.7   <u>Living the Brand / Brand experiences</u>

Both experts expressed how important that those involved (organisational) have a real experience with the brand, a love of the brand – indeed crucial that they live the brand.

> "The magic I'm looking for is someone who preserves the core and revolutionize what you don't have to keep, that's really what we want, and that's what Arthur Guinness wanted" (AF, Diageo).

As AF expresses, "*We insist on every brand, especially Guinness, that whoever works on them literally falls in love with them – you need to understand what's brilliant about them".* KJ supported this*, "To be a good brand manager you've got to be inside the brand".* The lack of "living it" is also referred to as having detrimental effects on the brand: *"The fact that brand managers move on constantly is having a significant effect – the way businesses operate now is it is all about what did you do last year" - KJ.* Ultimately both would agree it is all about giving the consumer the best possible experience (Thellefse, Sørensen, and Andersen, 2005)/reality of the brand: *"for brands to build trust they must not let their customers down, be consistent in what they say but be open and honest and to be as transparent as you possibly can" - KJ.* Both agreed that the experience of the brand goes to the very essence of it: the functional in how it delivers as a product, the emotional in what it stands for and now the social in what it says and does – essentially what the premise of its narrative is.

4.5.1.8 Innovation / Digital Age

Certainly the web has required new thinking on brand management (Berthon, et al., 2012) and this has led to a lot of practitioner soul searching: *"With the internet there's a much greater exposé of what's really happening – companies might not have been always trustworthy but no one knew they weren't" - KJ.* It is also not a space that many brands feel comfortable within*, "this open space requires a lot of training" - AF.*

> *"You have to recognize that consumers own this brand and we don't want to just create new things, we want to collaborate with you, because it's as much yours as it's ours" (KJ, Guinness).*

This new brandscape is strewn with hurdles but it is as much an organisational conundrum as it is as a result of the changing consumer: *"brand management is such a critical role but there are far too many poor brand managers who don't get brands – it is driven by corporate culture which is all about the next 12 months"- KJ.* The data uncovered not only the changing role of the marketer and with it a need to embrace consumer collaboration, but also the real difficulty that organisations have in taking this relatively unchartered course.

4.5.1.9   Narrative and Dialogue

Both respondents discussed the growing importance of developing and nurturing a dialogue (a shared story) with consumers as a way of building affinity (Keller, 2012). Importantly they see it as a two way process that is as much shaped and curated by consumers, as by the organisations.

> *"Those creating this sense of relationship are those putting resources against immediate and authentic responses to consumer dialogue - it means you are placing judgment against when to jump into the conversation" (AF, Diageo).*

KJ highlighted the parameters of this co-created dialogue: *"Guinness gives consumers enough but lets them fill in the gaps – if they are sufficiently engaged they will fill in the gaps in their own minds."* Both feel that conversations should be encouraged but ultimately left to define their own course: *"If you try and control the conversation then you are sunk – It is like participating in an uncontrolled environment"- AF.*

Finally on narrative, KJ adds a unique perspective not outlined in the literature: *"With Guinness what's actual truth and what's legend becomes blurred – but it doesn't matter because if people enjoy the story then that's fine."* So there is a sense that if the brand has truth and a robust product to back it up, then consumers can indulge in a colourful story – which adds to the layers of engagement and satisfaction.

4.5.1.10 <u>Legacy</u>

Guinness pays great respect to the original ethos of the organisation and the founding principles of Arthur Guinness, which the respondents believe can, in other brands, often be forgotten in the hunt for market share (Peppers and Rogers, 1995). Diageo places great credence in legacy: *"we brought back the Arthur Guinness foundation and what we do with that money is what Arthur did, which is to give it to social entrepreneurs so that they can build community"* - AF.

> "Guinness is an institution in Ireland with great affinity and its success story instils a massive amount of pride in the people. It's a message that you should always be true to your core values and remain true to your beliefs"
> (KJ, Guinness).

The focus on legacy is demonstrated in an initiative that has gained momentum in recent years (Bruce and Harvey, 2008): *"we have something in our credo called Standing on the Shoulders of Giants – it basically says lets know the stories of our founders and lets be inspired by them"- AF.* This has led to socially inspired initiatives such as water to Africa and other more intimate initiatives to communities around Ireland. This approach, in their minds, is what the modern day brands have to be doing as it gives consumers real reason to engage more deeply with them.

4.5.1.11 <u>Community and the Digital Age</u>

The final theme pot uncovered in the sessions related to community, including the broader, virtual communities which are so much a feature of target consumers' lives (Lim et al., 2011). The power and importance of this was clear: *"we are about building our business and a brilliant way of doing that is creating a brilliant and vibrant community that we operate in and therefore we*

are gonna invest in this community" - AF. This interest in community is also captured with regard to new recruits at Diageo, where currently the number one question is "*what is your policy on social responsibility?*" It is important and even more so that people care both inside and outside the organisation.

> "Arthur Guinness was a great builder of community – he was a social entrepreneur and something that inspires us today" (AF, Diageo).

Organisations are definitely waking up to the mutual benefits of driving community to the heart of the business (Casalo et al., 2007) and for Guinness it rings true, as it has always been a key feature of its essence. Respondents would suggest it should be natural for the brand to accept and facilitate new ways of building a community. For Guinness the original ethos of community rings true and inspires the brand's marketers today.

> "The ethos of the organisation is about bonding with the community, they support the community and it takes pride in the company. Both want to play a part in each other's lives" (KJ, Guinness).

Both respondents realize the need to build a community is just as much consumer pull than organisational push: *"people want an open dialogue, to participate in brand ideas, to contribute to stories, co-create, magnify or bin them – but if you're not up for that fully then don't go there" - AF.* Diageo certainly has a deep commitment to engaging with its community and this drives much of their communications agenda but as KJ highlights it has to be a two-way scenario.

AF also pointed out how their embracement of new technologies (Woodcock et al., 2011) is assisting community engagement: *"with Facebook brands must start to learn how to have dialogue with people on their platform – and it is not intuitive to marketers".* Diageo have seen the power on affinity through both dialogue and building community, "*our openness is being rewarded by people engaging with us*", and this heightens their commitment to developing this ongoing*, "We train people so they can engage (with consumers), we empower them to engage".*

4.5.1.12 Guinness in-depth interviews – worksheets

Both worksheets (Fig. 4.11) highlighted the need to embrace the historical building blocks of the brand (Muehlling, 2011) with product truths and to create the conditions to allow openness with consumers. Above all there has to be real passion delivered from an organisational perspective, *"living the brand"*, allowing fertile conditions for a deep narrative with consumers to flourish.
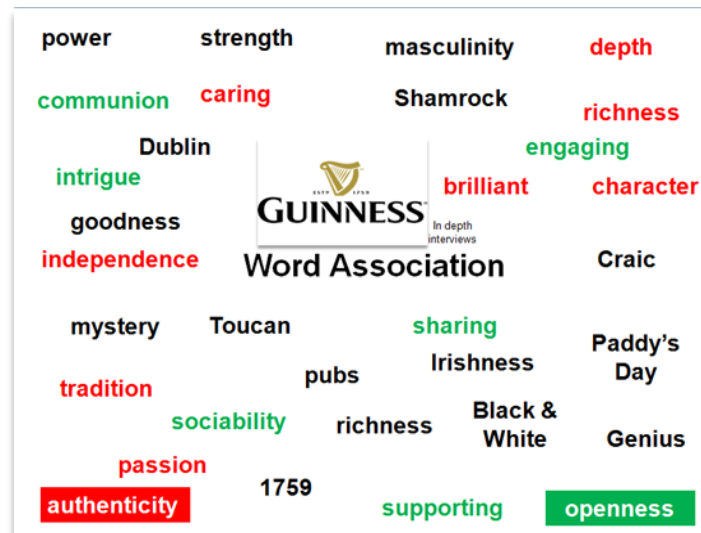
Fig. 4.11 Word association outputs – Guinness in-depth interviews

The care (goodness) in the product is reflected in the corporate culture and this in a time when goodness appears thin on the ground in the business world (Yan, 2011), and this breeds great resonance with consumers. For those associated with the brand at Diageo passion is a key proviso, *"be in love with your brand so you never change something that's important" - AF,* and at *a* corporate level to be connected has to start with a passion: "*You need emotional closeness in the first place otherwise consumers would be suspicious" - KJ.* In terms of the ranking sheet, dialogue was given a higher status than anticipated by the researcher. After authenticity and trust it came in third and is reflected in the emphasis both placed in creating and nurturing a two-way conversation with consumers*: "brands must start to learn how to have dialogue with people" - AF.*

4.5.1.13 Guinness in-depth interviews – summary

Both interviews delivered insights into not only what building blocks are required to establish a shared consumer narrative (Boje and Baskin, 2011) but also what cultivates and promotes the narrative, ultimately building affinity. Again the insights are grounded in the internal corporate culture and practices,

in the ways that consumers are engaged, and how the conversation is maintained. Fig 4.12 Fan Mechanism captures the contributors to narrative in the Guinness case but also illustrates the key drivers of dialogue i.e. what stimulates debate, communication and engagement.

Reflecting also on the Nike in-depth data, the insights can be plotted with the five blades of the fan (also in parity to literature). The same authenticity factors integral to the brand and the organisation provided the foundations in which to allow a dialogue with consumers to flourish. Playing a much deeper role than Nike, the history, provenance and founding ethos provided great material for the narrative but also the willingness and visibility of the organisation to *live and love* the brand and keep moving forward, delivering the credibility.
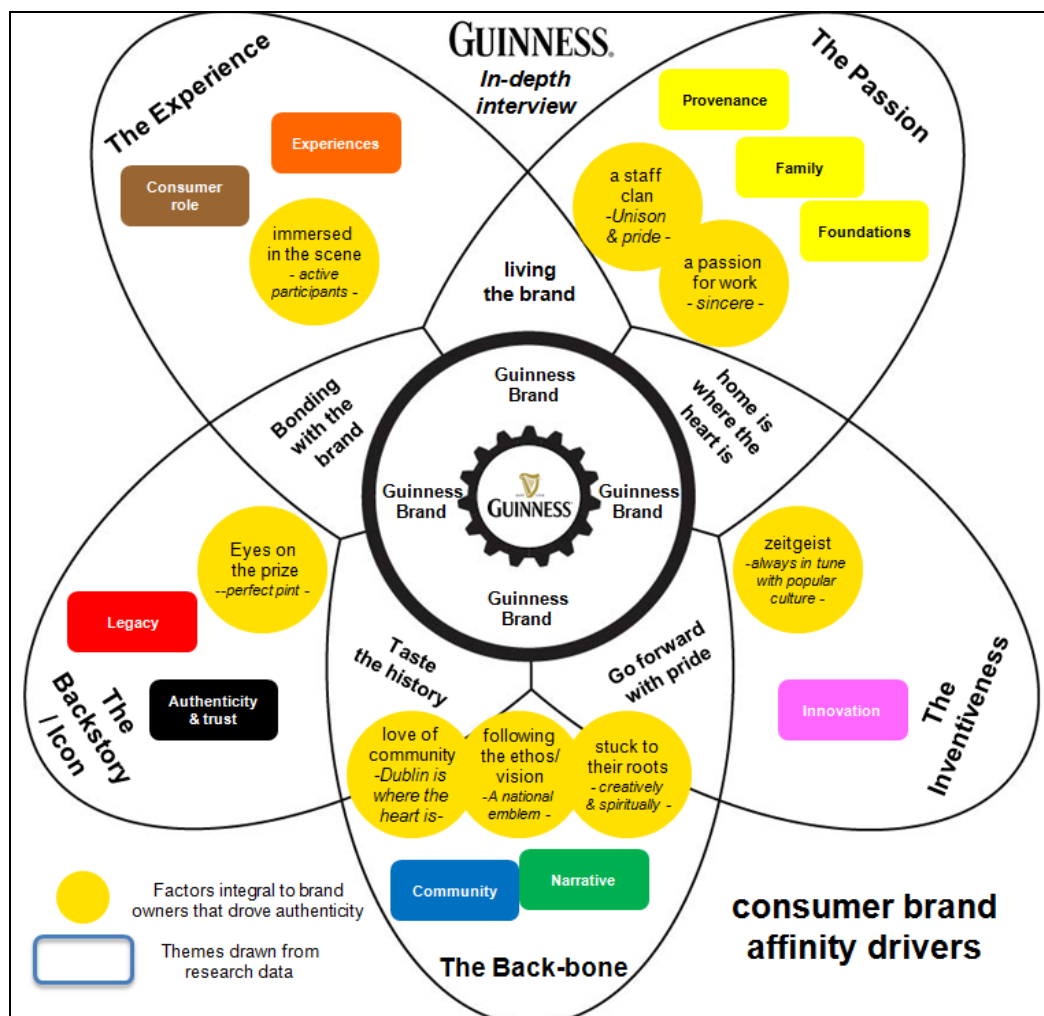
Fig. 4.12 Mapping affinity drivers – Guinness in-depth interviews. Source: Original

With Guinness community, history, corporate ethos and staff passion all play vital roles not only in building an engaging authenticity for consumers but also in delivering a personality that is captivating and provides the catalyst for

dialogue. Opening the doors of the organisation is not only desired but also actively encouraged.

4.5.2 Guinness focus groups – theme analysis

Very much following the thematic path laid out in the literature and the in-depth interviews, the focus groups delivered a number of supporting insights and new understandings of the phenomena surrounding narrative and affinity. Two focus groups were run involving core target consumers, which had been verified within the preceding in-depth sessions. Both sessions were run in Edinburgh at the end of 2011 and spring 2012.

Guinness Focus Group data themes

Fig. 4.13 Guinness focus group data falling into key thematic pots

Like the previous focus groups, the collapse in trust was played out together with the belief that for organisations "*there's nowhere to hide*". Indeed consumers felt in such a powerful position (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2010) that if they did not like what they were seeing, hearing or experiencing then there were many outlets for their disapproval (including social media such as twitter) which are now even more outside of the control of organisations: "*there's a lot of anti brand stuff about so the product has to stack up".* Generally Guinness was held with high regard by consumers, *"the product has to deliver quality and it always does",* and this was really seen as the premise for the relationship: *"The start point has to be a good product – or else you can see right through it".* The historical aspects of Guinness also added to the intrinsic trust, *"if it is been around so long you feel safe with it",* and those that had been to the Storehouse in Dublin really found that the artefacts of the past

really underlined its credentials and acted as the catalyst for dialogue: *"By talking about a history and length of time it's been around, you do apportion trust to it".*

Like with the in-depth interviews, foundations, family and provenance played major roles not only in layering trust but also delivering the conditions for story making and dialogue: *"Arthur Guinness helps you make the connections with its history and family and this feels wholesome".* This time honoured aspect really created energy in the groups: *"It's authentic because it looks like it has never changed – the pint you get now looks like one you'd get 50 years ago and I tend to gravitate to brands with a bit of history".* In view of the prevailing corporate culture, an insight was drawn by a respondent who made comparisons with Radio 6 music: *"6 music employs dj's that are properly into their music – the idea of people doing something because they love it is powerful."* With Guinness this was something that respondents understood – that there were, at the heart of the organisation, people who really cared.

Guinness is also a brand that has passed the test of time, and moved through the generations which adds to trust cues and paints a more colourful narrative. Provenance with Ireland is obvious: *"like the national drink of Ireland – even the harp logo feels like it is part of the Irish flag."* The idea that it has not changed on a whim is seen as important factor also: *"Has a long tradition of coming from the same place and representing the same things".* Like in the following Hacienda case, place (power of the association) and the broader understanding of what that place stands for is seen as an important trust and affinity builder: *"Harnesses the Irish love of celebrating anything'.* Guinness and the role it plays locally (even for a global brand) in the community is seen as vital: "*They have a history of care for the family and employees".*

The data also emphasised the defining role that consumers play now in not only keeping brands "in check" but in really engaging with them (Chernev et al., 2011): "*being able to look past the name of the company and see in for yourself is really important – it makes you feel a wee bit more involved, you feel a bit warmer towards them, feel that you've got backstage access to them".* Consumers do want to get a deeper relationship: *"You can connect with*

different parts of the story and it is always generous with its marketing and promotions – I'm happy to get involved". Reference was also made to Brewdog (Scottish based brewer): *"Brewdog is very easy to find out about it and they want to pull you into that story – to tell you all about it and show off – it is really easy and accessible – they are a really open company - it is a Scottish brand that you are helping out".*

Core to Guinness consumers' empathy and the source of the narrative is also the experiences around the brand (Rageh et al., 2011). It is famous for its events around St Patrick's Day and visible for other broader music (Witnness Music Festival) and sport (Rugby) initiatives, *"it is associated with groups of people and mates – it is a really social experience".* To consumers the brand is alive and always gets in the news for the right reasons: *"Doesn't get any bad press re binge drinking."* Linked to this theme is also the aspect of innovation. Guinness is a brand so entrenched in tradition and a more rural pace of lifestyle, but it engages as it maintains its relevance through innovative marketing, groundbreaking advertising or its futuristic visitors centre. It stays relevant to the changing needs of its consumer and this appears to allow the narrative to flourish: *"captures the zeitgeist with its marketing – always seems with-it for such a traditional brand".*

With regard to narrative, Guinness is abundant with stories and is a willing participant to share the narrative (Davies and Knight, 2007): *"stories add more depth to a brand and they help stimulate your imagination and emotional relationship with it"* and *"stories help join the dots about a brand and they strengthen your relationship with it".* Consumers want to engage with the brand and are much more aware today how this relationship can develop (Woodcock et al., 2011): *"there's much more opportunity for us to talk to brands as tools are now in place (technology, social media)".* There is also an understanding that any relationship must be two way: *"If there's a willingness for brands to listen then people feel they have something to offer, if they can tell a story it engages your imagination and makes you connect more".*

Finally legacy was reflected in consumers with focus placed on heritage, timelessness, staying true to your roots (Chiu et al., 2012), not trying too hard

and conveying a sense of pride in what it does. These elements resonated with consumers and delivered reasons to engage and provide the content to build a shared narrative with not only the brand, but also other consumers.

4.5.2.1 Guinness focus groups – worksheets

Following the same format of the in-depth interviews all respondents completed both brain game and word association work sheets (Fig. 4.14).

Fig. 4.14 Word association outputs – Guinness focus Group interviews

The word association sheet firstly underlined the importance consumers place in the brand's history and heritage and also how this plays out in terms of authenticity and trust. They also reflected the congeniality of the brand – its warmth and sociability and how this allows narrative to flourish. The second worksheet (Brain Game) allowed the respondents to plot the importance of each theme in building affinity. After a broad allegiance to 'establishing trust through authenticity', 'nostalgia' significantly came out as the next most important factor. Guinness is a brand rich in stories *(that people want to share and build)* and the nostalgic imagery played out in consumers' minds, the bars they frequent and the advertising and marketing communications they see; it all combines to build a rich tapestry for consumers (Borghini, 2009).

4.5.2.2 Guinness focus groups – summary

The Guinness focus groups delivered rich insights (Fig. 4.15) regarding the key brand affinity drivers that resonated with consumers, which not only helped support both the literature and in-depth interviews, but also illuminated the organisational traits that play a role in building this affinity and drive through the dialogue. The heart and soul of this is reflected in the passion

portrayed in the organisation: the experiences around and within the company; the quality of the product and commitment to perfection; a keenness to engage consumers in brand activities; being in tune with the zeitgeist; and engaging with and developing a community around the brand. Guinness respects, reflects and allows its colourful history to resonate with consumers and, in a period when consumerism is so fickle and demands a new type of relationship (Katsioloudes, et al., 2007), this acts as a spine to brand trust and delivers a willingness to build narrative.

There is a palpable generosity emanating at the heart of the brand and flowing through all of its marketing, CSR and community activity. These all work together to build trust and engagement with consumers. Guinness, in consumers' eyes, channels the past through a modern lens and strives to bring consumers along with them. It embraces the tools to build narrative and its open culture is shaped to engage in a constant two-way dialogue.
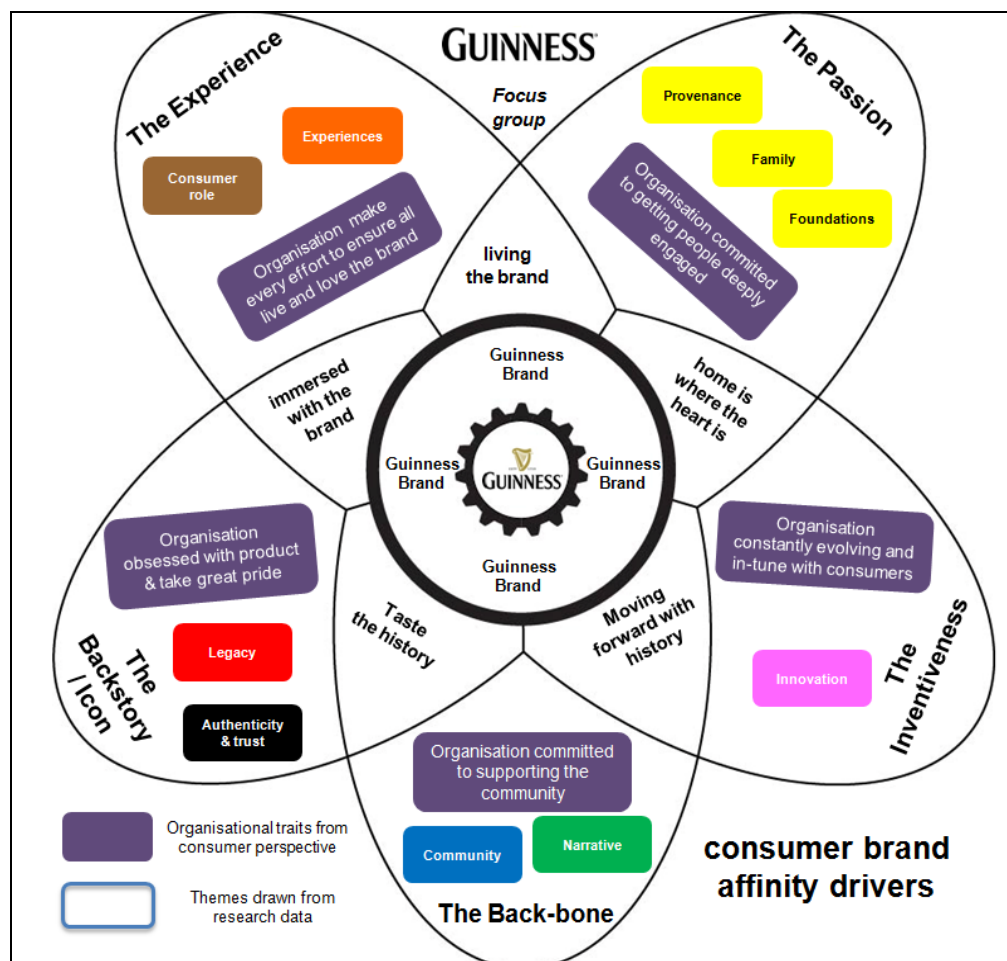
Fig. 4.15 Mapping affinity drivers – Guinness focus group interviews. Source: Original

Guinness is an immersive experience and as the data showed, if the conditions are there, consumers will participate.

4.6 Case study three - The Hacienda.

The third case investigated was from the world of entertainment – the former nightclub and music venue in Manchester, The Hacienda. It originally opened in 1982 and remained in its original location until it closed in 1997. During that time it was widely regarded as the most famous club in the world (Musicweek, 2001) and seen as the launch pad for the cultural movements of Acid House and ultimately "Madchester" (Offord and Garbutt, 2011). The house music scene broke globally and was soon generically referred to as the Second Summer of Love (Redhead, Wynne and O'Connor, 1997) and the Hacienda was seen as the key player in this movement. It was the brainchild of Tony Wilson, whose desire was to construct an innovative space for "the people" to enjoy the best of contemporary music, architecture and design, and to experience free expression through dance (Hook, 2009). It was financed, in the main, through Factory Records and from the sales of their lead artists New Order and the Happy Mondays and money, or lack of it, cast a shadow over it throughout its existence.

The design of its interior (Peter Saville) was seen as the benchmark for clubs to follow and the cultural influence and legacy in dance music is still felt today (Milestone, 2008). In compiling this case research, three significant people that were involved with the brand were interviewed in-depth, including: the Resident DJ, Graeme Park; Club and Production Manager, John Drape; and creative lead, Trevor Johnson. Unlike the other two cases, three people were interviewed; Manchester is a very interconnected space and they were all keen to become involved in the research. As the analysis will reveal, all three had very similar perspectives and insights to offer so no bias was recorded in this weighting. This case as previously discussed, allows for a rich comparison with the other more contemporary cases and this is pictorialised in section 4.7.

4.6.1 In-depth interviews – theme analysis

Following the three in-depth interviews the data fell naturally into a number of thematic pots, each of which played significant roles in delivering consumer brand affinity (Fig. 4.16). The third case illuminated some alternative

perspectives distinct from the Guinness and Nike cases and the retrospective nature of the case allowed a further dimension, nostalgia, to be considered.

The Hacienda In-Depth data themes

Fig. 4.16 Hacienda in-depth data falling into key thematic pots

Clearly the Hacienda was at its prime during the 1990's, so to get a perspective on how the modern state of communications, economy and society might influence affinity may have been a challenge but the question was posed and rich insights were delivered.

4.6.1.1 Modern context

John Drape (JD) highlighted that the engagement levels the brand had with consumers – *the actual word of mouth chatter* - really created noise and affinity around it and as a lot of it was based on real product experience then it was suggested this brought great authenticity to it.

> "If the internet was around we'd have the biggest database ever with loads of chatter – but then it was all word of mouth – it was about the physical sharing experience" (JD, Hacienda).

All suggested that as the club became a benefactor of such a weight of real advocacy (Silverman, 2011), in the main resonating from those that had actually witnessed the club, then in a modern web connected world the online noise around the club would have been vast and active. They did doubt however whether this would have been as rich as the noise generated from those that had actually experienced the club but it would certainly have opened up the brand to new areas and places.

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It was highlighted that today's consumers are so critical of companies that make mistakes, even if they are trying something new, and that ultimately this may have had a detrimental effect. Generally those involved with the club saw it (naturally) as groundbreaking even with its well-publicized tendency for making mistakes, but the respondents argued, *"this flawed-self added to its appeal" - JD. "It was ahead of its time and that's why it didn't make any money – when you're ahead of the game you make all the mistakes before anyone else does"- JD.* This was supported by the lead creative Trevor Johnson (TJ): *"The Hacienda was years ahead of the SuperClubs – but wasn't even designed to be one – it just became one by reputation".* The reputation was clear that the Hacienda delivered a quality product and this together with its pioneering status gave it real authenticity and credibility. These foundations meant that if it had emerged today it would still have captivated consumers and created a phenomenal degree of shared narrative around it. All three sensed there were not many organisations around today that had the same level and diversity of stories central to their narrative. Indeed they felt that with today's level of digital interconnectedness it would still have had the broad diversity of affinity and demonization – just more vocal.

4.6.1.2 <u>Authenticity and Trust</u>

Trust was a key driver of consumer affinity with the Hacienda; Graeme Park (GP) highlighted that customers had total faith in the club delivering a powerful experience and a product (music) they couldn't hear anywhere else.

> "Punters had 100 % commitment to believing in it – they believed in the music too - DJ's never got a request once during the acid house period. There was a solid product at the heart of it" (GP, Hacienda).

It was a product that, in the absence of any digital social media, had to be physically experienced and to engender the level of word of mouth it achieved then the product had to be standout: "*The live experience was crucial, the experience of going to The Hacienda was a total sensory experience*" - GP.

> "It had a worldwide reputation for greatness and being at the cutting edge - everyone was so impressed and the only way to see it and witness it was to go to it" (JD, Hacienda).

The brand owners placed so much effort, and deep passion, on creating a totally unique experience that it resulted in total engagement and support from its regular consumers: *"The staff believed in it and this just spread to the punters" - GP.* Additionally, the detail of The Hacienda was recognisably different from anything else that consumers had seen, "*the Hacienda was about not standing still, we constantly looked for ways to improve stuff" – JD,* and from a creative perspective*, "it was all about the detail" - TJ.* This really appears to reflect the passion of those behind the organisation and subsequently raised consumer authenticity perceptions even further.

4.6.1.3   Heritage and Openness

The next theme that the data naturally fell into related to the provenance, people and the premise of the Hacienda. Over its life it became synonymous with Manchester and it emerged from a period when the town was in a state of decay and had perceptively lost its way, *"Manchester was in a post industrial mess and needed investment – culturally" – TJ,* and consequently when the Hacienda arrived it did signify in consumers' minds a step change: *"it created a space that would define art and culture in Manchester and people respected that" - TJ.*

4.6.1.4   Foundations

The backbone to the product and the premise for such deep consumer affinity appears to be the passion of those leading the brand for embracing detail.

> "Paramount in everything we did was the attention to achieving absolute excellence – we had a commitment to excellence at any cost – in fact regardless of cost" (TJ, Hacienda).

Together with this seemed an almost (by today's standards) unbelievable disinterest in money – a business naivety that created an unparalleled product. The financial innocence of the key players richly layered the affinity afforded to them by the broader public. In a time period when the region was suffering economically, here was a group of people that disregarded the concerns of making a profit for simply making a product: *"The Hacienda was organic – it just grew and grew – it was disorganized and dysfunctional – things could*

have been ten times more efficient but that wasn't the spirit" - TJ. Much of this philosophy was embedded within its public face – Tony Wilson: *"Tony was always willing to try new things – everything was always the future to him – he always took a gamble" - TJ.* This corporate spirit, social conscience and pubic manifesto played a powerful role in building affinity with consumers and layered the narrative as people warmed to the business naivety it belayed.

4.6.1.5 Provenance

The Hacienda influence was widespread and always conjured up images of Manchester – they became synonymous and this northern, working class, sociability appeared to wrap the place in layers of honesty and trust. People warmed to Manchester and the idea that the Hacienda rose out of the economic void provided stimulating content for the narrative.

> "It created a style movement for others to follow and defined a once rundown area of Manchester as a cultural quarter" (TJ, Hacienda).

Manchester has had a long and chequered history as an industrial heartland – The Hacienda became part of a new cultural wave and this created standout and engagement: *"a place other than London is making things happen" - JD.* That link to the city, is suggested, had proved to be an enduring quality as well: *"It has become the definitive representative aspect of the city and that means the visual imagery lives on" - TJ.*

4.6.1.6 Family

The power of a shared ethos (Smith, 2011), a bonding of a clan of people with a shared ideology, delivered an ongoing narrative that consumers were engaged with.

"People talk about it as if it were a family – but it was! It became representative of the attitude of the city – it was of the community" (TJ, Hacienda).

The engaging qualities of disorder and risk taking (Thorbjørnsen et al., 2002) in such a very public way, by a small group of highly visual individuals, provided for very strong affinity cues. The inner circle of the Hacienda were extremely well known personalities (national and local) and their unified mindset (shared values, beliefs, and ethos) and spirit built affinity and shaped an attitude for the wider community at the time.

4.6.1.7　New Consumer / Consumer Role

As has been highlighted, digital social media was in its infancy, so word of mouth and printed media played a huge role in adding credence to the brand but the greatest contributor was delivered from the experience of the club. This, it was contested, differs in today's consumer (Malcolm, 2012): *"now you are devoid of the reality experience and people are more willing to comment than experience these days"* - GP.

> "You had to make an effort to be a part and you had to go to get in on the inside. They had implicit trust in us and the boundary between the audience and us was always blurred" (GP, Hacienda).

So for the Hacienda the affinity emanated from the real experience – the consumer role was to simply define that experience for themselves. In addition consumers played the role as ambassadors – giving them the social currency to spread what was happening in the club: *"people went to the Hacienda because they couldn't hear the music anywhere else – and that encouraged people to define it and recommend it as a great club"* - GP.

In contrast to the other cases (Szmigin et al., 2005), whist many modern brands have a completely open door approach with consumers, the Hacienda appeared close knit: *"part of the appeal is that it appeared aloof – there was no real interaction between the venue and wider people but you had to be in to get the inside knowledge"* - TJ. This created the energy among consumers, creating their own external social communities (sense of belonging) and narrative around the club – they were left to define it themselves (part of an exclusive group). This illuminated the broader impact that a shared narrative has on a brand and in this case consumer-to-consumer dialogue and how this positively created impact on the brand's associations (brand values).

4.6.1.8　Living the Brand / Experiences

A rich insight from the respondents was in their absolute embodiment of "living the brand" (Grams, 2011), which covered not only the planning and running, *"They really threw themselves into each aspect of the project and of the club"* - TJ, but also in being part of the club: *"I wanted to be out there dancing as much as they did, and sometimes I did"* - JD.

> "Everyone is obsessed with creating their brand these days – the Hacienda never did that. It just became a brand by experience and word of mouth and by just letting people in" (TJ, Hacienda).

People could therefore see the belief that the brand owners had and that built not only trust but also an ability to create immediacy of dialogue and a rich narrative. To see the brand owners engaged with the brand in a very real way appears to have brought a real proximity of the brand to consumers and built credibility. This aspect of *living the brand* also meant it never stood still as the brand owners were aware, more than most, that to create a sense of longevity it had to continually evolve to engage the changing subtleties in the zeitgeist.

4.6.1.9   Innovation

Another key theme emerging from the data was how the sheer amount of innovation surrounding the club fed the narrative. Nobody had seen or witnessed anything like it for a generation.

> "It was ahead of its time and that's why it didn't make any money – when you're ahead of the game you make all the mistakes before anyone else does. It was years ahead of the SuperClubs and wasn't even designed to be one – it just became one by reputation" (TJ, Hacienda).

The level of innovation spread to the organisational structure – there really wasn't one; strategy – there really wasn't one. They certainly played by different rules, which built narrative and affinity within the target consumer base. Innovation was also very human and in their case, very flawed: *"Tony Wilson would just say yes all the time even it cost a fortune – we didn't care, we wanted perfection"* - TJ.

4.6.1.10   Narrative and Dialogue

The Hacienda story was colourful and an ever-changing phenomenon: *"Word of it spread like wildfire – everyone was talking about the Hacienda at other clubs all over the country"* - TJ. Even as the club faced closure it had an open dialogue with its consumers and a narrative that fed a broader imagination: *"When sounds were made about it closing it gave it a bit of a personal face for the first time – Tony Wilson on TV news raised real empathy"* - JD. From start

to finish it was always in the popular consciousness and there was always a rich narrative, be it groundbreaking tunes or guns, its constant twitter gained engagement.

> "People went to the Hacienda because they couldn't hear the music anywhere else – and that encouraged people to define it and recommend it as a great club – everyone talked about it" (GP, Hacienda).

The respondents also discussed the constant and evolving noise that surrounded the club, a combination of the sheer volume of articles in club magazines and also as a consequence of all the music bands involved (Happy Mondays, New Order, ACR). This resulted in a constant stream of stories to add to the richness. Some of the stories were positive and some less than glamorous (guns and gangster), but it never failed to make the news and this added to the intrigue and broader engagement with the brand. The take out from the respondents was in the sheer power of the energy created by the constant dialogue between organisation and media and consumer-to-consumer: *"there was never a dull day at the Hacienda" - JD.*

4.6.1.11 <u>Nostalgia</u>

Finally in this sub section, Nostalgia emerged on a number of occasions and, referring back to the literature (Marchegiani, 2010), was treated with a certain degree of caution: "*As people look back now there is probably a lot of rose tinted spectacles but from where we were stood or dj'd people were having and making the most amazing time" - GP.* Nostalgia, from the literature (Kessous and Roux, 2008), has been used by a number of brands as a powerful connecting emotion in an attempt to engage consumers with their stories - from fashion retailers (Fred Perry) to washing up liquid (Fairy). This theme is not in regard to using nostalgia as a driver to engagement or layering the product credo with positive reflections from a previous time period (older consumers, McColl, 2012), but as a filter to ensure the data is not contaminated i.e. get to the reality of the past situation rather that a potential emotive interpretation.

Consequently the researcher steered the respondents away from any *glory days* debates and was met with several replies that captured the essence that

indeed the product was so groundbreaking, so experiential and part of an emotive period of so many lives that it still features heavily in the public conscience today – even among consumers that did not engage physically with the product.

> "There's a new generation of kids that see the Hacienda as a new club brand – they might get the Factory Records / New Order link but really there's nothing nostalgic to them at all" (GP, Hacienda).

The memory is and will still get distorted, "*Because there's an emotion aspect to this brand, people are still very affectionate towards it because of their experiences – lots of people now take ownership for it without taking responsibility*" - JD.

Interestingly, as the brand has been re-launched in recent years, a new swath of consumers are getting involved relatively free of previous knowledge and yet again the engagement is born out of the quality of the experience, and nurtured through social media rather than traditional word of mouth.

4.6.1.12 <u>Legacy</u>

The next evocative theme was the area of legacy and the role it played in influencing the depth of consumer/brand emotional connectivity. The key re-occurring aspect that emerged was its focus on quality: "*we never cut corners and it showed and it just made the product better than anyone expected*" - TJ. This aspect of the brand reputation seems critical in building consumers and admirers (fan base).

> "Many people are still indebted to the Hacienda and its legacy – the reputation of those that worked there opened up so many doors – they are seen as innovators and risk takers and part of something unique" (JD, Hacienda).

The other key aspect of legacy was taking insights from the impact building a spirit amongst the key leaders can play. For the Hacienda it was a unifying concept that drove all aspects and was highly visible to consumers: "*The Hacienda was organic – it just grew and grew – it was disorganized and*

*dysfunctional – things could have been ten times more efficient **but that was not the spirit**" - TJ,* and *"it showed what you could do with blind passion" - JD.* The notion of consumer emotional connectivity developed through a lack of corporate control, paving early successes but ultimately brought about the club's demise and closure at the hands of the gangs: *"The gangs gave it a short term edge but eventually it turned everyone away, and I lost my front teeth" - JD.* However this should not limit the desire for organisations to relinquish control or discourage them from being more open with the consumer base, as this facilitated a great deal of energy, affinity and dialogue: *"Our philosophy was let the people in and let them experience and interoperate what we have created" - TJ.* It is a concept discussed in both the Nike and Guinness in-depth interviews; the idea of letting consumers take control delivers great impact on affinity, but as the Hacienda illuminated, then and today, it is still fraught with danger.

4.6.1.13 <u>Community</u>

The role the club played in the emergence of Manchester's cultural identity has been previously identified, but the data uncovered a number of other community influencing impacts: *"it was a fulcrum for cultural diversity that still resonates today" - TJ.* The Hacienda played a significant role in the broader cultural emergence of the city and delivered a lot of broader developments (even attributed to a 25% increase in applications for the University, Brown et al., 2000) during its active periods. The club had a very open door policy (regardless of background) and this shaped and built empathy and stimulated rich dialogue: *"it provided a focal point for a new youth movement" - GP.*

> "Hacienda emerged in a time when people would meet in record shops with kindred spirits and stand out from your mates – not like now – it was a real community" (TJ, Hacienda).

As TJ commented, it was a very fluid community that had few rules and was constantly evolving to cater for an ever-developing consumer base: *"to interact and experience the Hacienda you had to play your part" - GP.* It became a philosophy that started with the founders but then spread amongst the community: *"Hacienda were just infatuated by what they put out – no*

guidelines, no rules – only an understanding and a commitment to a principle – it became a brand philosophy" - TJ.

> "The brand was a definition of an experience created by the club and its people. One community evolving together over time" (TJ, Hacienda).

Importantly, the community believed (via their loyalty) in the vision of the founders and key corporate individuals. So when they said they built the Hacienda for the city, the community, it resonated. There are many aspects about the Hacienda case which exemplify how not to run a business, but the reality is that these factors helped build a community which for a period of time created a very powerful brand in-tune with its consumers, achieving phenomenal trust, engagement and a rich narrative. The organisation delivered the product and the community delivered the affinity and the dialogue was abundant.

4.6.2 Hacienda in-depth interviews – worksheets

The worksheets both helped underline the key driving forces of affinity and a shared narrative. At the heart was an organisational shared commitment to the product and its experience and indeed to grow with the consumer wherever the ever evolving journey took them.
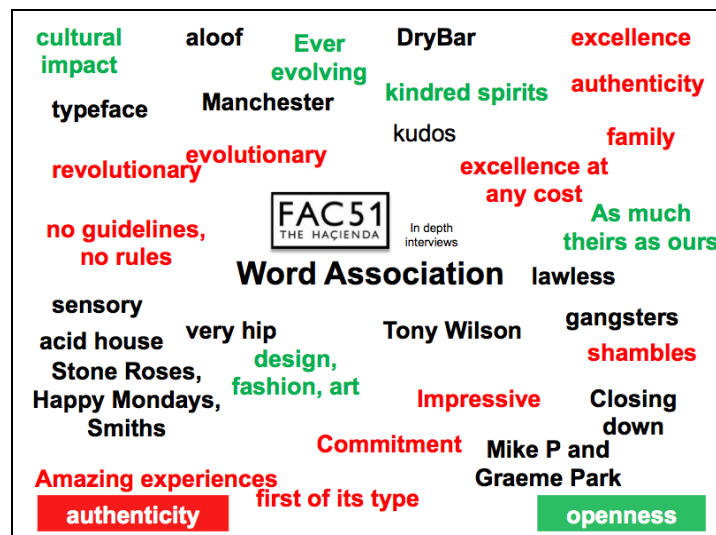
Fig. 4.17 Word association outputs – Hacienda in-depth interviews

Authenticity was the driving force and the shared narrative seen as the engine to build engagement with the consumer base. Again community was not listed as high as the in-depth interviews would suggest, but the data signified how

being engaged in a motivated community really builds affinity: *"The brand was a definition of an experience, a shared experience"* - TJ.

4.6.3 Hacienda in-depth interviews – summary

The interviews (December, 2011) uncovered a significant level of insights into the sphere of what constitutes authenticity, what instils trust and what drives affinity (Fig. 4.18). Distinct from the other two cases was the emphasis placed on the people that played a very public role in the brand's life – the figureheads. In addition, great emphasis was placed on the organisation *living the brand*. They embodied this and their public profile allowed the broader community to understand what the brand stood for – and all in a period where social media was human and not digital. They were almost *artistic amateurs* – living their art / their brand - and this emotion caught the zeitgeist of the time.
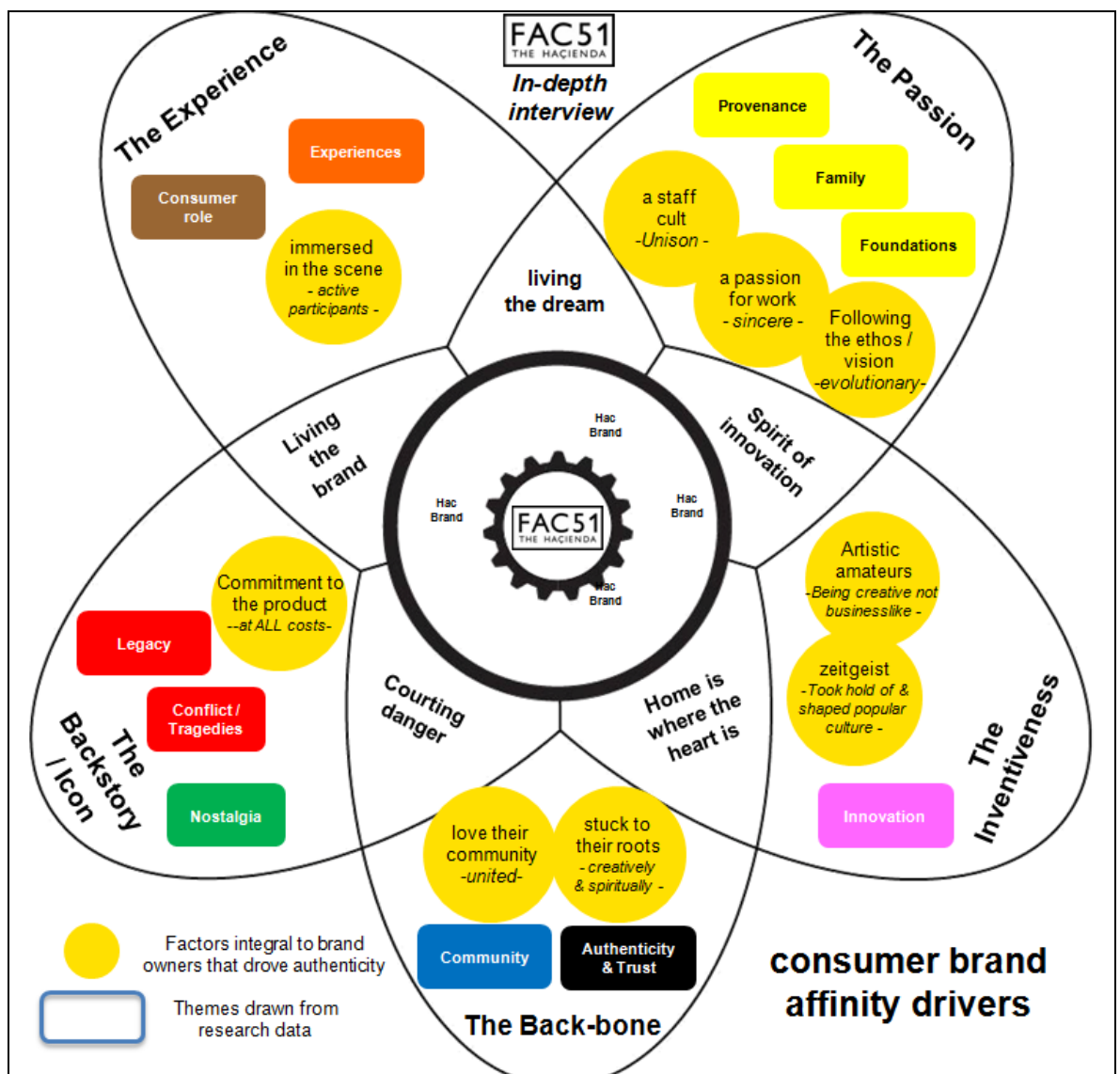
Fig. 4.18 Mapping affinity drivers – Hacienda in-depth interviews. Source: Original

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Like the other two cases, the fans blades are driven by very similar themes, but in this case provenance, community, and an immersive experience were much more accentuated. With authenticity once again the backbone, consumer engagement and involvement is more readily offered and affinity magnified as a consequence.

4.6.4 Hacienda focus groups – theme analysis

Two focus groups were held with respondents that frequented the Hacienda (*most often*) during the 1990's and, to a lesser extent, either the Ministry of Sound in London, Renaissance in Birmingham, or Cream in Liverpool. Again the format replicated the other focus groups, i.e. centred around semi-structured questions drawn from the thematic pots identified in the literature review. An overarching trust in the brand was evident in both groups: *"Trust that what is being offered is actually being offered – that is, the best quality DJ or band – they never let you down"*. The product promise and the reality being in parity, proved the linchpin in building trust and shaping authenticity amongst the respondents. Trust was also built from the early foundations of the club – it had a reputation (and credentials) as a live venue with new and up and coming talent: *"I never went before all the acid house scene happened but it was pretty well known for live acts and local live bands"*. Trust was also shaped by the proximity of those in charge: *"they had a proper passion for the brand and for what they were doing."*

Hacienda Focus Group data themes
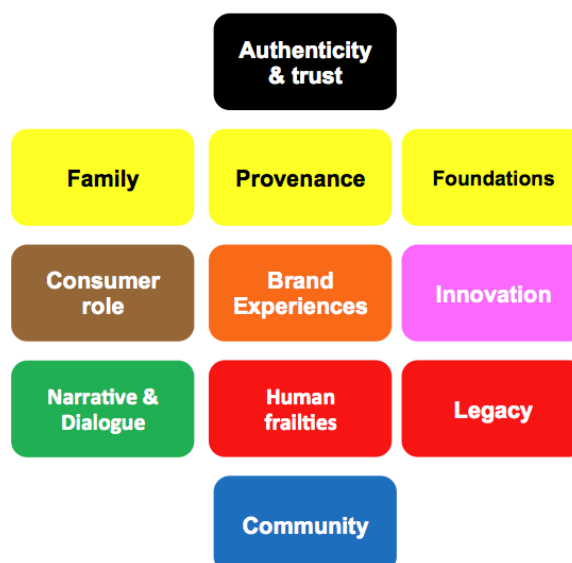
Fig. 4.19 Hacienda focus group data falling into key thematic pots

The figureheads and leading players in the Hacienda story also helped build a cache: *"it was a club owned by my favourite band – and they'd always be there as well – total dream".* It was also evident in the groups that it was a product of Manchester – the city's own – and a symbol of civic pride: *"it was ran by a who's who of Manchester – TV celebrities, musicians and celebrities"* and *"The founders were mavericks – they didn't care about money they just wanted to make something happen".* Indeed for many it was like a big *"secret celebrity society".* This, it was suggested, added not only credibility (trust) but also created huge dialogue between the media and consumer, and between consumers themselves. The sheer innovative nature and super stylish design also evoked great pride: *"felt like ours and it was better than anywhere else"* and *"amazing that it came out of Manchester".* It was also seen as innovative in the way it communicated and in its media: *"the club flyers and fanzines were pretty groundbreaking".* This innovative aspect to the brand really resonated with consumers as it felt that they were not only on their wavelength but also part of a movement: *"it was amazing to be part of the start of the whole acid house thing – felt like we were making it happen".*

Trust levels were constantly high amongst consumers; indeed once the club had been experienced then *"I didn't care what was on – getting in was enough and it was always good".* For many it never let anyone down and the narrative was born simply out of the excellence of experience: *"was probably the only place you could hear certain tunes – other than the pirate stations."* The visibility of the owners and their obvious flaws really did build affinity amongst consumers: *"they seemed to be making it up as they went along – always money troubles and surrounded by flakey folk".*

The provenance (Gunlach and Neville, 2012) really gelled with people from the area but was also sensed by those not from Manchester: *"it captured the good old fashioned northern spirit of working hard and having a proper party"* and as others outlined, *"put Manchester on the map"* and it *"defined what Manchester had become".* The aspect of connecting a brand to/with a sense of place/ location allowed the narrative to be centred and the club's story became entwined in Manchester's. As discussed, the club was all about the experience and consumers played a key role in defining that experience: *"the unity of the*

crowds really made the club" and "there was no social media like now with randoms. It was all word of mouth and trusted as it was from your mates or your mates' mates". Also, the fact that it had emerged in a period of relative urban decay meant it had great standout and generated empathy: "it was like nothing you would have expected from Manchester." To most respondents it was the first of its kind but, importantly to establishing an ongoing narrative, it never seemed to stand still. This sense of innovation was also personified in the public figurehead, Tony Wilson: "he was a maverick and innovator and it showed".

The next area that proved rich in the focus groups was that of the role the club played in community, not only the Manchester community, the dance community, the gay community, art and design community and music scene but in the sense of community spirit that it engendered when it fell on bad times, "When it was going smelly we really all wanted to help", and also when it was alive, "Loads of people gave up their time even for free to get involved – flyers, fanzines". Communities emerged with it and as one respondent highlighted, "If it was around now the social media space would be electric." This captured the rich layers associated with the brand that because there appeared no control over the corporate image then narrative and storytelling just gained unprecedented momentum through consumer groups. This finding also mirrors the open philosophy referred to by Haslam (2000): "fans have become bands, consumers have become producers; that's always the Manchester way."

Either by design or fortune, they did create the conditions for fertile dialogue and narrative: "they did their talking inside the club and we did all ours outside". It was also not just the experience that generated a dialogue; their creative output really resonated and had public impact: "they created such amazing artwork and design that their presence was everywhere". Narrative also flourished as a result of the bands associated with Factory Records being integral to the club: "because all the bands were involved there was a constant stream of stories".

The final thematic pot of insights centred on the legacy it left behind and the imprint of the brand's human frailties. The power of passion and the magnitude of momentum were played out by consumers: *"it's amazing what you can do when you are really into something"* and *"they didn't give a damn they just followed their dream".* Respondents also noted the impact of the organisation "opening up" and how it affected consumers: "*People really warmed to their dilemma – they opened themselves up and let us see the reality"* and *"nothing was ever covered up, you could make of it all what you wanted".*

The foundations of affinity though were again laid with a quality product (Strizhakova et al., 2011) that was always superseding expectations: *"They never cut corners and it made the product more than you would ever have expected".* The team behind the brand put the club and the experience before everything else and those fragilities did build bonds: *"They really were unprofessional and unplanned – but it got them to a special place"* and "*they made loads of financial mistakes but it never held them back."* Indeed nowadays their story would have been played out in greater detail with the proximity that digital communications now allow. The respondents thought this demise would have built even deeper affinity with the consumer base, with a suggestion that the narrative might have even gelled consumers together (very much like the save Radio 6 campaign) to save it from its closure.

4.6.5 Hacienda focus groups – worksheets

All respondents in the focus groups were supplied with worksheets and these provided additional insight. Again the passion displayed by the inner sanctum of the Hacienda brought great trust and authenticity to consumers: *"their passion for the brand for what they did, brought and built authenticity".* The experience, the reality, for some respondents was vital in that the real live experience always lived up to the hype. This was important and something that respondents believed would be lacking in today's over-hyped world. The brand's authenticity was absolute in respondents' eyes – in the fact it was a first - a game changer out of the North of England, and in that it didn't follow the rules.

Clearly from the respondents' accounts, the Hacienda made its own rules and that inspirational position was reflected in the authenticity it evoked amongst its consumers. Openness was seen as paramount – in the fact they were not afraid to have a go, make mistakes, and for those mistakes to be illuminated in the press. They broke the rules in search of excellence and were not too concerned with the consequences. This very open approach built the scope of narrative consumer-to-consumer rather that organisation to consumer.

Fig. 4.20 Word association outputs – Hacienda focus group interviews

4.6.6 Hacienda focus groups – summary

The focus groups delivered rich insight not only into what the foundations were for generating real affinity with the brand, but also into what drove the rich narrative amongst consumers. Central to the success was the organisational position of living the brand and, from the consumer perspective, "living the dream" (Chouinard, 2006). The power this plays with consumers is palpable – to see brand owners immersed in their own scene is a powerful endorsement.

Unusually for the time period, the organisation was very open, had a very visible leadership and a team with a shared ethos. It was a brand essentially created for the people by the people and this proximity to the user base evoked a very real narrative and built affinity. The organisation only cut corners in their business acumen; the product, experience and a commitment

to evolution placed the club and its output aside from the competition. Importantly the Hacienda became synonymous with Manchester; it was born of the city, for the city and created opportunities for people in the city. This has huge resonance with consumers emotionally - a social brand truth that went beyond the functional aspects.
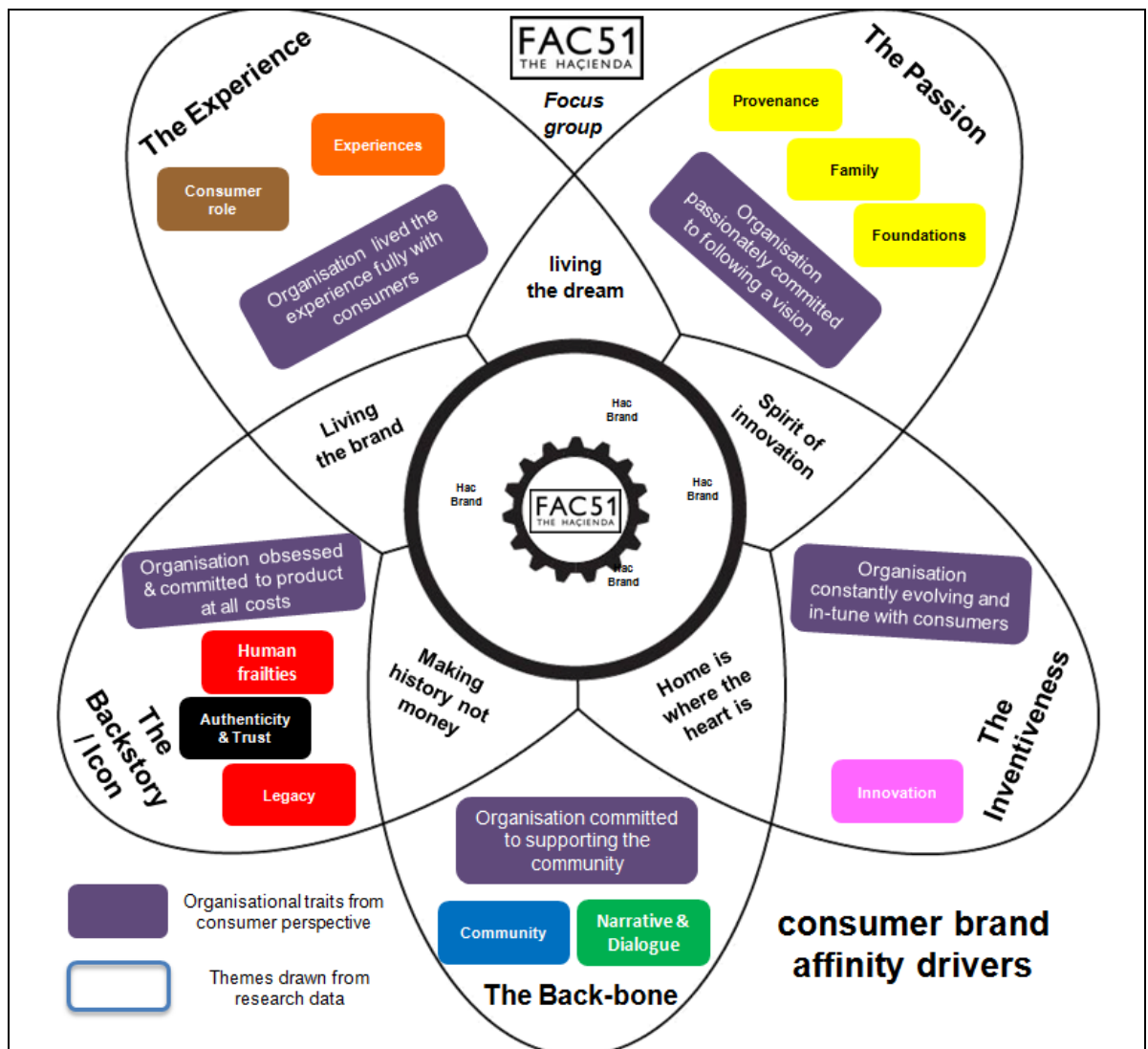
Fig. 4.21 Mapping affinity drivers – Hacienda focus group interviews. Source: Original

Finally Fan Mechanism Fig. 4.21 again mirrors the previous cases in illuminating the themes that populate the key blades in the fan of affinity. The standout insights are an unquestionable commitment to the corporate vision, an allegiance to provenance and community, and a carefree obsession to delivering excellence. The Hacienda was created by the organisation but quickly became the property of the community and they did with it what they wanted. It constantly evolved and that spirit delivered rich narrative and affinity.

4.7   Summarised findings and Cross case analysis

The data analysis uncovered a number of insightful themes, which not only delivered the cornerstones for building consumer trust within the cases but also illuminated what the key drivers were in building consumer affinity through a shared narrative and a two way dialogue between consumers and, ultimately, between consumers and the organisation.
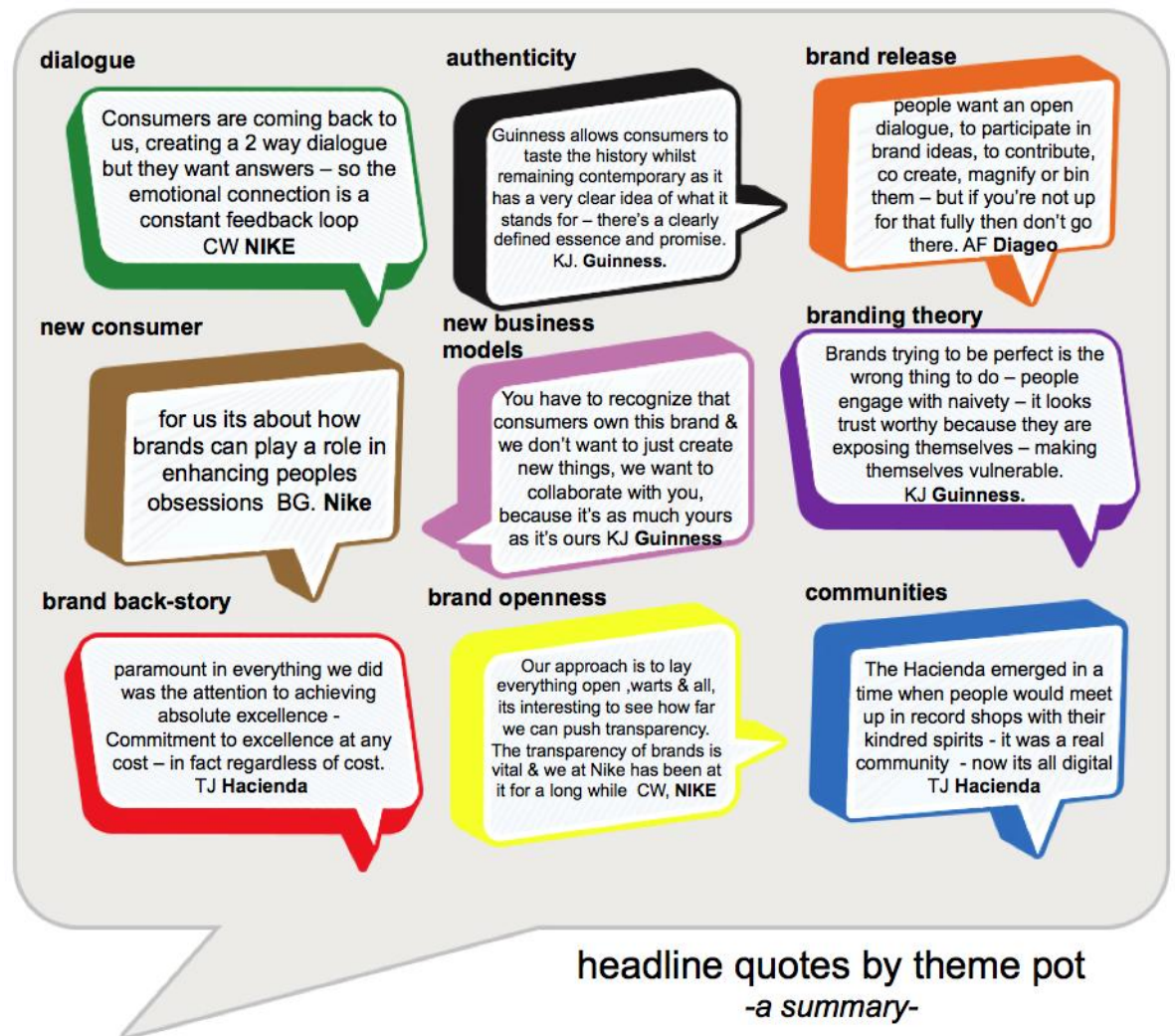
Fig. 4.22 Capturing the headline quotes per theme pot. Source: Original

The themes, using the colour coding system instigated in the literature review, provided an insightful template for analysing the data and affording it with a replicable structure. Fig 4.22 captures key quotes from the case data and allocates them to the relevant themes to illustrate their salience. It emphasizes that concepts such as corporate openness, engaging consumers in co-creation, embracing and permeating communities, doing well by doing good,

focusing on the ever evolving product details, enhancing consumers' relationships with brands (the experience), ensuring the organisation lives by what it preaches (living the brand), providing the social framework for dialogue and ensuring those responsible for the brand (inside the organisation) actually care – are all insights that cut across the cases investigated. All highlighted not only that there is a broad trust erosion permeating brands and marketing (Clark, 2009), but also that an upfront, open, true and mature relationship with consumers can start the reconnection journey (Friedrich et al., 2011).

In addition, when drawing reference from the in-session individual work sheets significant anomalies are highlighted (Fig. 4.23) and the power of shared dialogue further underlined.

Influencers on brand affinity	Nike		Hacienda		Guinness			Researcher	
	In depth interviews	focus groups	In depth interviews	focus groups	In depth interviews	focus groups	Mean hierarchy	hierarchy	Via literature
Trust	1	2	2	1	1	2	1.5	2	1
Nostalgia	6	4	4	4	4	3	4.2	4	6
Authenticity	1	1	1	2	2	1	1.3	1	2
Openness	4	6	5	4	5	5	4.8	5	3
(stories) Dialogue	3	3	3	3	3	4	3.2	3	4
Communities	5	5	6	6	6	6	5.7	6	5

Fig. 4.23 Analysis of rankings from individual work sheets. Source: Original. Pictorialises respondents' ranking of brand affinity factors, '1' being most important.

Indeed respondents agreed how important it was to build a rapport (Lundqvist, 2012) with organisations and that a progressive organisation that opens itself up, allowing all to see inside, was essential in order to build trust and ultimately start and share the dialogue. This was reflected not only in the "word association" sheets but also on the "brain game" sheets where nostalgia was given an unusually higher ranking. Having returned to the original sheets and found the supporting quotes, one can sense that nostalgia was given higher credence primarily as a consequence of its trust and authenticity attributes. It may also be the case that two of the studied brands, Guinness and the

Hacienda, were heavily laden with nostalgic overtones and this may have skewed the data (Muehling et al., 2012). It does however reflect the credence consumers place in a back-story, a provenance and a time line as it appears in the first instance to underline its authenticity credentials. There is also a broad sense that people do, with the right brands, embrace community (Nike+) but somehow prefer not to, in a research group environment, want to appear that somehow the brand has *got them*. It is an unusual anomaly and one worthy of further research but it in no way undermines the weight of impact community does play in developing affinity.

In totality, the data across the cases uncovered a number of factors that have/will create brand disconnect, but importantly has offered real insight into what practical steps to take and what communications philosophy to embrace in order to start to engage and build affinity with the target consumer groups.

First, however, the cross case disconnecting factors will be considered.

4.7.1 Brand disconnect factors

The first category of cross case findings relate to what is causing the current levels of brand disconnection. These had been outlined in the literature (Keller, 2012), but gained traction and were developed further within all of the qualitative questioning sessions. Fig 4.24 outlines that the apparent heart of the disconnect is that today consumers (aided by digital communications) simply have more power: *"Consumers are the future of the brand – they just have so much more power" – KJ, Guinness.* It is essential to appreciate this and understand how this manifests in real brand decision making capabilities: *"if you put your trust in them and they let you down then you can walk away" – KJ, Guinness.*

There has also been a void between what brands promise and what they deliver and consumers get this imbalance and it can break the relationship down fast: *"Trust has been eroded and there is a general mistrust amongst especially larger, global organisations. Consumers feel let down as they put their trust in institutions and it's all come crashing down" BG. Nike.*
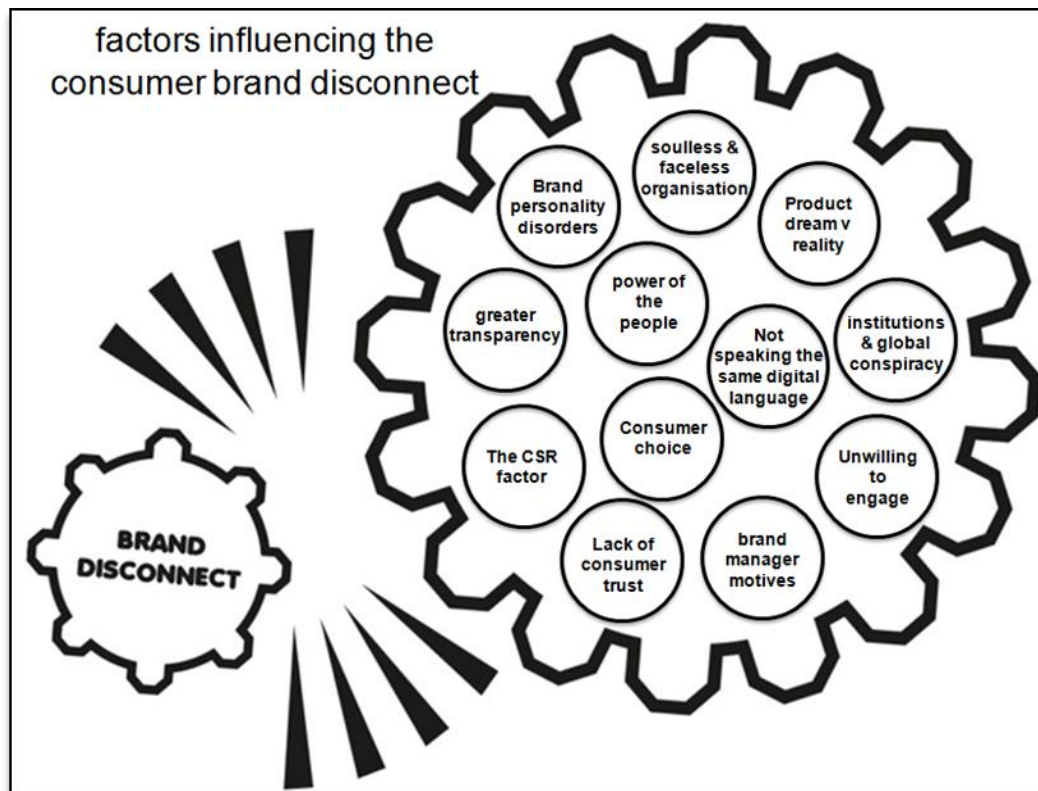
Fig. 4.24 Brand disconnect brought about by a number of factors. Source: Original

Consumers have become accustomed to organisations being in the business of making money at all costs (Burmann, et al., 2009) and this, from the data, has become unacceptable as a more empathetic paradigm emerges: *"we really believe in the power of brands to foster social change" – BG, Nike.* Consumers realise the power of brands to engage, to influence but also to cause harm. Narrative flourished and affinity grew stronger when brands exhibited more of a social conscience: *"there is an opportunity to have an impact on the world beyond our world of sport and as a global business we have a responsibility to do that" – BG, Nike.* It is important now to show what you value and let consumers interlock with these values and let them develop: *"we are saying these are our values and we are being true to them in everything we do – we carry it all the way through and it will be attractive to those that share those values"- KJ, Guinness.*

Organisational transparency is seen as essential today (Finchum, 2010) and a lack of it is a significant cause in the ongoing trust erosion. This point is captured in the Guinness focus group: *"Brands cannot hide any more".* In the supporting in-depth session, Andy Fennell stated, *"I love the transparency that broadband brings".* This is also magnified when organisations are simply

unwilling to engage, particularly when consumers have shown interest in developing a narrative but the organisation has remained closed – it is a phenomenon that quickly turns away consumers: *"otherwise consumers would be suspicious – like you are trying to exploit them"* - KJ. From the alternative perspective, the situation is mirrored *"If there's a willingness for brands to listen then people feel they have something to offer"* - Guinness Focus Group.

Organisations that have not embraced the digital revolution in brand/consumer relations have also been left floundering in the eyes of consumers. The in-depth interviews reflected how these organisations saw the implementation of this being of paramount importance: *"what Facebook have done for us is they have trained three hundred of our graduate mangers in how to use the digital platform and this year they are doing a lot of our agency staff as well"* – AF, *Diageo.* It was apparent that organisations and their communication agencies and consultants are not as sharp as the consumer base in the digital arena, and that the more progressive organisations realise this is a gap to fill: *"we should look at digital not as marketing channels but as tools for communication and enhancing relationships with consumers"* – BG, Nike.

Another factor attributed to the breakdown lies with Brand Managers themselves, either through a lack of passion for the product, a lack of commitment to the organisation or being handcuffed by the yearly cycle of brand planning and targets. All these together **starve the brand of energy and momentum and create a break in the dialogue** and an emotional apathy that consumers can sense: "*a big thing is that today no brand manager is willing to take big risks – we come from a world where anything wrong is big news"* – BG, Nike; *"The danger for brands are brand managers that are just passing through"* – KJ, Guinness.

The next disconnection factor relates to a brand having a perceived personality disorder, appearing to give off mixed messages and mixed opinions. Consumers need to understand the organisational position in order to potentially join in, as evidenced by: "*so all we can do is behave authentically and behave in a true way and be open to scrutiny"* – AF, Diageo, and "*a message should always be true to your core values and remain true to your*

beliefs" – KJ, Guinness, and further supported within the Hacienda focus groups, *"The message was pretty consistent that this was Manchester's own"*.

Finally, an insight that broadly emerged was that consumers today have so much choice; it raises the question whether any one brand can rely on total and absolute commitment and monogamy from consumers? This phenomenon has created a reduction in affinity, but lessons have shown that there is still huge scope for bonding when the opportunity arises: *"our job is made so much more difficult with the disposable nature of today's society" - CW, Nike,* and from BG at Nike, *"There's a niche for everybody now – so a big brand has to appeal to a broad audience".* From the data, it is recommended that practitioners should consider these factors and insights when considering their annual brand plans and used as an *aide-mémoire* when establishing a broad spectrum of initiatives from corporate recruitment to consumer engagement.

4.7.2 The building blocks of authenticity

All interview sessions underlined the literature in that the basis for a rich and deep, shared narrative is via a consumer acceptance that the brand exudes authenticity (Ind, 2007 and Hynes, 2009). The modern context of mistrust accentuates this prerequisite and the data uncovered a number of building blocks that can deliver authenticity. Fig's 4.25 and 4.26 highlight the key foundations divested from the data and evident in all three cases.
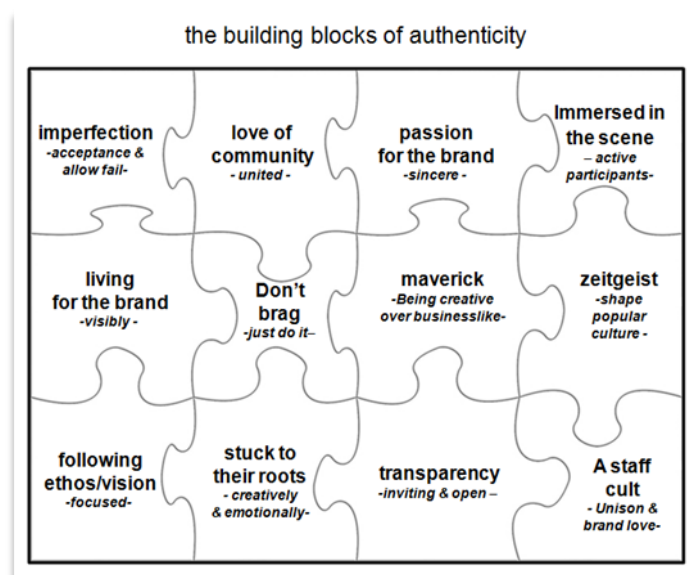
Fig. 4.25 What factors appear to establish a sense of authenticity. Source: Original

The journey of authenticity appears to start with staff unison - the idea that there is a manifesto, written or unwritten that they are all following: *"all the staff worked all the hours, total love and belief" – TJ, Hacienda.* This shared ideology ensures the right people are doing the right job, under the right ethos: *"It is about instilling a culture that allows you to live and breathe the brand" – KJ, Guinness.* It is about all those associated with the brand having passion for it - they care: *"We are lucky as we have brands that are easy to fall in love with"- AF, Diageo,* and *"There's huge responsibility for companies and brands in terms of who they hire – people in love with the brands" BG, Nike.* Living the brand was a rich theme in the literature and it was magnified in the research, stretching out toward the importance of delivering staff that are truly active participants in the scenes they represent: *"we have filled the place with skaters – guys still right into the scene" – BG, Nike.* This, it is suggested, enables the organisation to ride the zeitgeist and be in touch with target consumers – a shared passion.

Authenticity Driver	FAC51 THE HACIENDA	GUINNESS DRAUGHT	NIKE
A staff cult - Unison & brand love -	✔	✔	✔
love of community - united -	✔	✔	✔
passion for the brand -sincere -	✔	✔	✔
living for the brand -visibly -	✔	✔	✔
following ethos/vision -focused-	✔	✔	✔
maverick -Being creative over businesslike-	✔	✔	✔
Immersed in the scene – active participants-	✔	✔	✔
Stuck to their roots - creatively & emotionally-	✔	✔	✔
zeitgeist -shape popular culture -	✔	✔	✔
Transparency -inviting & open –	✔	✔	✔
Imperfection -acceptance-	✔	✔	✔
Don't brag -just do it-	✔	✔	✔

Fig. 4.26 Authenticity factors across all cases. Source: Original

The demand to accept failure and exhibit human traits is also seen as vital in endearing consumers to the brand and building a sense of authenticity. All talked about the appeal of seeing flaws and BG highlighted the corporate conundrum,*"people are really torn between being perfect and transparent and*

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being unique and themselves". In BG's view it is not about being perfect, it is about having an open communications conduit so things can be discussed and debated with consumers. Transparency really is a powerful driver of authenticity and BG adds further to this debate: *"these days it (transparency) is critical because people are so savvy and they have almost perfect access to information and quite good filtering systems",* and "*opening up adds and brings depth and story and meaning to it – just makes it more real".* From Diageo's perspective AF was clear*, "people want an open dialogue".* The learning is clear that to establish the conditions for dialogue then companies must open up and not be afraid to show their flaws - that's human and consumers can deal with it. This also links to a corporate requirement to not brag – do things naturally without the need to constantly receive accolades: *"my attitude to good works (CSR) is make it make economic sense without you bragging about it, let people find out"* – AF, Diageo.

'Being maverick' and 'taking a less worn path' also established credentials and delivered fertile ground for narrative and dialogue to be shared. Of all the three cases the Hacienda was clearly the most un-businesslike business, where profit was never a consideration until far too late in their story: *"they would spend all their money on the detail"* - JD, Hacienda, and *"they just weren't bothered about money"* – TJ, Hacienda. This was also clearly supported at Nike (CW), *"the more we start mashing not for profit and for profit and stop defining what we achieve as being either good or bad for the world then we will end up in a much more interesting place".*

There is an interesting dualism present in the data, as equal emphasis was placed on ensuring that the brand is true to its roots but also being part of the contemporary Zeitgeist. One aspect, it was suggested, shows history, ethos and purpose (which builds authenticity) and the other, the ability to have relevant and meaningful conversations – a more modernistic take on the premise of authenticity. The Guinness focus groups discussed this in relation specifically to the brand and agreed that the zeitgeist was played out in the brand's marketing and advertising. Importantly, on zeitgeist, KJ presented a warning: *"Guinness never tries to exploit things that seem to be popular at the time – with the Zeitgeist - as long as it sat with the core values."* Finally the

requirement to facilitate, be active in and support community is imperative: *"a brilliant way of building our business is creating a brilliant and vibrant community"* – AF, Diageo.

4.7.3 What is driving the narrative?

As outlined, authenticity was a key prerequisite and is delivered via a number of constituent parts, all of which added to the layers of trust bestowed on the brand by its consumers. The other aspect of rich insight delivered from the research centred on what appears to drive narrative and dialogue with consumers. It is accepted by respondents that narrative is a fundamental bonder and shaper of relationships, but insight was needed from the research to deliver support for practitioners. Fig 4.27 outlines the insights that have played significant roles driving narrative with the cases under investigation.
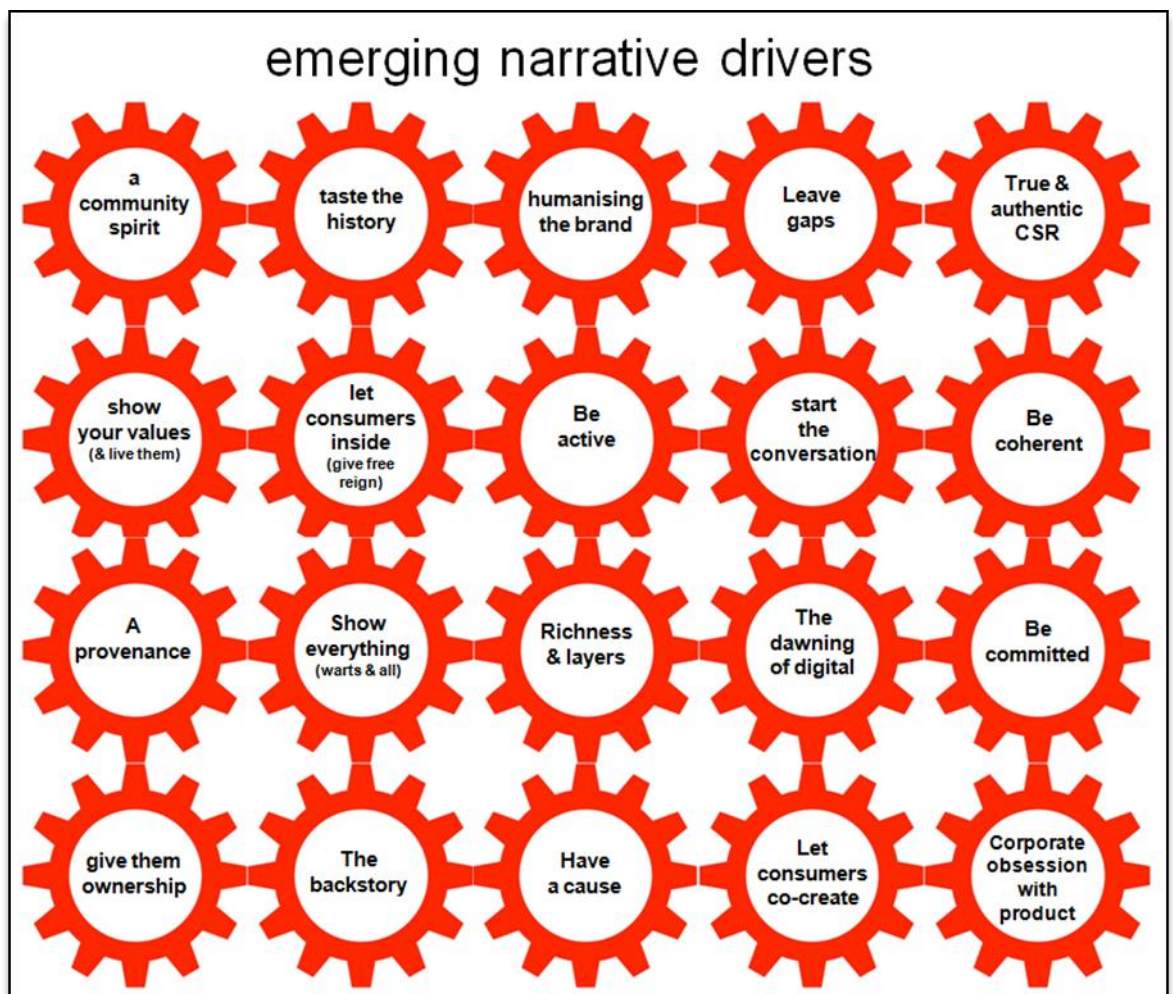
Fig. 4.27 Factors that deliver energy to the consumer/brand narrative. Source: Original

Aside from the factors highlighted within this chapter (and detailed within Fig. 4.27), attention should be drawn to a number of the more subtle influencers. Firstly, leaving gaps in the narrative appears to evoke significant influence in consumer to consumer dialogue: *"Guinness gives consumers enough but lets them fill in the gaps, and fill in the rest"*, and *"With Guinness what's actual truth and what's legend becomes blurred – but it doesn't matter because if people enjoy the story then that's fine" – KJ, Guinness.* This was key to the Hacienda story and was captured in the focus groups: *"the thing with the Hacienda is there were always tales to tell".* Digital has, throughout this study, been a significant engine in changing the communications landscape. The message and insight from all the in-depth interviews was that digital communication is vital in starting the conversation with consumers, to nurture them, feeding them and embracing feedback.

Diageo showed how they treat contact with consumers in the virtual space as absolutely paramount: they train their staff, they feed the conversation and they are willing to take criticism and make changes. Andy Fennel talked about how a consumer tweet almost jeopardized a huge event they were running in South Africa with information that was not true (an incorrect rumour). He emphasised how in previous days this would have been overlooked or, if discovered, met with the weight of a significant legal department. On this occasion however, digitally the tweet was seen within seconds and shortly after the brand manager was able to talk directly to the tweeter on the ground and alleviate the situation. As AF highlights, *"you've got to be really in it, and fully engaged."* In addition to embracing the digital medium is an organisation's need to understand how this has affected the consumer definition: *"the internet has formed this sense where anyone can be anyone – so you can define who you want to be" -* BG, NIKE.

Handing over ownership to consumers (Salzer-Mörling and Strannegård, 2004) to co-create and shape (Muniz and Schau, 2011) is presented as an essential business ethos to help build engagement and establish dialogue. This can manifest in a number of ways, such as the Hacienda who saw the energy and community built by the consumers, Nike ID allowing consumers to create their own trainer, NikeFuel allowing consumers to create their own

health program, and the Nike Foundation allowing consumer the role in defining the engagement parameters. For many organisations this is seen as risky and maybe too avant-garde, but the cases illuminated how it has to be an essential corporate value. For Diageo this is an absolute business prerogative: *"With CÎROC (Vodka) we have partnered up with P Diddy (recording artist) – he teams up with our scientists and they co-create together - the reason it is an interesting story is that everything is authentic"* – *AF, Guinness.*

The final insight to illuminate in this section relates to the organisation's corporate social responsibility (CSR) and its role as a good active citizen in the community. The power of feedback in the Hacienda case and its role as community champion and shaper was significant as were the roles played by Diageo in the "Standing on the Shoulders of Giants" community activities and increasing demands of CSR amongst their new recruits. It is now of critical importance amongst consumers (and a counterbalance in the deterioration of trust) and even more so amongst a new wave of employees coming into organisations – a new generation with different moral codes. The picture was also clear in the Nike in-depth interviews: *"Nike Inc. has CSR hardwired into the business"* - BG, Nike. Finally AF captures Diageo's sentiment: *"Consumers are attuned to the authenticity in your CSR".*

The list in Fig. 4.27 covers the many drivers that have played a role in building a shared narrative in the case studies; some are more applicable to certain brands and different target consumers, but all underline the power and importance of developing intimacy through honesty and transparency with today's consumers (Byrne, 2012).

4.7.4   How can narrative thrive?

The previous findings detailed what appear to be the foundations of narrative, the conditions for dialogue and the key driving forces. However, the data also delivered insights regarding how narrative can flourish over time. Fig. 4.28 illustrates how narrative should, it is recommended, play a vital ongoing role in the fluidity of communication within the organisation. The data also highlighted how, via digital social media, narrative flourishes with consumers and even

amongst non-consumers. Consumers are so interconnected, so information rich and so much more aware of their growing consumerist powers that they now want and can have an ever-increasing role.

Narrative
On everyone's lips

NETWORK narrative

consumer

narrative

Depth of relationship

Depth of relationship

organisation

- Consumers allowed IN - involve them - they have a role to play
- Narrative grows & morphs as both consumers & organisations feed it and let it flourish
- Brand lives in the minds of non direct consumers – by association and these associations have an influence
- The network – has bonds and strength that can mobilise and impact on the brand meaning
- Individuals have their own perspective on depth of relationship – must be accomodated
- Organisation lives the brand values and sees culture as everything
- Narrative can deepen the brand (organisation) relationship

Fig. 4.28 Understanding the spectrum of brand narrative. Source: Original

The diagram encourages organisations to open up, to welcome consumer narrative, to feed it and accept that it will not always be positive. Brands need to be shaped to constantly be in the dialogue loop and provide consumers with not only 'food for thought', but also the power to walk in and be vocal at the very essence of the brand: "*brands will start to learn how to have dialogue with people and the ones creating this sense of relationship are the ones that are really putting resources against immediate, continual and authentic response to consumer dialogue*" - AF.

This open door approach (Gabor, 2009) demands that the organisation must be on message, employ the right sort of people, live the ethos and talk the right language. It is not the case anymore that marketing communications have to be on brand, but the **organisation has to be *on brand* as well**. The organisation must also be aware that the nature of relations afforded to it can be from the flirtatious to the absolute committed and in this way organisations

must accommodate this spectrum – it is only human: *"giving people the chance to change their individual experiences is really interesting"* - BG, Nike.

Fig. 4.29 demonstrates the new organisational outlook defined from the data.
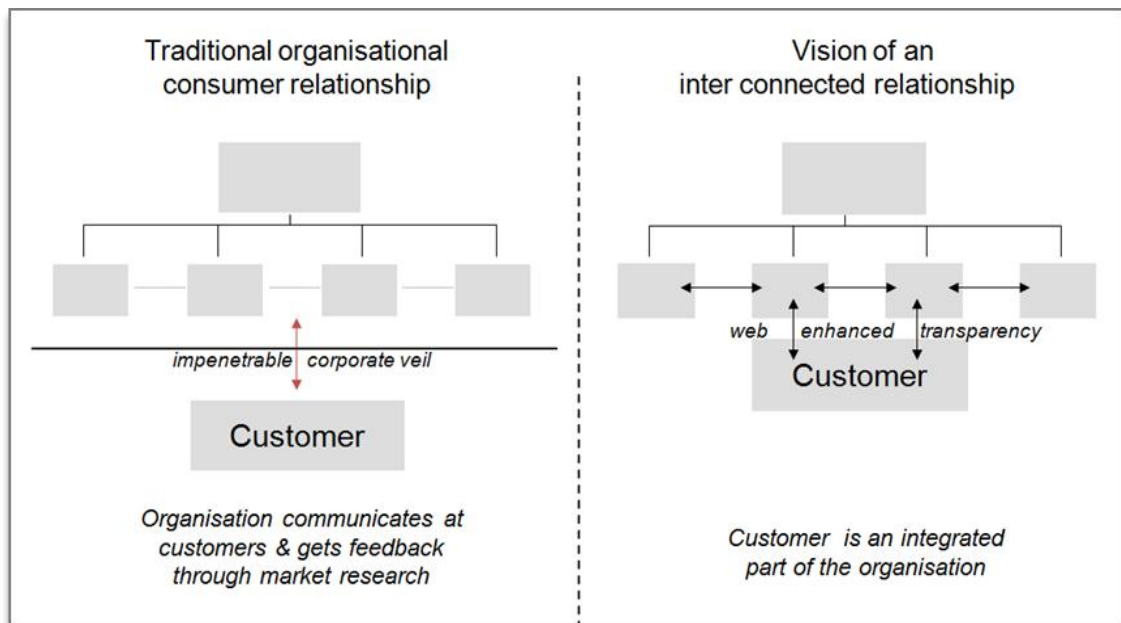
Fig. 4.29 Dialogue exchange demands a new organisational openness. Source: Original

It suggests pulling down the impenetrable veil that so many companies hide behind, and having the confidence to open up and welcome an open dialogue: *"The ones succeeding at being open, the one's doing it best are the really organized ones."* - KJ, Guinness.

Finally, this study supported the key themes identified within the literature review (Jensen, 1999; Ind, 2007; Woodside et al., 2008, Wachtman et al., 2009, O'Sullivan, 2006) and through identifying a wealth of rich insights offered a route map, a framework, for brand owners to consider when developing their marketing and communications plans. It also delivered new knowledge in what they should focus on internally to develop conditions that have the propensity of creating a dialogue and rich narrative with consumers.

Fig. 4.30 reviews the journey this chapter has taken and the findings uncovered, including establishing true and authentic pillars with sociability and openness at the essence, embracing a corporate philosophy of living the brand under the gaze of consumers, and establishing the conditions for an

open dialogue with consumers that ultimately allows them to shape and reshape the brand. The breadth of insights drawn from the three diverse sectors has resonated across each of them – an important observation for practitioners.
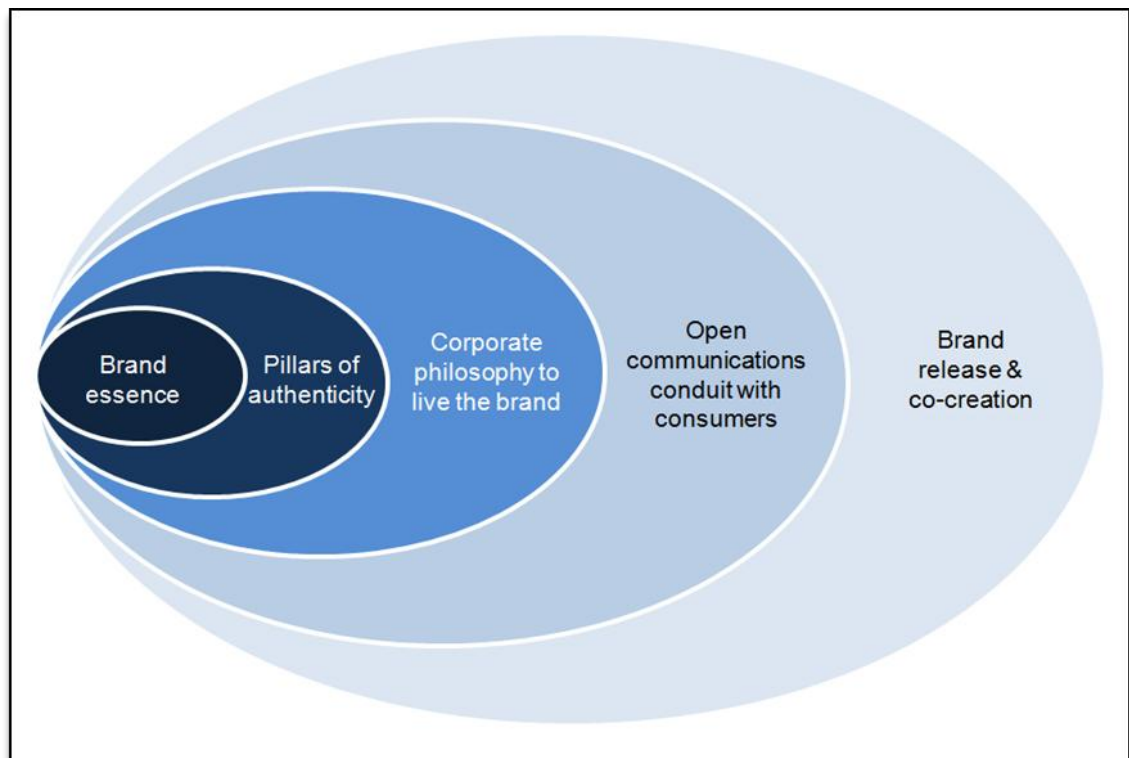
Fig. 4.30 Opening the layers of narrative. Source: Original

4.8   Summary

This chapter presented the analysis and findings of a sample of seven qualitative in-depth interviews with senior branding stakeholders and six focus groups involving target consumers relevant to each individual case. The interviews were designed to understand why there appeared a break down in trust with brands, what the building blocks of affinity were and what constituted the drivers of a shared consumer / brand narrative.

The next chapter presents the broad research conclusions and recognized limitations of this research as well as potential areas of future research.

Chapter 5 - CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This final chapter presents the conclusions and recommendations of the study. It begins by stating how the original aim of the study has been addressed and how the original primary and associated research questions were clearly answered. The main findings of the research are summarized and this is followed by section 5.3 which suggests the managerial implications of the findings. Recommendations will encompass both practitioner and academic and will provide guidance from the research. Finally sections 5.4 and 5.5 discuss the potential limitations and recommendations for future research.

5.1 Research Aims and Questions

The ultimate aim of the research was to investigate how organisations can build consumer engagement and brand affinity through a shared narrative. In view of the trust breakdown between brands and consumers, (Quandt, 2012; Randall et al., 2011; Yannopoulou et al., 2011; O'Sullivan, 2006), the thesis set out initially to gain insight into what foundations should be in place to build trust, to ascertain how the key driver, authenticity, is established and ultimately to comprehend the wider drivers that are creating the conditions and energy for a mutually beneficial shared narrative - a narrative that builds affinity. Since research in the broader area is modest and no previous research has been specifically conducted in this area, primary data was collected from seven leading individuals involved in brand guardianship via in-depth interviews and six consumer focus groups. From a critical realist perspective a qualitative research approach was taken using a thematic framework analysis to establish rich insights.

The research is of significant importance as it is borne out of a practitioner need to readdress the conditions of the modern digitally interconnected brandscape. Brands are witnessing the difficulty in building consumer affinity (Burmann et al., 2009) and consequently dialogue is breaking down. This was illustrated by Caroline Whaley at Nike, who added, *"brands have lost their cache, from a trust point of view".* Today consumers also have, via the internet, an unprecedented level of choice (Shim et al., 2011), and it requires

brand owners with other huge challenges, to work harder, think differently and apply different measures to help build affinity with the ever-sceptical and promiscuous consumer. The study addresses the key research question concerning this modern day branding conundrum and presents insights that can be considered for practitioner branding programmes. As KJ Guinness concludes, "*as a brand manager you have even less control than you used to have… it means getting the bits you can influence right even more important*".

This research commenced by establishing a number of key objectives to be addressed and section 4.8 "Cross case analysis and findings' illustrated how these have been met and that real contribution to practice has been delivered.

1. **To ascertain**, via the literature, what influential themes currently appear dominant in shaping the levels and depth of consumer/brand affinity.

   Fig 4.22 (pg. 183) illustrated the broad and varied spectrum of influencers from organisations delivering a culture of corporate openness, embracing and permeating communities, to ensuring the organisation lives by what it preaches (living the brand).

2. **To understand** what is driving the current disconnect between brands/consumers and reducing levels of trust.

   Fig 4.24 (page 186) identified twelve factors that are complicit in driving brands and consumers apart or in reducing levels of affinity, from how the digitally empowered consumer has greater access to knowledge and can exert more direct influence over organisations, to how a lack of motivation, desire and focus amongst brand managers drives the disconnect.

3. **To identify** key insights amongst the practices and ethos of the case organisations that drove affinity amongst their core consumer target.

   The use of the "Fan Mechanism", discussed next in section 5.2, allowed for a clear understanding of the cross case phenomena that exhibit

significant influence in building brand (or organisational/consumer) affinity. These cover brand owner characteristics, organisational traits and motivational factors which encourage dialogue, a narrative and deep affinity to flourish amongst consumers.

4. **To recognise** how authenticity (*a key affinity and trust factor*) can be established in consumers' *(and broader stakeholders')* minds.

   Fig 4.25 and 4.26 (pages 188/189) highlighted the twelve factors consistent across the case organisations and that contributed to delivering brand authenticity cues. These included an all-encompassing staff credo, a commitment to play active roles in communities, and an acceptance of imperfection. In essence, the more it exhibited human characteristics, the greater the organisational authenticity credentials.

5. **To discover** from the case organisations, what appear to be the emergent drivers of dialogue and an ongoing thriving narrative.

   Fig 4.27 (page 191) displayed the twenty drivers uncovered from the research, all of which exhibit real influence in driving a thriving narrative. These are in no way a hierarchy, but each has demonstrated more significance, as discussed, under differing conditions. As a development of this objective, the research also uncovered insight into how narrative should be encouraged to flourish (Fig 4.28), and how a different organisational outlook (Fig 4.29) can influence a two-way narrative loop.

6. **To deliver** a framework rich in insight for organisations, brand guardians and consultants that can be considered for application within their own corporate credo, marketing and branding activities.

   This final objective is achieved with reference to Fig 5.5 (page 208), entitled the "Lore of the Brand". The framework demonstrates how, via an open communications conduit, both the internal (organisation) and external (consumers) can deliver a rich and shared brand narrative.

Lastly, as discussed in point 3, The "Fan Mechanism" delivered a roadmap to uncovering cross case phenomenon - an analysis tool that provides an additional framework for identifying underlying occurrences. The next section examines and summarises the key insights delivered through its application.

5.2 Delivering insight and practitioner guidance through the Fan Mechanism/Framework

Having amalgamated the Fan Mechanism frameworks from the three cases, a number of reoccurring phenomena have allowed a summation framework to be developed (Fig 5.1). This collated fan delivers insights into: 1) Which brand owner characteristics drive perceived authenticity amongst consumers, 2) Which organisational traits allow affinity to flourish amongst consumers, and 3) Motivational factors that drive and stimulate narrative. It further confirms the depth and range of cross case finding discussed in chapter 4.
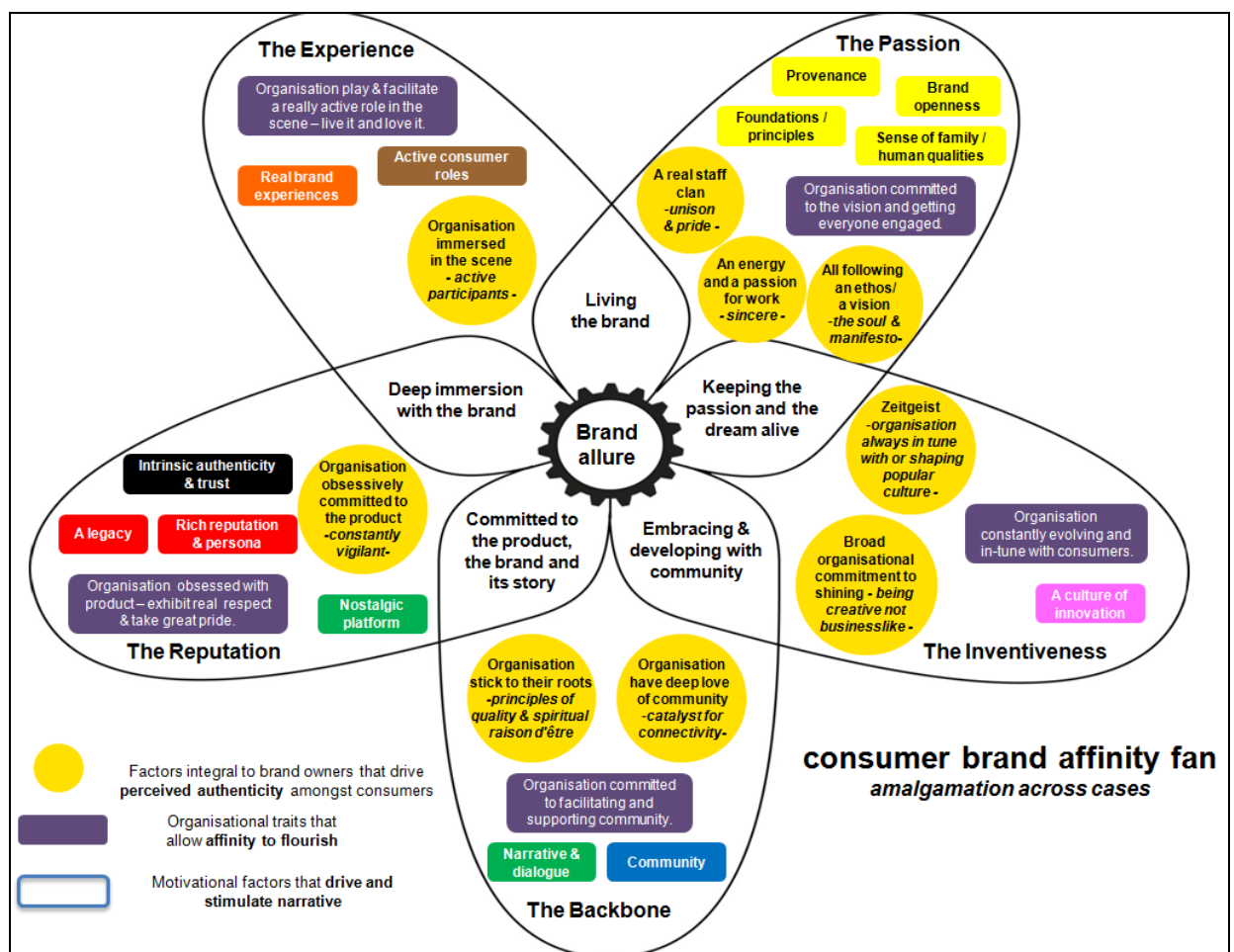
Fig 5.1 A summation of the individual case fan framework analysis. Source: Original

These characteristics, traits and factors present practitioners with the vital perceptivity to assist them in shaping their future branding activities. It illuminates behaviours and key narrative hot spots that have shown real impact in building consumer/brand affinity within the researched cases. It is suggested practitioners use this summation as a further *aide-mémoire* in their branding armoury, and to assist them in developing real brand allure.

5.2.1 Driving perceived authenticity

Via this summation fan, a total of nine brand owner characteristics were identified (Fig 5.2), each having the propensity within the case organisations to strengthen authenticity cues in consumers' minds.

Fig 5.2 Organisational characteristics driving authenticity. Source: Original

1. ***Organisational obsession with the product.*** In our surplus society (Appleyard, 2005), consumers lay even greater emphasis on the actual and basic quality of the product. The product has to stack up against the story the brand owners present and this is no more reflected than when the brand owner obsession with the product is palpable. Each case had, at its core, individuals/teams who were besotted with the product, the brand and its delivery to consumers: *"as a marketer you realize they (Guinness) never compromise on the quality of the product"* AF, Diageo*.*

2. ***Organisation immersed in the scene.*** Nike talks about employing active sports fans, Diageo are committed to their local philanthropic activities and the Hacienda inner sanctum was highly visible both front of stage and on the stage. The brand owners (guardians) acting as active and recognisable product users positively drives the authenticity cues.

3. ***A staff clan/cult.*** In an era when impermanence is the norm amongst many organisational staff (*"the fact that brand managers moving on constantly is having a significant effect"* KJ, Guinness), brands that create and maintain the bond among personnel really deliver an energy and authenticity to the brand. Having everyone focussed and committed to the cause really reflects on the brand and its output (Hogan et al., 2003)*.*

4. ***A passion for the brand.*** Great places to work, places that shine, deliver connected and passionate individuals who care. Again this translates into raising authenticity perceptions amongst consumers: *"let people in the organisation become passionate advocates of the brand"* KJ, Guinness*.*

5. ***Following an ethos.*** In recognition of the original community-focussed values of founder Arthur Guinness, Guinness has at the heart of their credo "Standing on the shoulders of giants". With this the organisation puts great emphasis on encouraging the founding values to really permeate the very ethos of brand management. This commitment to a

central tenet of the brand captures the hearts and minds of consumers and manifests as heightened authenticity. A point also identified within the Hacienda data: "*at the centre of the Hacienda was a solid inner sanctum of close friends – all with the same ethos*" JD, Hacienda.

6. ***Being in tune with the Zeitgeist.*** An ability to *"speak the same language"* and appreciate the contemporary sights, sounds, fashions and causes has shown to really resonate with consumers. Nike's capacity to constantly listen and adapt to the ever changing consumer, establishes them as an authentic brand in-tune with the heartbeat of society: *"as a brand you must become culturally relevant and culturally resonant"* BG, Nike.

7. ***Putting progress before profit.*** Companies that deliver a culture of innovation and inspiration build authenticity cues. They are willing to take risks and this very human quality resonates with consumers: "*Nike is about sustainable innovation"* BG, Nike.

8. ***Love of the community.*** Companies that keep it local, whilst their aspirations may be global, create great empathy with the consumer base. Being an active and caring part of the community pays real dividends: "*Guinness is locally renowned for bonding with the community and for supporting the community"* KJ, Guinness.

9. ***Sticking to your roots.*** Understanding what makes the brand great, where it came from and what it believes in clarifies their message and delivers authenticity. Brands that change (the essence) are generally seen as less trustworthy: "*your brand becomes true when the truth in your brand becomes real"* CW, Nike.

5.2.2 Encouraging affinity to flourish

The process of amalgamating the case fans uncovered five organisational traits (Fig. 5.3), each of which had distinct influence in creating energy for consumer affinity to proliferate.
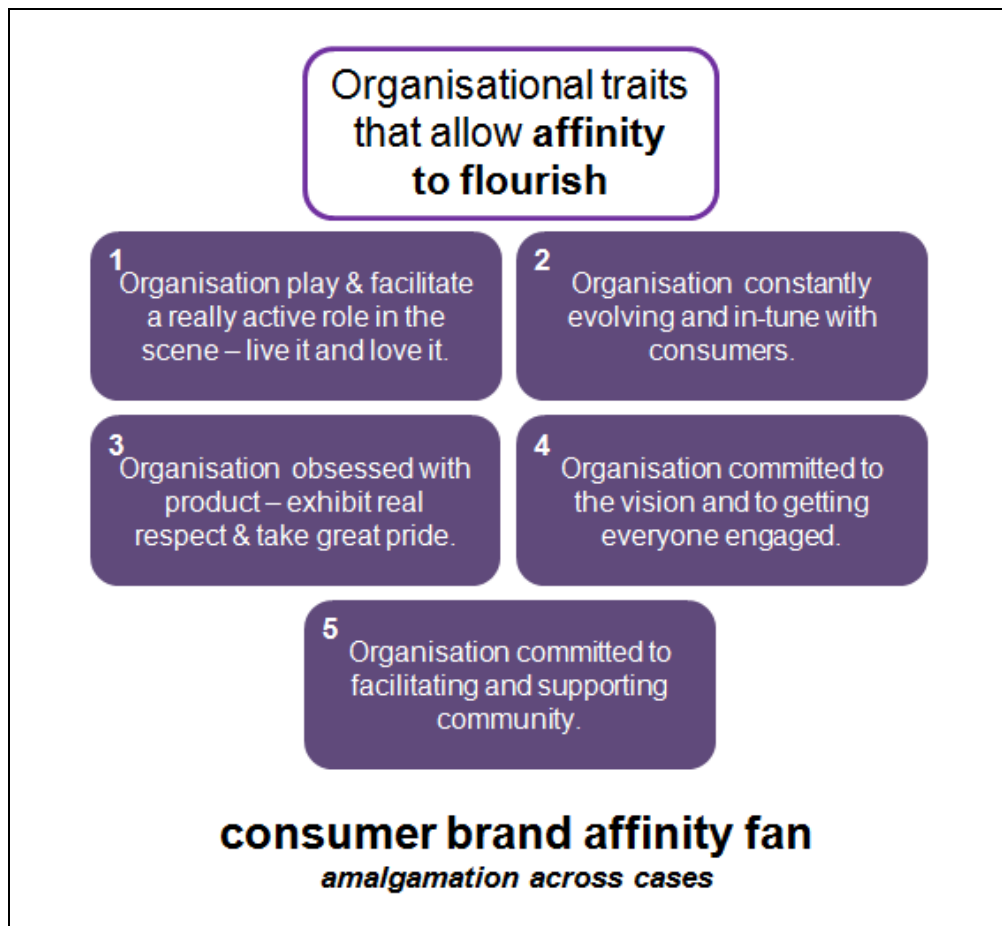
Fig 5.3 Organisational traits driving affinity. Source: Original

1. ***The active organisation.*** Being active and visible in the relevant scene creates impact, cut-through and energy for the brand. In this case it's important the brand and the employees love and are active within the sector the brand represents. This passion cuts through into the consumer sphere and creates an ongoing reason to have dialogue with the brand and, as such, builds affinity: "*I have to feel passionate about what I'm involved with, it definitely helps*" CW, Nike.

2. ***The evolving organisation****.* Organisations that do not stand still build longer-term brand affinity with the equally, naturally evolving consumer. Whilst it is essential to keep true to the brand essence (*"preserve the core and revolutionise what you don't have to keep"* AF, Diageo*)* it's vital to stay in-tune with the consumer, stay relevant, and keep the narrative flowing: "*Nike is constantly bringing out new products in everything from skateboarding to football – they never seem to sit still – it's all about improvement*" Nike Focus Group.

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3. ***The obsessive organisation.*** Being constantly focused on the product and what makes the product great, unique and distinctive is a fundamental prerequisite. The research highlighted how so many companies lost sight of this in the hunt for short-term profit, but in the case studies this was where the real cornerstone of affinity rested: *"we would always do it, regardless of cost, because it would make it better"* JD, Hacienda*,* and from a Nike perspective, CW *"it's about holding your ground and being true to quality".*

4. ***The committed organisation.*** Companies that make real efforts to live the brand (Ind, 2011) have shown real influence, from corporate internal relations to igniting innovation. Even more significantly, this effort acts as a driver in building on-going consumer affinity. Consumers can nowadays see right into the heart of corporations – a team of motivated, energised individuals *living it* is highly motivational. As AF Diageo highlighted, *"you have to be in love with it to really care".* Additionally the Guinness focus groups stated that, *"the idea of people doing something because they love it is powerful".*

5. ***The caring organisation.*** Care translates across the product, staff, the community and broader social responsibility initiatives. Organisations that exhibit these traits certainly saw the resulting positive impact in consumer dialogue and affinity: *"they have a community attitude that really strikes a chord"* Guinness Focus Group and from CW, Nike *"our activities have brought energy back to communities in bad times – we were there when the chips were down".* In today's hyper-connected society, consumers seek out these traits and support organisations that show compassion (Tyagi and Tyagi, 2012).

5.2.3 Stimulating narrative

The distilled fans not only captured the insights initially drawn from the literature, but also those subsequently built and developed through the research. A total of thirteen factors were shown to drive consumer/brand and consumer/consumer dialogue and ultimately assist in deepening affinity with the organisation and its output (Fig 5.4).
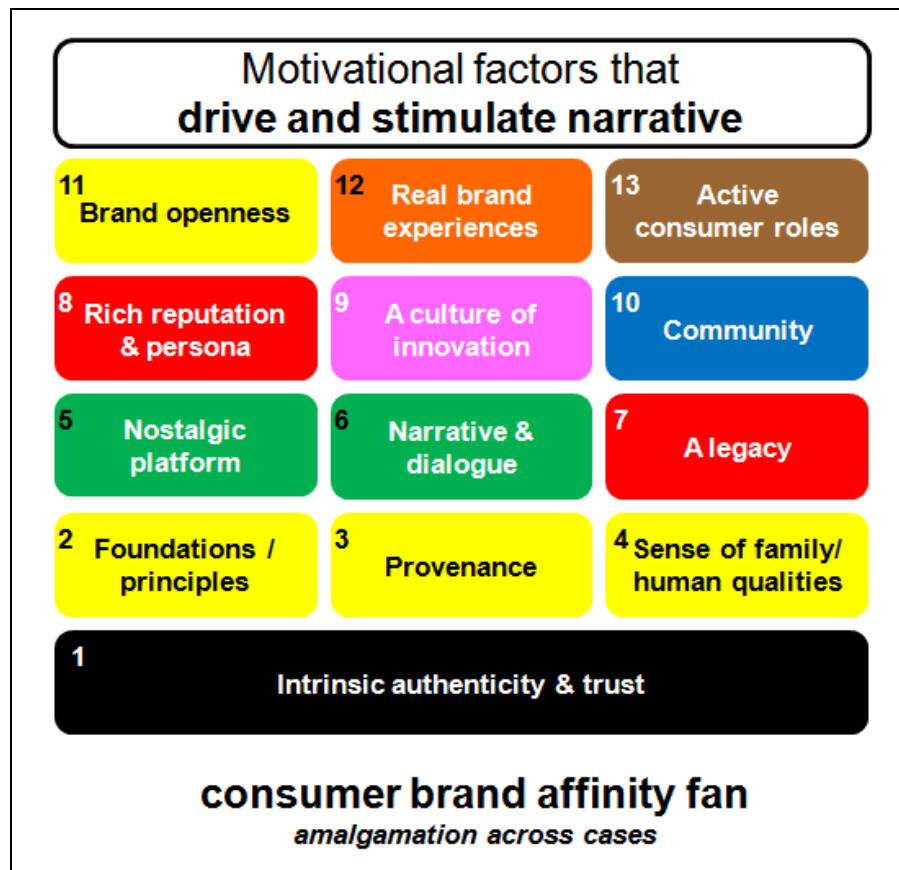
Fig 5.4 Organisational characteristics that stimulate narrative. Source: Original

These factors have been discussed within the literature review chapter, were identified across all three cases, and have been further discussed within the "*Cross case analysis and findings*" section (page 183). In essence, the factors centre around 'richness of corporate story', 'openness of organisational culture', 'pride in product', 'provenance and principles', 'a commitment to all communities it touches', 'a passion for innovation' and 'an emphasis of offering the most colourful of consumer experiences'. Each of these factors achieved positive consumer/brand affinity and indeed the more factors prevalent, the more opportunities to deepen affinity: "*emotional connection is all about a 2-way feedback loop"* CW, Nike.

5.3 Summarising the Main Findings of the Research

It is clear from the literature review (Clark, 2009; Herskovitz et al., 2010) and the in-depth interviews that *"we are definitely seeing a growing mistrust in brands"* - BG, Nike. The focus groups also stated that, "*there's a lot of anti brand stuff about so the product has to stack up"*. It all points to the fact that there is a very powerful disconnect between brands and consumers.

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Consumers are now ever more sceptical and disconnected (Talton et al., 2011) and this is having a huge impact on brand affinity. This is all happening against a backdrop of a protracted economic recession in the UK and leaving practitioners seeking new ways to engage: "*brands will need to start to learn how to have dialogue with people*" – *AF, Diageo.*

The research uncovered a number of factors that, having been identified in all three cases and illuminated through the "Fan Mechanism", all contributed to this disconnect (Fig. 4.24). Essentially the influencing factors are centred around a breakdown in consumer trust (lack of authenticity cues), the vision and values of the organisation (a lack of corporate openness), the increased power in the hands of consumers (digitally enhanced), an unwillingness shown by the organisation to engage (a lack of dialogue) and ultimately the lack of passion and abilities of those in charge of the brand (not living it). The research clarified the detrimental effect these are having on an ever-fragile consumer affinity and acted as insight signposts for practitioners.

It became apparent that the real seeds of this disconnect were grounded in the notion of authenticity and what actually constitutes it. The research again (across the cases) delivered broad insights (Fig. 4.25 / 4.26) into how practitioners could start the rebuilding process from creating real passion internally, "*The Hacienda were just infatuated by what they put out*" – *TJ,* to opening the doors of the organisation and being transparent *"The transparency of brands is vital and we at Nike have been at it for a long while"* – *CW, Nike.* The driving force centred around the idea of building a shared dialogue with consumers - *building a mutual story* - and the research delivered insight on a range of drivers that can facilitate this: *"understanding your consumers' world and what role you have a right to play in that world and that's all about finding and developing the narrative" – BG, Nike.* This idea of a shared and rich dialogue permeated all three cases and sits at the heart of all the key learnings: "*people want an open dialogue, to participate in brand ideas, to contribute, co create, magnify or bin them – but if you're not up for that fully then don't go there*" - AF, Diageo*.* In that, the research uncovered a number of fundamental drivers to establish a credo of corporate/consumer engagement (Fig. 4.27).

The research identified drivers as diverse as delivering a sense of the history and the ideals of the organisation, to building bridges with community and establishing a thriving culture of digital awareness, ability and application amongst all staff. It is a rich tapestry of insights and also accentuates that it is as important to leave gaps, make mistakes and act naturally. The data amplifies the need to let consumers inside the organisation, open all the doors of the company and work at starting and maintaining the conversation: *"as we open up we cannot engage old world realities."* – AF, Diageo.

As well as delivering these "affinity drivers" the research also presented a case for how narrative can flourish and thrive. This centres on the ideals of openness, establishing momentum behind a shared narrative and providing the content for broader consumer-to-consumer dialogue: ***"when brands have deep emotional connections, the reaction is extraordinary"*** – CW, Nike. By way of summarizing this rich breadth of insights uncovered within the research, Fig. 5.5 entitled "the Lore of the Brand" visualizes the thesis recommendations.
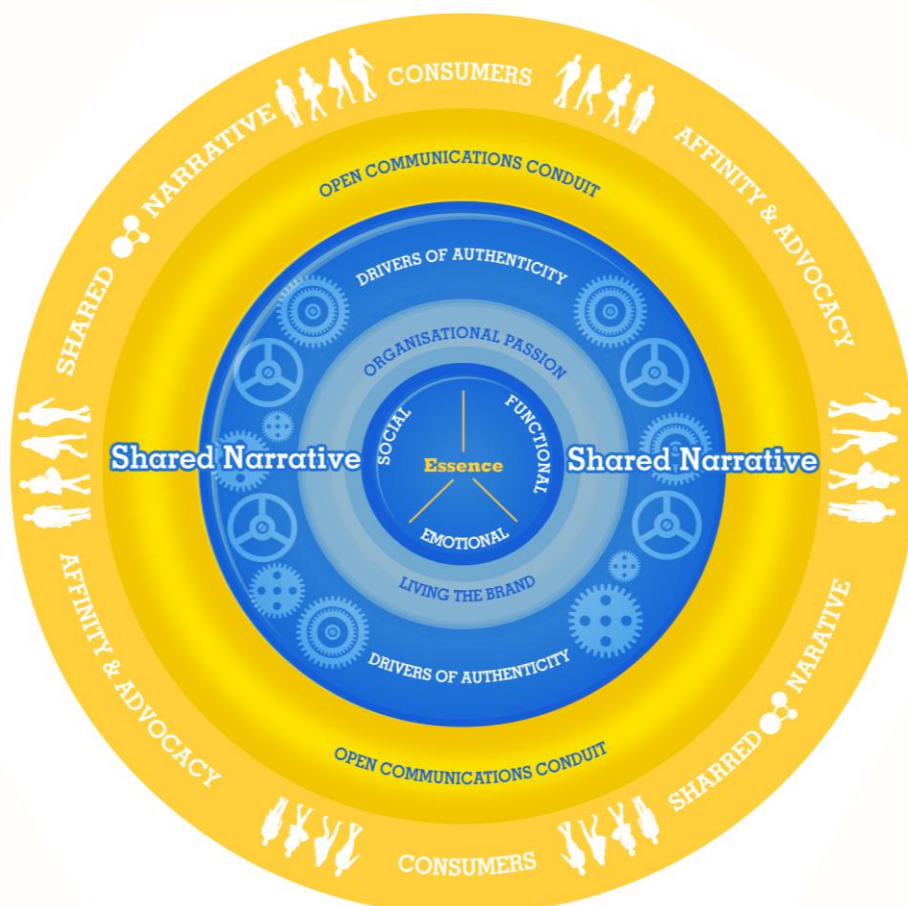
Fig. 5.5 The Lore of the Brand – a vision for building narrative. Source: Original

In this diagram both the internal organisation (blue) and external consumer (yellow) are seen delivering a shared narrative, a dialogue that shapes their personal story over an open communications conduit and on their own terms. This provides consumers with access to the heart of the organisation, the very essence, which it is proposed must have a social dimension at its core: *"you have to be prepared to get in there and be part of the community"* – CW, Nike. This reflects an assumed willingness of the organisation to listen, share and create with consumers and an acceptance that the fundamental layer has to be truth delivered through authenticity. For the brand to *be owned* by both consumers and the organisation there has to be belief and establishing authenticity is therefore paramount: *"You have to recognize that consumers own this brand and we don't want to just create new things, we want to collaborate with you, because it is as much yours as It is ours"* – KJ, Guinness.

For too long, as the smoke and mirrors have dissipated (Lundqvist and Liljander, 2012), consumers have been falling out of love with brands and the "Lore of the Brand" fundamentally stresses that truth and authenticity are paramount. As Andy Fennell, Chief Marketing Officer at Diageo summarises, *"it has always been true that brands need to be authentic and that they need to build trust by being straight".* This sentiment is also shared by Nike, *"being sympathetic reflects that there is a truth to it – you are being true to what that product or experience is – that is the essence of brands that will make it"* – CW, and certainly supported from a Hacienda perspective: *"everything about it was real, it was unreal"* – TJ, Hacienda.

Finally the Lore of the Brand's premise is that it is evolutionary, it is about constantly working at building and feeding the narrative with consumers, and accepting that as they change then ultimately so will the brand. Andy Fennel captures this sentiment: *"Invest in keeping people externally focused, so they stay fresh, and look for opportunities to change but also to be in love with your brand so you never change something that's important".* The data presents a case for greater intimacy with consumers, rewriting a new script, a new brand story, together. *"If your (brand) can tell a story it really engages their (consumers) imagination and makes them connect with it more"* - Guinness Focus Group.

5.4 Implications of the Study

The study has allowed the researcher to academically investigate the modem day practitioner branding landscape from three distinct organisational perspectives. The findings and insights provide practical new knowledge regarding how brand owners can regroup and adapt their ideologies to deliver a more emotionally connected relationship with consumers and ultimately a better commercial relationship.

It is envisaged that academics researching in the field of branding, consumer connectivity, impact of digital media on the consumer/brand relationship, narrative and storytelling will find this research and its findings of rich stimulus. Importantly, the frameworks developed regarding the building blocks of authenticity, what appear to be the drivers of narrative, how narrative can be encouraged to flourish and indeed the recommendations held within "the Lore of the Brand" framework should all encourage academics to pursue further studies in this area. The next section outlines the key academic implications of findings from this study and then how it is envisaged practitioners can benefit from the findings.

5.4.1 Academic Implications

The literature review highlighted that there is limited peer reviewed evidence, empirical evidence or indeed broader recent insight into specifically how organisations can build consumer engagement and brand affinity through a shared narrative. This research has shone a light onto a stream of opportunities emitting from the new brandscape outlined in the study, the themes that it has uncovered and framework it has provided. Undoubtedly, and an opinion expressed within the in-depth interviews, that more guidance and insight into deeper understanding consumer/brand affinity would be readily embraced by organisations. It was interesting to ascertain (during the in-depth interviews) that Nike has recently commissioned practitioner research into an associated area. In addition to the cases analysed in this study, the researcher has amassed data from other cases and, as highlighted, has been

granted access to more, presenting the opportunity for a further focused academic study and developmental papers.

With regard to the cases specifically under investigation, the researcher was given unlimited insight and access to the inner structure and philosophy (brand heartbeat) of major brand names. The data from these senior people provides other academics with an unprecedented level of insight. It is also envisaged that academically the content, access and public resonance of the cases would provide for excellent academic tutorage, particularly in masters level and above in many University Business Schools, where the inner most machinations of organisational leaders are most sought.

The new knowledge fills a gap in current branding literature but the insight framework could now be tested in other geographical territories, against brands in different sectors or amongst organisational branding professionals at different levels. The illuminated drivers of authenticity, narrative and dialogue could also be academically probed amongst a broader consumer base, *not just core target consumer*, to investigate the potential scope and scale of brand influence and provide further guidance to practitioners.

5.4.2 Practitioner Implications and recommendations

Coming from a practitioner background, the guiding motivation of this study was to provide a conduit between two diverse spectrums (academic and practitioner) and by doing so enable practitioners to apply new theories more readily. Born out of the practical application issue (Kelemen & Bansal, 2002) the research was therefore conceived to provide, primarily, rich and contemporary observations, but also a researcher's framework to guide practitioners. It was crafted to discover insights (*deeper knowledge of patterns and mechanisms*) that may provide useful not only to brand owners but also to the broader marketing consultants industry, which the researcher represents.

Whilst the insights are set against the difficult, and increasingly complex modern marketing landscape, no attempt is made to assert absolute and broad applications, but from the study a number of practitioner implications

can be outlined for consideration. Having spent a significant amount of time capturing the data with senior branding people it is apparent that the need for guidance prevails in many sectors and so it is suggested these practitioner recommendations (together with the "Fan Mechanism insights in 5.2) should be considered as a rich starting point for further investigations:

1. Be transparent - Organisations must open up to consumers

The data really highlighted the need to let consumers inside the organisation and deliver their own narrative. Activities should be considered to encourage this, from communications campaigns, to web facilitation and physical intimacy: *"for brands to build trust they must not let their customers down, be consistent in what they say, but be open and honest and to be as transparent as you possibly can"* – KJ, Guinness.

2. Embrace narrative

A pipeline delivering two-way communications must be established. It is simply not sufficient to only have a one-way narrative with consumers that actively seek more: *"consumers are coming back to us, creating a two way dialogue and they want answers"* – CW, Nike.

3. Create dialogue

Brands need to have a voice and develop their own narrative and then appreciate how that relationship can flourish: *"it is about understanding their world and what role you have a right to play in that world and that's finding the narrative"* - BG, Nike*.*

4. Accept broader narrative

The modern brandscape exhibits a world where intra-consumer dialogue regarding brands flourishes. Brands must embrace this, but at the same time put in place measures to manage any negativity: *"Our desire is to make sure*

conversations are not just going back and forward between consumers and brand but between consumers as well" - CW, Nike.

5. Embrace co-creation

The cases illuminated the power of co-creation – even going as far as handing over an organisations new product development efforts to a music celebrity (Diageo and P Diddy): *"the other side of co-creation is getting people involved in how the business and brand evolves, develops, and what direction it might go in"* – BD, Nike. Efforts must be put in place to examine what scope there is for co-creation in organisations.

6. Live the brand and love the brand

In recent years there has been a movement to allow defining the external image of the brand by reflecting the inner culture and values of the organisation. As the internet has allowed consumers to gain previously unattainable access, then the importance of getting the right people is paramount: "*we insist on every brand, especially Guinness, that whoever works on them literally falls in love with them – you need to understand what's brilliant about them"* – AF, Diageo, and *"the Hacienda were just infatuated by what they put out"* – TJ, Hacienda.

7. Accept a need to retrain

The data highlights the need that this new "open book" paradigm does not come naturally to practitioners and there will be a requirement to retrain particularity with knowledge of the digital space: *"this open space requires a lot of training"* – AF, Diageo, and *"brand management is such a critical role but there are far too many brand managers who don't get it"* – KJ, Guinness.

8. Refrain from control

Brand Release is an essential value for practitioners to embrace in order to engage consumers and build emotive bonds, but it does require the bravery to

face the unknown: *"if you try and control the conversation then you are sunk – it is like participating in an uncontrolled environment"* – AF, Diageo. In this way, the research suggests that organisations need to establish a culture of taking risks and accepting a degree of failure.

9. Seek evolution

The pace of change affecting brands has increased significantly in recent years and the findings highlighted how important it was to allow the brand, its narrative, the channels for dialogue and the sphere of influence to constantly evolve: *"the Hacienda was about not standing still, we constantly looked for ways to improve stuff"* – JD, Hacienda.

10. Accept imperfection

The research gave insight that it is more important to have an open and fluid dialogue with brands than to constantly seek perfection. Perfection does not exist and, as has been shown, consumers can deal with imperfections: *"people are really torn between being perfect and transparent and then being unique and themselves"* – BG, Nike.

11. Take pride in your history

Consumers bond with the brand's history, its story, and wherever possible it should be weaved into the brand communications. It does not have to be a focus, but its availability certainly underscores trust: *"lets you know its history – it's got pride in its roots"* - Guinness focus group.

12. Be responsible

CSR is playing an increasingly significant role not only in building affinity with consumers but also in attracting the right staff to organisations. The research suggests that there must be consideration of this within the brand's plan – and it must be genuine: *"I think people are fed up with companies who aren't willing to do responsible work"* – BG, Nike.

The research highlighted that there are some significant learnings that practitioners should consider. The marketing landscape has changed and new skills, new approaches and paradigms have to be embraced to ensure brands are constantly on the zeitgeist on an ever-evolving consumer.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Initially the thesis could be academically deconstructed into a number of research papers, as well as a number of ongoing doctorate studies - notably the literature review, the consumer trust debate, the drivers of authenticity and creating ongoing narrative in the digital space. Furthermore, this study can also be translated into the following four research areas:

1. *A study into achieving deeper emotional connectivity to donors in the third sector.*

This thesis presented rich insights into the corporate world of branding and the study could be translated into the third sector and deliver insights into building affinity amongst donors. In this way the cases under investigation could be: *Livestrong* (delivering insight and impact from celebrity), *The Salvation Army* (illuminating the emotional connectivity of a shared ethos, religion, social conscience) and MacMillan Cancer (illustrating the emotional draw of a disease with broad public relevance and significance)

2. *A study into the affinity building power of nostalgia on the High Street.*

The study can also be converted into an investigation into identifying the key motivational drivers behind the emergent use of nostalgia by high street fashion brands, from the re-expression of fashion styles, to store layout and even marketing communications. The cases under investigation could be Cath Kidston (modern day kitsch and vintage / retro), premium traditional brands such as Crombie, Jenner's, or true vintage clothing retailer - Armstrongs.

3. A study into the immersive power of the on-line narrative.

The thesis could be adapted to attempt to understand/investigate the emotional connectivity generated through online social media community membership. The study could encompass both identifying the affinity generation drivers for brands and comprehending the broader societal impact digital communities are creating. The cases under investigation could be leading social media platform, Facebook; non-branded on line forum, Mumsnet; and branded space, The Special K diet community.

4. A study into how rebuilding the story of the Great British seaside resort can rebuild trust and affinity.

Finally, the study approach can be translated into a tourism perspective. Following a resurgence of interest into the Great British seaside resort, the study could be an investigation into what the drivers are for rebuilding consumers' affinity. It could help understand how narrative generates interest and empathy amongst a potential new wave of consumers. The cases under investigation could be: Blackpool, the traditional family playground; Brighton, a contemporary expression of a resort; and Morecambe, a place in the shadows of its heydays.

The heart and soul of this thesis is in understanding what shapes a shared narrative and how to start the affinity reconnection process with consumers and has real application and potential insight drawn across a number of arenas.

5.6 Research Study Limitations

This study, like any other study, has its limitations and certainly the research findings may be influenced by the definitions and measurement methods used within the various questioning strategies. These can be summarised as follows but are, it is argued, not significant enough to affect the overall premise and level of insight achieved.

The format required the researcher to schedule extensive interviews (most over one and a half hours) and to increase reliability all the interviews were conducted by the researcher, who allowed for nuanced clarifications and the spontaneous ability to explore areas that were not originally presented in the literature review. Some level of researcher subjectivity was present, however, as noted earlier in the thesis, the potential concerns regarding researcher bias (Saunders et al., 2009) were considered and action taken. Being a practitioner with over fifteen years in the marketing and advertising industry, it was accepted that this might have influenced, in particular, the data interpretation. As highlighted, steps were taken (in the reflection period) to counter any influence, particularly post in-depth interviews. Transcripts were re-read a number of times to withdraw both preconceptions and misinterpretations and to ensure, as far as possible, that bias was removed. However, it is conceded that the subjective nature of the semi-structured interview could affect researcher subjectivity but it should be highlighted that real focus was given to alleviate this.

In total, seven in-depth interviews were carried out across three sectors and potentially this could have been increased. Although a valid (Yin, 2009) sample size (small sample and age of one case also discussed on page 107), a number of factors prevented more individuals being contacted. The individuals selected were senior, critical to the brand activities, eloquent and keen to take part. The data they delivered was deep, rich and relevant and any more data could have over-saturated the thematic framework. As a consequence of setting the bar so high in respondents (for example the Chief Marketing Officer for Diageo), the time and expense of achieving any further individuals was limited. The interviews required travel to London, Manchester and Birmingham and that, together with the six regional focus groups, made further samples prohibitive.

An additional limitation to the design of the study was the difficulty in interviewing focus group individuals who had been active attendees of the Hacienda Club in the 1990's. Ultimately this was achieved in the first instance by utilizing the researcher's social network and requesting those individuals to locate individuals, through their social network, who matched the profile. As

most individuals were now in their late 30's and 40's and in full time employment, getting the groups together (from a distance) did prove difficult. In addition, to alleviate any recollection bias the use of secondary and archive data was used and provided the accuracy to correct any memory or hindsight biases.

A concern exists in using case study design with regard to its potential for overall subjectivity. The thesis does focus heavily on qualitative data, however, it is triangulated both with the literature and, particularly in the focus groups, via measures taken (individual worksheets) to triangulate against any group dynamic and consensus. The design ultimately delivered and heightened the overall richness of insights and express measures were taken to alleviate any bias as previously discussed. This also supports the use of a thematic analysis against other case methods.

Finally, the decision was taken early in the study to focus on the three nominated cases and engage a deep emersion into those only. Other cases were considered and an agreement to participate was gained from other potentials, including *Fiat* (Marketing Director and Advertising Agency Planner), *Liberty* (Head of Buying), *Tennents Lager* (Marketing Director), *Highland Spring* (Marketing Director and Marketing Manager), *Angostura Rum* (Managing Director) and *Celtic Football Club* (Head of Sponsorship). These consenting individuals will be re-contacted for future academic papers.

In conclusion, this thesis succeeded in achieving the objectives set out in delivering a framework for practitioners that gives them insight into how a shared narrative with consumers can firstly be achieved and ultimately be allowed to flourish. In doing this it has contributed a positive step forward in closing the research knowledge gap, delivering rich insights for practitioners and provided opportunities for further academic research. It seems fitting to end this thesis with Caroline Whaley at Nike's concluding thought: "*you are living in a world of curation rather than brand control and that's a fascinating space*". It is a call to let consumers inside, let them co-create and let them shape the narrative, the story, on their terms. It points to a new dimension in brand management; one in tune and embracing the ever-evolving consumer.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix 1 – Summary of Storytelling Works

1. Ind and Burke Model

Toolkit for engagement 1. – Ind and Bjerke (internal corporate storytelling)

Connecting
Broader corporate connectivity – avoiding the feel of propaganda. Ensure tone and language are widely appropriate..

Collection
Find and collect all the stories that swash around an organisation – from informal tales to printed materials.

Compilation
Stories need to be evaluated and structured – and aligned to core org values and business strategy. What's in and what's out ? There needs to be believability and novelty.

Communication
Stories need to be seeded and shared through the organisation and ultimately externally – not just what you say but how you say it.

Co-evaluation
Whilst a dark art the impact of the storytelling can be tested on culture and commitment through employee tracking studies.

2. Mathews and Wacker Model

Toolkit for engagement 2. – Mathews And Wacker

1.Humanize
Must engage audience at a human level.

2.Basic Plots
Brand stories should be built with interlocking layers of nuance.

3.Self discovery
Encourage people to make their own connections with a product.

4.Simplicity
Don't contradict and use back story to scene set.

5.Iconic Characters
Great characters help consumers retain the brand story for much longer than can be anticipated.

6.Get a moral
If you want people to believe tell them what you believe in first.

7.Time Horizon
Set in the past or ongoing – setting the time platform hugely impacts on understanding.

8.Entertain
The ultimate way to engage.

9.Audience understanding
You must understand them and understand what they are understanding !

10.Conflict
A great way of understanding your position and focus – but can be dangerous if not tightly controlled – remembering consumers are now building and rewriting your story.

3. Wilson Model

Toolkit for engagement 3. – Make Believe - Wilson

1.Controlling Idea
The central and attention grabbing idea.

2.Premise
Essence of what the story is about.

3.Role
Let people feel a part.

4.Antagonism
Create a struggle to engage.

5.Genre
Break the genre conventions.

6.Setting
Create an enticing world.

7.Cast
Character reveals character.

8.Backstory
Provides the reason to believe.

9.Archetypes
Types of character heighten engagement.

10.Dilemmas
True character is revealed under pressure.

11.Character Arc
Change and development in character wins hearts.

12.Structure
Organise story to maintain engagement.

13.Subplotting
Heighten engagement in the central story.

14.Inciting Incidents
Turning points force reappraisal.

15.Obligatory Scenes
Let people predict with reward scenes.

16.Intrigue, Mystery, Suspense
Pin them to their seats.

17.Point of View
Reveal more compelling angles.

18.Hook
Hook them in from everywhere.

19.Exposition
Show not tell – let them decide.

20.Dialogue
Words maketh the character.

Appendix 2 – Key literature placed under similar themes

Key insights and themes from the Literature Review

Author(s)	Year	Source type	Summary and findings	Pot
Day & Montgomery	1999	Journal of Marketing	Traditional models of marketing theory not now as appropriate in modern world	▮ (magenta)
Clark	2009	*Practitioner journal*	Accentuates that no brands today are safe from what appears a total and widespread breakdown in consumer confidence	▮ (black)
Sheth & Parvatiyar	2000	Academic book	Need for new paradigm of marketing is required that encompasses new relationships	▮ (magenta)
Jenson	1996	Academic book	laid out a case for emotional connectivity and how consumer and brand can engage through story	▮ (blue)
Hosein	2010	Neimans Foundation Harvard Journal	Relationships can be forged if we inject the channel with story, authenticity and emotion. Trust has to be grounded.	▮ (green)
Jamieson	2011	*Practitioner 1 on 1 research boundary interview*	Brand managers taking far too short-term view rather than a more longer perspective of sustaining brand value	▮ (orange)
Ridderstrale & Nordstrom	2000	*Practitioner Book*	Markets are (over) filled with products and services giving a surplus of very much of the self same – how to differentiate?	▮ (black)
Ewing et al	2009	Journal of Business Research	Brand demise is a natural part of a brand's developmental process, instigated by consumers	▮ (orange)
Collins and Porras	1996	Harvard Business Review	Maintaining core values and purpose while adapting to environmental changes has significant impact on brand value	▮ (red)
Schultz	2009	Academic Book	There appears a huge difference in what brand promises and what brand delivers – resulting in trust meltdown	▮ (black)
Crutchfield	2009	*Practitioner journal*	After toxic banks and defective goods, brands that don't embody all the elements of engaging narrative will fail to thrive.	▮ (green)
Brymer	2004	*Practitioner journal*	Brands exist in an increasingly noisy space (WWW) & now must continually work on what makes them *special*	▮ (magenta)
Clark	2009	*Practitioner Journal*	Brands that can deliver their promises and maintain trust are the ones that will succeed – misinform at your peril	▮ (orange)
Beverland	2005	Journal of Product & Brand Management	Loyalty and trust need to develop over a long period of time - a brand's words and deeds need to be matched - be true	▮ (brown)
Brown, Kozinets & Sherry	2003	Journal of Marketing	Authenticity is often "made-up" and now the digitally connected world leaves no hiding place for these deceptions.	▮ (black)
Ind	2007	Academic Book	Lack of authenticity has reduced consumers' faith in marketing, resulting in total lack of engagement.	▮ (black)
Haig	2008	*Practitioner Book*	Brand fiction has lead to lies & in an age where markets are increasingly connected, consumers just can no longer be deceived.	▮ (orange)
Forden	2001	*Practitioner Book*	Highlights the commitment to a consistent brand story allows the story to stick.	▮ (green)
Huang	2010	Journal of Family & Economic Issue	A brand story with high authenticity tends to be perceived with more positive brand image than one with lower authenticity.	▮ (green)
Schultz	2009	Practitioner journal	The consumer must receive constant brand experiences and any route map has to be based on truth.	▮ (orange)

Hatch and Schultz	2010	Journal of Brand Management	The changing role (co-creation) consumers play in creating brand value, and how it necessitates a full stakeholder approach	
Price	1978	Academic Book	The power of the narrative and how telling a story builds emotional connectivity- it should permeate communications	
Lewis and Bridger	2000	Academic Book	Internet has played a pivotal role in disabling the *emotional bond* dial – illuminating reality – nowhere/nothing to hide	
Jenking	2006	Academic Book	Emergence of more considered / demanding consumer desiring deeper role in building and shaping the brand narrative	
Wachtman & Johnson	2009	Journal Marketing Management	Story has ingredients to build strong consumer / brand emotional connectivity – essential to deliver model of incorporation	
Rowley	2005	Journal of Retail & Distribution Management	Communication flows between all parts of an organisation and all consumers at all times – an on-going 2 way relationship	
Ind	2006	Journal of Product & Brand Management	Recognizes relationship between org. & customers is dynamic, & calls for greater concentration on direct dialogue.	
Clifton & Simmons	2003	Academic Book	Demand marketers establish a storytelling approach both verbally & emotionally rich - expansive rather than restrictive.	
Peters	2003	Academic Book	Argues that good stories are the keystone of modern business success and can create the "waves of lust"	
Kaufman	2003	The Journal of Business Strategy	Storytelling is far more convincing to consumers than rational arguments, statistics or facts. They illicit trust.	
Herskovitz & Crystal	2010	Journal of Business Strategy	If words and deeds are matched, you will create an intrinsic, and implicit emotional long-lasting trust laden relationship.	
Christodoulides	2009	Journal of Marketing Theory	Consumers are interacting live with brands & consumers, creating content, stories & communities – participative branding.	
Abimbola	2009	Journal of Consumer Marketing	Allow different stakeholder to tell different stories as they are powerful sense making tools – imp. to consumers help write them.	
Holmes	1998	The British Journal of Psychiatry	A narrative can trap a person and the more coherent and reasonable the narrative, the stronger	
Escalas	2004	Journal of Consumer Psychology	Let customers create meanings for brands in a narrative way, and they become more valuable and connected	
Rindfleisch et al	2000	Journal Advances in Consumer Research	The use of nostalgia in marketing communications influences significantly brand preference	
Reisenwitz et al	2004	Marketing Management Journal	Products, store interiors and architectural design are also being increasingly used to evoke a "yearning for yesterday" - empathy	
Belk et al	2003	Journal of Consumer Research	The power nostalgia plays, & presents a model for use in communications	
Shekedi	2005	Academic Book	Raises concern of qualitative researcher in danger of nostalgia to romanticise seeing subjects through *rose-tinted glasses*.	
Kessous and Roux	2008	Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal	Nostalgia has the power to connect across time and place – and real impact on building a brand narrative	
Berry, Shostack, and Upah	1983	Academic Book	Marketers should move away from transactional marketing & build longer term relationships focusing on building trust	
Simmons	2001	Academic Book	Recommends companies open up & let this influence, persuade, motivate & inspire consumers – all through the co-created story	

Ind	2010	Visiting Lecture	Brands must accept & engage consumers to play a lead role. Remove the barriers & welcome consumers in – it's theirs.	
Prahalad & Ramaswam	2004	Journal of Interactive Marketing	Embrace connectivity and co-creation. They recognise that a brand is created with others and we must trust consumers more	
Fog et al	2010	South Asian Journal of Management	Dialogue built on real life stories told by all internal and ex stakeholders - anchored in the corporate culture, creating authenticity	
Hogan et al	2003	Academic book	Innocent laid itself open to allow consumer in and be a part of their ever-expanding story – total visibility builds trust	
Thellesfsen, Sorensen and Andersen	2005	Journal - Cybernetics & Human Knowing	Branding is a sign process where consumers (power holders) add meanings onto the product – maybe not as intended	
Pierce	1931-1958	Academic book	A symbol, once out there spreads amongst the peoples and by experience, meaning grows – people power / lose control	
Ketner	1981	Academic Book	Attraction occurs when brand arouses similar (shared) emotions in different people – mirrored in on line communities	
Bruner	1991	Journal - Critical Inquiry	Stories allow humans to make sense of the world and are the social glue and currency needed to bind consumers with brands.	
Brown, Kozinets, and Sherry	2003	Journal of Marketing	Brand stories composed of meanings and associations emanating from within & without - meaning changes over time	
Iser	1974	Academic book	Readers play a role in composing the story, individualizing their experiences and expectations – powerful for branding	
DataMonitor	2009	Practitioner research paper	Increasingly individualistic consumers demands self-expression and asserting individual control over brand meaning	
Baumgarth	2010	European Journal of Marketing	All internal stakeholder to "live" the brand - provides foundations for consumer engagement & a roadmap to shape image	
Escalas	2004	Journal of Consumer Psychology	If the brand does not present its story (spine to knowledge), consumers lack a channel to construct brand associations.	
Lee, Motion & Conroy	2009	Journal of Business Research	Brand avoidance - gap between customer expectations (advertising) & reality of performance (usage or informed usage).	
Schultz	2009	Practitioner Journal	Dot-coms failures (90's / 00's) – broken promises led to consumer disconnect – and loss of trust in broader brand world	
Stone	2009	Practitioner Journal	Customers engaged in advancing a social or do-good agenda through purchases. Growth of brands that help them achieve do-good goals.	

Appendix 3 – In-depth Interviews - Respondents Resume's

1. Nike

    1. Caroline Whaley

Current: General Manager Creative Development | Nike Foundation

Previous: Managing Director Nike | Nike Foundation

Caroline has been with Nike c15 years where she has held a number of very senior marketing roles in Europe, Canada and Latin America.

    2. Ben Gallagher

Current: Insight and Creative Strategy Director | Nike Foundation

Previous: Marketing Director Nike | Brand Communications Director Nike UK

Ben has been with Nike c3 years where he has held senior marketing (UK Campaigns) and a senior consumer research and planning role. He currently holds the top consumer insight role at the Nike Foundation

2. Guinness

1. Andy Fennell

Current: Chief Marketing Officer | Diageo

Previous: Board/Director marketing roles in the UK and internationally (inc. ultimate global responsibility for Guinness) - Diageo plc / various sales and marketing roles at Britvic and Bass plc.

Andy Fennell was appointed chief marketing officer in September 2008 and has global responsibility for Diageo's portfolio including Guinness, Johnnie Walker and Smirnoff

2. Kenny Jamieson

Current: Managing Director Brand Innovation and Insight consultancy *Dreamweavers*

Previous: Global Marketing Innovation Director | Diageo / Guinness Brand Director / Tennents Marketing Director

Whilst at Guinness, Kenny was based at the St James Gate brewery in Dublin, directing development of all aspects of the iconic Guinness brand. He also had a global role at Diageo responsible for driving marketing innovation across all major Diageo markets and brands, including UK, US, Africa, Japan, Baileys, Johnnie Walker, Smirnoff and Guinness.

3. The Hacienda

1. Graeme Park

Current: International DJ and radio presenter.

Previous: Graeme was the resident Hacienda DJ for an 8 year period

Reputed as one of the UK's House Music pioneers, Graeme began DJing in 1986 and became one of the most famous "Superstar DJ's" in the world.

2. Trevor Johnson

Current: Creative Director of Manchester Design company *Creative Lynx*

Previous: Trevor was Creative Director for the Hacienda club and for the associated music business Factory Records

Trevor designed (with Peter Saville) the branding for Factory Records and the Hacienda Nightclub Fac 51. Trevor also designed for many Manchester recording artists and recently for Manchester United.

3. Jon Drape

Current: Founding Director at national events and live communications agency *Ear to the Ground*

Previous: Jon was the Production Manager/Director at the Hacienda until its closure

From January 1991 until May 1997 when the Hacienda finally closed its doors Jon was the lead in the club's production. He also has over 20 years experience in the live entertainment industry producing some of the UK's most successful civic events including The Opening Ceremony of Liverpool Capital of Culture and The Commonwealth Games Handover Ceremony.

Appendix 4 – Focus Groups - Respondents Resume's

1. Guinness

Focus Group 1

6 males in the bulls-eye target for the Guinness drinker – all place Guinness in their *most often / most preferred* alcoholic drinks repertoire and were aged between 27 and 35 which mirrors well the Guinness target profile - male, ABC1 socio-economic classification, in the age group 21-35 year with a bulls-eye of 28.

Focus Group 2

7 professional males in the bulls-eye target for the Guinness drinker – all place Guinness in their *most often / most preferred* alcoholic drinks repertoire and were aged between 27 and 31 which mirrors well the Guinness target profile - male, ABC1 socio-economic classification, in the age group 21-35 year with a bulls-eye of 28.

2. Nike

Focus Group 1

3 males 3 females placing Nike in their top 3 (and purchasers of brand) preferred sportswear brands. Aged between 22 and 27 they sit in Nike's target market for their shoes, clothes and other accessories which is males and females between 18 and 35 years old.

Focus Group 2

3 males 3 females placing Nike in their top 3 (and purchasers of brand) preferred sportswear brands. Aged between 22 and 27 they sit in Nike's target market, for their shoes, clothes and other accessories, which is males and females between 18 and 35 years old.

3. The Hacienda

Focus Group 1

6 northern British males that frequented the Hacienda in the 90's and specified it as their *most preferred* over the other competing super clubs – Ministry of Sound , Renaissance, Cream, Back to Basics.

Focus Group 2

5 Southern Britain males 1 female that frequented the Hacienda in the 90's and it was their *most preferred* over the other competing super clubs – Ministry of Sound, Renaissance, Cream, Back to Basics.

Appendix 5 – Checkist to Ensure parity and consistency of semi structured questions

Flow of session notes – Guinness Focus Group

Setup

- Informal room.
- All sat around table.
- Me at head of table.
- Audio set up and tested
- Pad and pen for me to capture.
- Worksheets / pens for group to capture thoughts.
- Flip chart to capture ongoing themes generated.
- Drinks / nibbles on arrival.
- Cash for payment
- Inform Consent forms

Room stimulus

- A2 boards

    o Guinness (marketing and advertising)
    o Jack Daniels (marketing and advertising)
    o General board of brand with strong consumer/brand empathy.

- Packs of Guinness / Jack Daniels / Malt Whiskeys / Regional Ales / Drew Dog

Welcome

- About me.
- About the research.
- About informed consent
- How useful this is.
- About the next 90 mins.
- About the recording equipment.

Rules

- Just express yourself – I want your attitudes and feelings.
- No answer is wrong – feel free to speak your mind.
- Try and build on others views.
- Feel free to contradict.

Introductions
- Round – table
    o Who you are?

1

- o What you do?
- o What do you drink?

Kick off – first burst

- Off the chest – any burning thoughts about Guinness / brands that you want to share.
- How do you interact with Guinness (promotions / Dublin / advertising / web).

Homework

- Around the table discussing prepared homework.
- Build / share / summarize key themes.
- Place themes on flip chart once agreement achieved.

Semi structured questions

- ### Essence

  - o I want to understand what you think of Guinness and what is important about it to you.
  - o Take a sheet of A4 with a picture of an empty pint on it. Fill in with as many words as you can with what Guinness stands for (for example – traditional Ireland / family values / masculine strength)

- ### Trust

  - o There has been a lot said about consumers losing trust in brands – how do you feel about this?
  - O How does Guinness rate in trust *V* other brands – elaborate?

- ### Nostalgia

  - o Mention Guinness and nostalgia is always discussed. What does nostalgia do for Guinness?
  - o Why are so many brands using Nostalgia at the moment? – (Fiat to Fairy Liquid)

- ### Authenticity

  - o Would you describe Guinness as authentic?
  - o Does it matter? / Are you interested?
  - o Does age matter? What makes it?

2

- **Intimacy and Openness**

  - Some organisations are very open – you can impact on their product range / talk to staff / comment on advertising / go see them – how important is this?

- **Storytelling**

  - Some brands tell great stories – their history / their process / their philosophy / their leader – tell me what's so engaging about these.
  - What brands tell great stories – mini / fiat 500 / Innocent?
  - Why does this seem to be important at the moment?
  - What makes a good story?

- **Communities**

  - Social networking is the buzz marketing phrase at the moment – I want to understand how they may affect our relationships with brands, so tell me about your networks (I use facebook / LinkedIn / B3ta and a car forum).

    - What makes a good forum? (Freedom of speech / honesty).
    - How do you feel about brands moving into web based communities?
  - What about broader sense of community – brands taking a role in this … thought and example?

Summing up

- Draw group to clip board where all major emerging themes have been captured.
- Give each person 5 *star stickers* and ask them to place alongside the insight theme that they feel is important in building the brand consumer relationship.
- I will then write up the final list and achieve consensus.
- All will then be thanked and paid for their time and efforts.
- Ensure all consent forms have been signed and left.

Post Session Reflection

- Piece by me on Dictaphone, immediately as all group members leave.
- Attempt to capture my general thoughts on process, flow, outputs and other general learnings.
- Important to capture subtleties of group dynamics, approach and content, to allow fine-tuning.

3

260

Appendix 6 – Repondents personalised email intive to focus group

1. Guinness Focus Group

2. Hacienda Focus Group

3. Nike Focus Group

A Focus Group Invite

LET'S TALK ABOUT

Thanks so much for agreeing to take part in the focus group, where we'll be discussing amongst other things, the world of Nike. It will be an informal session with up to 8 people taking part who are all pretty similar to you. I will be simply setting questions about how you feel about Nike the brand, and allowing you, the group, to openly discuss. Refreshments will be served – maybe even an energy drink.

To capture the conversations and help in writing the report I will be recording the session, and if this were something you would prefer not to happen then please email me ASAP.

To kick the session off I would like you prepare a short piece of homework – don't worry it should only take you 15 minutes.

Homework exercise.
1. What is it about Nike the brand that engages people?
2. Adidas , Asics and Reebok are huge brands – what makes you prefer Nike?
3. Bring along something that captures why you like Nike so much.

If you have any questions about the session please drop me a return email or call me (07803 887 504)

Thanks again and see you on Thursday 2nd February

Cheers, Mark Fowlestone

The key details are:

Date : Thursday 2nd February 2012   Time: 6pm   Location: 54 Marshall Street London W1F 9BH
                                     Duration: 1h 30 mins

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Appendix 7 – Individual Respondents Worksheets

1 . Word Association and The Brain Game – Blank Sheets

2 Word Association and The Brain Game – Completed Sheets

Guiness Word Association

Nike - Brain Game

Guinness - Brain Game

Appendix 8 – Summary and Final Harvest in Focus Groups
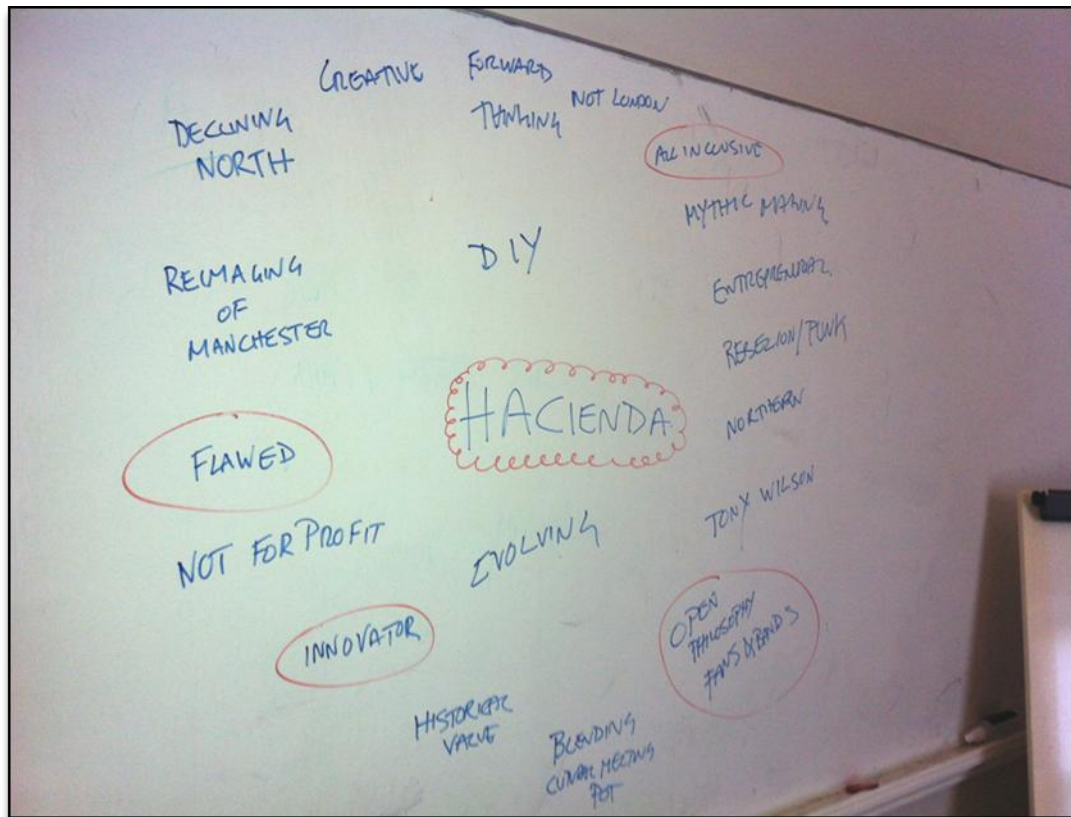
Researcher captures key affinity driving themes and allows group to deliver concensus

Appendix 9 – Research Consent Form

Research Consent Form
Edinburgh Napier
UNIVERSITY

CONFIDENTIAL

Title of Project: The Lore of the Brand:
The role and impact of narrative on brand affinity

Researcher Number: **08017969**   Researcher: Mark Fowlestone

London. 29th June 2012

Participant's Printed Name: _____

Professional Relationships with Nike: _____

_____

Contact email: _____

Introduction

I invite you to take part in the above research study, which seeks to identify the impact of narrative and storytelling on consumers' affinity with brands. You have been invited, as you have been a key professional player in the development of the Nike brand. The purpose of this research study is to obtain information pertaining to consumers' relationships with brands and how stories and storytelling play their part. The research will be informal and taking the shape of a one on one discussion where you will be asked questions regarding your views and relationships with Nike. It will take no longer than 90 minutes and your involvement will be extremely valuable as it is envisaged any findings will be used to assist marketers connect better with consumers.

I will keep your participation in this research study confidential however; it is possible that other people may become aware of your participation in this study. For example Edinburgh Napier University staff may inspect and copy records pertaining to this research. Hence reasonable efforts will be made to keep the personal information in this research record private and confidential, but absolute confidentiality cannot be guaranteed. Importantly, it is intended to record the session to allow efficient gathering of all the information, and ultimately it is proposed to use snippets of audio to highlight key points in the research report. All data collected will be kept in a secure place (stored on an encrypted remote storage device) to which only the researcher has access. Finally the collective results may be published in a journal or presented at a conference.

If you would like to contact a supervisor, who knows about this project you are welcome to contact Dr Maktoba Omar at Edinburgh Napier University Email: M.Omar@napier.ac.uk

Taking part in this study is entirely voluntary. I urge you discuss any questions about this study with me now to allow you to make your decision. If you decide to participate you must sign this form to show that you want to take part.

Please tick boxes to confirm you agree with the statements

I confirm that I have read the introduction notes above regarding the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions and have had these answered satisfactorily. ☐

I understand that my participation is voluntary & I am free to withdraw consent at any time, without giving a reason, without my legal rights being affected. ☐

I understand that many comments & opinions may be looked at by responsible & authorised personnel from Napier University. I give permission for these individuals to have access to this information. ☐

I understand that the research group will be recorded and clips used in the compilation of the findings paper. I give permission for this and its usage as detailed in the introduction. ☐

I agree for my comments to be specifically referred to and highlighted as my own within the final thesis. ☐

I agree to being contacted in the future about further studies relating to this research topic. ☐

Signed participant: _____ Dated: _____

Signed researcher: _____ Dated: _____

Researcher Contact Details:

Name of Researcher: Mark Fowlestone

Address: The Business School,
             Edinburgh Napier University – Craiglochhart
             Campus
             Edinburgh
             EH14 1DJ

Email / Telephone: markf@multiplyuk.com / 07803887504

When competed: 1 copy for participant; 1 copy (original) for researcher file

Appendix 10 – Interview stimulus sheets

1. Nike stimulus

2. Guinness stimulus

3. Hacienda stimulus
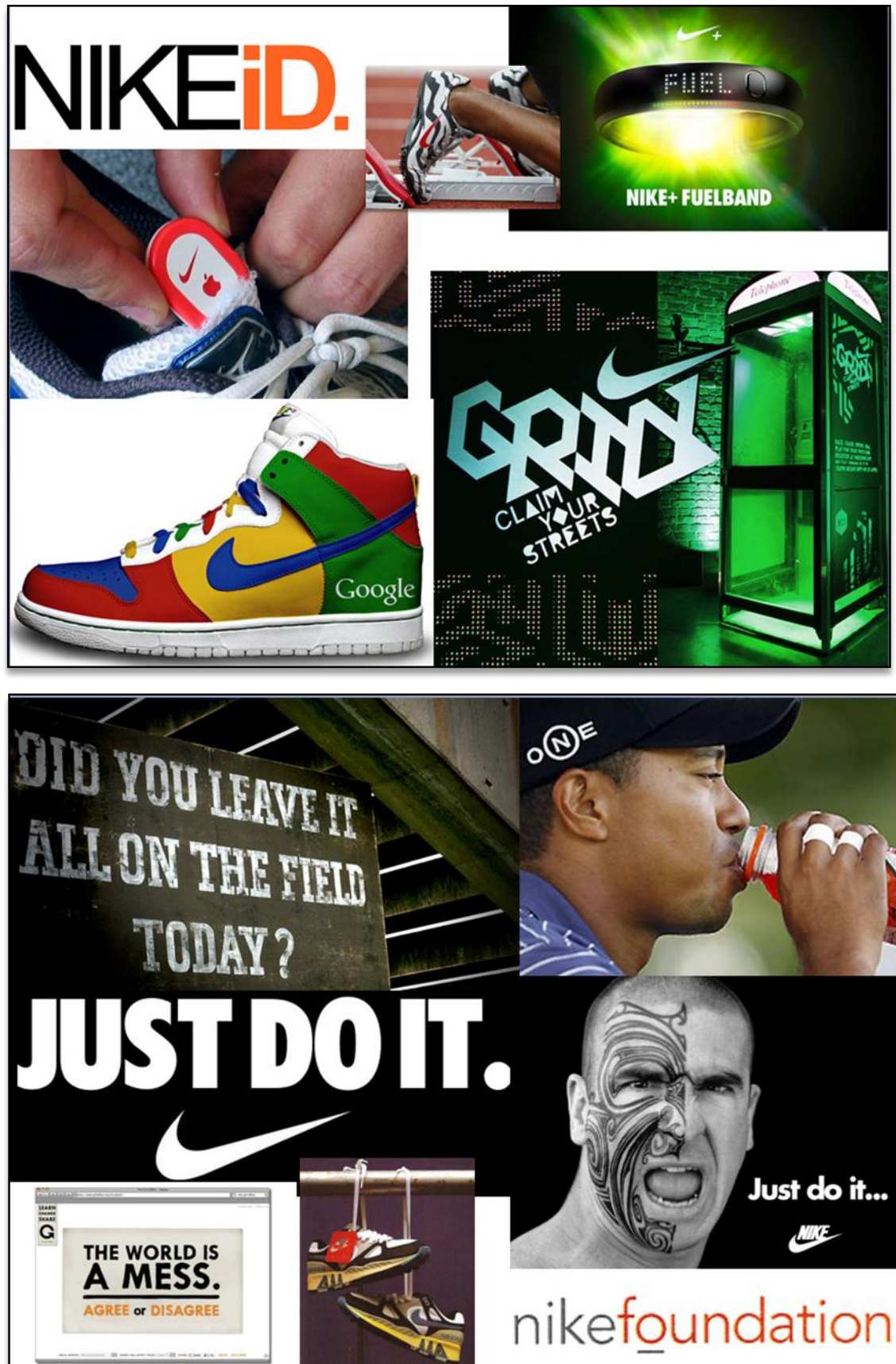
4. Broad brand stimulus

5. Jack Daniels stimulus

6. Fiat stimulus

7. BewDog stimulus

8. House club scene stimulus

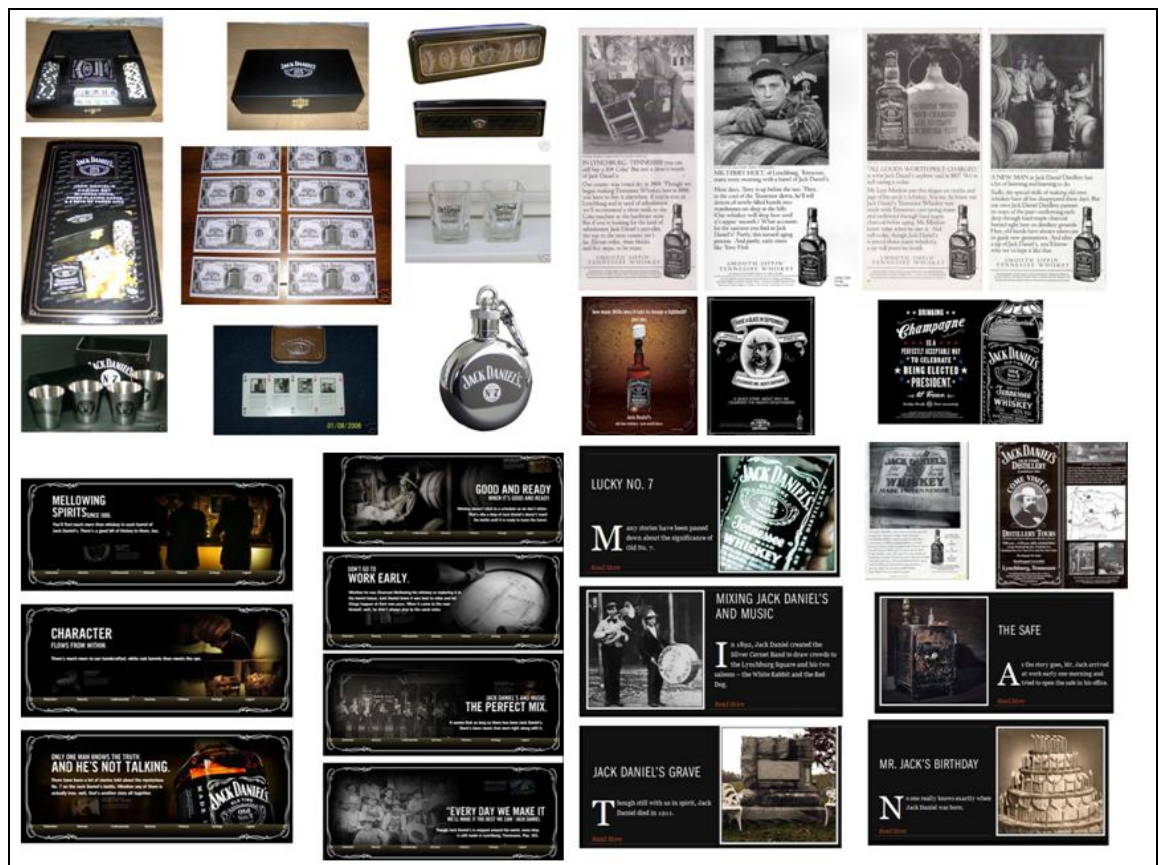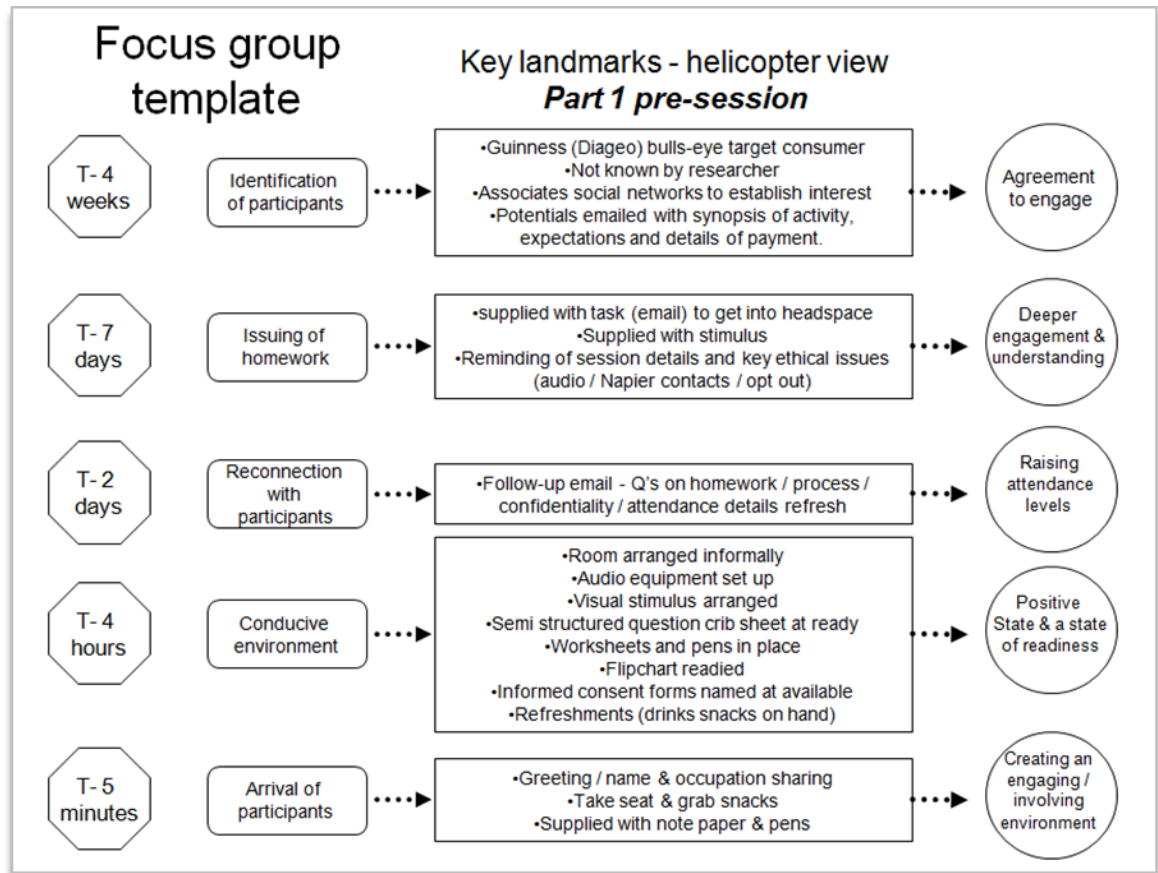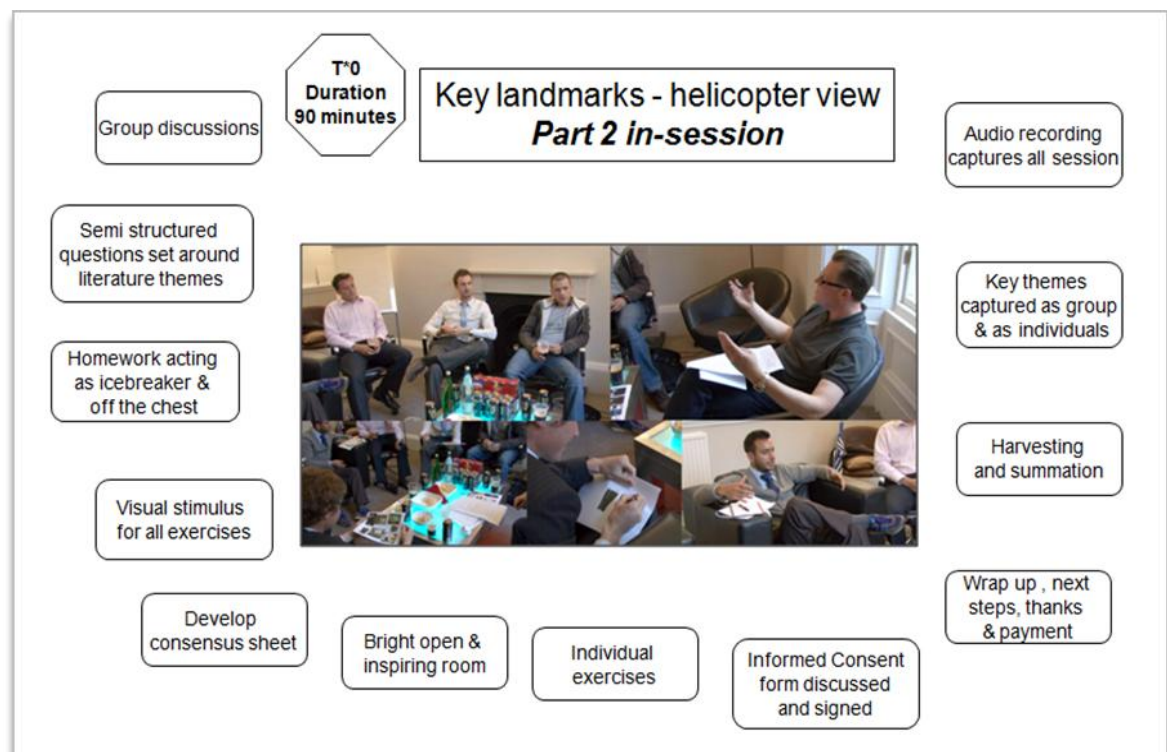**Appendix 11 – Focus Group Format Stages**

1. Pre-session

2. In-session

3. Post-session

Key landmarks - helicopter view
Part 3 post-session

T+10 minutes	Collate all data	·Signed consent forms ·Individuals worksheets and notes ·Theme Ranking Sheets - individual and group ·Interviewer notes ·Audio file	Capture & store
T+1 hour	Personal reflection	·Overall impressions ·Good/bad - thoughts on improvements ·Key take outs ·Ethics	Learnings for main body of research
T+5 days	Data capture	·Transcribing / re-running footage / consider group dynamics / Hermeneutics / Paralanguage	Ensuring richness of data not overlooked
T+2 weeks	Data analysis	·familiarization; identifying a thematic framework; indexing; charting; mapping and interpretation ·Isolating themes & capturing killer quotes ·Triangulation - transcript / worksheets / research preconceptions / literature	Focus on reliability, validity & practitioner application
T+4 weeks	Report writing	·Learnings ·Processes ·Reliability ·Pitfalls ·Richness	Roadmap for main thesis