

SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND MANAGEMENT -DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

MSC IN GLOBALIZATION, BRANDS & CONSUMPTION

ESCAPING BY RUNNING AWAY:

THE MOTIVATIONS BEHIND MINIMALISTIC CONSUMPTION IN THE FORM OF BAREFOOT RUNNING.

- Master Thesis -

Handed in by: Reema Akhtar

Supervisor: Jon Bertilsson & Carys Egan-Wyer

Research field: Consumer Culture Theory

23rd May 2013

Acknowledgements

This Master Thesis marks the end of my one year master program in Globalisation, Brands

and Consumption from Lund University. This thesis was an interesting challenge which

would not have been possible without the contribution of some people I would like to take

this opportunity to thank.

First of all I would like to thank each and every interviewee who after knowing that I am

conducting this research for a Master Thesis showed tremendous support and willingly

volunteered to share their insights, thoughts and stories with me. I appreciate their honesty,

and openness, to be contacted through Skype or in person. Their time and effort was of great

assistance.

Secondly I would like to thank my supervisors Jon and Carys for their time and patience.

They both guided me throughout with their expert and constructive advice. Due to their

support and constant encouragement it was possible to finish this task in high spirits.

Last and not the least I would like to thank my family who have always been a source of

comfort.

Lund, 23rd May, 2013.

Reema Akhtar.

- 2 -

Abstract

Title: A study of consumer perspective on the motivations behind the rising trend of

Barefoot/ Minimalistic running.

Date of Seminar: 28th May, 2013.

Course: BUSN 39 Degree project Master's level in Global Marketing: MSc in Globalisation

Brands and Consumption.

Author: Reema Akhtar.

Advisors: Jon Bertilsson & Carys Egan-Wyer.

Key words: Authenticity, Self-realization, Individual identity, autonomous, reflexive

defiant, emancipation, natural, nostalgic, Barefoot/minimalistic running.

Thesis Purpose: The purpose of the study is to investigate the growing trend in consumers

to go back to basic lifestyle and to reveal how different events, meanings, experiences and

ideas have a role to play in this change in consumers' attitude. The paper aims to understand

this new rising trend and consumer interest and provide a theoretical explanation of the

phenomenon. The study focuses on barefoot / minimalistic running as a viable example of

such a change and focuses on gaining insight into why the transition happens. The purpose is

to explore the reasons that motivate consumers to run barefoot in present times when they

have all sorts of technologically advanced footwear that promise improved functions and

extra support for running better. This research will tap into that specific sect of consumers

who are attracted to this consumption. It is believed that it is not merely barefoot running, but

in general there is a growing trend among consumers to seek simpler consumption patterns.

Methodology: The study takes interpretive epistemology and constructionist ontology as

the philosophical stance. A logical choice of research strategy following the aim to study

consumer behaviour is qualitative research since it collects data in the form of words and

stories to interpret people's motivations, actions and choices. Furthermore an exploratory

research design is used to track the themes this research is based on. The qualitative method

chosen for this study are semi-structured interviews since they provide detailed information

- 3 -

on how consumers see the world. The data is analysed using strategies that include hermeneutically grounded interpretive framework and hermeneutic circle which is a part of existential-phenomenology. These strategies are used to interpret and link the collected data to the research purpose and assist in answering the research question.

Theoretical Perspective: Since no prior research has been done on possible motivational factors that contribute to the phenomenon of barefoot/minimalistic running, hence related literature domains were combined to build up a comprehensive framework. Authenticity is an overarching phenomenon, and this study puts forth the possible themes through which a post-modern consumer is able to experience an authentic escape from mundane lives. First theme is the post-modern liberation which results in a fragmented individual. Consumers escape from their fragmented selves by shaping control-resistant identities which in turn are complemented by the Narrative individual identities of the consumers. The second theme shows the escape for authenticity in the form of a transcendent experience. By means of Nostalgia and a yearning for more natural and pure days gone by, the post-modern consumers achieve the desired unique authenticity. These themes help in explaining the research purpose of this study

Empirical data: The research is based on the collection and interpretation of relevant data that can be classified into two types: primary data (semi-structured interviews with six barefoot/minimalistic runners. The interviews either took place on Skype or face to face in person. They were recorded with a video camera) and secondary sources (produced by people who were not eyewitnesses of the event: articles, books, internet publications).

Conclusion: Consumers are motivated towards minimalistic consumption due to factors that assist them in achieving an authentic experience. These factors include, shaping autonomous and unique individual identities by becoming reflexively defiant consumers who face challenges and emancipate themselves from societal norms by seeking transcendental experiences by being close to nature and re-living the simpler days from the past.

Table of Contents:

<u>Par</u>	t1. Introduction	7
1.1.	Background	7
1.2.	Literature Review	
1.3.	Research purpose	16
1.4.	Contribution	
<u>Par</u>	t2. Theory: A quest for Authenticity	18
211	Post-modern liberation	10
2.1.	2.1.1. Identity Crisis	
	2.1.2. Fragmented Identity	
	2.1.3. Control-resistant identity	
	2.1.4. An individual Narrative identity	
2.2.1	Escape to transcendence	
2.2.	2.2.1. Nostalgia	
	2.2.2. Yearning for purity of nature	
<u>Par</u>	t3. Methodology	27
3.1.	Research Philosophy	27
	Research Strategy	
	Research Method	
	3.3.1. Semi-structured interviews	
	3.3.2. Sampling and Data collection	32
3.4.	Data Analysis	
3.5.	Collection of Secondary sources	37
3.6.	Restrictions	37
<u>Par</u>	t4. Motivations behind barefoot running	39
4.1.	Constructing the autonomous self	39
	4.1.1. Autonomous Reflexive Defiance	
	4.1.2. A unique autonomous self	44

4.1.3. In the face of challenges you find	
Unique sovereignty	46
4.2. A desire for simplicity	49
4.2.1. Natural Re-enchantment	49
4.2.2. Evoking the unvarnished past	53
Part5. Discussion and Conclusion	56
5.1. Discussion and Contribution	56
5.2. Conclusion	63
5.3. Limitations and Future Research	64
<u>References</u>	65
<u>Appendix</u>	71

1. Introduction

In this chapter the area of interest is introduced, which is the growing trend among consumers to go back to basic mode of consumption, more specifically the trend of barefoot/minimalistic running. After a look into the background and most recent progress available on the topic the chapter continues with a thorough literature review of the theories and relevant topics related to the research topic. These theories centre on Consumer Culture Theory, as well as on the search for authenticity, self-realization, independent identities and awareness against corporate lifestyle and a yearning for long gone simple and pure days. Moreover the literature review includes analysis of high risk activities such as sky diving, river rafting, study of a few popular sub-cultures such as Harley Davidson, Star trek fans and iconic brands such as Snapple. The section is concluded by formulating a research question according to which it is argued that the real motives behind barefoot or minimalistic trend need to be studied. Finally the theoretical as well as the practical contributions of the research for marketers and researchers are stated.

1.1. Background

In the present times, with our fast track lives, it is not surprising when people start feeling like robots. They compare themselves to machines that are designed to take part in a set procedure called life and follow certain rules and regulations designed for each common man. Such a scenario gives rise to an ever increasing need to stand against the societal norms. Celsi, Rose and Leigh (1993) claim that consumers seek self-identification, in order to set themselves aside from their peers. They also say that the drive behind this self-identification is to be able to differentiate themselves from a mass community and with time achieve a dignified feeling by mastering a specific art of consumption. Since this paper focuses on the reasons behind consumer's interest in barefoot running, I will start by introducing this phenomenon. According to runner's world (n.d.) barefoot running is also known as minimalist or a natural way of running. As the name itself indicates it basically involves running without shoes or at the most running in thin soled foot wear i.e. minimalistic foot wear. However barefoot running is not only different from normal running as far as the footwear is concerned, in fact the style of running is also very different. It has a unique style where rather than the heel striking the ground, it is the front or mid toe that strikes the ground first. Barefoot runners believe that this style prevents injuries and makes their foot stronger.

There has been a tremendous amount of research done and is still being carried out regarding the medical contributions or barefoot running. This kind of research includes all pros and cons of running bare feet, and how this form of running prevents injuries. Mostly runners are told about these benefits in order to make them switch to bare foot running, so that they can protect themselves from any future or current physical trauma. However apart from these reasons there are many societal and personal factors that also contribute to the increasing interest in barefoot running, and it is essential to study these elements in detail, so that in future consumers who are switching to minimalistic consumption are catered to.

Robillard (2013), author of 'The barefoot running book', mentions the psychological theory called 'positive disintegration' by Kazimirz Dabrowski, in his blog. According to Robillard the theory not only helps him understand his own varying and diverse interests but also explains how with age he has become more inquisitive and has frequently started questioning his own believes and norms. The theory states that a certain percentage of population becomes more complex with age. At first people cling on to societal norms, but as their personalities develop and they reach the 'critical stage' of their lives they start to question 'how things are' and 'how they should be' in real. It is at this stage, when consumers face their internal conflict and give shape to their own ideal self-images.

Furthermore in his book, Robillard (2010) mentions that among the many reasons why people opt for bare foot or minimalist shoe running is due to their desire for going back to basics, and simpler times. This approach gives them a rebellious feel, meanwhile running in a natural and challenging manner, which is different and unique as compared to any other everyday activity. He also mentions how implementing such consumption activities in their lives, make consumers feel more in charge of their decisions, especially against corporate giants, in this case the running shoe companies. According to Schouten and Mcalexander (1995), sometimes consumers who share common values and identify themselves with the similar consumption activities come together in the form of sub-cultures. Some of the examples of such sub-cultures as mentioned by Celsi et al. (1993) are Skydiving, bungee jumping, white water rafting, mountain biking and scuba diving communities which have gained popularity over the recent years. All of these are high risk activities which according to these authors provide an element of thrill and challenge, to these consumers, who seek an outlet from their monotonous stressful routines.

On the other hand according to Schouten and Mcalexander (1995) sub-cultures such as that of the Harley Davidson biker community, consist of consumers, who other than seeking a 'transcendental escape' from their mundane lives, also relish the fact that they are part of such a group activity which would be considered awkward in normal everyday scenarios. According to Holt (2002) postmodern consumers are strongly aware that marketers usually make up stories associated with their brands which in real life have no connection with the brands history or performance. This makes the consumers do a thorough research on the brands history. Studies have shown that this is also the case for bare foot runners, (Rothschild, 2012; Robillard, 2010) who due to easily accessible information through different forms of media, are fully aware that it was not until the 1970s that the modern running shoe specially designed with its various attractive features got introduced. This makes the postmodern consumers question the norms that they blindly believe in and what could life possibly be like had these norms not been forced onto them.

As much as we know about the reasons behind various high risk activities such as skydiving, biking, etcetera, little has been explored regarding an activity similar to bare foot running. An example of a similar trend is that of the Palaeolithic (Cave man) diet followers. According to Zelman (2010) supporters of this diet regime question the modern diet and blame it for the health hazards faced commonly across the globe. These consumers want to re-live the history of their ancestors. According to Zelman, their beliefs revolve around the fact that if our ancestors could live without consuming certain kinds of products then why can't we? This is similar to barefoot runner's inquiry about their ancestors. These runners look back in time and wonder how pre-historic human beings were able to travel across the globe and even hunt bare feet. This gives rise to curiosity about our roots and the un-necessary changes that we have introduced into our lives.

Rothschild (2012), states that her study is the first of its kind that explores the motivational factors behind the rising trend of minimalist or barefoot running. In spite of her efforts to do an analysis on the personal motivational reasons of consumers who take part in barefoot running, her study is yet again limited and revolves pretty much around medical reasons. Currently there is plenty of research being carried out and data available regarding the medical and health benefits or repercussions associated with barefoot running, but so far little or no research has been done regarding the motivational factors and personal needs of the consumers who follow this trend.

In times like today when the latest technologically innovated products are easily and readily available, whether they are running shoes that promise various functions, or it is processed, ready and easy to cook food. Why is it that even in the presence of these products a growing number of consumers still seek challenging lifestyles, and feel the need to go back to basics? This is a question that can only be answered by studying the evolving needs and behaviour of consumers taking part in minimalistic consumption activities.

1.2. Literature Review

Over the recent years, there has been an increase in consumer oriented research, which is based on studying various possible reasons behind different consumption patterns of the post-modern consumer. The increase of interest in this area of research can be explained due to its importance for businesses and companies to be able to understand their consumers better and cater to their evolving needs. These studies have resulted in a number of theories including the Consumer Culture Theory, which as stated by Arnould and Thompson (2005) fully views and explores the various aspects of consumption activities and choices of the post-modern consumer. Furthermore they say that Consumer Culture Theory is successful in understanding the active consumers of the present society. These post-modern consumers decode and interpret the marketed messages reaching them through various mediums such as advertisements, brands, and retail settings. They are not ignorant, on the contrary the post-modern consumers are more in control of their consumption habits, and use the available resources in the market to construct their own ideal identities in order to portray their choices and lifestyles.

Holt (2002) further supports this phenomenon by stating that even though consumer culture mainly centres on consumption of popular brands and products that fulfil unattained desires. But over the years there has been an increase in consumers who are more in control and conscious of their choices. He says that the post-modern consumers want to construct their own individual and authentic identities, for which they do not conform or fall prey to current marketing norms. This rising awareness within consumers is explained in many ways. There are different reasons believed to result in the birth of an educated, well aware consumer society. According to Lasn (2000 cited in Sullum, 2000 and Holt, 2002) in his book 'Culture Jam: The Uncooling of America', currently the world is engaged in a battle of human kind versus the corporate world. He states that consumers do not feel enough challenged since everything necessary in life for survival is easily accessible to them.

They watch different TV shows related to wilderness and nature, but they don't experience the thrill of living on the edge in their personal lives. In a review of the book Sullum (2000) says that the author portrays independent thinking by walking away from the comfortable lifestyles media has generated for us. This he does by preferring to shop at a local fruit and vegetable shop rather than the well-known international grocery store. On the same note, Wikstrom, Elg and Johansson (1989) argue that the blurring class societies and fewer genuine consumption opportunities makes consumers live mundane and monotonous lives. Hence they try to seek authentic and immaterial consumption to distinguish themselves from the norm. It is this conventional existence that results in dis-satisfied people who feel purposeless in their lives. Consequently this results in feelings of nostalgia and remembrance of the simpler and authentic times which were poles apart from the present days of manipulative corporate world and its targeted helpless consumers.

In order to revive their diminishing identities as a result of a society consisting of mass produced commodities and monotonous dreary lifestyle. People seek authenticity for resurgence of their lost independent identities. There are multiple ways by which consumers are able to experience authenticity or feel more in charge of their existence. According to Peterson (2005) being original and creative is considered the key to authenticity. In order to fight against the influence of the corporate world, people start to question all the existing norms and even the experts, whom they previously trusted blindly. Here he further states the phenomenon of self-reflexivity in which consumers prefer holding on to their true and unique identities rather than anything else. On a journey to create their authentic image, they favour originality and independent thinking. As a means to achieve this Wikstrom et al. (1989) say that people reorganize their priorities. They reconsider the importance of the products that were previously considered necessary for survival and use in every day. Mostly after the reevaluation, these products are omitted from life and no longer used.

This brings us to Ozanne and Murray (1995) who introduce the reflexively defiant consumers. According to them consumers do not just consume to fulfil the basic needs in their lives. But instead through their consumption habits they tend to reflect their social vision, taste and education. Hence consumers become informed and reflexively defiant when they critically evaluate the consumption patterns assumed to be appropriate by the society at large. Furthermore according to them these consumers are no longer dependant on the spoon fed codes of the current market system.

They decipher these codes and create their own identities free from the dictation of the market forces. Kinnear, Taylor and Ahmed (1974) claim that inquisitive consumers who are curious to know how things actually work, are also enthusiastically willing to learn and adapt new ideas and perceptions. They show a stronger desire to new approaches and are not scared of a change from the norm. However we need to know why the post-modern consumers are increasingly seeking authentic modes of consumption in order to reflect their personal strengths and values. Petersen (2011) sheds some light on this issue, stating that nowadays especially in the western world there is a high tendency of people suffering from depression. According to him the reason is never ending pressure of the society to be authentic, and attain self-realization. In this scenario consumers seek their own personal and unique identities, by working on their inner impulse. For bare foot runners this could be one of the reasons why they have an impulse to follow the Tarahumara Mexican tribe that lives in somewhat similar minimalistic conditions to our ancestors. Perhaps this experience makes these consumers feel morally strong. As if they have taken a stand against the corporate world which has been misguiding and controlling them for decades.

With the purpose of challenging themselves and testing their capabilities, consumers opt for high risk consumption. Here we can take the example of a high risk activity such as sky diving. According to Celsi et al. (1993) participants of sky diving have many reasons behind their interest in such consumption. Some of these reasons include the search for a thrilling and adventurous experience in order to escape the same monotonous life. Another reason the authors state behind this interest is the presence of consumers who are conscious of their impression on other people. These consumers like to develop and master a rare and new skill, in order to specialise in an area where few have wandered off to. Not to forget the identity crisis in the twentieth century due to the media and easily accessible information. Nowadays there are multitudinal media platforms through which consumers all over the world are able to connect. They are all exposed to the latest and newest upcoming trends. Moreover due to rapid globalisation and online marketing consumers anywhere in the world are able to enjoy and experience same consumption patterns. As a result they face similar homogenous identities and a loss of self-expression. Hence the authors further argue that in order to carve out their own authentic identity they take part in unique activities such as the high risk sky diving. However barefoot or minimalist is hardly considered high risk, as far as life endangerment is concerned, but perhaps it is risky since consumers have to learn and invest time in a new skill, which is not exactly very comfortable to begin with.

According to Boltanski and Chiapello (2005) the rising unrest against the corporate world is due to Capitalism and its dehumanizing effect on the society. They say that capitalism fits everyone into the same mould, inhibiting independent and free democratic thinking. It oppresses creativity and instils the feeling of uncertainty among consumers. Likewise Campbell (2005) speaks of the effect of the industrial era, in which machine production has replaced crafts men ship. This too is believed to have a dehumanizing and alienating effect on consumers. He additionally states that people, who are romantics and dream to relive the old pre-industrial times, hope to do so in a future where their consumption habits will help them reminiscence the simpler times. Here the ideology behind barefoot or minimalist running could be explained in accordance to his phenomenon. Perhaps for barefoot runners, it is important to be close to nature just like their ancestors. Hence they imitate their ancestors who travelled and hunted bare foot, feeling close to the nature and mother earth. Apart from this aspect of natural experience, Peterson (2005) mentions that for the post-modern consumer the quality of art is not as important as the authenticity of the artist. Hence consuming an art that is historical is considered authentic by the consumers. Our history creates the feeling of nostalgia, which is a feeling that consumers yearn for. Nostalgia is gateway to simpler times, when honesty and purity ruled. According to Underwood, Bond and Baer (2001), some companies are also seen utilizing the nostalgic factor in their marketing in order to enhance their authentic and original craftsmen image in the eyes of their consumers.

Presently consumers, seek an outlet to voice their concerns regarding various social and political issues. According to Holt (2002) the post-modern consumers use, those products that offer them value are perceived as authentic resources which are used to portray and create a similar authentic image of themselves. Such products provide a direction to the consumers, hence becoming iconic in their meaning and importance. Examples of such iconic brands are Harley Davidson and Snapple. Holt (2002) further takes the example of Harley Davidson and explains how the reason behind its strong following is due to the meaning the brand brings to its consumers. According to (Schembri, 2009; Schouten and Mcalexander, 1995) Harley Davidson brand provides the consumers with a utopian and authentic feeling related to the past. It brings a sense of masculinity and freedom from the confined present day lifestyles, along with the belief that if you are a Harley Davidson owner, you have the license to act in ways that are not considered normal in everyday life. A somewhat similar example is of another iconic brand that is Snapple. According to Holt (2003) in order for brands to become

authentic, they need to provide consumers with sincere credibility that is pure from any commercial interest. He states the case of Snapple, which was initially a small family business, but later turned into an iconic brand. There were many tactics used by the owners to portray Snapple as a product that targeted the growing tensions within the society against the corporate lifestyle. The approach was to define Snapple as a brand which was run by amateurs who made it successful with their creativity rather than their expensive MBA degrees. Furthermore Snapple hired Wendy the Snapple lady for their advertisements. Unlike any Hollywood actress or model she seemed like a real life character that consumers could associate with. Not to mention the two very blunt, bold radios jockeys Snapple hired to promote its brand. Both the radio jockeys openly expressed their views against the sophisticated tastes and priorities of rich and elite American upper class. Snapple fans reproduced a similar rebellious nature, by consuming the drink.

In his paper on 'Sartre's idea of authenticity', Weberman (2011) states that humans choose to take part in certain consumption activities in order to complicate their lives on purpose. This can be explained due to the fact that post-modern consumers do not have full freedom and control over their lives. Furthermore the author uses Sartre's terminology of 'transcendence-facticity' to explain two aspects of human personality. Here the transcendent side of the consumer's personalities signify the active and free independent thinkers who question and oppose not only the societal norms, but themselves as well. Whereas the term facticity insinuates humans who prefer to exist in the artificial world, while embracing the life already chosen for them. These are passive consumers who do not interrogate their status, ethnicity or the roles they play. As an example Arnould, Price and Otnes (1999) refer to another high risk consumption activity in this case the white water river rafting. According to them such activities provide consumers with a transcendent experience.

This is due to the closeness to nature these consumers experience as well as the unforeseen risks they take. These high risk activities challenge the consumers physically, emotionally and socially, which allows them an escape from the mundane lifestyles. The authors take the example of business men, who are seen running around naked in the wild, feeling liberated while taking part in white water river rafting. According to Wikstrom et al. (1989) consumption serves two main functions. First it satisfies material needs and second it satisfies immaterial needs. Further they argue that when the basic needs of a man in order to achieve comfort have been met. Only then he turns to fulfil his immaterial desires, or higher desires

for pleasure and leisure. However if consumers shift to a higher consumption once their basic needs are met. Then it is harder to explain consumption habits of consumers who are involved in activities such as barefoot running or the Palaeolithic diet. This has somewhat been explained by Uusitalo (1986 cited in Wikstrom et al. 1989). According to her consumers seek authenticity as a counter action towards rapid industrialization and a society of mass produced products. Since consumers live mundane and monotonous lives, they tend to strive for a challenge. Hence they search for ways to shift away from the same old and convenient modes of consumption based to save time. The consumers opt for exciting and stimulating activities, which also assist them in their process of self-realization. Furthermore according to her in their struggle to define themselves individually the post-modern consumers go as far as crafting products themselves at home. This activity not only provides them with an authentic experience but also this way they are able to reflect their personalities much better through the products they use.

As stated by Wikstrom et al (1989) consumers are so anxious to be stimulated that they no longer wait for their lives to change and become more interesting. They do not enjoy experiencing someone else's creativity, in fact they prefer to participate in various activities themselves to explore their own creativity. According to Campbell (2005) this trait of consumers can be explained by the phenomenon of craft consumption. In craft consumption the product is designed and produced by the same person, who also uses it. This person applies a mix of his or her expertise, knowledge, skill and values to create an item which is a reflection of self-expression. Furthermore the author argues that it is indeed crafts consumption which is considered the more humane and authentic form of consumption by consumers. Formation of subcultures is another phenomenon that is a result of the increase in consumers seeking authenticity.

According to (Kozinets, 2001; Schouten and Mcalexander, 1995) consumers pursue logic in order to fulfil the empty space in their lives. They do so in a hope to make more sense of their existence. Furthermore Schouten and Mcalexander (1995) claim that the consumers belonging to one subculture share common beliefs. They unite due to their trust and identification with certain products and consumption habits. According to Celsi et al. (1993) these communities and subcultures unite people from different backgrounds and experiences under one common goal. In addition these authors bring attention to the addiction model according to which consumers can get addicted to activities that give them a rush of

adrenaline and authentic experience. It causes these consumers to push the envelope and test how far their limit reaches in a state of challenge. The research question of this study is: What are the factors that motivate the barefoot runners, in switching to a minimalistic form of consumption? This research will explore the reasons behind changes in attitudes. The research question focuses on 'how' and 'why' barefoot running is emerging, and what are the reasons that influence people towards this mode of exercise. The above literature review and discussion provides us with concepts which can be used and implemented in the case of the barefoot or minimalistic running trend. These concepts can assist in conducting a further study to elaborate the reasons behind such forms of consumption.

1.3. Research Purpose

Having discovered all of the above it can be safely said that whereas there is ample research conducted on the reasons for motivations behind high risk consumption activities such as skydiving, or white water river rafting, or on popular subcultures such as Harley Davidson and Star trek fans. On the other hand there is however little or no research that has been presently carried out on the emerging trend of barefoot running or minimalistic consumption regarding the motivational factors behind these trends. This area and discipline is under researched, where the only research so far conducted is limited to medical science, and technological perspectives and comparisons between shod runners and barefoot runners and the different foot wear used.

Therefore the purpose of this research is to investigate and study the growing trend in consumers to go back to basic and minimalistic consumption. In this research the focus will be specifically on barefoot or minimalistic runners. The purpose is to explore the reasons that motivate consumers to run barefoot in present times when they have all sorts of technologically advanced footwear that promise improved functions and extra support for better running. Rather than shifting to luxurious consumption after fulfilling their basic needs, instead they switch to and prefer simpler modes of consumption. This research will tap into that specific sect of consumers who are attracted to this type of consumption. It is believed that it is not merely barefoot running, but in general there is a growing trend among consumers to seek simpler consumption patterns.

1.4. Contribution

This research will have both theoretical and practical contributions. The results will provide useful insights regarding the subject at hand. By understanding the changes occurring with time in consumer's choices and needs based on various life experiences, both researchers and practitioners will benefit in the long run. They will be able to tap into the changing consumer preferences and perceptions which can help in making decision for further innovation projects and in formulating marketing strategies in order to cater better to the evolving post-modern consumer. These marketing strategies can be used to increase future brand loyalty or perhaps gain back the lost trust before it is too late for the brand. Marketers and researchers both will be able to answer questions such as why consumers suddenly lose trust and question iconic brands like Nike and Adidas that have been trusted blindly by so many for decades. And questions such as what are the factors that contribute to this logical thinking in consumers and what motivates them to think out of the box will be answered.

Moreover this study will help researchers better understand the wider post-modern consumption trends towards simplicity and authenticity, through the analysis of this one particular trend of barefoot running. There is also the possible transferability of insights of this research to other similar disciplines which give priority to the analysis of motivations of consumers to engage in experiences and their perception of their participation. Therefore this study can be related to fields of Business, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology

2. Theory: A quest for Authenticity

In this chapter I establish a theoretical framework by introducing different concepts and themes that are central to this study. Since no prior research has been done on possible motivational factors that contribute to the phenomenon of barefoot/minimalistic running, therefore related literature domains were combined to build up a comprehensive framework. Authenticity is an overarching phenomenon, and this chapter puts forth the possible themes through which a post-modern consumer is able to experience an authentic escape from mundane lives. First theme is the post-modern liberation which results in a fragmented individual. Consumers escape from their fragmented selves by shaping control-resistant identities which in turn are complemented by the formation of Narrative individual identities of the consumers. The second theme shows the escape for authenticity in the form of a transcendent experience. By means of Nostalgia and a yearning for more natural and pure days gone by, the post-modern consumers achieve the desired unique authenticity. These themes help in explaining the research purpose of this study.

2.1. Post-modern liberation

In order to understand the post-modern consumers better, it is necessary to have a look at the post-modernist world we currently live in. Firat and Venkatesh (1995) state that consumerism is a result of capitalism. They say that consumers have been exploited, by artificial needs generated by capital markets, in order to gain profit. During modernism consumers arranged their consumption habits in accordance to the market rules and logic. However in post-modernism consumers are active individuals who think logically and independently, this way interfering with the perceived reality. They do so by questioning the claimed functional benefits and values of the products being sold to them, in case they feel misguided. Furthermore the authors describe the post-modern consumers as independent thinkers, who dismiss old beliefs in the hope of unveiling the true meaning behind the socially constructed reality. These consumers emancipate themselves spiritually and symbolically by breaking free from the social ties. In short post-modern consumers aim at re-enchanting their lives, by setting themselves free from the restraints of technical and restricted corporate world they live in. This they achieve by getting inspiration from vast heterogeneous and broad sources.

Consumers no longer consider themselves as ignorant individuals who can be controlled. Instead they free themselves from any restricted boundaries they are forced to stay within by the society or different organizations. Rather than depending on one main authority for guidance, they turn to depend on other sources of information, so that they are able to judge different scenarios better and make decisions accordingly. Hence as compared to modernism, post-modernism liberates consumers, by providing them with alternative consumption practices and experiences. These experiences provide the consumers with new perspectives and ideas that in turn lead the consumers to their utopian escape, from the grips of corporate forces, (Ibid).

In case of barefoot or minimalistic running, consumers raised concerns regarding the expensive and technologically advanced shoes they had to purchase and continuously replace only because the companies making these shoes promised certain functional benefits. I have already presented how post-modern consumer seeks emancipation, and now I will further discuss how modernism suppresses the individual self-expression of consumers. I will discuss how these consumers then overcome this challenge, by shaping their own unique identities. According to Kozinets (2002a) post-modern markets have a totalizing effect, which tends to homogenize the consumers and suppress their individual self-expressions. Hence in the face of these strong market forces the consumer tries to re-organize his identity. According to Firat and Venkatesh (1995) the fragmented identity is a result of post-modern liberation. Consumer's lives are divided and disintegrated into various elements. In the following sections I will explain the fragmented post-modern consumers and how these consumers express themselves by creating their own identities.

2.1.1. Identity Crisis

Fearon (1999) defines identity and self-image as those characteristics that portray the beliefs, values and principals of a person. Hence personal identity is in fact a set of attributes that represents the person and sets him or her aside socially from the rest. It is this personal identity through which a consumer is able to show, what he endorses and what he condemns with in the society, (Ibid). According to Gabriel (1999) in the contemporary society consumers face self-doubt, which is a result of the increased power the post-modern companies' exhibit on consumers. He further elaborates how these companies practice a totalizing control over consumers by completely influencing there personal spaces, their minds and their thoughts. This results in a fragmented identity, which leaves the consumer

confused and frustrated, because he no longer feels like a unique individual. Next the phenomenon of a fragmented identity is explained which is an inevitable result of post-modernism.

2.1.2. Fragmented Identity

Goulding, Shankar and Elliot (2002) explain why consumers try to create meaningful identities out of their consumption choices. According to these authors, consumers, feel pressurised and over whelmed by their fast paced work lives. The rapid advancement in technology does not help either. Moreover important social institutions, such as family life, work place and political scenario, are dissolving. These institutions previously provided consumers with stable identities. As a result consumers emerge as confused and fragmented, (Ibid). According to Fuchs (2007) people who suffer from fragmented identities feel indistinguishable and in-authentic. This is because they feel they live a lie, and their lives are controlled by outside forces. The author further elaborates that these individuals live in the present, without wondering or questioning about their past or future. Due to this they only focus on momentary pleasures, which lead to moral crisis and a state of emptiness.

Seen from the same perspective, post-modern consumers are also fragmented, since they let the society and bigger corporate powers influence their decisions. These consumers crave to form their own individual expressions and identities. According to Fearon (1999) a non-assuming post-modern consumer, questions the societal norms. This consumer wants to contribute to the society by unlearning the beliefs that humans hold on to without considering that they might be a fad. Barefoot runners are a suitable example of such independent consumers, who explore new paths, by challenging the companies who have been selling shoes, based on the false promise that new technologies will serve the purpose consumers seek. In the following section it will be discussed how in the face of fragmented and confused lives, consumers, resist societal norms and shape their own identities. These identities speak for the consumers, and reflect their true beliefs and values.

2.1.3. Control-Resistant Identity

Control-resistant identities are a form of recalcitrant identities, (Gabriel, 1999). Consumers are faced with confused and homogeneous selves, which results in an identity crisis. All this is due to the contemporary controlling factors which influence consumers completely, making them feel like ambivalent puppets. The consumers begin to detest the dependencies

that post-modern companies have created, and fantasize to break free from all social norms, (Ibid). According to (Nancarrow and Nancarrow, 2001, 2007; Southgate and Elliot, 2003) consumers' desire authenticity by showing control over their individual identities, and by violating and opposing the existing norms and systems. They consider themselves 'cool' since they express their ideologies markedly via their distinct identities, and question the traditions for the purpose of emancipating themselves (Brooks, 2000). Furthermore due to rapid globalisation, the world has become a mix of various cultures. According to (Holt, 1998; Mihalcea and Catoiu, 2010; Southgate and Elliot, 2003) mass produced products of the same quality and standards are readily available, everywhere in the world. Since these products are popular and are being used by everyone commonly, they fail to depict each and every consumer's 'individual' identity. Since everyone ends up using the same commodities, the social status, taste and success of consumers is no longer associated with the products they consume, (Ibid). Therefore consumers, focus on escaping the common aspects of the society they live in, in order to portray their uniqueness.

This fight for achieving an authentic unique self is explained by Canniford and Shankar (2007) who use the example of surfing movies which show the tension between youth and different social institutions. Such movies on surfing often showed a rebellious character, who stood strong in the face of challenges and stayed faithful to his believes. Another way to achieve self-realization is when consumers are true to themselves and stop copying others. According to Fisher (2005) the unique style of each surfer provides him with prestige. It is this style that puts him aside from the mundane. Here he gives the example of Jay Adams a character out of the movie 'Dogtown and Z-boys'. Adam stands out because of his spontaneous style which he carries off without any extra effort. Moreover while Adam's peers turn their hobby, into a job and become successful entrepreneurs. He on the other hand, does not fall prey to the societal norms. In order to stay true to his identity Adam spends whatever money he earns on drugs and gets tattoos all over his body. Taking drugs for instance as reported by Morton (2000), depicts the user as a rebel who is dissatisfied with the societal standards and opposes them. Hence post-modern consumer is constantly in an effort to stand out for his or her own individuality.

2.1.4. An Individual Narrative Identity

According to Hatch and Schultz (2001) individual identity unlike the social identity is formed when a person is able to reflect on his or her own image. The authors state that these individuals evaluate themselves as both objects and subjects. This means that they are able to merge their own as well as an outsider's perspective of themselves which gives rise to their individual identities. According to Gabriel (1999) the post-modern consumer has a narrative identity. An identity which consists of the stories an individual tells about him or herself. These stories change each time the consumer re-evaluates and interprets his life and opinions. They provide the consumers with a temporary escape from the societal and organizational control which influence the entire world around them, (Ibid). Fuchs (2007) further elaborates on narrative identity, stating that it is a combination of the past, present and future concerns. This identity shapes up when the consumer re-assesses his actions from the past, present and what their consequences could be in the future, and then accordingly writes his own life stories. Furthermore the author states that post-modern consumers with narrative identities stay faithful to their perspectives, they do not give into temporary attractions in life. They stick to their beliefs, even if this means having to face repression or criticism from the society. Taylor (2005) sheds some light on the authentic post-modern identity idea, and how it is connected to the individual self-expression of a person.

There is a certain way of being human that is my way. I am called upon to live my life in this way and not in imitation of someone else's life. But this notion gives a new importance to being true to myself, (Taylor, 2005, p.30).

This explains how post-modern consumers are indeed independent and en-lightened thinkers, who stay sincere to their true selves and believes. According to Fearon (1999) identity is that quality and character of the consumer, in which he takes pride. Similarly according to Southgate and Elliot (2003) the main aim of an individual's life is to achieve happiness which is possible if that individual has the right and freedom to question and challenge the norms. According to Muniz and Schau (2005) post-modern consumers are sensible thus use only those products which they believe best serve their purpose. These consumers also reject mass produced products in order to show their scepticism towards the corporate system. They believe that the current market is only concerned to cater the unsophisticated masses. It does this by introducing products with the latest technology, but with a short life span. Soon these products become redundant and have to be replaced with newer innovative versions, due to

which a consumer has to keep changing his needs and fall prey to this market manipulation. The post-modern consumers are not content with blindly following the norms; hence they seek liberation, (Ibid).

2.2. Escape to Transcendence

According to Cova, Kozinets and Shankar (2007) one of the ways by which consumers decommercialize their lives is by being part of a transcendent experience. According to Stranger (1999) in the presence of everyday instabilities consumers achieve calmness and exceptional experience by taking part in activities that are more challenging. One such example of a popular high risk and challenging activity that became popular in the face of social instabilities is surfing. Booth (1996) looks back in time during the 1960's when the youth faced devastation and an urge to stand against the norms. It is this time when surfing became a popular rebellious activity. Surfing was a way to express the frustration youth felt at their everyday mundane metropolitan lifestyles, (Cova, Kozinets and Shankar, 2007; Booth, 1996). According to Booth (1996) it is during this time when Hollywood movies started using the activity of surfing to show a carefree, fun filled lifestyle. Movies such as 'Endless Summer' portrayed surfing as the real thing. Surfer's lives were shown to be careless and easy going with no worries.

Similarly according to Belk and Costa (1998) in order to experience authenticity consumers participate in various rituals. These rituals are not merely about wearing or consuming certain products, instead it is the freedom and liberty they signify. That is freedom from authorities, relaxed schedule versus rushed responsible lives, and independence versus dependence on contemporary goods. Goulding et al. (2002) states that consumers often seek a temporary escape from their regular lives so that to be distinguished from the rest of the ordinary world. The authors state the example of the Rave dance sub-culture. The followers of this subculture do not follow a permanent dress code like the hippies or punks. On the contrary Rave followers break away from their mundane lives over the weekends. This way they produce a transcendent experience for themselves which helps them to leave behind their responsibilities for a short period of time.

According to Brown, Kozinets and Sherry (2003) the unstoppable technological and scientific evolvement stresses the post-modern consumers who as a result feel overpowered. Hence consumers generate unique and sometimes challenging consumption habits to overcome and

escape the inauthentic post-modern world where with each passing day it becomes more and more difficult to keep up with the fast advancing technology (Hartman, 2002). This attribute of the post-modern consumer is excellently portrayed in the example by Muniz and Schau (2005). The authors state the example of Newton, the first personal digital assistant that was introduced by Apple. This model proved to be unsuccessful and was soon replaced by other models that came with better functions. However this incident turned Newton PDA into an authentic brand since it was not in use by the typical unsophisticated consumers who frequently changed products based on the latest market edition. Many consumers therefore continued to use Newton, since they felt that they were defying the societal norms by doing so. According to the authors these consumers experience an element of thrill and emancipation while using old technology. When they face criticism or hear offensive comments they experience the feeling of consumer magic. It is similar to the experience of thrill people enjoy during sky diving or white water river rafting. Perhaps barefoot runners experience the same feeling when their belief in the trend is questioned or mocked. Apart from seeking transcendent consumption, consumers also have other ways through which they can escape from their current lives. Post-modern consumers yearn for the simpler times from the past. According to Havlena and Holak (1991) people go through a life journey from childhood to adulthood and then their professional lives. The authors believe that in the face of crisis and change consumers prefer to hold onto their roots and original identities.

2.2.1. Nostalgia

Feeling of Nostalgia is a positive emotional state where people look back in time with a longing for the simple and pure days gone by, (Holbrook, 1993; Stern, 1992). According to Belk (1990) people are able to transcend the constraints of their lives through time. He further states that having a sense of one's own past, or being well informed about general history, is essential for an individual's self-development. Nostalgia is a link to more natural and pure times. Hence as an escape from their burdens and responsibilities consumers seek the naturally authentic and transcendent state, from the past (Cova et al., 2007; Goulding et al., 2002). According to Holak and Havlena (1991, 1992) consumers do not necessarily need to have lived a moment in the past in order to feel nostalgic about it. The authors explain that listening to old music, watching black and white movies or simply remembering historic events can also trigger the feeling of nostalgia, and this phenomenon is called 'Historical Nostalgia' by Stern (1992). Since the individual has not witnessed or experienced the event

from the past, this gives historical nostalgia a mythical and fantasy like feel, (Ibid). Marketers often use nostalgic references in their campaigns to remind consumers of the golden tension free times. Brown et al. (2003) mention the theme of Arcadia used in retro-marketing. Arcadia is used to promise consumers a link back to the mystical and magical past. A recent example of the successful 'beetle' campaign by Arnold communications can be studied to better understand this concept. The campaign uses statements that arouse the nostalgic association with the old vehicle. These associations give rise to positive emotions such as 'times are changing' frame of mind from the sixties. On one hand there is historical nostalgia which is associated with times that are not from the individual's personal life, and are simply moments that are looked back upon to make better present and future judgements. Similarly on the other hand there is the phenomenon of 'Personal Nostalgia', which is associated with past incidents from the individuals own life, (Muehling, 2011).

According to Muehling (2011), personal nostalgia is more dominant and effective. This is because it is often associated with sudden remembrance of a past event, which has a sacred importance in the individual's life. Furthermore according to (Belks, 1990; Bergadaa, 1990; Stern, 1992) when consumers are faced with constant changes and uncertainties in their lives, they tend to seek comfort in their past. The consumers perceive their past, from childhood or younger times more authentic and stable. Marketers often use personal nostalgia to trigger strong memories and associations from their earlier lives. For example star wars, tries to transfer its viewers to a galaxy far away, that they remember from their childhood fascination with the series, (Brown et al, 2003). The movies and series portray a time and space quite distant from the ordinary present life. They help viewers in transforming themselves and escaping to another place in time, (Ibid). It is true that consumers' reminiscence about their past activities, which makes them, try to create similar present day experiences. This takes us to the next section, which describes the yearning of consumers, for a primitive, natural way of life, similar to how their ancestors lived.

2.2.2. Yearning for Purity of Nature

According to Torgovnick (1990) nowadays going primitive is gaining popularity in the western world. She states that this is due to the fact that going back to basics is a phenomenon which opposes the current discipline and materialistic society, proposing a utopian escape to its people. Goulding et al. (2002) say that consumers nowadays feel rootless and cut off from their traditional values. Penaloza (2000) gives the example of the

western cowboy. According to her, the west has always represented a world different from the rest, with tales of its heroism, and brave cowboys shown as free and self-sufficient. In order to experience the wild natural side, visitors move to the west temporarily to witness a world of wild and pure bred animals along with cowboys who do all the rough and tough work. They themselves dress up in western attire comprising of jeans, boots, hats and bandanas to re-live the past and escape from their urban lives. The Rodeo cowboys depict authenticity by their nomadic lives, unlike the corporate life with a fixed schedule. A rancher is free to do as he wishes; he brings up animals himself, feeds them and even helps them give birth to new cattle. The livestock is brought up with care, and fed properly. This is unlike the high-tech husbandries where animals are mass produced and grown artificially by feeding steroids. Consumers appreciate the pure organic meat which seems more authentic and natural, (Poole, 2013). Another similar example is given by Belk and Costa (1998) of the modern mountain men. The mountain men re-live a mythical past by actually creating those experiences and surroundings. They wear the same cloths (buckskin, moccasins and grow a beard), act in the same manners and even live in the same conditions which were adopted by a west American back in 1825. In other words they create a natural and authentic mystical experience by visiting history.

3. Methodology

In this chapter I explain my choice of methodology. I argue that my theoretical framework and the nature of my research question have shaped my selection of interpretive epistemology and constructionist ontology as my research philosophy. A logical choice of research strategy following these decisions and my aim to study consumer behaviour is qualitative research since it collects data in the form of words and stories to interpret people's motivations, actions and choices. An exploratory research design is used to track the themes this research is based on. The qualitative method chosen for this study are semi-structured interviews since they provide detailed information on how consumers see the world. They consist of open ended questions which encourage the respondents to share their experiences in detail. I proceed with a detailed description of how I selected the sample, collected the data and then present the strategies used for data analysis. These strategies include hermeneutically grounded interpretive framework and hermeneutic circle which is a part of existential-phenomenology. They are used to interpret and link the collected data to my research purpose and assist in answering the research question. This is followed by the details of how secondary data was collected and used. I conclude the chapter with a description of the restrictions the method chosen employs.

3.1. Research Philosophy

Methodology of a research is of great importance since it explains how the study will be structured and conducted. It gives details on how the data will be collected and later how this data will be interpreted and analysed. I will begin by outlining the research philosophy of my study. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Lowe (2002) there are many reasons why it is necessary to understand the philosophical stance of your research in the beginning. The reason is that it helps clarify which research design should be used. Moreover the authors state that the research philosophy helps the researcher in figuring out what exactly is the purpose of his research. The researcher is able to save time by avoiding unnecessary research designs and opts for suitable methods of collecting and interpreting data in a way that best answers the research question. This research is based on the Consumer Culture Theory. When compared to other sociologies of consumption, CCT includes rich and detailed explanation of the experiences of consumers (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011). According to these authors, consumers think independently and logically.

Thus based on many social, personal and psychological reasons consumers shape their individual consumption habits. Keeping this perspective in mind I decided to choose interpretivism as my epistemological position. This is because for my research the main focus is to understand barefoot runner's perspectives. By getting to know how barefoot runners perceive the world, and what are their beliefs and needs, only then it would have been possible to find the real reasons behind their motivations. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) interpretivism is the opposite of positivism. Unlike a positivist doctrine, not only does it explain the human behaviour and the external forces that affect these behaviours but moreover interpretivism understands consumer behaviour by deeply studying and analysing consumer's actions. Within interpretivism I adopted hermeneutic-phenomenological tradition as an intellectual philosophy that according to Bryman and Bell (2011) is based on studying and understanding how individuals interpret their surroundings, and make sense of their lives.

The decision of choosing interpretive-epistemology also supports the decision of adopting constructionist ontological position. According to Bryman and Bell (2011) constructionism is the opposite of objectivism. Unlike objectivism which states that social factors are out of reach and influence by social actors, constructionism on the other hand states that social phenomenon and the real surroundings are under constant change. This is due to the interactions between these surroundings and various social actors. These changes are a result of how different people think, feel and perceive different scenarios. For instance the authors state that cultures do not only signify fixed external factors that represent a certain section of people. Rather cultures are continuously being repaired and reproduced to portray new meanings. I pursue the same goal in my study which is to study different consumers and their personal reasons. The aim of my research is to study various barefoot runners. I plan to hear their stories and learn how various experiences in their lives effected their perceptions and eventually made them pursue barefoot running. In short during this research I will be studying different respondents in detail and through their subjective experiences interpret the possible reasons behind the rising trend of minimalist running.

3.2. Research Strategy

In order to decide on a research strategy it is necessary to look back at the research question and the purpose of this research. Since the aim of this research is to find out what are the reasons behind the popularity of barefoot running, it was essential to study barefoot runner's behaviour and reasons for motivations. In order to study barefoot runners in detail and get

their perspectives, the data collected had to be in the forms of words. These words and sentences would portray in detail the feelings, emotions and perspectives of the runners. Hence in order to capture and embrace complete meanings and emotions of the respondents the best strategy in collecting such data is qualitative research. According to (Denzin and Lincoln, 2000; Smith et al., 2002) qualitative methods consist of many natural and interpretative techniques that help in seeing the world from the respondent's eye. This is important since the purpose of the study is to understand the meanings different consumers give to various scenarios, based on their personal experiences and values rather than due to the influence of the researcher. Furthermore Bell and Bryman (2007) state that qualitative research strategy uses words rather than numerical figures as the form of data collected which is in line with the kind of data required to serve the purpose of the research at hand. Moreover the authors clarify that qualitative research is based on interpretive epistemology and constructionist ontology position, which also have been chosen as the philosophical departure for this study on barefoot runners.

Another important part of research strategy is choosing a suitable research design. According to Maxwell (2005) research design consists of a number of steps and procedures that clarify how a study is to be conducted. Similarly according to Malhotra (2010) research designs outline the details of how to collect required information in order to answer the research question and give a structure to the research plan. Consequently each research design has different research methods out of which the most suitable one is chosen to collect data. For my research I have chosen exploratory research as my research design. According to Malhotra (2010) the purpose of exploratory design is to understand a problem more clearly by providing rich insights, which in turn helps the researcher progress in a better direction. This is why exploratory design is ideal for this research, since the outcome depends largely on the trends that will emerge from various insights collected from the respondents. The author further elaborates on the characteristics of exploratory research design, stating that it uses flexible and an unstructured method of data collection in which the sample used is small and not necessarily representative of the population. For this study qualitative research method is ideal in case of exploratory research design. The overall population of barefoot runners is large and due to time and financial constraints it would have been impossible to include every unit of the population. Therefore a small sample consisting of 6 interviews was chosen to be studied.

The most common qualitative method of this design is semi-structured interviews with a few numbers of people. The interviews were conducted either on Skype or face to face in person.

3.3. Research Method

The purpose of this study is to find out what motivates consumers to go back to basic and simpler consumption. In order to find out the perspectives of various consumers who live busy and fast paced lives, it was decided that the best decision would be to stick to such a data collection method that makes it possible to get in depth information. Keeping in mind all of the above arguments and the philosophical stance that have been chosen to conduct this research. It has been safely concluded that qualitative research strategy would be used for this study. In order to further support this argument, Malhotra (2010) defines qualitative research as an unstructured exploratory research methodology, which requires a small sample consisting of units that do not necessarily have to represent the overall population. For this research direct qualitative approach was used, which is according to Malhotra (2010) a technique used when the purpose of the research is exposed to the respondents. Also the time allotted to complete the thesis was short and in order to reach a satisfactory outcome with in the given time, it was important to get detailed information from various barefoot runners. Therefore it was decided to carry out in-depth semi-structured interviews.

According to Erzberger and Prein (1997) one of the ways to improve the validity of research results is to use more than one investigative method in order to collect data. Its purpose is to overcome the limitations that might be faced by the researcher if he sticks to only one method of gaining consumer insights. However due to the shortage of time and resources, it was decided that I will not conduct Netnography which served as an excellent alternative source of data. However I did take some help from three blogs written by barefoot runners, from the target population. The purpose was to get some added inspiration and check whether the trends emerging from the interviews could also be seen in the blog entries. None of the data available on the blogs was analysed or used in concluding themes. However it did help, reading experiences of the barefoot runners, on a different medium, where they expressed their views more openly and in detail.

Having stated the method of data collection I will further explain the advantages and limitations of this method.

3.3.1. Semi-Structured Interviews

Qualitative interviews are very different from quantitative interviews. According to Bryman and Bell (2007) qualitative interviews focus on gathering detailed knowledge of how the interviewee's interpret and judge the world around themselves. This is in connection to the Phenomenological interview, in which the goal is to get a first person account of experiences related to the research topic, (Thompson, Locander and Pollio, 1989). For my study I have chosen to conduct semi-structured interviews. The reason as mentioned by Bryman and Bell (2007) are many, which include the flexibility of this data collection method. Moreover in semi-structured interviews there is no set questionnaire, the course of conversation is circular and not linear, this is because the interviewer does not want to give the impression that he or she is more informed about the topic in order to encourage the interviewee to openly narrate his stories even if it means getting off track (Bryman and Bell, 2011; Thompson et al., 1989). Furthermore there is not even a set order or wordings of the questions asked. The interviewer can ask the questions in any order; depending on which ever direction the respondent directs the conversation.

For this research I let the data guide and decide how the questionnaire shapes with time. This phenomenon is called 'convergent interviewing' (Attwater and Hase, 2013; Maxwell, 2005). According to these authors in convergent interviews the researcher begins by conducting a pilot interview. Moreover the researcher starts off with conducting interviews by keeping in mind the abstract themes he or she is interested in covering. Once the respondents answer, the researcher is exposed to new information and insights, which help him to introduce new questions to the interview guide. For this research the same interview method was adopted. After each interview, I analysed the data, which helped me in targeting similar emerging interests and themes mentioned by each respondent. This then helped me in developing the questionnaire for future interviews. Moreover open questions were used which gave the respondents a chance to freely express their point of views. In order to further get respondents to elaborate on their answers; probing technique was used. This made the respondents explain in detail certain terms and phrases they used which had a vague or multiple meanings, (Ibid).

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009) even though unstructured interviews do not follow a planned set of questions, however the interviewer has a clear idea of the aspects he or she wants to investigate. Hence based on these aspects I formulated a few basic questions in the beginning that covered each theme. See the Appendix for the interview

guide. Moreover the author's state that in informal interviews it is the interviewee's viewpoint and attitude that directs the conversation, hence these types of interviews are also called 'informant interviews'. Therefore keeping this in mind and also since at the beginning of the research I had a fair idea of the themes and previously existing theories, I decided to conduct semi-structured interviews so that the data guided the end results. Studies that revolve around a comparatively homogenous population, and are based on narrow objectives, have a certain degree of structure in their interviews, that means that more or less similar kind of questions are asked from each respondent (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006). This is a student thesis which had to be carried out in a limited time period, because of which I had to narrow down the scope of research. Hence keeping this in mind, it was decided to not have completely unstructured interviews, due to which I chose semi-structured interview method.

3.3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

This research is not aimed at statistically symbolising the target population; rather it is aimed at providing valuable insights from each respondent's experience. According to Laverty (2003) for phenomenological and hermeneutic phenomenological research participants are chosen based on the criteria of their experiences which should be in relation to the research question and purpose. More importantly these respondents should be comfortable with sharing these accounts from their lives with the researcher (Ibid). Hence when it came to selecting a suitable sample of respondents for the interviews, a Non-probability sampling technique was used. This is because of the fact that interviewees for this research were not selected by chance; in fact it was the conscious decision of the researcher to select respondents from specific geographical areas. Furthermore once these places were decided, Facebook was selected as the online forum to track down interested individuals. Out of these only those respondents were approached who were either easy to meet in person, or willing to have a Skype call interview online. Among the various Non-probability sampling techniques a mix of Purposeful sampling and Snow-ball sampling were used to further narrow down the selection of suitable respondents.

According to Maxwell (1998) in purposeful sampling technique important people who can provide valuable and valid information are deliberately chosen. Moreover the author states that this selection of a small, methodologically selected sample with partially homogenous respondents provides more reliable results and it can be said with confidence that these results represent the average members of the target population. According to Malhotra (2010)

these techniques are suitable if the research faces financial and time constraints. Both these hindrances were encountered during this research. Moreover according to the author both these sampling techniques give the researcher complete control to select the respondents based on their easy access and availability. Snow-ball sampling is a method where the researcher asks the respondents already interviewed to introduce him to other interested candidates from the target population. I found snow ball sampling very reliable, since from the beginning I was contacted by experts from the target population, who were then able to guide and recommend me to more reliable respondents. Sometimes people were unable to take out time for an interview themselves or had other constraints such as not being comfortable with being recorded, or not having access to Skype. Even though these people did not personally participate but they forwarded my message to friends and acquaintances who then contacted me, via a phone text message or by an email send to my personal Gmail account.

While deciding on the number of interviews to be conducted, the *principal of adequacy* was kept in mind. According to the principal enough data should be collected, in order to fully explain the phenomenon under study, till a stage of saturation is reached, (Morse and Field, 1995). The stage of Saturation is that tipping point, when conducting further interviews does not produce any more significant new data, and the respondents simply repeat the same information over and over again, (Ryan and Bernard, 2003). According to Guest et al. (2006) saturation is usually reached after six interviews, this is when the main themes are apparent and easily recognizable from the available data. Keeping this in mind, I decided to include a total of six interviews in my research, even though the total numbers of interviews performed were seven in number.

In order to find the suitable respondents to be interviewed I searched on Google search engine for online communities in Copenhagen, Lund and Malmo. These three cities are geographically closer together, and easily commutable. Hence consumers from these cities shared similar views, and often planned activities together. As a student researcher with limited resources and time constraints, I decided to collect my sample from these cities since they were close by, and at the start of this research I wanted to be sure that I could easily travel to Malmo or Copenhagen if the need arose. The research results guided me to different online forums out of which three Facebook groups, seemed to be in line with the focus of interest of this research. These consisted of Malmo Barefoot run, barfodslob and Copenhagen

barefoot. In order to reach out to respondents, I posted on these Facebook pages, clearly stating that I am a Master student currently conducting research for my final thesis which is on barefoot running. Table 1 gives an overview of the sample and represents the participant's gender, age, profession and mode of interview. In place of the actual names, stage names have been used to identify respondents. Since I was able to find respondents of different ages and professions, this resulted in motives, experiences and feelings of participants from different stages of lives. According to Malhotra (2010) the length of in-depth interviews ranges from 30 minutes to an hour. For my interviews the maximum length was 25 minutes, since this was the saturation point after which the respondent started looking uncomfortable and also started repeating the same answers.

Table 1: Participant profiles overview

Staged Name	Gender	Age (in years)	Occupation	Mode of interview
Emil	Male	18	Student	Skype
Sam	Male	32	Colleague and Salesperson at Raymond's shop of barefoot running shoes	In person
Alex	Male	34	Police Officer	Skype
Nathan	Male	23	Student	In person
Raymond	Male	35	Physiotherapist and owner of a barefoot running footwear shop	In person
Rick	Male	22	Student	Skype

It is believed that various internet forums and communities are rich sources of qualitative data, which can serve to be very useful for market researchers in coding and identifying current and changing needs, desires and expressions of consumers (Eysenbach and Till, 2001). Moreover getting information from online forums is less time consuming and much more economical, (Kozinets, 2002). Also consumers increasingly rely more on online

available information and usually through these forums get to communicate with other consumers and learn from their experiences, (Kozinets, 1999). Nowadays consumers from the same geographical area form online communities, this way it is easier to track down consumers having the same background. According to Kozinets (2002b) the researcher needs to be clear about his research purpose, so that he or she can track down useful forums, in order to get acquainted with the participants. Due to the popular trend of creating Facebook communities to promote various brands and services, I decided that searching for suitable barefoot running communities on Facebook would be a faster and convenient method of reaching out to the target group. It was through these communities that I got in touch with the respondents who volunteered to be interviewed for this research. In order to improve the validity of the results gathered from the interviews, I decided to study a few blogs for inspiration and as a complementary source of reliable insights.

According to Redsicker (2013) the latest findings from Technorati's 2013 digital influence report blogs are the third most prominent reliable online resource. Blogs are believed to convey an honest picture of both the negative and positive aspects of a brand, and are also a platform where consumers openly discuss and share their perspectives and experiences. Therefore in order to get access to a few blogs I shared my intentions and the purpose of my paper, requesting people on the Facebook communities to share their personal blogs. I clearly indicated that the research was being conducted for my master thesis. As a result I was contacted by three people, first was Martin Cronier from Malmo, second was Peter Piskeben from Denmark and third was Dan Gerell from Lund. Going through their blogs, I could see similar themes emerging from some of the blog entries. However these blogs did not provide with sufficient information which could be deeply analysed and referred to as Netnography. Plus due to severe time restraints, I decided to only study the blogs in order to feel more confident about the themes that were emerging from the interviews. Another reason for not using the data from the blogs was due to the language barrier and fear of misinterpretation, since these blogs were in Swedish or Danish language and I did not feel like Google translator could be completely trusted.

3.4. Data Analysis

According to Thompson (1997) hermeneutically grounded interpretive framework, is a method by which important marketing insights are derived from consumer's stories. For this research, the data collected through semi-structured interviews were analysed based on this framework. Thompson (1997) outlines the steps involved in analysing data in accordance with the framework. Firstly the researcher needs to transcribe the interviews for each respondent. Then the researcher will study the answers, while searching for specific patterns or concepts mentioned by the interviewee. Once these trends have been shortlisted, the researcher needs to analyse further data looking for similar trends in other respondent's answers. This way the researcher is able to note common themes that emerge from the shared interests of the respondents, (Ibid). The data analysis of this research is also inspired by the hermeneutic circle approach, which is a part of existential-phenomenology world view analysis. According to Thompson, Locander and Pollio (1989), existential-phenomenology is an alternative means of studying lived human experiences. In hermeneutic circle approach qualitative data is analysed through an iterative process. This means that at first each interview is analysed at an idiographic level and once this is done then all the interviews are analysed on a whole to track down common patterns with in different experiences of the respondents, (Ibid).

Moreover through a process of abduction which is close to the hermeneutic framework, important theoretical insights were achieved. According to Alvesson and Skoldberg (2009), abduction does not dismiss theoretical presumptions that have been gathered by prior literature review. In fact the authors elaborate that it uses theoretical framework as a means of inspiration in order to find important themes from empirical data for better understanding. In the abduction process the researcher moves back and forth between previous theory and collected empirical data. While doing so both sources are re-interpreted in relation to each other, which also helps in further development of theory as the analysis progresses, (Ibid). Furthermore (Thompson, 1997; Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1994) mention the concept of inter and intra text analysis. According to the authors at first one entire transcribed interview will be read and analysed, this is known as intra- text analysis. The purpose is to read the entire interview in order to get a grip on various themes that the interviewee points out. Once this is done, then texts from other interviews will be read and analysed side by side, this is inter-text analysis. The reason behind this is to look for similar as well as different

patterns across different interviews. One of the advantages of doing this is that after comparing the text from two or more interviews the researcher might see the responses from a different perspective, hence analysing them more deeply. As Kozinets (2002b) states that comparing the data's will help the researcher divide them into different categories which represent different themes.

3.5. Collection of Secondary Sources

Secondary data are easily available, relatively less expensive than primary data sources and are also quickly obtained, (Malhotra, 2010). It is important to evaluate and go through secondary data before collecting primary data. This is because secondary data helps in providing significant insights on the topic of research and also helps in developing a relevant approach to solving the problem at hand, (Ibid). For collecting relevant secondary data I used LUBsearch a discovery service that searches through all Lund university library resources, to provide its students with journal articles, books, e-books and article/book reviews. Apart from this I used Google Scholar to search for relevant secondary data. Mostly I typed in the key words related to the topic I wanted information on, or I would type in the name of articles and the authors who wrote them. Majority of the time, I got references from previous articles I had read, in order to avoid secondary referencing. Apart from this my supervisors also recommended a few secondary sources to me, which could help me in acquiring the relevant knowledge I needed. I also borrowed books from the Library of Lund Economics and Management. I studied secondary data so that I could gain important and relevant insights, which could guide me in understanding the respondents and analysing the primary data in a better way.

3.6. Restrictions

As a researcher with little prior experience I faced some difficulties while collecting data. Some of these restrictions and flaws were apparent right away, while others became obvious after much reading and learning about how to conduct semi-structured interviews. As an interviewer I was not professionally trained and neither did I have enough time to learn the various tactics through which an interviewer can make the respondents break free and give more details. I was not trained to act as a non-directive listener who does not play an intrusive and presumptuous role during the conversations. According to Easterby-Smith, Thorpe and Jackson (2008) the interviewer can influence the answers.

Furthermore according to Thompson et al. (1989) if a researcher is analysing the data alone this can lead to sedimentation of perspectives. This means that the researcher might end up focusing on only one aspect of the data, failing to detect other themes. This can be overcome if there are more than one or two researchers, due to which there are more than one fresh views and ways of analysing the data, (Ibid). Other than that I had no prior experience in recording interviews, because of which I was unsuccessful in recording two of the most important and well conducted interviews from my research. Both these interviews took place on Skype. I researched for appropriate soft wares to record Skype calls; however both the soft wares failed to do their job. Unfortunately it was only after the interviews had finished did I realize the recordings were not being saved. As a result total of seven interviews were conducted but only six were used.

According to Morse and Field (1995) sometimes respondents are not co-operative and or interested in the interview. They give shallow and short answers, and are stubborn about not opening up. This problem was faced in two of the interviews, one of which was dropped. The other was the last interview, where the respondent seemed pre-occupied and also faced technical audio problems at his end due to which he was unable to hear the questions properly. This made him feel embarrassed and impatient at the same time. He seemed to be in a hurry to end the interview, and just give enough information that could be useful for the research. Another limitation seen in face to face interviews was how the respondents became conscious, since I was sitting right in front of them recording through a video camera. They kept trying to peek at the interview guide, checking for how many questions were left to be asked. Compared to the respondents who were interviewed through Skype, respondents interviewed in person were more distracted by the researcher's presence. Apart from this all of the respondents interviewed were male, due to which the sample was male dominated and not gender balanced. Hence it can be said, it did not represent the entire population very well. As far as the secondary data is concerned the limitations, faced were related to low external validity, relevancy and accuracy, (Bryman and Bell, 2011). This is because perhaps the time and circumstances under which the study was conducted in the secondary source might not be relevant anymore, making the results less reliable. Moreover since no prior research had been done on the motivational factors of barefoot running, or minimalistic consumption it was difficult to come across secondary data that was directly useful for the research problem in question, (Ibid).

4. Motivations behind Barefoot running

In this chapter the empirical data collected will be put forward and analysed, in relation to the theoretical models used in this thesis. Semi-structured Interviews will be reviewed and common themes that emerge from the data of each interview will be presented in detail. The purpose of this chapter is to find the various reasons behind the motivation for barefoot running. Once the interviews were transcribed and the recordings were re-evaluated, a number of themes came forward. It was obvious that all the five respondents had some common reasons for choosing barefoot running. Each respondent's feedback is analysed to see which similar trends exist in the entire data collected. It is these trends that make up the various propositions put forth to be responsible for the popularity of barefoot running trend.

4.1. Constructing the autonomous self:

After each interview, it became clearer and obvious that the respondents had some shared beliefs regarding barefoot running and how they perceived the world. Even though each respondent had his own characteristics, but still it was fascinating to see familiar interests shared among the respondents. It is believed that consumers are always looking for a way to escape from their normal everyday routine by questioning the norms of the society they live in. Moreover by embracing new challenges they also shape their individual identities. The following sub-themes further explain how consumers shape their individual autonomous identities, by sticking to their beliefs and implementing them in their lives.

4.1.1. Autonomous Reflexive Defiance:

The first trend observed from the interviews was how respondents were aware of the corporate world and its control over their lives. They considered themselves well aware against this manipulation and educated enough to challenge the marketers which in this scenario manufactured and sold modern footwear. This attribute of the respondents portrayed them as autonomous individuals who took control of their consumption choices, rather than follow the trends that are set by big companies and followed commonly by the society. This attribute was made obvious in some of the comments gathered from the interviews. The following excerpts from the interviews reflect this point of view among the interviewee's.

"Barefoot running is opposite to being fooled by a big marketing machine...yeah....like Nike or Reebok. These were the shoes you bought that were actually not good for you". (Emil, 18)

Emil a teenager from Copenhagen states how barefoot running is a way to show that he is no longer a prey to all the big corporate giants. It is obvious from his statement that according to him, companies nowadays only manufacture products, in order to make profits, and sell something to consumers, which in reality is of no use to them. Hence companies are not producing to make our lives simpler, or easier, in fact the consumers are only being fooled into buying expensive and useless products. According to Gabriel (1999) companies practice a totalizing control over consumers, by influencing their decisions and overwhelming them with their rapidly evolving and technologically advanced products. The consumers end up feeling inauthentic and controlled by outside forces, which results in fragmented identities of these consumers. However Emil is an excellent example of a post-modern reflexively defiant consumer. In accordance with Goulding et al. (2002) Emil has freed himself from a fragmented existence, by thinking logically about the manipulative roles played by big companies. From his statement Emil shows that in his point of view barefoot running is different and poles apart from being targeted by big companies. This shows how he differentiates his interests from fragmented individuals who according to Fuchs (2007) are distorted and scattered people, feeling trapped and controlled by outside forces other than their own minds. Emil on the other hand has acquired a self-autonomous state, where he has emancipated himself from corporate manipulation. On a similar note Raymond a physician and owner of a barefoot running shoes shop in Malmo said:

"We started off...we were just trying to introduce a better running technique that wasn't dependant on the type of shoe". (Raymond, 36)

At another point during the interview he elaborates on this point by saying:

"The principals of what we think is a good shoe, isn't different if you run or do aerobics or just stand here, or if you walk in the city....it is the same body....it is a permanent part of your life". (Raymond, 36)

Furthermore when Raymond was asked how barefoot running has changed his perspective, he answered:

"If you make the transition into barefoot running, you have already questioned the way that most people live or do things. You have made a conscious step to go against them and say that maybe there is another way of doing it....and I think it is the same way in eating, in shopping, in living your life. If you are just used to walking in other's footsteps and doing what everyone else does...then it is hard to [...]." (Raymond, 36)

In his first statement Raymond emphasizes on how as a physician when patients kept coming with serious injuries, he and his colleagues tried to find a better running technique, which was not dependant on the type of shoe they wore. Rather it mattered more on how the person ran. This is the opposite of what companies preach, since they keep introducing newer technologically advanced products, on which consumers become extremely dependant. Consumers try to keep up with the pace of new products by purchasing and updating their gadgets on regular basis, hence spending a lot of money in doing so. However Raymond believes that should not be the way, and consumers should not depend on the type of shoes that they wear. Hence in his second statement he makes it clear that barefoot shoes can be worn at any time of the day during any activity. It is more like a permanent part of your life, and you do not have to wear special shoes for every different occasion. By bringing about this awareness Raymond appears as a self-reflexive individual, who according to Peterson (2005) challenge the existing norms and societal experts whom people have been trusting blindly for years. Raymond has achieved an authentic image by being an independent and scholarly individual. He analysed the problem at hand and found a solution by re-prioritizing the needs and products of his patients who were unable to improve their situation by opting for the same old remedies, which in this case were the shoes produced by big companies.

In his third statement, Raymond clarifies how transitioning into a barefoot runner, not only suggests changing the technique in which one runs. But instead a person also changes his frame of mind and outlook towards life. According to Raymond, barefoot runners start questioning the norms in all aspects of their lives, in order to free themselves and be in charge of their decisions. Rather than blindly following what is taught to them by the media, they think out of the box and consciously make an effort to try something new. Raymond states that a person, who is unable to think independently, will also not be able to try barefoot running. This reflects on a very interesting aspect of Raymond's outlook towards barefoot running. It points out that he considers himself and fellow barefoot runners different and

more intellectual as compared to the rest of the world. He considers himself and his fellows more open and willing to accept change, which makes them autonomous from societal norms. Furthermore in accordance with Brooks (2000) it can be said that Raymond considers himself and other barefoot runners autonomously 'Cool', since they have successfully opposed the norms to express their ideologies. Sam who is a friend of Raymond and also a sales person at his shop shares somewhat a similar point of view:

"I ask myself, this is the world I am living in, what can I do about it? Keep saying to my customers...500 years ago we thought world was flat...then we thought it is round...we progress". (Sam, 37)

Sam questions past knowledge, and pushes himself to think differently. He believes that human beings keep experimenting and discovering new aspects of this world. Hence it is normal to be skeptical of the way he lives his life and the things he believes in. He is open to new perspectives, and believes that history proves how over the course of time humans have changed many theories they previously believed in. By holding on to this perspective Sam shows himself to be an autonomous individual who has achieved liberation from historical beliefs by challenging them. He also uses this perspective to sell barefoot running footwear to his customers, by giving them examples from the past in order to prove that it is okay to challenge the existing norms and concepts. This aspect of Sam's personality portrays the independent reflexively defiant post-modern consumer who challenges the socially constructed reality, (Firat and Venkatesh, 1995). A reflexively defiant consumer critically evaluates the past consumption patterns that still prevail in the society (Ozanne and Murray, 1995), and this is exactly what Sam practices himself and also promotes this way of thinking within his clients. Moreover Sam also portrays a post-modern Narrative identity as stated by (Gabriel, 1999; Fuchs, 2007). This is because he constantly evaluates the past, present and future, in order to re-write his own life stories and re-assess the theories that have been blindly believed in for a long time. Nathan who's a student at Lund University, shares his perspective on modern shoes, saying:

"For me it's just that I really like reading about science and if I read one way of doing something is better I just do that..." (Nathan, 23)

"...and then I just realized the way I've been thinking my entire life is just wrong, that's not how we are supposed to run. These modern running shoes have only been

around for what...like 35 years? It's crazy! That we think we need running shoes in order to run. I think running shoes are just a fad, on the contrary you don't develop your feet, and they are not strong, they are just weak". (Nathan, 23)

It is clear from his statements how Nathan shows his concern about companies misguiding the consumers. He feels ignorant knowing that until now he has been targeted by marketing and has been dependant on different branded footwear thinking it was best for him. Whereas in reality humans do not even need such advanced footwear to protect their feet. According to him it's outrageous how companies can sell an idea which is completely fake and made up, since shoes are not even good for the feet. They only make the feet weak and it is unfortunate that for the past 35 years or so no one has questioned these companies. In this way Nathan represents his individual identity as a logical thinker, who only consumes products he believes best serve the authentic purpose, (Hatch and Schultz, 2001; Muniz and Schau, 2005). In his second statement Nathan describes himself as a huge fan of reading about scientific developments. According to him, that makes him more curious and gives him an opportunity of learning new improved ways of doing things.

After the interview while elaborating on his interests, Nathan mentioned how he read somewhere that water bottles are emptied faster if you spin them while you wait for the liquid to drain out. He said that now every time he has to empty a bottle he uses the same tactic which makes his life simpler and easier. This shows the narrative aspect of his identity since he is interested in unlearning and re-learning new things by gaining more knowledge. Moreover Nathan represents a reflexively defiant consumer, since he shows off his social vision, education and taste through his activities. He likes originality and being different from the normal crowd by being a scholarly individual who reads up on latest developments in order to try new things with a different perspective. By gaining more knowledge and being well informed he is able to look at things from a unique and different angle due to which he can decipher the marketing codes and liberate himself from the dictation of market forces. Similarly Alex, who is a policeman in Malmo, and also friends with Sam, shares his perspective on modern running shoes:

"They build shoes nowadays that look more like spaceships. They are so big and supportive that once you walk barefoot your feet and body can't support it...you are so used to these things stabilizing your foot. I don't think it's the best way". (Alex, 34)

Alex compared modern foot wear to spaceships. By giving this comparison he shows how in his eyes these shoes are just heavy obstacles, which we human beings carry as an extra burden. He portrays the common perspective shared by barefoot runners, who believe in minimal footwear, which allows them maximum control over their movements while feeling as light as possible. Alex shows himself to be reflexively defiant since he detests the dependencies that have been created by big companies and wants to break free from them. Just like Nathan, Alex also believes that these shoes are only making us physically weak. Not just that but even worse are the promises made by big companies which are just a bunch of lies to trick people into spending money on useless products. Sam has a control-resistant identity similar to Nathan and hence successful deciphers the market codes, in order to autonomously decide his own consumption habits. The above arguments show that the respondents have developed control-resistant identities where they want to escape from the manipulative roles played by the big companies. They want to be autonomous individuals who can make their own logical choices, based on their own evaluation of what is wrong and right. These respondents are reflexively defiant, since they can express their ideologies confidently. In this way these consumers are able to achieve the autonomous authentic experience they seek.

4.1.2. A unique autonomous self:

Just like the respondents showed tension with the corporate world. In a similar manner respondents also showed that they could rebel and go against common people they came across in their lives. By staying strong in the face of criticism or scepticism barefoot runners, feel that they shape their identities. They do not let people influence their judgments or scare them away from their commitments. This shows them as strongly committed and faithful individuals. In this way barefoot runners become autonomous individuals who stand by their decision strong headedly. Following excerpts from the interviews shed some light on this aspect of barefoot runners:

"I found it very annoying that everyone was like 'ooh what are those shoes and why are you doing that'... and it was annoying when people were looking at my feet when I was trying it out. So I did it despite what people thought because I like going against how people in general think". (Nathan, 23)

It can be seen that even though people mocked, or sometimes asked unnecessary questions, but still this did not de-motivate Nathan. On the contrary he liked the challenge, and it made him feel that by sticking to barefoot running, he was acting differently. He was shaping his own unique personality which was different from any other person's identity. This aspect of Nathan shows us another side of his control-resistant and individual identity. As mentioned by Fisher (2005) post-modern consumers achieve self-realization by staying true to their cause and belief. These consumers do not copy others or let their opinion influence their judgment. Furthermore in accordance with Fearon (1999) Nathan shows an individuality and uniqueness that he takes pride in. Rather than being ashamed of his interests due to constant criticism or questions by people, he on the contrary gets a self-confident boost from all the attention. On a similar note Raymond says

"Even if people don't get convinced I know I am doing the right thing for me". (Raymond, 36)

This shows that Raymond is only concerned about what is good for him, and what his priorities are. Other than that he does not give much thought to how people judge him. This is in accordance to the rebellious post-modern consumer, who stays strong and faithful to his values in the face of challenges, (Canniford and Shankar, 2007; Morton, 2000). Raymond likes his carefree image in the eyes of other people and this is how he likes them to see him. Sam on the other hand says:

"I like to inspire and get inspired... so I welcome people to ask me questions and I like to explain barefoot running to them in detail". (Sam, 37)

This shows that Sam likes the attention he gets from curious and inquisitive customers. In contrast to Raymond he likes people approaching him or noticing him for his unique and different interests. Perhaps it is this nature that also makes him a good sales person. He is energetic and enthusiastic about barefoot running, talking about how good it is for everyone to run barefoot. Occasionally while talking he walks over to the displayed shoes, and runs around, to find the right size for you and convinces you to try it on. This shows how proud he is of his interest and knowledge on barefoot running. He almost shows off this unique hobby, by being more verbal about it, sharing and talking about it openly, without being shy. This shows his strong individual narrative identity, since he energetically talks about his stories in a detail manner. At the end it can be seen that both Raymond and Sam enjoy the attention

they receive whether it is positive or negative and the way they are judged due to their rebellious interests. Where on one hand Raymond shoes irritation at being noticed by people, he also cannot hide the fact that he likes being judged as a rebel. Sam on the other hand gets overexcited about his superior knowledge on barefoot running as compared to a starter, and takes it as an opportunity to share his views with people who take notice of him. The above arguments show that these respondents like to stand out of the crowd. Due to their bold decisions and diverse interest in barefoot running they see themselves as unique powerful individuals who have the ability to think out of the box. In this way they are able to achieve an autonomous authentic individuality, where they set their own standards that are free of anyone's influence.

4.1.3. In the face of challenges you find unique sovereignty:

One way by which consumers try to make their boring and monotonous lives a bit exciting is by facing more challenges. People feel no thrill in their safe and pre-planned lives. They wish to take control of their lives, so that they can feel autonomous. In order to add a little element of interest, they face various challenges and by doing so they also keep pushing themselves to perform better. For example Sam boasts about various sport activities he regularly takes part in:

"I am doing sports, I am horse riding, I am playing ice-hockey, I am playing football, beach volley ball, I play tennis, I am playing golf, I am doing triathlon...they are my main sports activities... I like the variety". (Sam, 37)

This is the response he gave when he was asked how he got introduced to bare foot running. This answer shows how he takes pride in being active and a sports fanatic. He wanted to mention that barefoot running was not the only sports he took part in; rather it was one of the many he enjoyed. This side of Sam's personality is in accordance with what Stranger (1999) says about post-modern consumers who are frustrated at their mundane metropolitan based lives. These consumers show freedom and liberty, from their controlled pre-designed lives, by taking part in as many diverse and challenging activities as possible. Off-record Sam boasts about his participation in the upcoming marathon in Berlin. He gives a confident shrug, saying that he hasn't been doing any prior training since he is already active enough. Sam illustrates how along with setting different challenging targets for himself, he also enjoys the extra strength he gains from barefoot running. Raymond on the other hand gives a

more detailed answer, which further shows how important it is for these men to exercise not for the sake of a better physique, but to gain strength which they can utilize in their everyday lives. This aspect of doing physical activity for the sake of gaining strength rather than better looking physiques is in itself a different perspective towards life. By showing this intention behind their physical efforts and interest in barefoot running these respondents set them aside from the rest of the crowd. They are not the mediocre typical athletes who get involved in the same repetitive activities, being part of the same human race. In fact these respondents show themselves to be different, as can be seen from the following excerpt from Raymond's interview:

"I love to train, I am involved in everything from cross fit training to functional movement training...out in the woods just moving, jumping. These activities have more benefits than simple weight lifting. You train more complex movements that are more similar to the movements you have to do in everyday life. I think that that's the way of training where you get more benefits. Instead of just working out and sweating, you can really use these movements, this kind of strength in everyday life. I think that in general in Sweden the entire training community is shifting to more functional training, even in the gyms". (Raymond, 36)

From Raymond's detailed answer it can be seen clearly that, he narrates his exercise experiences in such a way to make sure that he stands out from the rest of the crowd. He states that his functional training is much more useful as compared to the traditional way of exercising for the sake of sweating and shedding weight. On a similar note Emil, stated:

"I didn't realize how strong my feet had become from barefoot running. I went to a cross fit running class, and everyone was amazed.....even I was surprised how compared to people who did regular weight training, my feet had more strength". (Emil, 18)

Just like Raymond, Emil takes pride in this unique capability and benefit he achieved due to barefoot running. For him being able to perform the best at his cross fit class in comparison to much more adult and well trained individuals made him proud. He compared himself to everyone in his class, and felt ecstatic due to his accomplishment of a challenge no one else could face other than him. Other than this, from Raymond's answer, it is also clear how he relates functional training to natural outdoor training, in the woods or similar places where he

can run and jump around. It can be seen from the above arguments that the respondents consider themselves different from other athletes who are involved in normal weight training or any other exercise aimed at achieving a better body. These barefoot runners describe themselves as functional trainers, who are aiming at gaining strength by putting more and more challenges in their exercise routines. This aspect gives them an authenticity above normal athletes. This is because they break away from the normal concept of exercising for the sake of maintaining ones perfect physique and focus more on enhancing their endurance for challenging modes of physical activities. They significantly differentiate between traditional training at gymnasiums and their own functional training which they prefer to do close to nature.

From the above analysis it can be seen how respondents seek to construct an authentic autonomous self. This is achieved by different ways, which have been presented as subthemes to the main theme. In short the barefoot runners achieve the aim of building an authentic autonomous self, by shaping their identities. The first sub-theme explains how the post-modern consumers and in this case the barefoot runners are reflexively defiant. These consumers are educated and well aware of the manipulative marketing roles played by large companies. They take charge of their consumption decisions by getting rid of expensive technologically advanced products that do not serve the purpose they promise. These consumers challenge the existing socially constructed reality. In doing so they evaluate their past, present and future circumstances in order to evaluate their lives and re-write their own life stories. This gives shape to their narrative identities.

The second way of achieving an autonomous authentic self is by means of standing out from the rest of the crowd. Here consumers rebel against the societal norms and stay loyal to their beliefs. They do not let others judgment of themselves or criticism de-moralise them. Lastly consumers seek challenges to add thrill and escape from their pre-designed monotonous lives. These barefoot runners consider themselves authentic since they believe in functional strength building training which is different from the normal exercise most people do in order to maintain their physiques. Hence all these factors contribute to the authentic autonomous experience that barefoot runners aim to achieve.

4.2. A Desire for Simplicity:

The second motivational factor contributing to the rising trend of barefoot running is the yearning amongst respondents to leave behind their stressed and the fast paced lives. These people want to break away from their everyday routines, by escaping to a quieter and peaceful place. By emancipating themselves from their hectic lives, they are able to gain the authentic experience they yearn for. Following are the main themes that emerged from the interviews and are related to the desire among consumers for a simpler less complicated life.

4.2.1. Natural Re-enchantment:

We live in a busy and fast paced world. Time passes by in a flash and people feel less and less in control of their lives. In order to escape from the crazy routines and work lives, consumers seek some peace and solidarity by escaping to scenic and calm places. Some excerpts from the interviews show the desire among the respondents, to bring some simplicity in their lives. When Alex was asked to describe how he started running bare feet, he said:

"It was around in my 20's. I spent an entire summer in the country side. I ran bare feet without any shoes for around 6 to 7 weeks and I really enjoyed the entire thing. I remember that back then it was quiet a cool thing....so when Sam told me that it is the same thing but you don't get any sore feet, I intended to try it". (Alex, 34)

Similarly when Rick was asked how he got introduced to barefoot running he responded by saying:

"My friend told me about it... he told me it was more natural...like we did before...before we had shoes and stuff". (Rick, 22)

From the first statement it can be seen that Alex likes to be close to nature. He talks about his experience at the country side many years back which he still cherishes. He mentions how he could not resist trying barefoot running once his friend Sam told him how he can experience the same liberating feeling by barefoot running. Here Alex shows how he wishes to reenchant his life. He cherishes a memory from the past, which brings out his personal nostalgic feelings. In order to re-live the moment and acquire his utopian escape from his regular routine, Alex gives barefoot running another try. Similarly Rick states how he was convinced to try barefoot running when his friend told him that it was the natural way of

running. It was the way humans ran all along before running shoes got introduced. This shows Rick's fascination with natural mode of running, he believes that he should convert his lifestyle from artificial to as natural as possible. Furthermore to elaborate on this point when Alex, Sam and Rick were asked how barefoot running makes them feel and what is there about it that they like. They replied saying:

"It feels more natural when I run. I like the idea and the concept and the theory behind it. The thing is that I believe in it... that human beings should be as natural as possible. I like feeling the ground, feeling every stone and obstacle on the ground". (Alex, 34)

"I want to feel the ground; I want my toes to spread out. I like the feedback from the ground; I want to know how my feet and body feel when I land". (Sam, 37)

"These shoes... they squeeze around my foot like a sock...yea...it feels very good, it feels like you are not trapped...yea it feels more natural in a way". (Rick, 22)

Similarly Nathan expresses his point of view on barefoot running experience in regard to the book 'Born to run' by Christopher McDougall.

"It is portrayed as more natural...it is the way you should be running" (Nathan, 23)

And at another point during the interview:

"The book makes a point, that your feet are made to run...and that modern running shoes constrict your foot, they support it so much that you don't develop the natural muscles and ability of running". (Nathan, 23)

It can be seen that for Rick, Alex and Sam barefoot running seems to be a more natural way of running. They all like the feeling of the ground under their feet, and how they can sense each and every movement or object that they land on. Rick explains how the footwear is similar to wearing socks, which means he feels light and not trapped by any extra burden. In another place he mentions how when he goes to the gym he prefers to wear minimalistic footwear since they provide him with a natural balance. Similarly Nathan also feels that the natural way of running is bare feet. From all these three answers it can be seen that all three respondents hint a yearning for a natural and primitive way of running. All three of them state that this is how a human is naturally supposed to run, implying that they are inspired by their

ancestors who ran in a similar fashion. This is in accordance with Torgovnick (1990), who states that going primitive is increasingly gaining popularity, since it provides consumers a magical escape from their current artificial lives, and also provides an authentic experience similar to something from the past.

According to Thompson (2004) consumers who are Romantics often believe that they can reenchant their lives and souls if they return back to the natural way of living. This desire for self-fulfilment is apparent in the respondent's answers, who feel that modern running shoes have taken them farther away from their natural state of being. In order to bring back the magical feeling, they try to become primitive, believing that, that is the real way to live their lives. To get more insights on how natural these runners like to run, they were asked about the places where they prefer to exercise. Alex and Sam gave the following answers:

"Normally I run close to my house because it is easier, but I would prefer to run on the beach or in the woods. I also like the country side... doing garden work is relaxing even if it is tough work...cutting down trees and maintaining gardens...like nature so to say. Everybody enjoys more and more going away from the hectic city life. It's like they see that this is not the way they feel good. When people are off work they like to be in nature more and more... it is just the perception that I have, that it is going more and more in that direction". (Alex, 34)

"I wouldn't go running in the city, nowhere in the world, because I hate the pollution, and maybe if it's crowded you can't focus on the running properly. I am not a downtown city runner...I don't know if you have those people...if they exist I feel sorry for them. I like the nature". (Sam, 37)

According to Alex, people need a break from their work lives. When they do get time off, they prefer to relax by being close to nature. Alex likes to be in the country side, away from the city hustle bustle. Even his interests in gardening show how much he enjoys the calmness of nature. Similarly Sam shows distaste for running in the city. He even looks with pity at the people who are comfortable running in the crowded and noisy city. For him it is important to be close to nature and someplace where he has a chance to think and focus on his running, and rest his mind. They both show a desire for natural calm getaways. Sam seems more passionate about the natural and easy going experience of barefoot running. He said that it

doesn't feel like he has to make a special effort to run this way, in fact he feels very comfortable and not at all forced. He expresses the feeling of freedom in the following words:

"It's like grabbing something from the ground and eating it. I feel healthy when I run, makes my body free". (Sam, 37)

Sam expresses his thoughts on barefoot running by comparing it to eating fresh fruit. For him it has a similar pure feeling, of it being untouched and far away from any technological processing. Likewise Nathan showed a similar perspective, since when he was offered popcorn and biscuits at the beginning of the interview, he declined the offer and instead asked if he could have fresh fruit. He then explained how he is avoiding artificial sugar and is only sticking to natural sugar. Even on much persuasion he still declined the offer to have any of the two snacks offered to him. This shows how just like Sam, Nathan also appreciates the natural aspect of things. He relates to them in a positive manner and considers them healthier and more useful as compared to artificially created products. When Raymond was asked to explain what barefoot running means to him, he replies:

"It is a nice feeling, a nice experience. A way of releasing all the stress and all the problems we have all day". (Raymond, 36)

Clearly from this statement even Raymond also uses barefoot running as a getaway from his monotonous stressful life.

"Before I had Vibram five finger shoes I ran short distances. I usually run 100 metres or half a kilometre...not very long distances. I love running in the snow, when I got the shoes I ran 5 kilometres straight in the snow..." (Nathan, 23)

"When I go for a run I don't like to look back... I just keep running and running, not knowing where I am going or how I will get back... you know not sure whether I will get back" (Emil, 18).

Nathan tells how before switching to barefoot running, he used to cover smaller running distances. However on his very first try, at barefoot running, he ran comparatively a very large distance and that too in snow. This shows how the experience was so natural and refreshing that he went out of his way, not even keeping track of time or the distance. This reflects on the overwhelming and unique experience he had. Nathan also expresses his desire

to be spontaneous. Similarly Emil shares the feeling of absolute freedom he feels when running bare feet. He likes to run off into the wild, not thinking or worrying about his whereabouts or what might happen if he gets lost and loses his way. This explains how he likes to escape during this time, away from his usual thoughts where he normally has to be smart and plan ahead. But barefoot running gives him an opportunity to break free, into the nature, with nothing else on his mind.

"I really like this quote from the book. It says 'Run but don't leave a trace'. I just like to featherlike, like an elf. In a way I am jealous of my cats, they can just go out and run on their paws, and I have to put on these running shoes". (Nathan, 23)

It can be seen that Nathan does not like carrying extra burden. He wants to live his life, being as natural as possible, without using artificial extra burdens. He compares himself with his cats, and shows envy towards those animals, which in his eyes are lucky to be free and wild. They are free from any societal norms or pressures. He wants to live in the same manner, as natural as possible. From the above analysis it can be observed that all these respondents were seeking one common factor, which in this case is an authentic natural experience. These respondents yearn to re-enchant their dull and monotonous lives, and one way of doing this is by going back to nature. For these respondents any artificial product nowadays is impure, and polluted. In order to seek authenticity they believe in acquiring a natural magical experience by either consuming natural products, or by living their lives the natural way.

4.2.2. Evoking the unvarnished past:

In search for simpler times, people long for the uncomplicated days gone by. From the following excerpts, it can be seen that some of the respondents experienced nostalgia when they ran barefoot.

"I read the book 'Born to run', but I am not sure how I found out about it. Maybe because I was interested in reading about pre-agricultural things like how humans lived before there was agriculture. And then I think I found this guy who tried to live his entire life like as if agricultural revolution never happened, and I think he also ran barefoot and he recommended me to read that book..." (Nathan, 23)

Nathan talks about his interest in pre-agricultural era. He was influenced by a man who shared a similar interest but with an extreme passion for it. That man was living a simple life,

similar to how humans lived before the agricultural revolution changed the world. This man and Nathan both show a strong longing for a time that existed centuries ago. According to Holak and Havlena (1991, 1992) this is a portrayal of Historical Nostalgia. Both Nathan and his friend, whom he mentions in his interview, are inspired by an era back in time which they never witnessed personally. The fact that they never lived the pre-agricultural life makes it magical and exotic in their eyes.

Furthermore Thompson (2004) speaks of Romanticists who are consumers with distaste for industrial times. According to the author these consumers adore and respect authentic self-expression. This aspect is seen in Nathan, who yearns for the pre-agricultural times of simplicity and authenticity. On the other hand Emil also mentions reading the same book and finding those parts interesting where the author explains how humans used to live before industrialization changed everyone's lives.

"I read the book as well, which was very inspiring... it explained the stories about barefoot running and stories about how we used to run before you had regular running shoes". (Emil, 18)

It is perhaps this curiosity with our past that interests people into exploring activities such as barefoot running. In born to run the Mexican Tarahumara tribe signifies the older days when people lived on simplest diet and travelled the world in minimal wear. Respondents also associate the natural way of running with the only true and correct way of running. For them being natural is associated with older times, when things were purer and straightforward. Following are two excerpts from interviews with Sam and Alex:

"Five fingers was an eye opener for the world for the minimalist shoes and that you are able to run in a natural way... the way we are meant to run". (Sam, 37)

"It feels more natural, feels better, like it should be... like when you were a kid, you were going around bare feet in the summer running around and you don't do that anymore". (Alex, 34)

According to Sam, barefoot minimalist running technique and foot wear, reminded the world of their roots and history. This trend opened the eyes of consumers who were drowning in the artificial materialistic norms and believes. The consumers had forgotten to look back in time and see where they were coming from and how their ancestors used to live. Instead they had

fully grown accustomed to the products and lifestyles they had gotten used to with time. While Sam relishes in historical nostalgia, Alex on the other hand is reminiscing about his childhood memories, when as a kid he used to run around bare feet in the summers. This phenomenon where Alex finds solace in the memories of his past life is called Personal Nostalgia. According to Muehling (2011) personal nostalgia has a more dominant and sacred effect on a consumer, since it involves personal life experiences from old golden days.

As seen from Alex's statement he misses the light feeling of freedom and carelessness that he experiences as a child. He misses the times when there were no responsibilities. Now when Alex runs bare foot he can feel the same way all over again, and these feelings bring him a sense of security. In the face of challenges and identity crisis, holding on to old memories or re-living the past, helps him to revive his old self. The self he fears to lose. The above arguments show that in search for authentic simpler times, consumers seek solace in their past. This past could be related to a history that is either from the respondent's personal life, or from an era that he is fully aware of but has not lived it himself. Hence it can be seen from the analysis that the barefoot runners interviewed long for simple and authentic times. And they are able to achieve this authenticity by either being naturalistic or by holding on to the old simpler times.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this chapter the findings, their relevance and contribution to the research question are discussed, after which the conclusion of this study is stated. Moreover, the contributions are presented according to their theoretical relevance. Finally, the limitations of this study and suggestions for future research are given.

5.1. Discussion & Contribution

In this research the main focus has been to study the motivational factors for minimalistic consumption, by studying the specific case of for barefoot running. The aim has been to add to theory with in the minimal consumption literature and more generally to Consumer Culture Theory. This is done by exploring a certain domain of the minimal consumption phenomenon in regard to consumer practices of the previously unexamined barefoot running trend. The contribution has been centred on specific dimensions of authenticity, identity formation and back to the basics concepts. This aim has been achieved by studying a small sample of barefoot runners from a selected geographical area. This research presents and gives shape to a number of factors that explain how post-modern consumers attain authenticity and how they use barefoot running to express themselves in their normal everyday lives.

From the analysis of the collected data a couple of themes emerge which explain how through various channels barefoot runners achieve the authentic escape they seek. Barefoot runners aim to build authentic autonomous individual selves. They do so by being reflexively defiant, and aware of the large market manipulative forces in play. They take control of their own consumption decisions and break free from the holds of large companies. The post-modern consumers are shown as fragmented individuals due to the control external forces practice on their decision making abilities. However the self-reflexive barefoot runners challenge existing social norms. Moreover they re-evaluate the past, present and future circumstances and in doing so break free from their fragmented selves and shape their own authentic narrative identities where they write their own life stories.

In a similar manner the barefoot runners aim to achieve a unique autonomous self by rebelling against the society. They do this by staying strong in the face of criticism and in this way they do not let the society influence their beliefs. This leads to the unique identities and personalities of barefoot runners. Lastly barefoot runners try to escape their monotonous predesigned lives in order to live authentic and more challenging lifestyles. These barefoot runners push themselves to perform better, in order to set themselves aside from the normal crowd. They focus on more functional and strength gaining exercises which make them authentic and autonomous of their bodies as compared to the normal people who exercise only to maintain a better looking physique.

Moreover barefoot runners yearn for simpler and authentic times. They look for an escape from their hectic daily lives, so that to re-enchant their lives. This they do by seeking authentic natural experiences, where they try to stay close to nature and live their lives in a natural primitive manner. These barefoot runners are seen as romantics who believe that the natural way a man is built to live his life is in fact the magical and most authentic way of living. Secondly the barefoot runners gain a simple authentic experience by re-visiting the past. This could be memories from their own personal past, where they reminiscence the old days and remember them as the simple days by gone. Or it could also be historical nostalgia where the barefoot runners reminiscence about a past that they have not lived themselves, but are fully aware of. In this way barefoot runners are able to get a natural and simple authentic experience. Hence barefoot runners achieve authenticity by taking control of their decisions and shaping their identities as well as by seeking a more natural and simpler way of life.

Further I will discuss the various insights that were derived from the analysis of the collected data in light of the theories presented in the earlier chapters. I will discuss how this study and the various aspects of barefoot runners, contribute to the already existing literature. The main contribution of this research is to help both marketers and researchers understand the motivational factors for minimalistic consumption in new ways. Barefoot running and minimalistic consumption are both under-researched phenomenon, where the only significant research done in relation to barefoot running is from a medical perspective. So far no one has looked at it from a different perspective. From the existing literature we found the concept of positive disintegration as mentioned by Robillard (2013). According to this concept consumers become inquisitive with age, and eventually reach a stage where they want to calm down their inner struggle and conflict, by making sense of their surroundings. However my research has shown that age does not necessarily play a vital role in curiosity. Respondents from different walks of life and especially young consumers show a high interest in gaining more awareness.

These consumers are not trying to boycott brands and big companies, but they do want to question and increase their knowledge regarding the products they buy. This sheds interesting light on the post-modern consumers. It can safely be said that consumers irrespective of their age, are becoming increasingly aware of the reality. In the past perhaps young consumers were more influenced by brands and latest technologically advanced products as compared to their older generation. However the post-modern consumer is fully knowledgeable and no longer prone to the marketing codes that tend to misguide consumers. Companies, manufacturers and marketers need to realize this change and emerging trend in the society. Nowadays the reflexively defiant consumers not only look for functionally beneficial products, but they also make sure that the product actually delivers the benefits it promises.

These consumers are not only questioning the companies, but also the philosophy behind the product. They are challenging existing beliefs and facts which the society has been blindly following for many years. Companies need to take this awareness in consideration in order to understand with in time that it is not the brand that is in danger; rather it is the make of the product which is being questioned. Perhaps the future generations will favour those brands that provide them with authentic and real benefits as compared to expensive brands that simply use various marketing strategies to promote recent technologically advanced fancy products which in reality do not serve the real purpose. Researchers from different disciplines who are interested in studying consumer behaviour can use these changes in consumption priorities to study what consumers of the future are looking for. This way they can innovate better products according to the needs of consumers.

The post-modern consumers want the money they spent to be worthwhile hence they conduct thorough research while deciding on their consumption habits. These consumers feel inauthentic since they are controlled by external forces which pressurise them to constantly change their needs and replace old products with new ones on regular basis. These consumers want to hold onto their true values and do not only consume to fulfil their basic needs but also to show better taste, awareness and education as compared to others. According to Firat and Venkatesh (1995) post-modern consumers are logical thinkers. This research further elaborates by showing the consumer as a scholarly individual who is in a constant mission to unlearn and learn old concepts. These consumers are looking for a permanent and logical change, instead of just trying to challenge the old norms. They are not afraid of experimenting with new experiences in order to see the end results.

They are not only selfishly satisfying their own needs but rather want to bring about a change for the greater benefit of mankind. Prior literature explains that post-modern consumers are in search for their own individual identities. This research has further built upon that concept and has exposed post-modern consumers as individuals who are not only interested in consuming various products to shape a unique individual identity. Instead these consumers want to shape individual narrative identities where they write their own stories by re-evaluating the past, present and future circumstances. These consumers aim to shape identities which present them as autonomous individuals who are involved in bringing about a greater benefit and change for the society. They are strong headed and determined in their mission. They hold on to their beliefs and interests even if they have to rebel against the society. This is an important consumer aspect from both a practical and theoretical perspective. For instance companies can utilize this rising un-rest among consumers especially the youth who want to stand against the societal norms and old philosophies. Companies and scholars need to understand this nature of the post-modern consumers who are bent upon sticking to their beliefs.

These consumers want to take their lives in their own control. They no longer want to be passive and fooled by larger powerful forces of the society. Hence these consumers cannot be distracted from their agendas. It is essential for marketers and companies to cater to their needs, rather than try to mould them and convince them to buy the same old products or use the same old marketing strategies on them. Similarly marketers and companies can also cater to these consumers, by providing them with the necessary products and services which assist them in promoting the cause they work for. By being open to new ideas post-modern consumers also try to show themselves as autonomous individuals who are different and stand out from the rest of the crowd, (Holt, 1998; Mihalcea and Catoiu, 2010; Southgate and Elliot, 2003). Capitalism is said to have a dehumanizing effect because it puts everyone into the same mould. As a reaction consumers seek authenticity in the face of rapid industrialization. These consumers seek challenges in order to escape from same old convenient modes of consumption. They look for exciting activities so that they can explore their inner selves and give shape to their individual authentic identities. Companies can cater to such consumers by making sure that they offer added services with their products that could provide the consumer with some thrilling experience. It can be a mission that needs to be accomplished in a certain way with in a certain time frame. There could be added benefits and gifts for those who are able to achieve the target result.

Furthermore this study shows barefoot runners as post-modern consumers who even though seek a rare mode of consumption; but still they do not have a strong desire to be noticed because of their interest in barefoot running. In fact the minimalistic footwear is rapidly evolving and recently unlike the five fingers Vibram, the latest minimalistic shoes look exactly the same as any other normal shoes. Moreover most of the respondents mentioned during their interview that they prefer the normal looking minimalistic footwear, since they can wear them at anytime and anyplace. This shows how barefoot runners want to implement this phenomenon permanently into their lives. They are not interested in wearing the minimalistic shoes in order to show them off, or stand out and be noticed by people. This aspect of barefoot runners is in contrast to prior literature on post-modern consumers who seek a similar utopian escape by being part of different subcultures such as Harley Davidson subculture, or by participating in high-risk activities such as surfing, white water river rafting (Booth, 1996; Holt, 2002). These consumers are similar to barefoot runners since they also aim at liberating themselves from their regular hectic routines by taking part in high-risk activities. Even though barefoot running is not exactly a high-risk activity but it does have a similar element of thrill and also consumers do face difficulty transitioning into a barefoot runner.

However barefoot runners are different from consumers who seek high-risk consumption. This is because consumers involved in high-risk activities have to spend on expensive products in order to achieve a temporary state of escape from their mundane lives. Similarly according to (Kozinets, 2001; Schouten and Mcalexander, 1995) post-modern consumers like to get together in groups with other consumers who share similar interests. However this study portrays barefoot runners as consumers who do not look for a temporary escape, in the form of a group membership or a weekend away from their current lives. They do not spend on expensive heavy bikes or special get ups in order to appear different. On the contrary they try to implement barefoot phenomenon as a permanent lifestyle. These barefoot runners explicitly mention that they are not interested in meeting others of their kind, or in creating special rituals to characterize themselves differently. They follow this trend in their own comfort zone, for their personal peace of mind. This is an interesting concept regarding minimalistic consumption, that consumers intend to incorporate such consumption practices permanently in to their lives. Companies can hugely benefit from this trait of consumers who plan to adapt minimalistic consumption as a lifestyle.

They can provide an entire range of products to these consumers which can be used in every other daily activity. Since these consumers have not shown any sensitivity towards prices, and also minimalistic products are not of expensive make. Companies can gain profits at the same time catering to the consumers who seek authentic minimalistic consumption. Marketers can use this aspect of consumers to devise strategies for their marketing campaigns and advertisements that emphasize on minimalistic consumption becoming a permanent part of their lives. They can show models using simple minimalistic products in various activities of their lives, just like any other daily activity which does not differentiate us from anyone else.

Furthermore if these consumers ever join an online community it is for the mere purpose to help new barefoot runners with their transitional phase. This again shows how barefoot runners are interested in assisting others and working for the greater benefit of the society, rather than simply focusing on looking different and standing out. This is an important and different aspect of post-modern consumers who seek minimalistic consumption. These consumers are not interested in purchasing products to show-off for a short period of time. In fact they want to consume the concept behind the product, they are not conscious of the brands name, but rather are concerned with implementing the consumption practice permanently and comfortably in to their lives.

The data analysis also explains how barefoot runners seek to challenge themselves. They try new things only to introduce an element of thrill into their pre-planned and robotic lives. This study sheds light on the barefoot runner's, need for functional training. These consumers are also looking for ways to become more active and rather than simply partaking in normal exercises they want to build on their strengths. This shows them as practical individuals who wish to be independent in many ways. They want to be free and in charge of their lives just like their ancestors. They want to shape their autonomous identities, in order to seek emancipation from the control of external forces. At the same time they want functional benefits, which help them in better survival. In modern days even though we have all sorts of facilities available to make life easy, the truth is that these luxuries only make us weaker. This study shows how barefoot runners believe that normal shoes made their feet weak, by providing too much protection. These consumers compare themselves to how they should have been and what they have become due to their own creations to make life easier.

This aspect of consumers is important for companies aiming to cater to post-modern consumers, who want to be as natural and self-sufficient as possible. Barefoot runners yearn for a natural and simple way of life since they believe in the authenticity of the primitive lifestyles lived by their ancestors. Apart from this consumers seeking minimalistic consumption are also different from consumers who take part in high risk activities. This is because even though they also aim at escaping their mundane lives. But at the same time they are looking for long-term functional benefits. High risk activities demand consumers to take out special time and above that spend on expensive rituals and put up with other burdens of associated costs. Consumers mainly take part in them to emancipate themselves from the society and by doing so also show off their participation in a unique activity. On the other hand barefoot runners practice minimalistic consumption to shape their identities, but not in order to show off, or with the intention of making it a temporary ritual. This is an important theoretical contribution to prior literature that exists on high-risk activities as well as the participation of consumers in sub-cultures such as the Harley Davidson sub-culture.

Furthermore this research shows barefoot runners as romantics who believe that they can bring back magic and re-enchant their lives by living the past all over again. These consumers want to liberate themselves from the artificial world they live in. Due to this they wish for simpler days gone by, for example the pre-agricultural and pre-industrial times. In their eyes these were the truly authentic days when humans lived in a natural way and were true to themselves. These consumers take support from personal and historical nostalgia in order to reminiscence about the better times from their past. For marketers this aspect of consumers is important to understand in order to market various products and services to them. Similarly companies and researchers need to understand while studying post-modern consumers that these consumers seek solace from their past. They trust historic events and gain information from the past in order to decide their consumption activities in the present. Marketers can utilize the factors of nostalgia and being close to nature in their marketing campaigns.

At the end it can be said with confidence that this study will help researchers better understand the wider post-modern minimalistic consumption trends towards simplicity and authenticity. There is also the possible transferability of insights of this research to other similar disciplines which give priority to the analysis of motivations of consumers to engage in experiences and their perception of their participation. Therefore this study can be related to fields of Business, Psychology, Sociology and Anthropology.

5.2. Conclusion

From the above discussion it can be seen that this study has accomplished the task of bringing forth new aspects of consumers who opt for minimalistic consumption in the form of barefoot running. This takes us back to the research question which was aimed at finding out why post-modern consumers opt for minimalistic consumption at times like today when they have all sorts of technologically advanced products available to them. The purpose was to find the motivational factors that drive minimalistic consumption. From this study a couple of themes have emerged which help us in identifying these motivational factors.

This paper shows how capitalism has a dehumanizing effect on consumers. Post-modern consumers seek authenticity, which is an over-arching phenomenon and can be achieved through many ways. Consumers nowadays feel overpowered and controlled by the artificial needs that have been created by the external market forces. Due to the major influence of large companies in their decision making, consumers feel inauthentic and confused. Their own identities are lost and they emerge as fragmented individuals. These consumers then search for their own individual unique identity. They rebel against the societal norms, hence forming their own control-resistant and narrative identities. These post-modern consumers are reflexively defiant logical and independent thinkers who re-assess their past, present and future in order to fully understand themselves and make their consumption decisions accordingly.

Apart from this these consumers also acquire their authentic autonomous selves by staying true to themselves. They hold on to their beliefs and do not let the society influence their decisions. They seek challenges to test their limit, which makes them feel more authentic and different from the rest of the society. The second theme shows the escape for authenticity in the form of a transcendent experience. By means of Nostalgia and a yearning for more natural and pure days gone by, the post-modern consumers achieve the unique authenticity they desire. These consumers are romantics who believe in re-enchanting their lives by living their lives in a similar manner to their ancestors. Personal and Historical nostalgia are two forms of nostalgia on which these consumers depend in order to reminiscence about the good old days. They believe that human beings have made their lives artificial and that the right way of living their lives is the natural way. Hence it can be safely assumed from this study that post-modern consumers seek minimalistic consumption in order to achieve authenticity.

Consumers are motivated towards minimalistic consumption due to factors that assist them in achieving an authentic experience. These factors include, shaping autonomous and unique individual identities by becoming reflexively defiant consumers who face challenges and emancipate themselves from societal norms by seeking transcendental experiences by being close to nature and re-living the simpler days from the past.

5.3. Limitation and Future Research

Here I will present my study's limitations and propose directions for further research that would enrich the findings of the paper and might provide new insights on the subject. Even though I have been able to find rich and substantial empirical data to support me theories, there are still a number of limitations that affect this study and need to be addressed. This study was able to find interesting insights after studying barefoot runners who belonged to Copenhagen, Malmo and Lund. However it will be interesting to research the phenomenon in other countries or cultural spheres in order to observe the similarities or differences that might appear.

I believe that consumers from different countries will differ substantially in their perception towards barefoot running and minimalistic consumption based on the resources and socio-cultural background of each country. It was fascinating to learn about and develop on various motivational factors behind barefoot running phenomenon. These valuable and interesting insights were gathered using the qualitative semi-structured interview data collection method. However that limits the scope of the study, hence it will be even more interesting if barefoot running phenomenon is studied in further detail with the help of Netnography and ethnography. Furthermore I also encourage further studies on these motivational factors in relation to other forms of minimalistic consumption activities such as the Palaeolithic diet and see whether these factors contribute to other forms of minimalistic consumption.

References

Alvesson, M. & Skoldberg, K. (2009). Reflexive Methodology: New vistas for qualitative research, 2nd edn, London: Sage Publications.

Arnould, E. J., Price, L.L., & Otnes. C. (1999). Making magic consumption: A study of white water river rafting, *Journal of contemporary ethnography*, vol.28, no.1, pp.33-68.

Arnould, E.J. & Thompson, C.J. (2005). Consumer culture theory (CCT): Twenty years of research, *Journal of consumer research*, vol.31, no.4, pp.868-882.

Askegaard, S. & Linnet, J. T. (2011). Towards an epistemology of consumer culture theory: Phenomenology and the context of context, *Marketing Theory*, vol.11, no.4, pp.381-404.

Attwater, W. & Stewart, H. (n.d.). Convergent interviewing and its use in qualitative research. Available Online:

http://www.business.otago.ac.nz/mgmt/ANZAM2004/CD/Papers/abstract66.htm [Accessed 14 April 2013].

Barefoot Running, (n.d.). Runner's world and Running Times, Available Online: http://www.runnersworld.com/tag/barefoot-running [Accessed 15 April 2013].

Belk, R.W. & Costa, J.A. (1998). The Mountain Man Myth: A contemporary consuming fantasy, *Journal of consumer research*, vol.25, no.3, pp.218-240.

Belk, R.W. (1990). The role of possessions in constructing and maintaining a sense of past, *Advances in consumer research*, vol.17, no.1, pp. 669-676.

Bergadaa, M.M. (1990). The role of time in the action of the consumer, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, vol. 17, no.3, pp. 289-302.

Boltanski, L. & Chiapello, E. (2005). The new spirit of Capitalism, *International Journal of Politics*, vol.18, no.3, pp. 161-188.

Booth, D. (1996). Surfing films and videos: Adolescent fun, alternative lifestyle, adventure industry, *Journal of sport history*, vol.23, pp.313-327.

Brooks, D. (2000). Bobos in Paradise: The new upper class and how they got there, New York: Simon & Schuster.

Brown, S., Kozinets, R.V., & Sherry Jr, J.F. (2003). Teaching old brands new tricks: Retro branding and the revival of brand meaning, *Journal of marketing*, vol. 67, no.3, pp. 13-33.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2007). Business research methods, 2nd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Bryman, A. & Bell, E. (2011). Business research methods, 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Campbell, C. (2005). The Craft Consumer: Culture, craft and consumption in a post-modern society, *Journal of consumer culture*, vol.5, no.1, pp.23-42.

Canniford, R., & Shankar, A. (2007). Hunting for cool tribes, In: B, Cova, R. Kozinets & A. Shankar, *Consumer tribes*, pp. 35-48, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann

Celsi, R.L., Rose, R.L., & Leigh, T.W. (1993). An exploration of high-risk leisure consumption through skydiving, *Journal of consumer research*, vol.20, no.1, pp.1-23.

Cova, B., Kozinets, R.V., & Shankar, A. (2007). Consumer Tribes, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Denzin, N.K. & Lincoln, V.S. (Eds.). (2000). The Sage handbook of qualitative research. Sage publications, Incorporated.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Lowe, A. (2002). Management research: An introduction, 2nd edn, London: SAGE Publications limited.

Easterby-Smith, M., Thorpe, R., & Jackson, P.R. (2008). Management Research, 3rd edn, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Erzberger, C. & Prein, G. (1997). Triangulation: Validity and empirically based hypothesis construction, *Quality and Quality*, vol.31, no.2, pp. 141-154

Eysenbach, G. & Till, J.E. (2001). Ethical issues in qualitative research on internet communities, *British medical Journal*, vol. 323, no. 7321, pp. 1103-1105.

Fearon, J. D. (1999). What is identity (as we now use the word)? Un-published manuscript, Stanford University, Stanford, California, Available through: http://www.stanford.edu/~jfearon/papers/iden1v2.pdf [Accessed 3 April 2013].

. Firat, A.F. & Venkatesh, A. (1995). Liberatory postmodernism and the re-enchantment of consumption, *Journal of consumer culture*, vol. 22, no.3, pp.239-267.

Fisher, K. (2005). Economies of loss and questions of style in contemporary surf subcultures, *Junctures: Journal of Thematic Dialogue*, vol.4, pp.13-24.

Fuchs, T. (2007). Fragmented Selves: Temporality and identity in borderline personality disorder, *Psychopathology*, vol.40, no.6, pp.379-387.

Gabriel, Y. (1999). Beyond Happy Families: A critical re-evaluation of the control resistant identity triangle, *Human Relations*, [e-journal] vol.52, no.2, pp. 179-203, Available through: http://www.lub.lu.se/en.html [Accessed 5 May 2013].

Goulding, C., Shankar, A., & Elliott, R. (2002). Working weeks, rave weekends: Identity fragmentation and the emergence of new communities, *Consumption, markets and culture*, vol.5, no.4, pp. 261-284.

Guest, G., Bunce, A., & Johnson, L. (2006). How many interviews are enough? An experiment with data saturation and variability, *Field Methods*, vol.18, no.1, pp. 59-82.

Hatch, M. J. & Schultz, M. (2001). Transparency and Identity: Modeling Organizational Identity Dynamics, *Human Relations*, [e-html], Available through: http://web.mit.edu/sloan/osg-seminar/pre_02_docs/hatch.doc [Accessed 1 March 2013].

Hartman, G.H. (2002). Scars of the spirit: The struggle against inauthenticity, New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Holak, S.L. & Havlena, W.J. (1991). The good old days: Observations on Nostalgia and its role in consumer behaviour, *Advances in consumer research*, vol.18, no.1, pp.323-329.

Holak, S.L. & Havlena, W.J. (1992). Nostalgia: An exploratory study of themes and emotions in the nostalgic experience, *Advances in Consumer Research*, vol.19, no.1, pp.380-387.

Holbrook, M.B. (1993). Nostalgia and consumption preferences: Some emerging patterns of consumer, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol.20, no.2, pp.245-256.

Holt, D.B. (1998). Does Cultural Capital structure American Consumption? *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol.25, no.1, pp.1-25.

Holt, D.B. (2002). Why do brands cause trouble? A Dialectical theory of consumer culture and branding, *Journal of consumer culture*, vol.29, no.1, pp.70-90.

Holt, D. (2003). How to build an Iconic brand. Market Leader [pdf], Available at: http://culturalstrategygroup.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/10/Snapple.pdf [Accessed 9 April 2013].

Jason (2013). Barefoot Running University. 22 March 2013. Sticking to your guns versus chasing the existential high: Blog. Available Online: http://barefootrunninguniversity.com/2013/03/22/sticking-to-your-guns-versus-chasing-the-existential-high/ [Accessed 15 April 2013].

Kinnear, T.C., Taylor, J.R., & Ahmed, S.A. (1974). *Journal of marketing*, vol.38, no.1, pp.20-24.

Kozinets, R.V. (1999). E-Tribalized marketing? The Strategic Implications of virtual communities of consumption, *European Management Journal*, vol.17, no.3, pp. 252-264

Kozinets, R.V. (2001). Utopian Enterprise: Articulating the meanings of Star Trek's Culture of Consumption, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol.28, no.1, pp. 67-88.

Kozinets, R.V. (2002a). Can consumers escape the market? Emancipatory illuminations from burning man, *Journal of consumer culture*, vol. 29, no.1, pp. 20-38.

Kozinets, R.V. (2002b). The Field behind the Screen: Using Netnography for Marketing Research in Online Communities, *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol.39, no.1, pp. 61-72.

Laverty, S.M. (2003). Hermeneutic Phenomenology and Phenomenology: A comparison of historical and methodological considerations, *International Journal of Qualitative methods*, vol.2, no.3, pp. 21-35.

Malhotra, N. K. (2010). Marketing research: An applied orientation, 6th edn, Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Maxwell, J.A. (1998). Designing a qualitative study, In: *Handbook of applied social research methods*, eds. L. Bickman & R.Debra, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications, pp. 214-253. Available Online:

http://coursesite.uhcl.edu/HSH/PeresSc/Classes/PSYC6036www/presentations/Ch7_qualitativeResearch.pdf [Accessed 19 April 2013].

Maxwell, J. A. (2005). Qualitative research design: An interactive approach, 2nd edn, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Mihalcea, R. & Catoiu, I. (2010). Consumer Identity and Implications for the Brand. *Annales Universitatis Apulensis Series Oeconomica*, 2(10).

Morse, J.M. & Field, P.A. (1995). Qualitative research methods for health professionals, 2nd edn, Thousand Oaks, California: Sage Publications.

Morton, B. (2000). The Guardian: Smoke signals and wrong tracks, Available Online: http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2000/mar/18/books.guardianreview1 [Accessed 12 April, 2013].

Muehling, D.D. (2011). The relative influence of advertising-evoked personal and historical nostalgic thoughts on consumers' brand attitudes, *Journal of Marketing Communications*, vol.19, no.2, pp. 98-113.

Muniz Jr, A.M. & Schau, H.J. (2005). Religiosity in the abandoned Apple Newton brand community, *Journal of consumer research*, vol.31, no.4, pp.737-747.

Nancarrow, C. & Nancarrow, P. (2001). An analysis of the concept of cool and its marketing implications, *Journal of consumer behaviour*, vol.1, no.4, pp.311-322.

Nancarrow, C. & Nancarrow, P. (2007). Hunting for cool tribes, In: B, Cova, R. Kozinets & A. Shankar (Eds), *Consumer tribes*, pp. 129-143, Oxford: Butterworth-Heinemann.

Ozanne, J.L. & Murray, J.B. (1995). Uniting critical theory and public policy to create the reflexively defiant consumer, *American Behavioural scientist*, vol.38, no.4, pp. 516-525.

Penaloza, L. (2000). The commodification of the American West: Marketer's production of cultural meanings at the trade show, *Journal of Marketing*, vol.64, no.4, pp.82-109.

Petersen, A. (2011). Authentic self-realization and depression, *International Sociology*, vol. 26, no.1, pp. 5-24.

Peterson, R.A. (2005). In search of Authenticity, *Journal of management studies*, vol.42, no.5, pp.1083-1098.

Poole, S. (2013). Give me the real thing, [e-journal] vol.142, no.5147, pp.24-28, Available through: http://www.lub.lu.se/en.html [Accessed 1 March 2013]

Redsicker, P. (2013). Social Media Examiner. 6 March 2013. Blogs outrank social networks for consumer influence: New research: Blog. Available Online: http://www.socialmediaexaminer.com/blogs-outrank-social-networks-for-consumer-influence-new-research/ [Accessed 14 April 2013].

Robillard, J. (2010). The Barefoot running book: A practical guide to the art and science of barefoot and minimalist shoe running, [e-book] Allendale MI: Barefoot running Press. Available through: http://barefootrunninguniversity.com [Accessed 1March 2013].

Rothschild, C. E. (2012). Primitive running: a survey analysis of runners' interest, participation, and implementation. *The Journal of Strength & Conditioning Research*, vol.26, no.8, pp. 2021-2026.

Ryan, G.W. & Bernard, H.R. (2003). Techniques to identify themes, *Field methods*, vol.15, no.1, pp.85-109.

Saunders, M., Lewis, P., & Thornhill, A. (2009). Research methods for business students, 5th edn, New York: Pearson/Prentice Hall.

Schembri, S. (2009). Reframing brand experience: The experiential meaning of Harley Davidson, *Journal of Business Research*, vol.62, no.12, pp.1299-1310.

Schouten, J.W. & Mcalexander, J.H. (1995). Subcultures of consumption: An ethnography of the new bikers, *Journal of consumer research*, vol.22, no.2, pp.43-62.

Southgate, N. & Elliot, C. (2003). Cool hunting with Aristotle, *International Journal of Marketing*, vol.2, no.7, pp. 167-189.

Stern, B.B. (1992). Historical and personal nostalgia in Advertising text: The fin de siècle effect, *Journal of Advertising*, vol.21, no.4, pp. 11-22.

Stranger, M. (1999). The Aesthetics of risks: A study of surfing, *International review for the sociology of sport*, vol.32, no.3, pp. 265-276.

Sullum, J. (2000). Rebel without Applause Available Online: http://reason.com/archives/2000/05/01/rebel-without-applause [Accessed 12 April, 2013].

Taylor, C. (2005). The Politics of Recognition, In *Contemporary Sociological thoughts: themes and theories*, (Ed). H.Sean, Toronto, Ontario: Canadian Scholars' Press, pp. 465-476.

Thompson, C.J. (1997). Interpreting consumers: A hermeneutical framework for deriving marketing insights from the texts of consumers' consumption stories, *Journal of Marketing Research*, vol.32, no.4, pp. 438-455.

Thompson, C.J. (2004). Market place mythology and discourses of power, *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, vol. 31, no.1, pp. 162-180.

Thompson, C.J., Locander, W.B., & Pollio, H.R. (1989). Putting consumer experience back into consumer research: The philosophy and method of Existential Phenomenology, *Journal of Consumer Research*, vol.16, no.2, pp. 133-146.

Thompson, C.J., Locander, W.B., & Pollio, H.R. (1994). The spoken and the unspoken: A hermeneutic approach to understanding the cultural viewpoints that underlie consumers' expressed meanings, *Journal of Consumer research*, vol. 21, no.3, pp. 432-451.

Torgovnick, M. (1990). Gone Primitive: Savage intellects, modern lives, Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Underwood, R., Bond, E., & Baer, R. (2001). Building service brands via social identity: Lessons from the sports market place, *Journal of marketing theory and practice*, vol.9, no.1, pp.1-13.

Weberman, D. (2011). Sartre on the authenticity required if my choices are to be truly mine, *Filozofia*, vol.66, no.9, pp. 879-889.

Wikstrom, S.R., Elg, U., & Johansson, U. (1989). From the consumption of Necessities to Experience seeking consumption, *Understanding Economic Behaviour*, vol.11, pp. 287-308, Springer Netherlands.

Zelman, K.M. (n.d.). Diet Review: The Caveman (Paleo) diet, Available Online: http://www.webmd.com/diet/features/diet-review-the-caveman-paleo-diet [Accessed15 April 2013].

Appendix

The interview guide below outlines the main questions that were asked from the respondents during the interviews. However since semi-structured interviews were conducted, there was no set order or wordings of the questions asked. Moreover in relation to the interview guide, there were other questions asked of the similar nature only to probe the respondent more deeply. These questions were different for each interview, since they depended on the information shared by each individual respondent.

Interview Guide:

- Can you introduce yourself?
- Are you a barefoot runner?
- How long has it been since you started?
- How did you get introduced?
- Did you have any particular prior personal experiences that led you to try barefoot running?
- What attracted you the most about it?
- How did you feel initially when you started running bare feet?
- Why do you think anyone would switch from hassle free normal mode of running to a more complex form of barefoot running?
- Where do you prefer to go for a run? Are there any special places?
- Do you strictly run bare feet or do you wear footwear that has been made for barefoot runners?
- Which of the barefoot running shoes do you like to wear and why?
- What does barefoot running mean to you?
- How has barefoot running changed your perspective towards life?
- Do you participate in any other activities other than barefoot running?
- What do you like to do in your free time?
- Do you feel addicted to running ever since you started running bare feet?

- Are you part of any barefoot running community online or offline?
- Do you know any other barefoot runners?
- If yes then are you in touch with them?
- Do you get together to go for runs, or discuss barefoot running in general?
- Do you feel a connection with other barefoot runners (even the ones you do not personally know)?
- How do people react to you on the road?
- What is the opinion of you family and friends? Does it matter to you what they say?
- How do you react and answer to criticism?
- Do you try to convince people and explain barefoot running to them?
- Do you feel that you are somewhat different and hence stand out of the crowd being a barefoot runner?
- If yes then how does that make you feel?