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*Value impact of social media: a perspective from the independent brewery sector*

GODSON, Mark St John

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**Value impact of social media: A perspective from the  
independent brewery sector**

**Mark St John Godson**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of  
Sheffield Hallam University  
for the degree of Doctor of Business Administration**

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## **Abstract**

The aim of this research is to develop a better understanding of how social media is shaping relationships between businesses and customers, and determining the value (if any) of its use in the UK independent brewery sector. The sector is characterised by splintered distribution networks; the existence of a large beer geek community; a strong camaraderie between brewers; and the social nature of the product itself, all of which lend themselves to the use of social media.

The research is positioned in relationship marketing, anchored through the principles of service-dominant logic and the co-creation of value, because it is concerned with customer interaction and involvement. Adopting an ontological position of constructivism, the methodology takes an interpretive, phenomenological approach, emphasising the subjectivity of the actors involved, and drawing on in-depth, semi-structured interviews with brewery owners and managers. Convergent interview techniques are used to develop themes which are then coded and sub-coded for analysis purposes.

An original contribution is made first through practical significance (Tracy, 2010), because it sheds light on a contemporary problem around the worth of social media as a business marketing tool, and how it can add value for small businesses. Second, through being prescient (Corley & Gioia, 2011) because the findings explore the impact of social media on generic lifestyles and the melding of roles between social and corporate identities. Finally, the contribution is revelatory (Nicholson et al., 2018), because it 'problematizes' existing social media marketing literature, challenging its use as a conventional marketing tool, and suggesting that breweries can use social media either organically or mechanically.

The findings show that independent breweries engaging on social media are doing so as part of an inclusive community, giving them presence, relevance and identity. In place of large marketing budgets they are using personal social capital, and overriding the traditional market delineations of supplier, consumer, employee, middleman, and competitor. The individual personality gives them an edge over larger breweries and using social media organically taps into the core of what the medium was originally intended for. Independent breweries are good at using social media in this way, but it does create tensions in terms of control, ownership and resourcing, and for this reason it cannot be claimed that social media has replaced traditional marketing in this sector.

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For their enduring love and belief in me, my parents *Derek and Nancy*, and my brother *Jonathan*.

### Dedicated to Suze

*I finally finished my 'beer thing' Little Buddy! I wish you were here to share this with me, but I know you'll be looking over me when I walk across that stage. God bless you Suze - Marko*

4<sup>th</sup> December 2018





## Chapter 1

### Introduction

#### 1.1: Introduction - What is this Study About?

It has been said that it took radio 38 years to reach 50 million listeners, television 13 years to reach 50 million viewers and the Internet 4 years to reach 50 million users (Gay et al., 2007). However, it took Facebook just 9 months to add 100 million new users (Tuten & Solomon, 2013), demonstrating not only the scale of social media usage but also its dynamic rate of adoption. To give some perspective to this, in an average day worldwide, Facebook users post 4.75 billion items of content; Twitter users send 500 million tweets; Instagram users share 95 million photos; YouTube viewers watch 1 billion hours (Zephoria.com, 2018; Omnicoreagency.com, 2018; Wordstream.com, 2017; Youtube.com, 2018). These figures are increasing, with an estimated 3.196 billion social media users in January 2018, up 13% since the previous year (We Are Social, 2018). With this kind of engagement, it is inevitable that social media will have an impact on businesses, either through the way in which they interact with their customers, or in the way that customers interact with each other. It is mooted that social media has created a 'new landscape' where control of the way in which marketing messages are disseminated, and interpreted, has shifted away from the organisation to the consumer (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Halliday, 2016; Labreque et al., 2013).

Against this background, the researcher sets out to understand how social media has affected traditional business communications and marketing in the UK's independent brewery sector. From an academic perspective, the study considers how Internet based social networking applications have interfaced with existing marketing theory around relationships, value creation and social media. From a practical perspective, the

question is whether this has created any advantages, or conversely thrown up any challenges for these small businesses, and how they might effectively operate in the midst of this new medium.

Whilst it is easy to think of social media as a relatively new phenomenon, it has now been around for two decades, so there is no shortage of literature on the subject. In terms of social media and marketing, this tends to be divided between those that treat it as an extension of existing marketing communication tools (Edelman, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009) and those that take a more holistic view related to the new landscape mentioned above (De Kare Silver, 2011; Felix et al., 2017). When focused on a particular business or sector, the object of social media marketing studies has tended to be 'high involvement' brands such as Jeep, Harley Davidson or Apple (Algesheimer et al., 2005), or alternatively sectors with high consumer experience levels, such as hotels (Chan & Guillet, 2011) and movies (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015). Studies of low involvement products tend to concentrate on big international brands like McDonald's, Starbucks and PepsiCo (Divol et al., 2012); leaving a gap where smaller, more locally based brands might lie.

In selecting the UK independent brewery sector for this research, the intention is to get down to a 'grass roots' level of social media involvement, from the perspective of the breweries using it. In this vein, the research considers how the breweries have adopted social media as part of their business strategy and how they hope to influence the consumer experience of their brands in an online context. It is hoped that an understanding of how breweries' relationships with their markets can be shaped by online social interactions, will be of significance, not only to scholars but also to the breweries themselves. The background research for the study suggests that 90% of independent breweries in the UK are using social media in one way or another (See Appendix 1), thus demonstrating some faith or belief in its value. The research is

intended to be of practical value to these breweries, by helping them to make the most out of social media engagement in what is a very complex market.

## **1.2: Why is this of Interest from a Research Perspective?**

In formulating this research the author was mindful of Wisker's (2007) advice to ensure that the topic would yield enough data, and be practical in terms of being able to access that data. At the same time, the need for originality and outcomes of value was taken into account (Tracy, 2010). Equally important, the researcher was keen to work in an area that was interesting and engaging. With this in mind, there are three reasons why this has been selected for a doctoral research topic. First, the independent brewery sector itself, made up almost exclusively of SME businesses, the majority of whom are prolific engagers with social media. Second, the topicality of social media, an area which has already shifted into ubiquity, and yet continues to grow and develop. Third, the personal interests of the researcher himself represent a major drive behind this study, for reasons to be described later. These three areas are expanded in the following sub-sections.

### **1.2.1: Background to the independent brewery sector**

The research takes place in a vibrant sector that is bucking a national trend of declining beer sales and has seen large numbers of small start-up businesses flourish in recent years. It is estimated that there are around 1,700 small breweries in the UK, with new ones opening at a rate of 4 a week (Brown, 2016a). These breweries produce a wide ranging product category, featuring a plethora of different beer styles, strengths, brands, packaging and dispensing methods. Furthermore, new product development in the sector is rife, and product lifespans are often kept deliberately short, thus

perpetuating a continual churn of product and sense of anticipation among social media followers. The large number of independent breweries in the UK covers all the different product variants and is often at the forefront of innovation. Despite their large numbers however, independents generally lack the financial muscle and marketing power of multi-national brewing corporations such as AB InBev, Carlsberg or Molson Coors, or large national brewery groups such as Greene King, Marston's or Charles Wells. Although independent breweries vary in size, all of them can be classed as SMEs, and 70% of them employ fewer than five people (Key Note Market Report, 2015). From a research perspective, this sector not only provides a rich source of potential data, but also a very pertinent question – can the use of social media give these small breweries any advantage over larger competitors?

The sector has a keen online following with plenty of activity in the form of blogs, Facebook and Twitter accounts, online fora and mobile phone apps. A lot of this takes place on third party sites, such as Untappd and RateBeer run by, and for, beer enthusiasts. Although beer itself fits the commodity status of an fmcg product, the independent sector is coloured with rich imagery and associations ranging from humour to tradition; quality to quirkiness; and local heritage is often emphasised. In a practical sense the sector is relatively easy to access with 57 breweries in the South Yorkshire / North Derbyshire region (Brown, 2016b) where the researcher is based. Relatively few studies relating to small breweries have been noted and none in the UK concerned with their use of social media, thus giving the research an element of originality and exclusivity.

### **1.2.2: Topicality of social media**

It has been claimed that the sheer onslaught of social media applications and engagement is heralding a revolution in business to consumer relationships (De Kare

Silver, 2011; Halliday, 2016; Hudson et al., 2016; Schultz, 2009; Wang & Kim, 2017). Management language has already embraced new buzz words like 'crowdsourcing', 'digital dialogue', 'citizen marketing' and 'brand democratisation' (Ryan, 2015; Tuten, 2008) reflecting the fact that everyone has an equal opportunity to create content, not just organisations or web site developers. However, some have questioned whether something that is inherently social can be used for business purposes (Felix et al., 2017; Fournier & Avery, 2011). Can consumers be 'friends' with a brand? Can a brand become part of a social network? Who is in control of marketing related social media, the organisation or the consumer? What are the implications from a business perspective? This latter consideration was brought sharply into focus by the announcement of prominent UK pub chain J.D. Wetherspoon that it was withdrawing from all forms of social media because it did not provide any business advantage (BBC News, 2018).

Contemporary practitioner based literature around social media marketing (SMM) sets out to show how organisations can use SMM as a marketing communications channel, with frameworks based around user types, and metrics based around things like hits on YouTube and likes on Facebook (e.g. Ryan, 2015; Shih, 2009). Academic studies delve more into the underlying concepts (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015; Houston et al., 2018) to determine the impact of social media on consumer behaviour. Despite the plethora of studies into social media however, relatively few attempt to contextualise it holistically in terms of its wider impact on overall business strategy (Felix et al., 2017) . This research thesis sets out to develop this area, and make a contribution to knowledge and practice, particularly when applied to the UK independent brewery sector .

### **1.2.3: Personal interests of the researcher**

The final impetus behind this study lies in the interests of the researcher himself. As a marketing academic the need to maintain currency and relevance in the subject area are

critically important, and yet the researcher finds himself as a 'digital immigrant' teaching 'digital natives' (Tuten & Solomon, 2013). Having grown up in a world without social media, the researcher is fascinated to observe how this new medium is shaping our society, and in a business sense, its potential to change traditional marketing. Sitting in a pub one evening, he noticed a beer mat for a local brewery which said "*follow us on Twitter*". Given the inquisitive nature described above, his natural reaction was "*Why?*" As a self-confessed 'beer geek' and a fully paid up member the beer consumer organisation CAMRA, the decision was taken to focus the research around social media marketing in the small, independent brewery sector. It is thus intended that undertaking doctoral research in this area will not only contribute significantly to research informed teaching, it will also satisfy the curiosity of an interested observer.

### **1.3: Research Aims, Objectives and Questions**

The broad aims of the research are to develop a better understanding of how social media is shaping relationships in and around the UK independent brewery sector and to determine what value (if any) might derive from independent breweries' engagement with this medium. In order to fulfil these aims, it is necessary to break them down into research problems or issues which can then be addressed through more tightly defined objectives and specific research questions (Wisker, 2007). In this study, the research issue entails contextualising social media in a business setting, defining how it applies to independent breweries, and suggesting what the ramifications might be for these breweries in terms of management and outcome. It is thus necessary to drill down into the nature of social media engagement in and around this sector, in order to understand if, why, and how the medium can bring advantages to the sector. The research objectives and resulting research questions are outlined below.

The first objective is to develop a framework around which to contextualise and evaluate social media engagement in the independent brewery sector. Bringing together various theories of user engagement, will help address the questions of how and why independent breweries use social media. It will also help depict more clearly how current thinking around the application of social media in a commercial environment informs what is seen in the independent brewery sector.

From here, the second objective is to determine how and where social media in this sector might create value. In order to address this objective it is necessary to ask questions around who engages with who engages with independent brewery associated social media and what the nature of their engagement is. It is also necessary to understand what constitutes 'value' in this context and how independent breweries might use their social media platforms to help co-create value with other users. Specifically, what outcomes do the breweries perceive for the various actors engaging in social media in this area?

Finally, the third objective is to establish whether use of social media can give independent breweries a competitive advantage. Here the research questions revolve around the defining characteristics of the independent brewery sector that lend themselves to social media engagement, including the role of brewery employees; the control and management of sector led social media; and the extent that individual breweries might differentiate themselves from one another through social media.

It must be stressed that the intention here is to view this from an organisational perspective, rather than through the eyes of the consumer. As such the data consists of the breweries' perceptions of how their customers experience sector related social media, rather than consumer data per se. In doing so, the research is intended to produce outcomes that are not only of value to management practitioners, but are also able to advance academic theory in this area.



#### **1.4: Conducting the Research**

Bryman (2014) underlines the need to approach any research study from a clear epistemological and ontological position. In this study, the researcher does not believe that social media relationships can be studied objectively, as he himself is a 'digital immigrant' (Tuten & Solomon, 2013), with pre-conceived views around social media, as well as a consumer of the beer produced by independent breweries. He does however accept that a social reality exists, evidenced by the great number of fora, chatrooms and blogs around beer as a subject. The research will therefore be interpretative in nature, approached through grounded theory methods. A full justification of this approach is given in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

The study uses preliminary secondary research to define the parameters of the independent brewery sector and the extent of its engagement with social media at a broad level. From here the primary research is based on in-depth interviews with owners or managers of sixteen independent breweries. The principal tool of data analysis is analytic abduction using iterative explanation building to develop existing theory. A convergent approach to interviewing is adopted, in order to narrow down what might be construed a wide research area (Williams & Lewis, 2005) with concurrent analysis of the data through first and second stage coding techniques (Miles et al., 2014) in order to develop themes for further discussion.

#### **1.5: Expected Contribution to Knowledge and Practice**

At a broad level this research is all about how social media is changing the world at a seemingly ever-increasing rate and how this represents a challenge for businesses to stay

ahead of the game. It is therefore intended that the study can contribute both in an academic sense, by developing existing theory around social media as a holistic business strategy, but also in a practical way by informing business practice in the independent brewery sector. The combination of a burgeoning and vibrant industry sector, together with an exciting and somewhat unpredictable communications medium is a worthwhile area in which to develop existing knowledge. In doing so however, the author is mindful of the need to ensure that a significant contribution is made (Tracy, 2010) and to clearly demonstrate the nature of this contribution (Nicholson et al., 2018).

An initial search of the literature supporting this research – relationship marketing, service-dominant logic, the co-creation of value, and social media marketing – suggests that the independent brewery sector is under-represented in studies in these areas. In particular, empirical studies of online brand communities and the accompanying co-creation of value, appear to concentrate on large organisations (e.g. Dessart et al., 2015; Wang & Kim, 2017) or high involvement products such as cars, notebook computers and branded athletic shoes (e.g. Algesheimer et al., 2005; Hudson et al., 2016, Munnukka et al., 2015). However, the author does not claim that the contribution to knowledge made in this thesis is solely based around filling a gap simply because of the sector being studied. For one thing, various studies already exist in the micro/craft brewing area (e.g. Drummond et al., 2018; McGrath & O'Toole, 2017), and also within research associated with the Beeronomics Society, so the sector itself does not give uniqueness in terms of study. Indeed, the whole issue of gap-spotting in developing a contribution to knowledge is contentious, despite empirical evidence that it is commonplace in extant research (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2012; Nicholson et al., 2018).

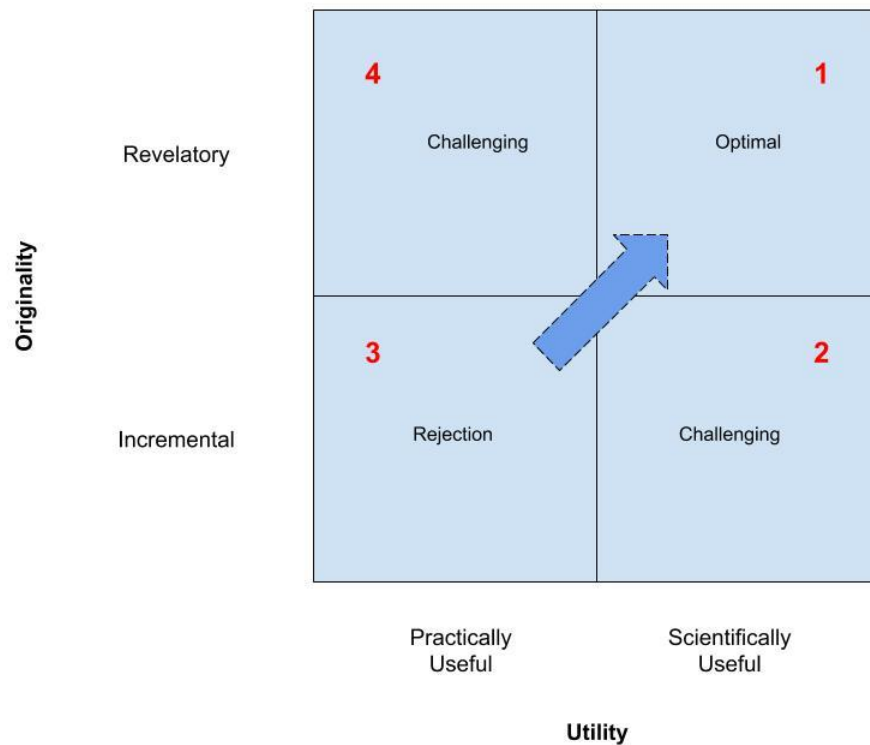
Although some maintain that careful scrutiny of existing research is necessary in order to develop rigour (Donaldson et al. 2012), others believe that a more innovative approach is required in order to make a significant contribution (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2012; Tracy, 2010). In particular, Alvesson and Sandberg (2012) heavily criticise the incremental, gap-

spotting approach which they liken to “*vacuum-cleaning narrow fields*” of existing theory (p 135), picking up specks of opportunity or possibility. They propose that for more interesting or innovative study, there needs to be a shift from gap-spotting to path (up) setting. Two methodological approaches are suggested to achieve this – using problematisation to generate assumption-challenging; and being more imaginative with empirical data, i.e. looking for mysteries in the data and trying to solve these, rather than using the data to confirm existing beliefs. In terms of the author's own research, it is contended here that the assumption that social media can be an effective marketing tool for independent breweries can be questioned (or problematised), not only as a result of the research findings, but also through wider contemporary events (e.g. J.D. Wetherspoon's highly publicised withdrawal from social media).

The notion of problematisation is also used by Tracy (2010) who claims that contribution should go beyond the (re) application of existing theory, into something that builds, extends, or problematises existing assumptions. Such advances require new conceptual understandings that “*explain social life in unique ways*” (p 846). In doing so she suggests three areas where research can have theoretical significance – heuristically; practically; and methodologically. Of these the author's research could be said to be of practical significance because it helps shed light on a contemporary problem around the worth of social media as a business marketing tool, how it can add value for small businesses and to what extent it empowers participants (in this case small independent breweries) to see things differently. Given that the research presented in this thesis is intended as a contribution to a Doctor in Business Administration degree, the need to apply analysis from a practical, as well as a theoretical perspective has thus been respected.

In terms of generating a theoretical contribution, Corley and Gioia (2011) suggest that the gap between practical utility and scientific utility can be bridged by making a contribution which is problem driven, and thus expands the scope of the research. It is already contended in this thesis that the research is problem driven because it is centred

on the current topicality and uncertainty around business use of social media. The terrain of the expected contribution of this research is therefore indicated by the position of the arrow appearing across Quadrants 3 and 1 in Figure 1.1.



**Figure 1.1: Current dimensions for theoretical contribution  
(Corley & Gioia, 2011, p 15)**

Corley and Gioia (2011) also argue that theoretical contribution would be more pragmatically useful if it was prescient (i.e. it anticipated what might be of significance in this field in the future). The findings of this thesis touch upon this as they explore the impact of social media on generic lifestyles of businesses and the melding of roles between what is individual or personal, and what is related to work life or the roles of

employees. It is thus suggested in this thesis that acceptance of social media as a tool that merges both private and business applications could be viewed as prescient, whilst the contention that social media relationships can be pseudo (mechanical) or genuine (organic) expands the scope of the findings.

To further reinforce this claim, Nicholson et al.'s (2018) study into contribution can be considered against the research in this thesis. They present a three-phase research paper on contribution which develops a conceptual framework from which to explore contribution claims. This reveals 5 types of contribution with 11 sub-types (Figure 1.2).

<b>Type 1: Revelatory</b>	Problematization	<i>Contribution made in this thesis</i>
	Using Multiple Lenses	
<b>Type 2: Incremental</b>	Neglect Spotting	<i>Contribution made in this thesis</i>
	Confusion Spotting	
<b>Type 3: Replicatory</b>	Exact Replication	
	Close Replication	
<b>Type 4: Consolidatory</b>	Systematic Review	
	Traditional Review	
	Meta-Analysis	
<b>Type 5: Differentiated Context</b>	New Context	<i>Contribution made in this thesis</i>
	Differentiated Replication	

**Figure 1.2: Dimensions in contribution in industrial marketing  
(adapted from Nicholson et al., 2018, p 5)**

Considering the contribution claimed in this thesis against each of Nicholson et al.'s contributory types, it is contended that it falls primarily in the 'revelatory' category, but with elements of 'incremental' and 'differentiated context'. The research here is not

considered to be replicatory as no paper so far has been discovered which does exactly the same thing. Neither is it considered to be consolidatory in that it is not based on bringing together existing studies but in developing something new from them. In arguing that the contribution is revelatory the author draws upon a 'problematization' approach to social media marketing literature by challenging the value of social media as a conventional marketing tool and questioning the range and scope of the medium in the independent brewery industry. This is borne out in the findings that these breweries can use social media either organically or mechanically, but that the organic approach changes their role and the way in which they relate to the various 'actors' in the social media engagement process.

The research is not overtly incremental, although it could be argued that in terms of 'neglect spotting' there is a gap for contrasting an organic with a mechanical approach in the independent brewery context. There is also some scope for 'confusion-spotting' due to the inconsistency that can be seen between those who see social media as another marketing tool (e.g. Chan & Guillet, 2011), and those who see it as changing all the rules (e.g. Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015). Finally there might be some 'new-context-spotting', from the perspective that the findings reveal that rather than replacing traditional marketing in small breweries, social media has become a universal way of 'doing things', which spans the division between business and home lifestyles. Bearing in mind however, Hazen's (2016) contention that 'new context' is not enough to claim significant contribution, it is hoped that the contribution can be viewed as primarily revelatory.

In terms of a contribution to practice, the research is intended to give small businesses a better understanding of social media as a potential business tool. Various studies have considered this area, e.g. the use of social media as a digital marketing communications tool (Järvinen, 2012; Karjaluoto & Mustonen, 2014); the B2B networking opportunities afforded by social media (Quinton & Wilson, 2015); the use of social media in innovation and entrepreneurship (Drummond et al., 2018; Jusilla et al., 2011) and the use of social

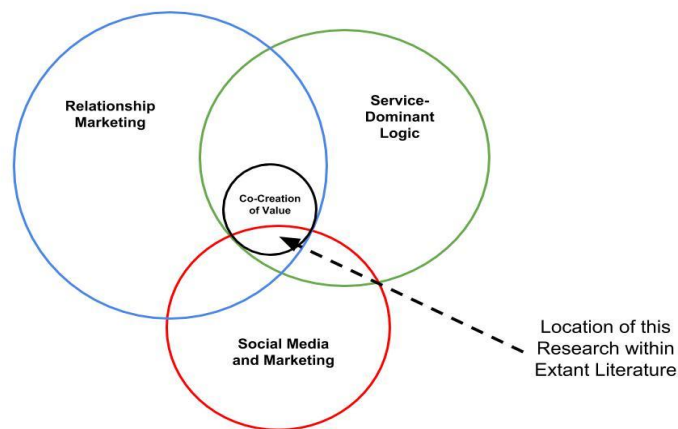
media by SMES to reach new customers (Michaelidou et al., 2011). The emphasis in this thesis however, is on a particular sector – independent breweries – and using social media across a multi-stakeholder environment, including B2C and B2B, as well as external and internal influencers. In this sense the objective is not to prescribe a standardised social media approach, but to evaluate how the medium is being used in different types of brewery. In this way a conclusion can be drawn regarding effective social media approaches based around the breweries' age, size and market, but perhaps more importantly, their individual personalities. These conclusions are outlined in Section 9.3.1, in the shape of five broad findings. These findings are further developed into five practical implications for independent breweries, described in Section 9.4.2.

To summarise, it is contended that the research makes a contribution to knowledge that is both prescient and revelatory. At the same time a contribution to practice is made by helping independent breweries better understand the worth of their social media engagement in the light of their own circumstances.

## **1.6: Supporting Literature**

The context of the research is positioned in the domain of relationship marketing because it is concerned with interaction and involvement (Gummesson, 1987; Grönroos, 1994) through online social media. As such, the literature review considers theories around how value is created through interaction and in particular what part the 'social' and 'relational' elements of the consumption experience might play in the co-creation of value. In order to focus these theories on the research topic, literature around social media and social media marketing is reviewed. The literature review takes an interpretative approach, more akin to traditional review principles than a strict systematic approach (Schultze, 2015), taking key influential texts and identifying areas that can be developed in line with the research objectives. The key areas considered are

relationship marketing, anchored through the principles of service-dominant logic (SDL) and the co-creation of value. Contemporary studies around social media engagement and social media marketing are then considered against the principles of SDL and the co-creation of value, from an organisational perspective. The objective is to develop a conceptual framework on which to base the methodology. It is suggested here that advances in IT, specifically in the shape of online social media, have provided a platform for co-creation through a social networking context (Halliday, 2016; Rihova et al., 2013). An integration of literatures in these areas can be seen in Figure 1.3.



**Figure 1.3: Supporting literature and location of this study**

In the light of this, the author identifies several areas where the literatures can be developed, in a way that can contribute to both knowledge and practice. First, by widening the scope from an organisation-consumer perspective to one that involves relationships with all actors (Merz et al., 2018), in and round the independent brewery sector. Doing so would address Vargo and Lusch's (2017) call for the development of mid-range, or meso-level theories around service-dominant logic and co-creation. Second, by building upon theories of the life-roles of actors in the social media arena (Halliday, 2016; Merz et al., 2018) and the development of an anthropomorphic approach (Hudson et al. 2016). Third, by applying this thinking to small independent



breweries, rather than large, multi-national or high involvement brands which many studies of consumer involvement on social media tend to look at (Chan & Guillet, 2011; Dessart et al., 2015; Divol et al., 2012). Finally, by extending social media studies across a wider set of variables, including culture, industry type and firm size (Felix et al., 2017; Wang and Kim, 2017).

### **1.7: Structure of the Thesis**

The thesis is presented in nine chapters, each one linked to the previous such that a picture unfolds around what on the surface looks like a complicated area. These chapters represent the development journey of the researcher himself as he discovers more about online relationships and social media engagement in small independent breweries. The intention is to address the research questions directly and in doing so bring the reader full circle from the broad objectives outlined in this chapter to the findings presented in the final chapter. This first, introductory chapter thus presents a brief background to the research, outlining why it is of interest, what the research aims, objectives and questions are and how and why the findings might contribute to knowledge.

The second chapter presents an 'interpretative' literature review (Schultze, 2015) based around influential studies and recent articles relating to relationship marketing, service-dominant logic, the co-creation of value, and social media marketing. The approach taken is one of assumption-challenging or problematisation (Nicholson et al., 2018) in order to develop existing theories associated with the research questions and objectives. At the end of this chapter a conceptual model is developed to guide the research methodology and subsequent data analysis. Chapter 3 describes the research methodology, justifying the approach taken at various levels. It is here that the underpinning research philosophy is presented, along with the nature of the research

approach that was used. Chapter 4 describes how the research was actually carried out, including an overview of the respondents and the interview process. This chapter also details the analysis process, describing in detail how convergent interviewing and the coding of data were conducted, and how four key themes emerged from the data.

The following four chapters (5 – 8) each consider one of the four key themes emerging from the first and second cycle coding processes. These chapters are thus labelled 'sector context'; 'lifestyle'; 'relationships' and 'control'. Each of them concludes with a section detailing the findings in the light of the research objectives and how this has built upon or developed contemporary literature in this area. Finally, chapter 9 brings these findings together within the context of the overall research aims and objectives, and summarises what has been learned and the contribution of the work. This chapter also includes an acknowledgement of the limitations of the research and suggestions for further research going forward.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1: Introduction**

A literature review is necessary to develop an overview of social media applications in business, comparing theory with practice and considering the underlying concepts and contexts through which the subject area might be understood. The previous chapter outlines the research topic, which is concerned with the impact of social media engagement within the independent brewery sector and the resulting implications for breweries seeking to use this as an effective communication tool. In developing the objectives of the research it is suggested that the advent of Internet based social networking applications, such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, etc., has created a new landscape in which consumers interact with each other as well as with brands and organisations. Marketing as a subject area has yet to come to grips with this new landscape and the possibility that marketers have lost control, and that the balance of power has transferred to customers has been mooted (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Halliday, 2016; Mangold & Faulds, 2009). Whilst the prospect of this new landscape might potentially apply across a wide spectrum of marketing and consumption, this study focuses on the UK independent brewery sector – a sector which brings together consumer branded products, social media and SMEs (organisations not usually associated with big marketing spends). The purpose of this literature review is therefore to consider existing relevant theory, against the context of the independent brewery sector, and to identify areas of theory that might be developed within this context.

### 2.1.1: Literature review method

In putting together a literature review, two broad schools of thought exist – the 'systematic' approach and the 'traditional' approach (Jesson et al., 2011). Borne out of research in the pure sciences, but more recently adopted in social sciences, the systematic approach scours a field for all evidence pertaining to the research question. It is tightly bound by inclusion criteria: usually key words which are used on database searches for all relevant articles, and exclusion criteria which strictly limit what can be included in the review. Conversely, the 'traditional' literature review method does not use strict inclusion and exclusion criteria and is more exploratory in nature. It relies instead on the researcher's *“interpretation, imagination, creativity and individuality in selecting and judging the studies”* (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015, p 162). Here the researcher develops his or her own relevance criteria based on their increased understanding of the literature.

Proponents of the systematic approach point to its superiority in being replicable, transparent, objective, unbiased and rigorous compared to the traditional method of conducting a literature review (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015). Critics however suggest that traditional reviews can also be 'systematic' and 'rigorous' without being tied to strict inclusion and exclusion criteria, thus enabling them to be more exploratory (Shultze, 2015). In deciding the best approach to take in this research, the author is guided by Shultze's (2015) advice that the objectives of the literature review should be in line with the overall study aims. Here, the broad aim is to develop a better understanding of how social media is shaping independent breweries' relationships with their markets and to determine what value (if any) might be derived from their engagement with this medium. As such an approach based around problematising contemporary literature as it might apply to the independent brewery sector is adopted, in order to develop the theory into a framework. The intention is to use this to develop a better understanding of the value impact of social media in this sector. Using Shultze's

'continuum' of review approaches, the literature review here is therefore described as more interpretative than systematic, relying on key texts and recent, influential and well respected articles around the field of study. Whilst this might be considered a traditional approach (Boell & Cecez-Kecmanovic, 2015) the author is comfortable with it, as it fits the exploratory nature of qualitative research better than a hard systematic literature review (Jesson et al., 2011).

### **2.1.2: Literature review structure**

In order to assign structure to the study, the focus of this chapter is therefore on the co-creation of value borne out of the interactivity which is now possible between independent brewery beer brands and consumers. This interactivity is generally accepted as a fundamental feature of online social media (Bolton et al., 2013; Larivière et al., 2013; Wirtz et al., 2013), but is also acknowledged as one of the backbones of relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994; Gummesson, 1999):

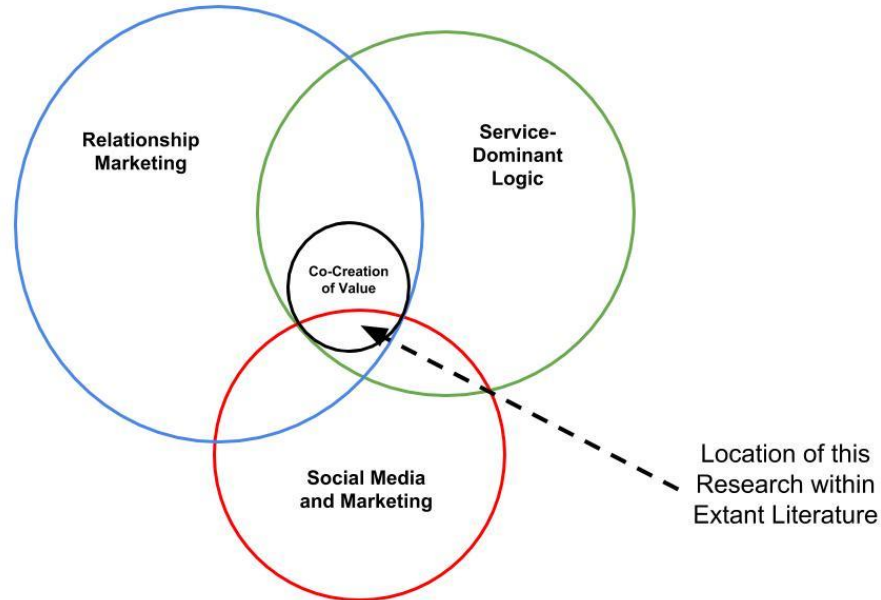
*"relationship marketing is marketing based on interactions within networks of relationships" (Gummesson, 1999, p 1)*

Of particular significance here is the notion that 'low involvement', 'commoditised' products such as beer, might be more suited to a non-relationship, transactive, or traditional marketing approach (Veloutsou et al., 2002; Zineldin & Philipson, 2007), based around mass marketing concepts such as the '4ps' (McCarthy, 1960) which don't typically involve customers and are controlled by the organisation (Grönroos, 1994). This then raises a question around what *relevance* or *value* the interaction brought about by social media might have for consumers in this market - why would they want to engage with organisations and/or their products via social media if on paper at least, that product is not conducive to a relationship approach? In order to answer this, it is

necessary to question how breweries might contribute to any consumer value that might derive through their social media engagement. On this basis the concepts which bring together consumer and organisational value are explored, in the shape of 'service-dominant logic' (Vargo & Lusch, 2004; 2017) and the 'co-creation of value' (Alves et al., 2016; Merz et al., 2018; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018).

These concepts shape the direction of the research as they question the 'value' created through interaction (Edvardsson et al., 2012). This leads to further questions around who controls the marketing process if value is created jointly through social media engagement. Some have questioned whether the organisation has any right to use social media (e.g. Fournier & Avery, 2011; Schultz & Peltier, 2013), given that it was developed for social, and not commercial purposes. As such an exploration of theories around social media in marketing, including brand communities, networking, and the use of social media marketing in SMEs is undertaken. The research is thus intended to develop literature around the application of service borne relationships to products (as exemplified in Gummesson & Grönroos, 2012) and the value created therefrom (as described by Vargo & Lusch, 2017). The research also contributes to contemporary literature around social media and marketing, as explored in articles such as Zhu and Chen (2015), Dessart et al. (2015), and Larivière et al. (2013).

To summarise, the key areas considered here are relationship marketing, anchored through the principles of service-dominant logic (SDL) and the co-creation of value. Contemporary studies around social media engagement and social media marketing are then considered against the principles of SDL and the co-creation of value, from an organisational perspective. The relationship of these strands is depicted in Figure 2.1. In order to provide a guide for the research data analysis, the chapter concludes with a conceptual figure based around user involvement in social media, drawn from the review of social media literature.



**Figure 2.1: Integration of different literatures to support this thesis  
(source: Author's own)**

## **2.2: Relationship Marketing Context**

Gummesson's (1987) original paper on relationships asserted that marketing should be concerned with different values from those he ascribed to 'traditional marketing'. These included the notion that long-term relationships with all stakeholders (not just customers), both inside and outside the organisation, were instrumental in the success of the organisation. In effect this widened the concept of marketing from a 'functional silo' to an organisational philosophy. This thinking led to the concept of 'full-time marketers' (FTMs), represented by traditional marketing roles (such as advertising executives, brand managers, sales people) and 'part-time marketers' (PTMs), representing all the other roles in and around an organisation. Gummesson (1998) went



on to describe these networks of relationships and interactions as 'virtual or imaginary organisations' as opposed to hierarchical or clearly delineated entities.

This adherence to the notion of an imaginary organisation, where the boundaries between the firm and the market dissolve and both become a network of interacting elements, might be reflected in the application of today's online social networking, because it allows for the involvement of customers (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018). This leads on to a second important value of relationship marketing – that all parties are active and that the customer is a 'co-producer'. Gummesson's (1998) view of a 'value constellation' with value added holistically through interactions and networks between all parties is brought up to date by Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2018) who acknowledge that these interactions are enabled on a large scale through new, digital technology platforms – in other words, social media. It is thus construed here that social media supports the notion of the customer as co-producer as described in broad relationship marketing theory.

### **2.2.1: Can relationship theory apply to beer?**

As far back as 1985, Bund Jackson argued that markets characterised by multiple suppliers, with a lack of differentiation between product offerings and low switching costs for customers, would require a transactive approach. She described customers in such markets as 'always-a-share' because the product is divisible and the customer can share his or her business amongst multiple suppliers simultaneously or at least over short term, consecutive purchase situations. Suppliers could win a share of this business provided they offered *"an immediate attractive combination of product, price, support and/or other benefits"* (p 122) - i.e. Four Ps marketing. O'Malley and Tynan (2000) concurred, arguing that the antecedents for a non-relational approach included large numbers (i.e. mass markets); anonymous customers, limited opportunity for

personal interaction and products of low value and/or representing a low risk for the customer. In such markets, having an interactive relationship with the supplier can add little or no value for the customer (Sheth & Parvatiyar, 2000).

Beer might well fit this classification, as from the consumer's perspective, its purchase and consumption is viewed over a short time scale, there is plenty of choice in the market and there is little risk or involvement attached to its purchase. From the brewer's perspective the market can appear anonymous and homogeneous as it is difficult to identify individual customers and develop discrete relationships with them. If the notion of *the customer as co-producer* is to be applied, then it is necessary to question how and where a customer might be able to create value for themselves through interaction with an individual brewery. Grönroos (1994) broadened the view that the organisation-consumer relationship was purely exchange based into something that involved a shared experience. Here, the customer determined the value of the product in use, in a way that was unique and personal to them. This thinking was developed by Vargo and Lusch (2004) in their concept of service-dominant logic (SDL), which took the view that value was embedded in the service elements enabled by a product, rather than the exchange value of the product itself. Over the years Vargo and Lusch have developed this theory into a position where today they make no distinction between products and services - service is the fundamental basis of all exchange and value is created by multiple 'actors' around the exchange (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). SDL might therefore offer a position from which to examine social media relationships around beer and the independent brewery sector.

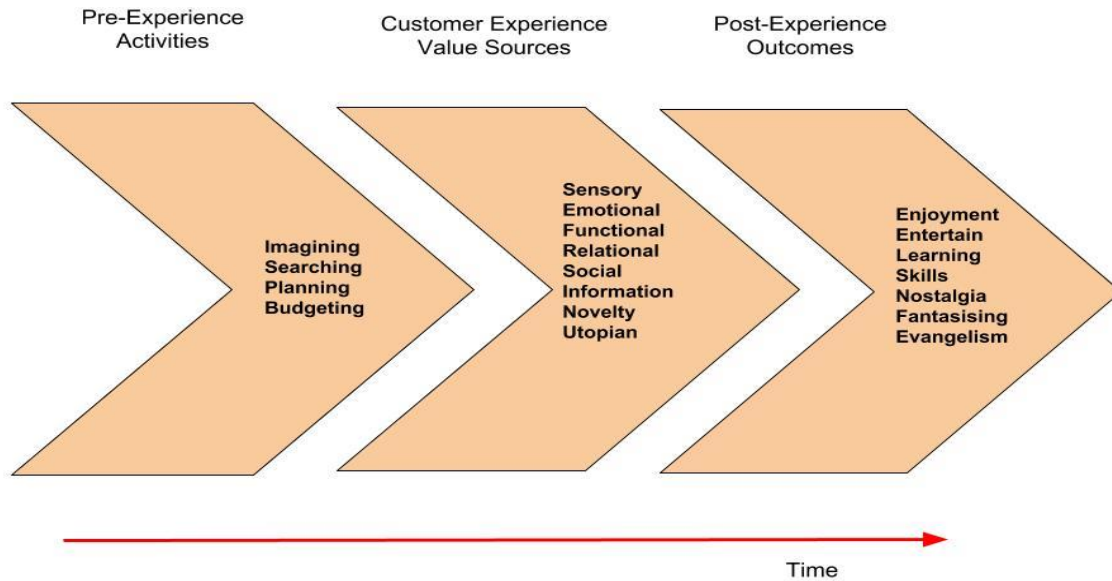
### **2.3: Service-Dominant Logic and Beer**

Vargo and Lusch (2004) argued that all production becomes the *“application of specialised competences (knowledge and skills) through deeds, processes and*

*performances for the benefit of another entity” (p 2).* Following this argument, beer consumers are experiencing a range of services ranging from a selection of particular hops and malts, to the skill of managing a brewing process (bearing in mind that the customer could feasibly brew the beer him or herself at home). Value is perceived by the consumer as ‘value in use’ rather than ‘exchange value’ and firms make ‘value propositions’. Wealth is created through the application and exchange of specialised knowledge or skills rather than the exchange of tangible resources and goods, and this can be seen as representing a shift in the dominant logic from valuing *operand resources* (resources on which some action is performed) to *operant resources* (resources which can produce effects).

Applying this to breweries, the implication is that value is created when people are consuming the beer. Thus the customer is buying into a personal experience enabled by the brewing process (be it taste, contentment, intoxication, social inclusion, etc.) rather than simply buying a product. However by focusing on value in use, the suggestion is that value is only created when people are actually drinking the beer, not when they are merely engaging on brewery based social media. Consideration of a more holistic *consumption experience* is required if the value experienced by the consumer is to go further than just the consumption of the product. ‘Experience Marketing’ (Holbrook & Hirschman, 1992) focused on the subjective elements of the consumer experience, which Tynan and McKechnie (2009) extended into a pre-consumption stage and a post-consumption stage, as illustrated in Figure 2.2. From the suppliers’ perspective, such an approach required a deeper understanding of the customer, the provision of a multi-sensory platform through which to experience the brand, managing all touch points through integrated marketing communication, and continuous innovation (Pine & Gilmore, 1998; Schmitt, 1999).

**Figure 2.2:**  
**Stages of the customer experience – activities, value sources and outcomes**  
**(Tynan & McKechnie, 2009, p 509)**



It is construed here that the multi-sensory platform referred to above would include experiences through brewery related social media engagement. Considering beer, in the pre-consumption stage, this might enable imagining and searching, whilst the value source at the consumption stage would certainly fit the sensory category (as beer is experienced through sight, smell, taste and texture) but also carry an emotional appeal. The interaction borne out through online media could provide relational, social and informational value. Finally in the post experience stage, as well as enjoyment, online social media might enable reminiscing (nostalgia) and even evangelising. These concepts might thus inform the analysis of the research data in this thesis as they suggest that the consumer, through social media, is contributing to the co-creation of value around the beer, through social media engagement. Although not originally envisaged by Vargo and Lusch's (2004), it is conjectured in this thesis that the social process engendered by social media supports the basic tenets of SDL. Social media is a

transmitter of operant resources (embedded knowledge), whether it is accompanied by the actual consumption of the product or not, and the users of brewery associated social media are operant resources as they become co-producers of value. The notion of the brewery owning and controlling its value creating resources is thus outstripped by a resource concept that is much more holistic.

This holistic view is reflected in Vargo and Lusch's (2017) recent theory of resource integration (as opposed to resource allocation), which introduces the role of multiple stakeholders to the value creation process which is controlled both outside and inside the organisation. In this way social media becomes a resource, that is not applied by the breweries, but rather used and developed by a multitude of actors (social media engagers) to create value in a way that is meaningful for them. These actors might include customers, but they are also likely to take in anyone with an interest in beer. Developing this thinking, Vargo and Lusch (2017) talk of a 'service eco-system' that supports resource integration and the co-creation of value. It is construed in this thesis that social media represents this service eco-system.

A recent article by Halliday (2016) is particularly relevant here, because it directly explores the link between SDL and social media, acknowledging that all of those engaging in social media are acting as operant resources. Although Halliday focuses her attention on customers, in practice this could include anyone, including employees, B2B partners throughout the supply chain, as well as the public at large. In the independent brewery sector, these 'actors' constitute a large 'beer geek' community which features centrally in the findings of this research. Describing the customer's role in value-creation, Halliday (2016) links SDL with consumer culture theory, where experiences and meanings are embedded in the cultural life-worlds of consumers. Here, consumers are not simply following a brand, they are constructing their own identity based around that brand, and social media is the ideal vehicle from which to achieve this. This identity represents 'life roles', 'life-projects' and 'life-goals', suggesting that lifestyle and identity

will be significant factors in determining how social media might create value in the independent brewery sector. This theme is taken up in the research analysis.

Despite its relevance, Halliday's (2016) article differs from the focus of this thesis in two areas. First, it takes the perspective of the consumer, whereas this research is based around the independent breweries' perceptions of how social media engagement might create value. Second, and as a result of the consumer focus, Halliday does not consider the other actors engaged in social media. This presents the researcher with an opportunity to apply some of the lifestyle factors outlined by Halliday in a wider context, including organisational and B2B relationship settings. The inclusion of a range of actors, playing different roles on interactive platforms concurs with B2B network theory enunciated in the 'interacted actor' concept of Håkansson and Snehota (2002). In studying social media networks around independent breweries, it is therefore relevant to ask how the co-creation of value can be effected across a range of actors, away from the actual consumption of the product. In order to do this, it is necessary to unpack the concept of the co-creation of value around beer as a product.

#### **2.4: Co-creation of Value Around Beer**

The literature on co-creation is varied, with articles ranging from physical *co-production* (Etgar, 2008; Potts et al., 2008) to more recent papers where the co-creation of value is seen as a psychological, or social concept, based around identity and self-actualisation (Halliday, 2016; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018; Saarijärvi, 2012). Physical co-creation is often quite literal, involving examples like self-service restaurants, home assembly of flat-pack furniture or 'Build-A-Bear Workshop'. Whilst physical co-creation certainly stimulates involvement and interaction between the consumer and the supplier, short of inviting consumers into the brewery to stir the mash, it is difficult to apply this to the beer market. The more psychological view can be seen in Holbrook's (2006) suggestion

that co-creation activities can be divided between *intrinsic* and *extrinsic* in terms of the value that customers derive from them. Whilst intrinsic values entail a direct gratification from the co-creation process, be it saving money (by for example assembling your own furniture), or having fun (by for example building your own bear), extrinsic values are more psychological. These have been linked to hedonic, self-actualisation ideals, such as the search for self-identity or lifestyle goals (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Bech-Larsen et al., 2007; Halliday, 2016) or the need for self-expression and individuality (Etgar, 2008; Hatch & Schultz, 2010). This element of co-creation is explored by Bech-Larsen et al. (2007) in a study of how an ethnic minority community created their own brand identity around a Danish beer product. Bech-Larsen et al. (2007) conclude that consumers have created a brand identity around their own individuality and that the brand identity provided by the brand's owner has been left malleable enough for consumers to do this. This then leads to a supposition – that the principles of customer co-creation can apply to beer brands, through a psychological, extrinsic model of value added.

In an attempt to put a value on psychological co-creation Merz et al. (2018) set out to define a 'customer co-creation value scale' (CCCV) specifically related to brand value co-creation. Referring to social interaction among actors in an ecosystem (which in this thesis is construed as social media), they identify seven dimensions of CCCV, based around customer owned resources and customer motivation (Figure 2.3). It is argued that the higher that customers score on the CCCV scale, the more valuable they are for the organisation. Managers can thus use the scale to deploy their resources more effectively. Merz et al. (2018) suggest two areas in which their theories around CCCV can be developed. First, by broadening the consideration of co-creation from customers to a wider set of actors, and second, by exploring the impact of individual personality as a moderating factor. Both of these areas are developed in this thesis.

<b>Customer Owned Resources</b>	<b>Customer Motivation</b>
Knowledge	Passion
Persuasion Skills	Commitment
Creativity	Trust
Network/Connectedness	

**Figure 2.3: Dimensions of customer co-created value around brands  
(adapted from Merz et al., 2018)**

Alves et al. (2016) widen the scope of co-creation of value, by exploring the participative context in which people and organisations develop meaning. They identify four clusters of value co-creation based around different types of value, processes (e.g. B2B and B2C), and actors. These consist of co-creation as a business logic, where the value added feeds business innovation; co-creation as a source of knowledge to aid product development; co-creation as the value added through customer experience and subsequent loyalty; and co-creation as a relationship dynamic with value added through interaction among all parties (i.e. B2C, B2B; C2C , and C2B). Whilst each of these four clusters can be developed through social media engagement, it is the fourth one (co-created value-added through multi-participant relationships) which informs this research thesis the closest. Furthermore, it is in this area that Alves et al. (2016) suggest future research be undertaken in order to determine what resources are required to enable value-added through multi-participant interaction. This thesis proposes that the existence of a social media based 'eco-system' represents a resource which the various



actors can use to develop value co-creation in a way which is relevant for them. Specifically, the enabled interaction has increased the propensity for a *social* element, not only between customers and suppliers, but also with others in the network, including fellow customers, external experts, opinion leaders and other stakeholders (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009).

The *social* aspect of the co-creation of value has been explored by Rihova et al. (2013) in their study of C2C co-creation. They identify four layers of 'social co-creation' which represent different levels of interaction between customers: 'detached customers'; 'social bubble'; 'temporary communitas'; and 'ongoing neo-tribes'. However, their study concentrates on physical, face to face interaction rather than online, and of their four levels only the final one, 'ongoing neo-tribes' might relate to this particular research as they depict the sharing of skills, experience and knowledge that can be seen in tightly knit members of an online community. These neo-tribes reflect ongoing social practices between customers who consider themselves members of a community, and can take place either in a physical or an online context. Rihova et al.'s (2013) findings are applied to service sectors such as tourism and retail, leaving room for development of the research here, in terms of beer products. They were also confined to neo-tribes of *customers*, again suggesting scope for a consideration of a wider range of participants.

## **2.5: Implications for this Study from SDL and Co-Creation Literature**

Although on the surface beer might be more suited to a transaction based marketing approach, the application of service-dominant logic (SDL) suggests that the consumer, through the social processes associated with brewery based social media, is contributing to the co-creation of value around the beer. This is supported by Vargo and Lusch's (2017) notion of a service 'eco-system' to engender co-creation among multiple actors. In this research the service eco-system is represented by social media, a view replicated

by Merz et al. (2018) when considering how co-creation of value occurs around brands. Halliday (2016) also links SDL theory and the co-creation of value to social media, emphasising the part played by individual lifestyles in what is a social and relational process of co-creation. This supports the view taken in this thesis that co-creational value added is psychologically based (as opposed to physical), and underpins the interpretivist approach taken.

However, in making a contribution to knowledge it is necessary to 'problematise' current theory such that a useful development can be advanced from the research at hand. To this end a number of areas have been identified where existing theory can be developed. Chief among these is the scope for taking a wider perspective. Whilst it is generally acknowledged that digital technology has enabled multiple actor co-creation (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018), papers in this areas tend to take the consumer perspective (Alves et al., 2016; Halliday, 2016; Merz et al., 2018; Rihova, et al., 2013). Indeed, the recommendation to widen the scope of actor inclusion is regularly suggested as a base to extend the theory. Merz et al. (2018) call for a consideration of how employees might be used as a co-creative resource, whilst Alves et al. (2016) suggest extending the study of co-creation to the many-to-many interactions, including B2C; B2B; C2C; and C2B. Whilst Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2018) acknowledge the roles of these multiple actors in co-creation, their paper is conceptual and does not consider particular sectors or product areas. By applying a multiple actor consideration within a specific area, it is argued that this research can contribute at a more granular level. The author is reassured here by Vargo and Lusch's (2017) call for the development of mid-range, or meso-level theories around SDL and co-creation, which this thesis delivers.

A second area where this research can contribute is through incorporating factors of personality into the co-creational process. It is acknowledged here that social media can add value through psychological dimensions, and the concept of consumers developing their own identity around a brand relationship is accepted (Bech-Larsen et al., 2007;

Halliday, 2016). However, the author feels that there is scope to develop this at a more granular level by considering the role of individuals' personalities conveyed through social media, in developing relationships and creating value. This is supported by Merz et al. (2018) who suggest that more research is needed into how individual personality factors might act as moderators of customer co-creation of value. The research takes up this suggestion and goes further, by including the personalities of all actors in the value-creation process, not just customers.

## **2.6: Social Media**

In order to develop the avenues described above, it is necessary to explore literature around social media, and in particular social media marketing, in order to define it within the parameters of the research and also to position it in marketing terms. The following sub-sections are structured around a number of questions, beginning with an overview of what social media is, before moving on to an exploration of its context within consumer behaviour, such that a better understanding of how independent breweries might engage more effectively. This leads to questions around the issue of who is in control of social media and a further section considering the literature on social media marketing. At the end of these sections a conceptual model is presented to develop the theory along the lines of the research objectives.

### **2.6.1: Defining social media**

The term 'social media' came about in the 1990s, allegedly coined by executives at American mass media corporation AOL when discussing how users of online sites could entertain, communicate and participate with each other in a social environment (Bercovici, 2010). Since then the term has become synonymous with networking,

interacting, community building and collaboration in an online environment (Hunsinger & Senft, 2014). Indeed, the evolution of social media as a communications platform has been credited with affecting the everyday lives of billions of people across the world (De Kare Silver, 2011; Felix et al., 2017; Tuten & Solomon, 2013; Wang & Kim, 2017). The opening sentence of this thesis demonstrates not only the scale of social media usage but also its dynamic rate of adoption. Different approaches can be observed in the literature discussing social media, which is divided between those who see it as another communications tool through which organisations can reach their customers (Divol et al., 2012; Edelman, 2010; Hudson et al., 2016; Karjaluoto & Mustonen, 2014; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), and those who see something which can have an as yet unpredictable impact on society, and therefore on organisation's relationships with their customers (De Kare Silver, 2011; Felix et al., 2017; Fournier & Avery, 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al. 2010; Hunsinger & Senft, 2014). This latter view underpins the research by addressing questions around the nature of the relationships engendered through social media engagement.

The differing views relating to social media can also be seen in the use of metaphors when discussing it:

*"Groundswell" (Li & Bernhoff, 2008; Vasanta Madhavi & Akbar, 2011).*

*"Revolution" (Smith, 2009; Shih, 2009; Tuten & Solomon, 2013).*

*"Child" (De Kare Silver, 2011).*

*"Digital crossroad" (Ryan, 2015).*

*"Spectre" (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).*

It might thus be viewed that social media is at once, ubiquitous, wide ranging, dynamic, revolutionary, unpredictable, opportunistic, but at the same time potentially threatening. These themes are explored in this research when interviewing breweries. However, in order to contextualise the subject from a research perspective, the following sub-sections categorise social media in terms of its empirical features and usage.

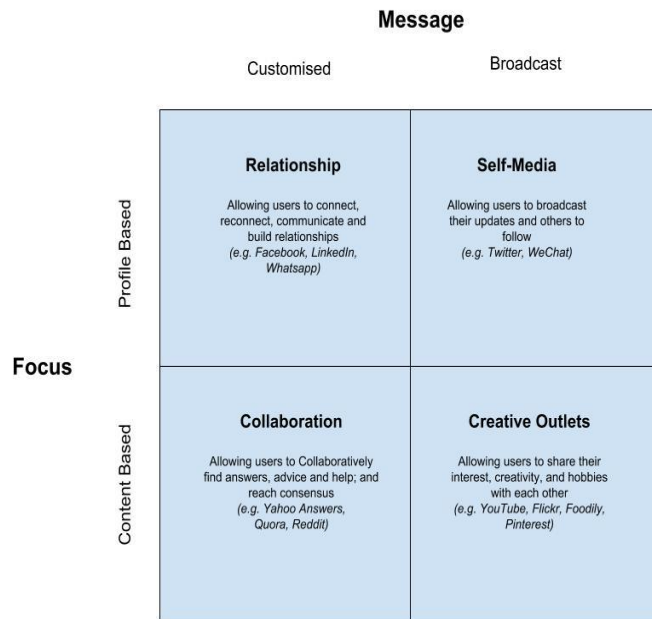
### **2.6.2: Categories of social media**

It might be concluded from the above reviews that 'social media' is an amorphous concept, with varying definitions and descriptions depending on the outlooks of the various commentators. From the perspective of this study it is necessary to establish some specific parameters, relevant to the topic in order to guide the methodology. In this way, a typology can be developed based on the primary function of each social medium, and the motivations of those using these media. The need to break up the different types of social media into categories is generally taken up by both academics and practitioners (Chan & Guillet, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Osatuyi, 2013; Wang & Kim, 2017) in order to gain a better understanding of how and why people use social media. The objective of categorising social media in this thesis is twofold: first, to determine what constitutes a 'social medium' and thus might fall within the boundaries of the research, and second, to provide a framework of social media usage relevant to the independent brewery sector which can be used as a base for interview questions.

Initial studies of the literature reveal no consensus on what the separate categories of social media might be or indeed how many categories there should be. Marked differences are seen between practitioners (such as digital media agencies, social bloggers, etc.) and academic theorists. Generally speaking business consultancies tend to suggest larger numbers of categories or types of social media including Internet search engines (see Appendix 2). The categories considered by bloggers tend to be

fewer and more condensed than the consultants (see Appendix 3). These categories appear too wide for this study, which is primarily concerned with the *interaction* enabled by social media, so it is useful to consider the peer reviewed academic considerations of social media typologies. Some of these follow the functional typologies of the agencies and the bloggers - Chan and Guillet (2011) for example list 6 different categories, whilst Mangold and Faulds (2009) identify no less than 15 separate examples of different social media. Whilst these make useful check lists however, they tend to be retrospective and one-dimensional in terms of simply considering what the features of the social media are. This study, requires a more conceptual delineation of social media usage along the lines of potential value added through co-creation.

To this end some academics (Dessart et al., 2015; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010; Zhu & Chen, 2015) have attempted to classify social media according to the underlying characteristics, both of the users and of the media themselves. For example, Zhu and Chen (2015) develop a social media matrix to explore how the human needs side of social media usage leads to satisfaction and therefore affects potential social media marketing approaches (Figure 2.4). Their model is based around the nature of the connection that a user has with a social media site, and the degree to which messages on the site can be customised to the individual user. The nature of connection ranges from sites which are predominantly 'profile-based', i.e. they are based around a specific individual, and those that are 'content based', i.e. they are based around a specific subject rather than an individual person. The other dimension on the model represents the level of customisation which the postings on a media site afford, i.e. the extent they can be tailored for a specific person or small group, as opposed to being broadcast to anyone who is interested. Applying these dimensions produces a matrix comprising four different categories of social media (Figure 2.4).



**Figure 2.4:**  
**Social Media Matrix**  
**(Zhu & Chen, 2015, p 337)**

As this research is concerned with the user perspective of social media rather than the platform features per se, Zhu and Chen's (2015) model appears relevant because it emphasises the psychological aspects of social media, based around users' needs and desires, thus introducing room for debate around how individuals engage with the various media. Specifically, it offers a framework to consider which types of social media might be more or less relevant in particular circumstances. From the perspective of this research it lends greater depth to questions around how customers of particular product categories (e.g. beer) might engage with the product, or its brands, within the context of social media. For example under 'creative outlets' it is suggested that intrinsically attractive or appealing products (such as brands of beer?) might lend themselves to users posting in this category. Similarly, users may develop 'parasocial relationships' with a brand (Gummesson, 1999) and thus follow the brand's broadcast messages through the 'self-media' category. In the 'relationship' quadrant, products that are conducive to self-presentation, by embodying the personality of the user (e.g. particular types of beers) lend themselves to consumer engagement, whilst under 'collaboration' a product must be relevant to users seeking information, answers or solutions (Zhu & Chen, 2015). The model might therefore usefully support the research design around

how beer drinkers engage with social media and the resulting implications for the breweries themselves. In doing so, a key question will be what type of person engages with social media and how this correlates to beer drinkers.

### **2.6.3: Social media users**

In terms of usage, age is a clear factor, with the ONS reporting in the UK that penetration is highest among the 16 - 24 age group bracket (90%) and lowest in the 65- 74 age group at 19% (Office for National Statistics, 2013). These figures are supported by Pitta (2010) who reports that 'millennials', or 'Generation Y' (those born between 1980 and 2000) have the highest usage of social media at 77%. The usage figures fall off through 'generation X' (born between 1960 and 1980) at 61%, 'boomers' (born 1945 - 1960) at 46% and 'matures' (born pre-1945) at 36%. In a study of Generation Y and their use of social media, Bolton et al (2013) conclude that this generation are more likely to participate actively, i.e. posting and creating content, than the previous generations. A similar picture is painted by Tuten and Solomon (2013) who distinguish between 'digital natives', i.e. those who have grown up with the Internet, and 'digital immigrants', who have experienced life without it and can therefore make more of a choice about how far to accept social media as part of their lives. Notwithstanding these simple age related demographics, Bolton et al. (2013) show that individual differences also contribute to user profiles. These include not only socio-demographic factors such as economic status and life-cycle stage, but also endogenous factors such as personal goals, emotions and social norms. These issues have a bearing on this research as they raise questions about the nature of independent brewery customers and how this audience uses social media.

Kozinets (2015) defines four distinct types of user based on their level of involvement. From the perspective of a beer consumer these might be described as follows:



*Tourists* who lack strong social ties and are only passively interested in the consumption activity around beer brands.

*Minglers* who maintain strong social ties, but are only perfunctorily interested in beer and beer consumption activities.

*Devotees* who have a strong interest in beer and beer related topics, but are less interested in the social aspects of the online activity.

*Insiders* who have a strong interest both in beer and beer consumption activities and are also heavily involved in the social aspects of online activity.

The different levels of involvement described above, lead many studies to distinguish between 'posters' - users who actively contribute by posting content; and 'followers' or 'lurkers' - users who are predominantly consumers of content (Preece et al., 2004; Bolton et al., 2013; Lai et al., 2014; Petrovčič & Petrič, 2014). Shang et al. (2006) note that while both lurking and posting can be classed as participation, lurkers outnumber posters by as much as 9:1. A similar distinction is made by Lipsman et al. (2012) who set out to quantify the value of 'fans' on social media sites like Facebook and in doing so differentiate between 'fans' of a brand and 'friends of fans' who, they claim on average outnumber the fans by a factor of 34:1. They conclude that these 'friends of fans' represent greater value than the fans alone because of their sheer numbers and market potential. This thinking mirrors that of Granovetter (1973) whose work on network theory suggests that weak ties in a network are more effective at diffusing messages than strong ties. It also supports an approach which looks at all categories of user types, irrespective of their level of involvement. Establishing any links between types of social media user and beer drinkers will be necessary in order to meet the wider research objectives. Building on user typologies, a further questions arises around why consumers engage in the first place (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010).

#### **2.6.4: Why do people engage with social media?**

Literature in this area generally draws upon historical psychological studies such as Maslow (1954), Ryan and Deci (2000), Reis et al. (2000), Sheldon et al. (2001), to explain motivation and the fulfilment of human needs. These needs are usually broken down into categories such as Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, or Ryan & Deci's three innate, psychological needs of self-determination - competence, autonomy and relatedness. In a study on satisfaction Sheldon et al. (2001) amalgamate some of these wider theories into ten different psychological "candidate needs" which they label:

*autonomy (the need for self-determination)*

*competence (the need to feel effective in what one does)*

*relatedness (the need for closeness and belonging with others)*

*physical thriving (the need for health and personal well-being)*

*security (the need for safety and protection)*

*self-esteem (the need for self-confidence in one's own worth)*

*self-actualisation (the need to fulfil one's ultimate potential)*

*pleasure-stimulation (the need for escape, entertainment, enjoyment)*

*popularity-influence (the need to have an impact on others)*

*money-luxury (the need for physical reward)*

Zhu and Chen (2015) apply these psychological needs across their four different social media categories and conclude that each category is capable of fulfilling different human satisfaction needs. Examples of how these different psychological needs might be fulfilled by different social media categories, depending on whether one is an active engager (a poster) or a passive follower, can be seen in Figure 2.5.

	<b>Relationship</b>	<b>Self-Media</b>	<b>Creative Outlet</b>	<b>Collaboration</b>
<b>Poster</b>	Relatedness Security	Autonomy Money-luxury Self esteem Popularity- influence	Competence Self-actualisation Self esteem	Competence Self-actualisation Security
<b>Follower</b>	Relatedness Physical thriving Security	Relatedness Self esteem	Pleasure- stimulation	Autonomy Physical thriving

**Figure 2.5: Psychological needs met by social media**  
(adapted from Zhu & Chen, 2015)

The needs outlined in this model might be applied to the 'beer geek' community who engage in beer and brewery based social media. Some of them will get satisfaction through demonstrating their knowledge and experience, whilst others will be there to feel a sense of belonging with like-minded individuals. However, whilst this categorises people's use of social media from a psychological perspective, an alternative more *"functional explanation of why people use media"* (Calder et al., 2009, p 323) exists in the shape of 'Uses and Gratification Theory' (UGT).

UGT is relevant here because it is specifically focused on studies of mass media, being described as an *"influential tradition"* (Shao, 2009, p 8) in studies of how different media meet the needs of individuals and add value to their experience. Sometimes referred to as an approach, rather than a theory, (Calder et al., 2009) the origins of UGT are not precise, but it remains relevant in today's studies of the Internet as a tool of mass media:

"...uses and gratifications has always provided a cutting-edge theoretical approach in the initial stages of each new mass communications medium: newspapers, radio and television, and now the Internet..." (Ruggiero, 2000, p 3)

It follows that many studies into why and how people use online social media base their analysis on UGT concepts (Bronner & Niejens, 2006; Calder et al., 2009; Dessart et al., 2015; Larivière et al., 2012). The underlying concepts vary, depending on the author, but popular interpretations include those originally advanced by Katz et al. (1973) and McQuail (1983), which broadly break down into *cognitive needs* (seeking information, knowledge or understanding); *personal needs* (seeking outlets for self-expression, finding oneself); *social needs* (seeking interaction, companionship, belonging) and *entertainment needs* (seeking escape, diversion, tension release or enjoyment / hedonism). These are reduced to three broad categories of engagement by Dessart et al. (2015) which they describe as affective (enthusiasm, enjoyment, emotions-based), cognitive (interest, absorption, knowledge-based), and behavioural (sharing, learning, action-based). Shao (2009) uses such categories to try and understand the appeal of online social media, concluding that three distinct, yet interdependent types of behaviour can be observed depending on the nature of the gratification which is being sought. These behaviours range from content consumption (when seeking information or entertainment); active participation (when seeking social connectivity); and content creation (when seeking to fulfil the personal needs of self-expression or self-actualisation). In each case gratification increases the easier to use the social media site is, and the more control the users have over it.

Larivière et al.'s (2013) research also uses UGT concepts, this time to study how value is derived from mobile based social networked systems. Here the four UGT concepts are transformed into customer values. Thus the cognitive needs become *informational value* which empowers the customers' purchasing and consumption decisions. Personal needs become *identity value* through for example expressing one's personality by 'liking'

a brand on Facebook. Social needs translate into *social value* through the customers' interactive engagement, involvement and experience (Calder et al., 2009) both with fellow consumers and also with the brands and their owners. Finally, entertainment needs become *emotional value*, involving feelings or affective states (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). Larivière et al.'s (2013) work is of relevance to this research from two perspectives – first, it categorises how customers might derive value from online social media (thus potentially guiding the design of effective social media marketing); second, because it considers the reciprocal value that the organisation derives through interacting with consumers. It thus suggests how the use of online social media can contribute to the mutual co-creation of value discussed earlier in the chapter.

#### **2.6.5: How do people engage with social media?**

If UGT serves to illustrate why people engage with social media, there exists the more practical consideration of how they engage in a way that relates to the concept of customer co-creation. To facilitate this Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) discuss 'User Generated Content' (UGC) as a means for individual end users to create content in various media and make this publicly available to other users. As such, UGC represents the use of social media (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010), rather than the social media itself, and can be seen in the generation of blogs, wikis, photos, videos, message board posts, reviews and ratings, etc. Some have referred to this as a 'democratisation' (Ryan, 2015; Tuten, 2008) reflecting the fact that everyone has an equal opportunity and right to create content (not just organisations or website developers) and it is this area that has caused a stir amongst management academics and practitioners (Felix et al., 2017; Fournier & Avery, 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009) who believe that it opens up new opportunities and challenges for organisations. Indeed, when the word *Consumer* Generated Content is substituted for *User* Generated Content, questions of who is in control of brand messages and brand positioning are raised (Felix

et al., 2017; Fournier & Avery, 2011; Ryan, 2015). Reflecting this, various new marketing terms have been applied, including 'crowdsourcing', 'digital dialogue', 'citizen marketing' and 'brand democratisation' (Tuten, 2008).

These concepts support the reviews earlier in this chapter around 'co-creation' and how the co-creation of value around a product (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018; Saarijärvi, 2012) can be enabled by online social media. Specifically, the interaction enabled by online social media has increased the propensity for a social element within the consumption process, not only between customers and suppliers, but also with other actors in the network, including fellow customers, external experts, opinion leaders, employees and members of the supply chain (Merz et al., 2018). From the perspective of this research, UGC therefore represents examples of the co-creation discussed in the previous chapter, and is a direct output of the use of social media. Such considerations have led to an assertion that customers now have an equal, if not greater role than the organisation in the creation of their own value experience (Fournier & Avery, 2011; Halliday 2016; Schultz & Peltier, 2013). If social media is an integrated resource based eco-system (Vargo & Lusch, 2017) then what is the role of the organisation here and how can this resource be linked to a marketing strategy?

## **2.7 Social Media and Marketing**

Given that this research is conducted from the perspective of the organisation, with the objective of guiding independent breweries in their social media engagement, the following sub-sections consider how contemporary literature views social media as a potential marketing tool, its use by SMEs and its impact on their relationships. The intention is to provide a basis against which to develop the multi-actor, personality driven research objectives described in the previous sections.

### **2.7.1: Social media marketing (SMM)**

In determining how organisations can best engage with consumers via social media, some studies take a traditional approach by viewing social media as another communications platform which organisations can use to engage their customers. For example Wang and Kim (2017) attempt to link customer relationship management (CRM) with social media users, using a concept of social CRM (Trainor et al., 2014) to determine whether the firm's overall performance can be improved. They conclude that CRM effectiveness can be enhanced if the firm is able to merge social media into its marketing activities. Similarly, Edelman (2010) argues that social media has impacted on the consumer decision making process, shifting the emphasis of marketing from the pre-purchase to the post purchase-stage. Both Wang and Kim (2017), and Edelman (2010) appear to contextualise SMM within integrated marketing communications (IMC), a concept popularised by Schultz et al. (1993) whereby organisations achieve a consistent brand message across all customer communications and touch points. These views are replicated in a B2B context by Karjaluoto and Mustonen (2014) and Järvinen (2012). In this parlance, social media simply becomes just another customer engagement tool.

Despite a body of thought suggesting that organisations have ceded some control of their marketing to customers (De Kare Silver, 2011; Felix et al., 2017; Labreque et al., 2013; Vasanta Madhavi & Akbar, 2011) many management based books and articles focus on how the marketer can remain in control. These approaches usually revolve around the employment of hard metrics such as views on YouTube or 'fans' on Facebook, and the demographics of the audiences using them (Pitta [Ed.], 2010), leading to suggestions of how organisations can monitor consumer behaviour and develop promotional strategies accordingly. For example Divol et al. (2012) attribute 'core functions' to social media which enable organisations to monitor, respond, amplify and

lead consumer behaviour. This almost makes it sound as if social media has been designed for a marketing purpose and Divol et al.'s (2012) statement of purpose – *"...here's how senior leaders can harness social media to shape customer decision making in predictable ways..."* (p 66) – sounds glib and potentially naïve when contrasted with the views of Hennig-Thurau et al. (2010), who use the analogy of a pinball machine when describing the impact of new media on marketing:

*"...companies serve up a 'marketing ball' (brands and brand building messages) into a cacophonous environment, which is then diverted and often accelerated by new media 'bumpers', which change the offering's course in chaotic ways. After the marketing ball is in play, marketing managers continue to guide it with agile use of the 'flippers' but the ball does not always go where it is intended to and the slightest miscue can be amplified into a catastrophic crisis..."* (p 313)

Indeed for some, organisational involvement in social media is an oxymoron – *"[social media] ...was created not to sell branded products, but to link people together in collective conversational webs..."* (Fournier & Avery, 2011, p 193). Recognising this dichotomy, some studies have sought to compare the effects of 'seeded' word of mouth and 'organic', naturally occurring word of mouth on social networking sites. Bruhn et al. (2012) conclude that firm created (seeded) word of mouth has more influence on functional brand attitudes amongst customers, and user generated (organic) word of mouth has more influence on developing hedonic brand image. Thus, in terms of beer, functional attitudes might revolve around taste, colour, strength, etc., whereas hedonic attitudes would be more about things like 'what kind of people drink the beer' and whether or not it is fashionable. Bruhn et al. (2012) point out that firm created messages will always be positive, but user generated comments can be either positive or negative. In a similar study, Trusov et al. (2009) suggest that social media based word of mouth is more effective than traditional media at attracting new customers, but that



'seeded' word of mouth on social networks *"...may be substantially less effective than organic..."* (p 98).

In terms of developing a strategic approach to social media marketing, Felix et al. (2017) develop a framework to guide the firm according to their needs and objectives. This framework consists of four dimensions along which a firm's social media marketing can be positioned:

Social media marketing culture, ranging from conservatism to modernism

Social media marketing scope, ranging from being a defender to being an explorer

Social media marketing structure, ranging from hierarchical to networking

Social media marketing governance, ranging from autocracy to anarchy

This is useful to the author because it presents a basis from which to design an interview approach, bearing in mind that independent breweries exist in all shapes, sizes, cultures and structures. Although Felix et al. (2017) acknowledge that the effectiveness of social media marketing may depend on specific characteristics of customers, the application of such a framework suggests that social media marketing is within the control of the organisation.

Finally, some studies consider whether the product or service itself has any bearing on the way in which social media marketing is experienced by the consumer. For example, Hudson et al. (2016) find that social media usage is positively related to the consumer's brand relationship quality. In other words, if the consumer can relate to the brand, they are more likely to engage with, and react positively to the organisation's social media marketing. Hudson and his colleagues note that this is particularly pronounced when the brand has a high perceived level of anthropomorphism (the extent to which human characteristics are associated with the brand). It would seem pertinent therefore to explore brand anthropomorphism in the independent brewery sector, although as

Hudson et al. (2016) acknowledge, any such feelings will be dependent on the experiences of customers rather than the organisation. This underlines the ultimate test of social media marketing effectiveness: its impact on consumer behaviour. A possible way of exploring this is through elements of socialisation around a product or brand, as manifested in brand communities or 'consumption tribes' (Kozinets, 1998).

### **2.7.2: Socialisation theory and brand communities**

Consumer socialisation theory posits that consumers will learn skills, knowledge and attitudes relevant to their role as consumers in the market place (Ward, 1974). This learning is facilitated not only by demographic variables such as age, gender, education, income, etc., but also by processes through peers - in particular circles of friends and acquaintances. These socialisation processes among peers lead to the development of affective consumer feelings and attitudes toward product, and behavioural outcomes in terms of product purchase and usage (de Gregorio & Sung, 2010). Researching these concepts further, Wang et al. (2012) developed a '*socialisation framework*' to demonstrate how relationships with peers on social media, impact on subsequent consumer behaviour. They conclude that socialisation among peers online does affect consumers' attitude towards a brand, and their subsequent purchase intention. These findings concur with Zhou (2011) who finds that social identity and group norm have a significant impact on user participation, suggesting that social media behaviour may be collectively driven rather than individualistic. These issues of consumer collectivity are often associated with studies of brand or consumption communities (Dessart et al., 2015; Närvänen et al., 2013; Stokburger-Sauer & Wiertz, 2015).

In terms of how and why consumers participate in brand communities Dessart et al. (2015) make a distinction between those who engage with a community based around the intrinsic qualities of a specific product or brand, and those who are there for reasons

more to do with the lifestyle associated with that product. Studies of communities where the consumers are participating through a genuine love of the brand tend to feature high involvement products such as the Harley Owners Group described by Fournier and Lee (2009) or the MacUser's Group considered by Muñiz and O'Guinn, (2001). Conversely, in a study of the low involvement, fast moving consumer good Nutella, Cova and Pace (2006) conclude that participation in brand community activity is based more on personal self-exhibition and engagement in a community, rather than an intrinsic love of the brand.

This raises a question for this research in terms of whether social media usage around individual beer brands can ever be based on a close affiliation with a particular brand, or whether consumers are there for other reasons which are less associated with the brand per se. Applying this distinction to Kozinet's (2015) typology of social media users, it might loosely be concluded that 'insiders' and 'devotees' fit the brand/product oriented community, whilst 'minglers' and 'tourists' fit the social relationships community. Similarly, in terms of Zhu and Chen's (2015) social media typology, product oriented community members might be more focused on 'creative outlets' and 'self-media' (e.g. YouTube, Flickr, Pinterest, Twitter, WeChat) , whilst socially motivated members would be more likely focused on 'Relationship' and 'Collaboration' social media (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Whatsapp, Quora, Reddit, etc.). These distinctions have ramifications for this research in terms of how and why beer drinkers might engage in online consumption communities and which social media outlets are the most appropriate for breweries to use for marketing purposes. These issues also open up questions of how effective social media marketing might be in different business scenarios.

### **2.7.3: Social media marketing in business**

Whilst most studies of social media marketing are based around a business-to-consumer (B2C) context (Jusilla et al, 2011; Lacoste, 2015), a number of research articles consider the subject in a business-to-business context. These include exploring the use of social media as a digital marketing communications tool (Järvinen, 2012; Karjaluoto & Mustonen, 2014); the B2B networking opportunities afforded by social media (Quinton & Wilson, 2015); and the use of social media in innovation and entrepreneurship (Drummond et al., 2018; Jusilla et al., 2011). Of relevance to this thesis, some of these studies specifically explore the use of social media by SMEs. For example, Michaelidou et al. (2011) shows how SMEs are using social media to raise brand awareness and reach new customers. These studies tend to conclude that the use of social media as a marketing tool for B2B companies is not as advanced as it is for B2C, either through a perceived lack of relevance to the sector (Michaelidou et al., 2011) or attitudinal resistance to the use of a new technology for marketing purposes (Järvinen, 2012).

These latter points, relating to sector relevance and attitudes towards social media can help to inform the research in this thesis. It has already been noted that the independent brewery sector is a prolific user of social media, so a deeper consideration of the characteristics of this sector is needed to try to understand why. At the same time, the personal attitudes of the individual businesses interviewed in this study will need to be taken into account in the research design. There is however, scope for the research in this thesis to build upon or develop the B2B articles discussed above. Not least of these is the opportunity to take a more holistic approach than simply B2B. Beer is a consumer product and whilst B2B relationships play an important part in its manufacture and distribution, the social media surrounding the sector cannot be seen as purely a B2B medium. Furthermore, the focus of B2B social media are professional networking platforms like Linked In and Viadeo, whereas independent breweries are almost exclusively using Facebook and/or Twitter, along with Instagram and Pinterest. Indeed, Michaelidou et al. (2011) and Lacoste (2015) both suggest expanding the scope of their research into more wide stream social media platforms.

## **2.8: Implications for this Study from Social Media and Social Media Marketing Literature**

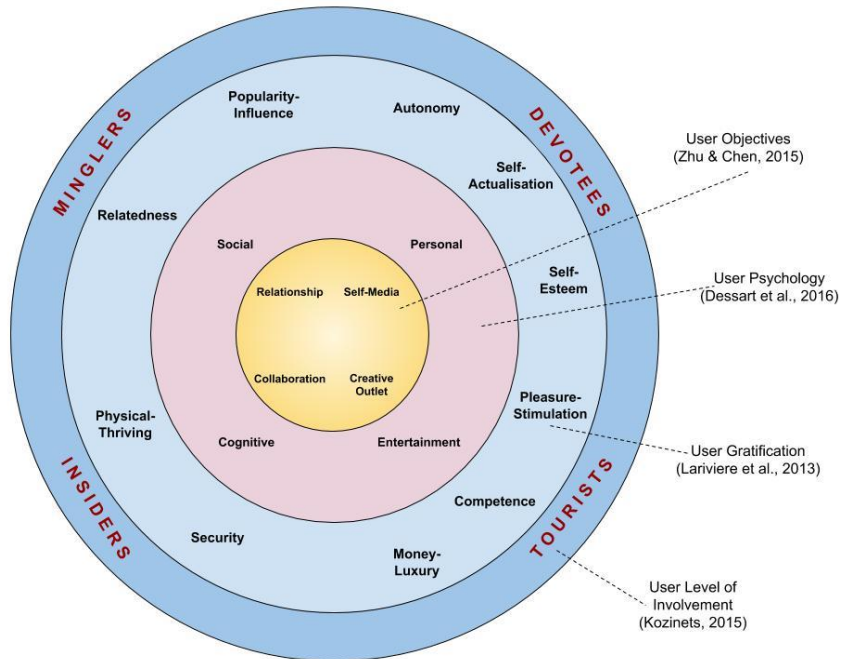
The literature pertaining to social media is wide and diverse, but there is common agreement that it affects business marketing through the way in which relationships are experienced by users. As such there is much to support the direction of this research, both in terms of how and why users engage with social media, and how organisations might develop a strategy around the new medium. Despite its depth and breadth, there appear to be a number of areas where this study can contribute to existing knowledge. First of these is the focus of the research – the independent brewery sector. Much of the contemporary literature tends to concentrate on large consumer brands such as McDonald's, Starbucks, Pepsico (Divol et al., 2012); high involvement products like athletic shoes, computer notebooks, or cars (Hudson et al. 2016); hotels, which are geographically distant from their prospective customers (Chan & Guillet, 2011); or multi-national brands with large consumer followings, such as Disney, Rangers FC, Coldplay, or Nutella (Dessart et al., 2015). This is in contrast to this research, which is focused on independent breweries which serve small, localised customer bases. These smaller businesses are less likely to have professional social media strategies in place and will thus tend toward a less corporate approach to social media.

Contemporary studies of social media in smaller organisations tend to focus B2B contexts (Drummond et al., 2018; Michaelidou et al., 2011), where the predominant subjects are professional networking sites like Linked in and Viadeo (Lacoste, 2015). This leaves an opportunity for the research in this thesis to take a more holistic approach, incorporating not just B2B, but B2C, as well as a wider range of social (as opposed to professional ) social media sites. Although simply filling a gap is not necessarily the most valuable contribution to knowledge (Corley & Gioia, 2011), the

research undertaken here does meet the call of Felix et al. (2017) and Wang and Kim (2017) to extend social media studies across a wider set of variables, including culture, industry type and firm size.

Mention above of a less corporate approach to social media engagement is another area in which a contribution can be made. The debate around whether social media is a legitimate tool for business purposes raises the prominence of hedonic or personality based relationships, as opposed to hard commercial ones. This can be seen in the literature around brand communities and in concepts like Wang and Kim's (2017) social CRM. Hudson et al. (2016) advocate the value of an anthropomorphic brand, based around human characteristics through which to develop social media relationships. There is room here to extend this thinking beyond the anthropomorphic brand, into a human element on the part of the entire brewery, including its employees, if they are to engage effectively on social media. This meets the suggestion made by Merz et al. (2018), that areas around lifestyle and personality be developed in further research.

Perhaps the largest contribution that can be made however, is bringing together the various social media user engagement theories into a model that can be used to understand the drivers and behaviours of all the actors in the breweries' social media networks. These theories generally break down into four broad dimensions, each with several sub-dimensions. These broad dimensions are user objectives (Zhu & Chen, 2015); user psychology (Dessart et al., 2015); user gratification (Larivière et al., 2013); and user level of involvement (Kozinets, 2015). These different concepts are brought together in a conceptual model (Figure 2.6), to represent a holistic view of social media engagement. Here, users' objectives, psychologies, gratifications and levels of involvement are combined into a multi-dimensional profile of social media users. The model is used to guide the research design and data analysis, and is further developed from the research findings in Chapter 9.

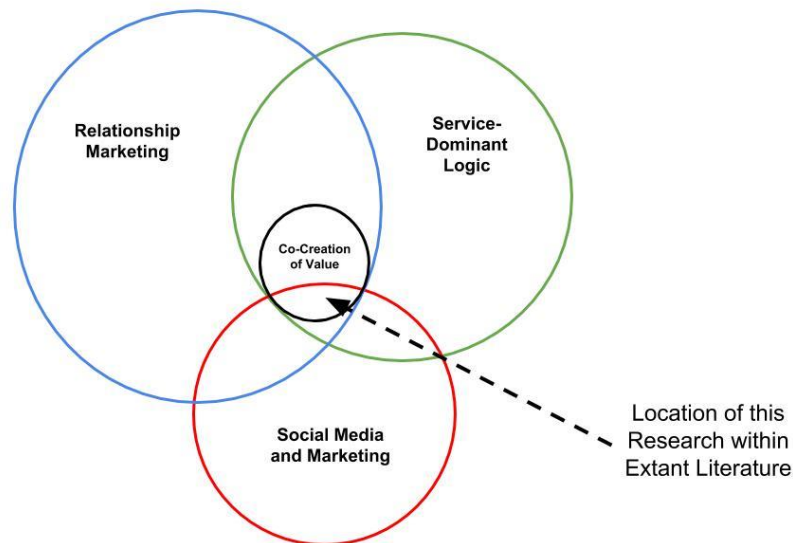


**Figure 2.6: A conceptual social media user engagement model  
(source: Author's own)**

## 2.9: Chapter Summary

The context of the research is positioned in the domain of relationship marketing because it is concerned with consumer interaction and involvement (Gummesson, 1987; Grönroos, 1994). As such, the literature review considers theories around how value is created through interaction and in particular what part the ‘social’ and ‘relational’ elements of the consumption experience might play in the co-creation of value. In order to focus these theories on the research topic, literature around social media and social media marketing is also reviewed. The literature review takes an interpretative approach, (Schultze, 2015), taking key influential texts and identifying areas that can be developed in line with the research objectives. The key areas considered are relationship marketing, anchored through the principles of service-dominant logic and

the co-creation of value. It is suggested here that advances in IT, specifically in the shape of online social media, have provided a platform for this co-creation through a social networking context (Halliday, 2016; Rihova et al., 2013). An integration of literatures in these areas can be seen in Figure 2.7.



**Figure 2.7: Integration of different literatures to support this thesis  
(source: Author's own)**

As beer is a low involvement, branded, fmcg it is concluded that consumer value is likely to derive through psychological ('hedonic', 'extrinsic') elements of co-creation (Holbrook, 2006) rather than the more practical or intrinsic elements. It is construed here that social media extends the basic consumption experience into something which is more complex and holistic (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009). In the words of Vargo and Lusch (2017) social media represents a service eco-system that supports resource integration among multiple stakeholders in the co-creation of value. The co-creation of value through multi-participant relationships widens the scope of the research into B2B and C2C, as well as B2C and C2B (Alves et al. 2016). At the same time, the social nature



of such relationships introduces elements of lifestyle and personality into the research (Halliday, 2016).

The literature around social media is diverse, but tends to divide between studies of participants' motivations and behaviours (e.g. Chan & Guillet, 2015; Dessart et al., 2015) and those which explore social media in an organisational context (e.g. Felix et al., 2017; Hudson et al., 2016). There is disagreement over how much control the organisation can exercise in the use of social media (Felix et al. 2017; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010), but general consensus that social media can represent a valuable co-creational resource for all users (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018).

In the light of this, the author identifies several areas where the literatures can be developed, in a way that can contribute to knowledge. First of these is by widening the scope from a single B2C or B2C perspective to one that involves all actors (Merz et al., 2018), which would include here general 'beer geeks', employees, competitors, and others in the supply and distribution chains around this sector. Doing so would address Vargo and Lusch's (2017) call for the development of mid-range, or meso-level theories around service-dominant logic and co-creation. Second, the research can build upon Halliday's (2016) suggestion that the various actors' life roles can shape the co-creation of value, by introducing the concept of lifestyle and individual personality as a moderator of co-created value (Merz et al., 2018). This would also develop Hudson et al.'s (2016) notion of an anthropomorphic brand, by extending the human element across the entire brewery and its employees.

The research undertaken is able to fill a gap by considering small independent breweries, rather than large, multi-national or high involvement brands which many studies of consumer involvement on social media tend to look at (Chan & Guillet, 2011; Dessart et al., 2015; Divol et al., 2012), but more importantly by meeting the call of Felix et al. (2017) and Wang and Kim (2017) to extend social media studies across a wider set of

variables, including culture, industry type and firm size. Finally, the various studies of actor engagement are brought together into a conceptual model consisting of user objectives (Zhu & Chen, 2015); user psychology (Dessart et al., 2015); user gratification (Larivière et al., 2013) and user involvement level (Kozinets, 2015). The resulting model is depicted in Figure 2.6 and serves as a basis from which to evaluate the effectiveness of social media engagement on the part of the independent breweries and the value derived by all parties therefrom.



## Chapter 3

### Research Methodology

#### 3.1: Introduction

The preceding chapters consider how Internet based social networking applications have challenged existing marketing theory and practice by creating a 'new landscape' in which customers, brands and organisations interact with each other. It is postulated that this new landscape can be addressed through relationship marketing, anchored in the multi-actor, resource integration theory of co-creation (Vargo & Lusch, 2017). Such an approach would support the study of the subjective experience delivered through engagement in online social media platforms. Various typologies of social media user objectives, psychology, gratification and involvement are combined into a user engagement model (Figure 2.6) suggesting a diverse and complex range of networks, relationships and motivations facing the would-be social media marketer. The purpose of this chapter is to position the research approaches, philosophies and traditions that are used to address this complex research area.

A review of research literature presents contrasting suggestions, ranging from starting at a philosophical level and working towards a detailed consideration of research methods (as exemplified by Saunders et al.'s 'Research Onion'; 2015) or alternatively, beginning with methods and working backwards to justify them. The latter approach is suggested by Crotty (1998) who argues that we start with a real life issue that we wish to address and work back to the wider theoretical and philosophical considerations which support what we are trying to do. This opens up the debate about whether we have a choice about our epistemological and ontological approaches (as suggested by Hassard, 1991) or whether we are inextricably committed to a single approach because

of our fundamental ontological and epistemological beliefs (as maintained by Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

Beginning as Crotty suggests, with research questions drawn out of the critical literature review, an attempt is made to justify these within an epistemological approach. The research approach, methodology, and methods are then developed from this, thus following something more akin to Saunders et al.'s (2015) 'research onion'. On the basis of these proposals an approach to analysing the research results is advanced and the chapter finishes with a summary of the research proposal. The following chapter (Chapter 4) describes in detail how the research was undertaken and how the data was broken down to arrive at the four major themes considered in the research analysis chapters, 5, 6, 7, and 8.

### **3.2: Research Philosophy**

In developing a research philosophy an ontological consideration must be made about how far social entities can be exist objectively, with a reality that exists independently to social actors, or alternatively how much that entity should be considered to be a social construction developed by those actors (Bryman, 2014). In this particular piece of research, the researcher must question what can be known about social media marketing? Ontologically, he accepts that a social reality exists independent of his own cognition and perceptions (McAuley et al., 2007). However, at the same time he accepts that this social reality cannot be observed objectively and that it will inevitably be influenced by the prevailing thoughts of the researcher and of those who are the subjects of the research. This leads to an ontological position of constructivism, being antithetical to objectivism and involving social phenomena and social interaction, with potentially multiple meanings (Bryman, 2014; Whitely, 2012). In other words, the

researcher is exploring the subjective experiences of breweries engaging with social media, with the objective of identifying potential sources of value.

At the same time it is possible to apply a range of epistemological standpoints from which to view the subject – how can we know what we know about social media and marketing? In marketing, these standpoints generally include positivism, realism, interpretivism (Johnson & Duberley, 2000) and post-modernism (Brown, 1993), depending on how far the researcher believes that something can be studied objectively as a natural science, or the extent that to which he/she believes that something can only be understood subjectively. Each of these stances has its proponents and opponents who argue vigorously that theirs is the most appropriate way of looking at theories and research in the social sciences, including marketing. Whilst each of them looks compelling in its own way, the vehemence of the arguments for and against each particular epistemology, suggests that adherence to any one is mutually exclusive (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

The question of objectivity raised above causes problems with adopting a positivist epistemology in this research. Johnson and Duberley (2000) remind us that the belief that science can produce objective knowledge rests upon the ontological assumption that there is an objective reality out there to be known. However this research is concerned with what is a very subjective area – relationship marketing, service-dominant logic and the the co-creation of value (Gummesson, 2003; Vargo & Lusch, 2004). The principles here are opposite to the mechanistic underpinnings of traditional marketing. Instead of aggregating customers into segments and assigning collective behaviours to all, relationship marketing looks at customers as individuals (Gummesson, 1987), and it accepts that multiple actors can be involved in the creation of value around a product or service (Vargo & Lush, 2017). These concepts acknowledge the foibles and eccentricities of the various actors, and their underlying attitudes and feelings. Why do we fall in love? Why do we make friends with some people and dislike

others? In marketing terms, why have thousands of people gone out of their way to join an online community called “My Nutella” in order to show their appreciation for a brand of chocolate hazelnut spread? (Cova & Pace, 2006). Can then, an objective reality of social networking in marketing ever be known?

Furthermore, adopting a positivist epistemology would require the researcher to remove all subjective bias in the assessment of a reality (Johnson & Duberley, 2000). The research involves online social networking and its impact on the marketing activities of independent breweries, but the researcher is already a participant in social media, with pre-conceived attitudes, thus precluding objectivity. It could also be said that as an enthusiastic consumer of the products of the independent breweries who form the subject of this research, he can hardly class himself as an objective observer! For these reasons the epistemological position of positivism has been rejected in this study.

This being the case, and at the other end of the scale, it might be questioned whether postmodernism is an appropriate platform from which to approach the subject. Firat and Venkatesh (1995) describe five themes of postmodernism - *hyperreality*; *fragmentation*; *reversal of production and consumption*; *decentred subjects*; and *juxtaposition of opposites* – all of which could be applied to this research area. Taking an epistemological view of postmodernism, would accept that there are multiple realities out there each with their own language and their own truth. In this sense it could be argued that postmodernism could support the fragmentation in marketing brought about by social media. However, postmodernism does not claim to have any of the answers, relying instead on deconstructing the epistemological theories of others. This has led to claims that it is parasitic and only able to demolish (Bauman, 1991). Thus whilst postmodernism looks attractive in marketing practice relating to social media, it has not been adopted as an epistemology in this study as the researcher believes that there is a meaning beyond what we can see.

Realism (and in particular critical realism) shares some of the features of positivism, namely that a common approach to finding knowledge can be adopted in both the natural and social sciences and that an external reality exists which is separate from the observer (Bryman, 2014). However, whereas positivism is empiricist, in that reality must be experienced directly through the senses, critical realism accepts that reality is shaped by underlying structures or discourses which are not amenable to our senses. Critical realism is therefore concerned with the identification and understanding of these structures, accepting that this will entail hypothetical descriptions. In other words a realist approach is reflective (as opposed to reflexive) and takes a view of an established order, albeit subjectively viewed. However, mindful of the dynamic environment and shifting structures brought about by social media (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018), the researcher believes that a more reflexive approach is needed here. As a result, and given the researcher's constructivist ontological position, a realist epistemological position is rejected in this thesis.

This leaves interpretivism as a natural position from which to conduct this research study. The interpretivist approach, would enable a qualitative research methodology which would appear to meet the research objectives. It would also fit with the grander theories of relationship marketing, networks and interactionism, supporting Gummesson's (2003) view that "all research is interpretative". The use of interpretative research in the study of consumption experiences is also supported by Cova and Elliot (2008) who in describing *interpretative consumer research* talk of the subjective components of the consumption experience, including hedonic aspects of searching for pleasure and enjoyment through consumption. This does sound like it might apply to the consumption of beer brands! Rather than seeking causality, interpretative studies aim to theorise patterns and connections, emphasising the subjectivity of the actors and the emergence of multiple realities (Charmaz, 2012). From an axiological perspective, the researcher accepts that his approach will be value-laden, as both a beer consumer and a 'digital-immigrant' and that the approach taken will inevitably be subjectivist.



Accepting this need for reflexivity, and the subjectively experienced nature in which social media engagement takes place (across all actors), an interpretative approach is deemed the most suitable for this research study.

Summarising this section, although marketing has long been associated with positivist, realist theory, recent developments in the form of relationship marketing have caused these views to be questioned. Furthermore, the whole marketing 'landscape' has been thrown into disarray by the advent of Internet based social media which has arguably reversed the traditional roles of buyer and seller and has been accompanied by greater fragmentation of markets and a decentred subjectivity. Given the dynamic and amorphous nature of social media described in the previous chapter, the subjective way in which it is experienced (as exemplified in the user engagement model depicted in Figure 2.6) and the researcher's own preconceptions around the subject, an interpretivist epistemology has been adopted in this research.

### **3.3: Research Approach**

Bryman (2014) makes the point that effective research questions must connect with existing literature and theory. However, relating the literature to the research questions, and the subsequent design of the research methodology, inevitably raises the question of whether to take an inductive or a deductive approach. Having already underpinned this research with relationship based theories, the gut feel is for an inductive approach, as relationship marketing thinking sets out to offer an alternative to traditional, established marketing theories with something which is more holistic. Describing traditional marketing as being stuck in obsolete paradigms and rituals Gummesson (1998) launches a vehement plea for an inductive approach to research in marketing, based on the notion that marketing knowledge must be based upon the experiences of reflective practitioners.

However, the literature review shows that relationship marketing, service-dominant logic (SDL) and the principle of value co-creation are themselves now established subjects with their own concepts, models and theories. This suggests that the research here could be deductive, as it will draw upon these theories. In addition, a deductive approach would seek to test or explain the findings against existing studies of social media, SDL and Halliday's (2016) consumer culture theory, or Felix et al.'s (2017) strategic social media framework. In particular, the four areas which are combined in the conceptual user engagement model (Figure 2.6) - user objectives (Zhu & Chen, 2015); user psychology (Dessart et al., 2015); user gratification (Larivière et al., 2013); and user level of involvement (Kozinets, 2015) - could be applied deductively. Indeed, deduction is the predominant approach of many existing research studies around social media. For example, Chan and Guillet (2011) based their study of online social media in the Hong Kong hotel sector on Kierskowski et al.'s (1996) *digital marketing framework*, whilst Hatch & Schultz (2010) based their study of LEGO's online brand community around Prahalad and Ramaswamy's (2004) earlier '*building blocks*' of co-creation.

Nevertheless there remains in the mind of this researcher a reluctance to follow a deductive route, not least because the research is being conducted into what has repeatedly been described as a 'new marketing landscape', and one which is potentially still developing (Alves et al., 2016; Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018). It would seem therefore that the research here will necessarily be inductive, particularly when the user engagement model (Figure 2.6), which is developed by the author from existing studies, is used. The danger however, is that such research can become what Marsden (1982) terms 'naïve empiricism' where data is simply collected without any theoretical development. Whilst it is possible to generate theory purely inductively (e.g. through grounded theory), in practice it is difficult to eschew all existing knowledge and pre-conceptions borne out of latent theory (Bulmer, 1979).

For this reason the approach taken here is a mixture of inductive and deductive, hoping to extend existing theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) by using the user engagement model (Figure 2.6) as a conceptual framework (Teece, 2009). Such a framework would be less rigid than a new theoretical model, as in Teece's words "*it is sometimes agnostic about the particular form of theoretical relationships that might exist*" (p 5). This approach might be described as abductive reasoning, being a mid-way point between induction and deduction, whereby the researcher "*matches theories by systematically combining findings from the field and theory from the literature...*" (Polosa, 2013, p 289). Unlike deduction, abduction does not seek to prove a point, but it does make inferences which are most likely to be true, given the evidence. In this study, theories of the co-creation of value and a combination of social media engagement studies are used to understand how and why people engage with social media in and around independent breweries, and how those breweries might use this engagement to their advantage. To conclude this discussion, an abductive approach, somewhere between deductive and inductive is adopted in this study.

Thus far an implicit assumption has been made that the research will be qualitative given the constructivist and interpretivist philosophy that has been adopted. The overall research aim - *to develop a better understanding of how social media is shaping relationships between businesses and their customers, and determining the value (if any) of its use in the UK independent brewery sector* – might be construed as being concerned with qualitative research because of its use of the word 'value'. Contemporary dictionary definitions of 'value' all describe it in terms of *worth, desirability* and *utility* (Milliken, 2001) which can be adjudged subjectively (i.e. what is valuable to one person might not be valuable to the next). Such thinking underpins relationship marketing where individual experience is emphasised, and it is no surprise that Gummesson (2005) is an exponent of qualitative research methods in marketing, pointing to the complexity, ambiguity, fuzziness, chaos, change, uncertainty and unpredictability of modern markets to support his view. Given the dynamic, yet

amorphous nature of social media, described in the previous chapter, Gummesson's words might readily be applied to the research area.

However, although the research questions outlined in Chapter 1 are predominantly qualitative in nature, some of them do lend themselves to a quantitative approach. For example, the questions around who engages with brewery based social media, and how social media engagement might affect brewery performance, could be construed in a quantitative context. As a result a 'mixed methods' approach has been considered, based on both qualitative and quantitative research. Such an approach has become increasingly accepted and popular, particularly in studies of marketing (Hanson & Grimmer, 2005). Of the three classifications of mixed methods research put forward by Hammersley (1996), '*facilitation*' would appear to be most justified to this particular research study's purposes because the use of quantitative research might pave the way for qualitative by for example, providing background data to the sector, and helping to select breweries to interview. Of the other mixed methods approaches suggested by Hammersley (2005) '*triangulation*' sounds less relevant as this suggests that the results of the quantitative research can be used to corroborate the results of the qualitative. In this study the two types of research would be producing answers to different questions (use of social media against the nature of the co-creation of value) so corroboration via triangulation would be difficult. Hammersley's final approach '*complementary*' is relevant here because it enables different aspects of the investigation to be dovetailed.

Whilst a mixed methods approach might not be acceptable to those who adhere to the notion that research methods are fixed to a particular epistemological commitment, it would appear to work well at the 'technical' level of data collection and analysis (Bryman, 2014). However, for the purposes of this study, there is a reluctance to commit to a quantitative approach (even within mixed methods) for the reasons outlined above about the complex, ambiguous and potentially fuzzy nature of the research area, as well as the practical considerations of conducting surveys when the

researcher's interest lies in the underlying subjective concepts of social media relationships and co-creation of value. Here the underlying concepts of social media marketing, networks and relationships can be viewed as 'sensitising' concepts Blumer (1954). Unlike the 'definitive' concepts of quantitative research, 'sensitising' concepts need not be capable of measurement and can instead present more of a sense of reference and guidance when viewing empirical data. In short therefore, although some quantitative data is gathered in this research in order to position the sector, it is not claimed that a mixed methods approach is used, as the research undertaken is predominantly qualitative. To summarise, the thesis is advanced as a constructivist, interpretative, qualitative study.

### **3.4: Research Methodology**

In developing a research methodology, it is questioned here whether an interpretivist approach incorporating symbolic interactionism or phenomenology might be more appropriate. On the surface, symbolic interactionism appears to fit the research area because it is about shared meaning and the way in which we use symbols to represent this meaning (Alvesson & Berg, 1992). Thus the brands of independent breweries might represent the symbols and the social networks of Facebook or Twitter would be the collective resource by which people make meaning of the brands. Such research might be conducted using focus groups or some form of online ethnography. The problem however is that symbolic interactionism is collective and does not consider the deeper, emotional aspects of interaction within the individual (McAuley et al., 2007). Being interpretative in a collective way, it is concerned with behaviour which is stable, or changing gradually (Burrell & Morgan, 1979) and is thus less able to address the fast moving and dynamic situation of the 'new marketing landscape'. For these reasons symbolic interactionism has been rejected in this research.

Phenomenology is a more attractive proposition here because it considers the deeper emotions and values which underlie the way in which individuals give meaning to their experiences (McAuley et al., 2007). In this study, a phenomenological approach would enable a consideration of the meanings attributed by the brewery to its social media engagement. Acknowledging that phenomenology can be both a research philosophy and a research methodology (Gill, 2014), for the purpose of this study, Van Manan's (2007) orientation of phenomenology to practice is accepted, linking the 'in-being' experiences of our life-world (as described by Heidegger, 1985), to the way in which we act. Van Manan's 'pathic' understanding based around "relational, situational, corporeal, temporal, actional" (2007, p 20) tendencies is clearly seen in this thesis in the four broad themes of the analysis chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8. For example chapter 5 is based around sector specific characteristics around independent breweries as exemplified in the lived experience of the actors involved in this sector. The lived experience theme is continued in the subsequent chapters relating to 'lifestyle', 'relationships', and 'control'. Here, depth interviews are an appropriate research method in order to uncover the 'common sense' reflected in the everyday details of our lives. Such an ethno-methodological approach would attempt to show how people develop an understanding of the world (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2000) and thus fit the research questions relating to the expectations and experiences of the independent breweries. For this reason, the research here is supported by a phenomenological methodology.

Gill (2014) reminds us that use of a phenomenological approach is more commonly seen in studies of nursing, pedagogy or psychology. However, several authors have shown how it can be useful in management research, including Gill (2014), Wilson (2012), and Ardley (2011). The latter two articles specifically apply phenomenological methods to marketing and consumer studies, so the author of this research is comfortable with adopting such an approach. It is acknowledged however that use of phenomenology precludes the use of grounded theory (Starks & Brown Trinidad, 2017). Section 3.6 of

this thesis describes how the data analysis draws upon grounded methods, using an abductive approach whereby the researcher constantly interacts with his or her data in order to develop the analysis (Charmaz, 2011). It must be stressed that this approach does not constitute the use of grounded theory per se, as the author is not using the multiple sources usually associated with Grounded Theory (Starks & Brown Trinidad), but is concerned with the philosophical notion of gaining understanding through in-depth interviews of the lived-experiences of the respondents.

### **3.5: Research Methods**

Having adopted an interpretative, phenomenological methodology, the next choice is how to go about generating the data needed to address the research questions. Unlike positivism, a relatively wide range of research methods is available within this approach, including surveys, ethnographies and case studies. In choosing a method, Easton (2010) advises us to think about the research questions. Generally speaking, these can be categorised into “who”, “what”, “where”, “how” and “why” questions (Yin, 2018).

It can be seen that the research questions outlined earlier fall across the “how”, “why” and “what” categories. In terms of this research study the “how” and “why” questions fulfil the exploratory, qualitative nature of the research area. According to Yin (2018) “what” questions can be viewed either as exploratory, as in aiming to develop propositions for further study, or descriptive, as in “how much” or “how many”. In this case the “what” questions are more exploratory in nature as they are intended to assess the potential for co-created value. For these reasons a descriptive survey is not a suitable method for this research (although a survey of secondary data relating the general area of independent breweries and social media may be necessary to set the scene for the deeper research). Neither is an experimental method appropriate. Although Yin (2018) concedes that an experimental approach can be used for

exploratory purposes, it would require the identification and isolation of variables and the controlled measurement of change (Saunders et al., 2015). This would be outside the scope of this research which is predominantly qualitative in nature.

Having identified an exploratory strategy, a number of methods are still open to the researcher, the most prominent of which appear to be in-depth interviews, case study research, and ethnography. On the surface ethnography would appear to be an attractive option because it is able to provide the *“thick description of the lived experience”* (Elliot & Jankel-Elliot, 2003, p 215) that the study area might require. A form of participant observation (Bryman, 2014), when used in a business research sense, ethnography is often associated with organisations, whereby the researcher becomes part of the organisation for a period of time. Whilst this might be appropriate for exploring how and why independent breweries use social media, it is not practical or possible for the researcher in this study to undertake organisational ethnography.

There remains however, the possibility of using ethnography here in the sense of engaging as a social media user. The rapid spread of, and ubiquity, of social media has led Kozinets (1998) to coin a whole new term - 'Netnography' – to describe such a research approach. However, whilst this appears to be an attractive proposition, given the nature of this research study, the author is mindful of Caliandro's (2018) caution of the need to manage the complexities of multiple social media environments. Caliandro suggests that social media ethnography is more than simply identifying an online community with which to associate, it is more about studying online social formations across multiple sites and engagement methods. In the beer world this would entail immersing oneself in the social media sites of numerous independent breweries, as well as third party sites associated with this sector, such as Untappd and RateBeer; and multiple individual blog sites dedicated to beer and brewing. Such an endeavour is beyond the scope of this study, and so social media ethnography has been ruled out.



Like ethnography, case study research is referred to as a 'naturalistic' design (Stake, 1995), as opposed to experimentally contrived, thus fitting the research objectives. The use of a case study method would fit the research questions - as Yin (2018) points out it is a preferred method for "how" and "what" questions. Yin further asserts that it is an appropriate method for studies of complex social phenomena (e.g. social networking) and those that are traced over time and may thus give some meaning to the dynamic nature of social media in marketing terms. However, case study research entails a very detailed examination of single cases, such as Chen and Tabari's (2017) study of the impact of negative online reviews on the Marriott Hotel Group in Beijing. The depth of such intensive analysis usually entails multiple angles and data sources from which to get a detailed picture. For example, Chen and Tabari's (2017) study included online customer feedback, coupled with managerial responses, employee attitudes and overall business performance. It is the intention here to use in-depth interviews with a number of independent breweries, but these cannot on their own constitute case studies. For this reason the use of a case study method has been rejected in this thesis.

Use of in-depth interviews with multiple independent breweries enables the researcher to develop ideas and understanding based on the perspectives of different respondents (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Drummond et al. (2018) use in-depth interviews in their study of social media impact on entrepreneurial firms' relationships and networks. Such an approach enabled them to gather "*perspectives, opinions and experiences on social media use*" (p 73), which, coupled with empirical data from the firm's social media platforms, is developed into a conceptualisation of activity structures in B2B networks. Drawing on Drummond et al.'s approach, the author is comfortable that use of in-depth interviews is an appropriate tool for a social media impact study. Such interviews can be either unstructured or semi-structured, depending on how far the same questions and question sequence are used amongst different respondents (Bryman, 2014). A semi-structured interview technique is compatible with the qualitative approach taken in this research, focusing on the respondent's personal point of view. Allowing

respondents to elaborate on, or deviate from the questions posed, enables them to highlight what is important or relevant to them. It also allows the researcher to exercise an element of control, such that a convergent interviewing technique can be used in order to narrow down emerging themes. Such an approach requires the preparation of an interview guide, comprising a loose list of issues to be addressed (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). Whilst not rigidly binding, use of such a guide ensures the collection of similar types of data from different respondents, thus saving time and reducing material that is of less relevance to the agenda. This is not to say that each interview should be the same. As Daymon and Holloway acknowledge (2011); *“Each interview differs from those before and after it because your developing knowledge leads you to concentrate on particular areas, and also because of the interest of participants”* (p 223). For the purpose of this research, semi-structured in-depth interviews are used, and an interview guide prepared separately before each interview – an example of the first one can be seen in Appendix 4.

In terms of developing the data 'iterative explanation building' (Yin, 2018) would fit the analytic abduction approach. This involves continual revision of theoretical positions as the data is examined until a consistency between developed theory and observation is achieved. To facilitate iterative explanation building, convergent interviewing is proposed whereby emerging themes are tested in subsequent interviews until no new data is generated (Rao & Perry, 2003). Rao and Perry contend that this is an appropriate method to investigate under-researched areas because it can quickly narrow down a wide field of enquiry to key issues relating to the area of study. Whilst it is not suggested here that social media marketing is under-researched, it could be construed as a complex area, with many potential lines of enquiry, straddling both management and psychological issues. However, Rao and Perry's (2003) convergent interviewing takes a very structured approach, using a snowball method to find new interviewees and, as the interviews proceed, developing a conceptual framework that can then be tested. They contrast convergent interviewing with in-depth interviews, which are far less structured.

However, they acknowledge that in convergent interviewing the interviewer must have prior knowledge of the subject under investigation, and in this study that is not the case. The researcher in this thesis is approaching the subject in a very exploratory way, with areas identified in literature, but with no knowledge of how or why they might apply in independent breweries. As such in-depth interviews are proposed which are based upon a convergent approach, but do not comply with the highly structured method outlined by Rao and Perry (2003).

### **3.6: Analysis of Data**

The analysis of qualitative data is not as straightforward as it is for quantitative because it does not tend to be structured or numeric (Silverman, 2010). As a result a number of options are open to researchers including analytic induction and grounded theory (Bryman, 2014). Grounded theory may well be appropriate here because it seeks consistency of explanation through the examination of multiple data sources (e.g. interviews, observations, etc.). In this way emerging ideas are coded, developed and refined against existing theories (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). However, in being totally inductive, it would not support the development of existing theories around social media marketing and networks. As is already intimated, it is hoped to use an approach here that is between inductive and deductive in order to develop existing theory. In this sense it is more likely that some form of analytic abduction is better as this will enable the researcher to relate the iterative cycles of data collection to existing theories until a revised theoretical platform is supported by the data. Here, abduction refers to an inferential conclusion which is most likely to represent actuality. It does not however go so far as to positively verify that conclusion, as a deductive reasoning approach might, by either proving or falsifying existing theory. Neither does it follow a totally inductive path, by developing new theory from observation, rather it seeks "*a situational fit between observed facts and rules*" (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p 171). This fits the

convergent interviewing approach used in this research because it narrows down the observations from consecutive interviews to find a most likely explanation.

Such an approach might be construed as using grounded theory *methods*, as opposed to the use of pure grounded theory per se. Such methods “*begin with inductive logic, use emergent strategies, rely on comparative enquiry, and are explicitly analytic*” (Charmaz, 2011, p 359). The use of an iterative, convergent interviewing technique, as described above would fit Charmaz's description to a certain extent, in the use of a grounded approach to the data collection. However, in terms of data analysis, pure grounded theory would require the use of a number of specific tools including theoretical sampling, where the analyst simultaneously collects, codes, analyses and develops theory as he or she goes along (Bryman, 2014). This is not exactly how the research analysis in this thesis is proposed. Rather, it will be more abductive, in developing theories and concepts, such as the user engagement model already advanced in the thesis. Charmaz (2011) acknowledges that an abductive approach can be consistent with using a grounded method, because the researcher is constantly interacting with his or her data in order to develop the analysis. In this thesis, convergent interviewing leads to the development of themes which are then coded and sub-coded in the analysis process. It is conjectured here therefore that grounded methods are employed both in the collection and the analysis of the data, but it is not claimed that this represents a pure grounded theory approach. In order to facilitate the collection and analysis of the data in this way, use of computer aided qualitative data analysis software (CAQDAS) is proposed.

Bryman (2014) points out that CAQDAS has now become an accepted part of qualitative data analysis, particularly when one is working from a large data set, as is the case in this study. They highlight the advantages of using CAQDAS, not least its ability to make the coding and data retrieval process much quicker and more efficient. In addition, given that the research here is all about computer based social media platforms, the use of a

computer based platform for data analysis seems appropriate. CAQDAS facilitates the use of coding, whereby the interview data is broken up into sentences or sections which are then assigned a word or short phrase to capture their essence or deeper meaning (Saldaña, 2016). In this way the data becomes organised, with similarly coded pieces of data grouped together in categories, such that patterns start to emerge. An Nvivo 11 CAQDAS application is used in this research to facilitate this coding process and ensure rigour in the form of a clear audit trail between the data and the emerging themes.

### **3.7: Ensuring Rigour**

Unlike quantitative research whose accuracy can be tested through tightly defined reliability and validity constructs, qualitative studies rely on reflection and reflexivity, with no one right way of achieving one's objectives (Whitely, 2012). As such, various means of assessing the rigour with which a qualitative study has been undertaken have been proposed. For example, Murphy and Yelder (2010) suggest four dimensions: credibility; transferability; dependability; and confirmability, whilst Porter (2007) cites six: transparency; accuracy; purposivity; utility; propriety; and accessibility. The problem is that such dimensions are themselves arbitrary, in that they are subjectively viewed and do not possess hard, scaleable boundaries. As such it is acknowledged that achieving the same consensus of evaluative criteria that are used by quantitative researchers will not be possible (Tracy, 2010). Despite these difficulties, it is important to demonstrate rigour and the author of this thesis defends the rigour of his research against the framework set out by Tracy (2010) which blends the criteria of the end goals of strong research with the various methods by which these goals have been achieved. In doing so, Tracy purports to create a parsimonious, conceptual framework from which to test the rigour of any piece of qualitative research. This eight criteria framework is applied to the author's research in Table 3.1.

<b>Criteria for Quality</b>	<b>Means, Practices and Methods Through Which Achieved</b>
<b>Worthy Topic</b>	<p>Topicality of social media, as described in section 1.2.2, and illustrated in recent news announcements of companies pulling out of social media</p> <p>Of practical use to independent breweries</p> <p>Concerned with a burgeoning sector which is bucking national trends</p>
<b>Rich Rigour</b>	<p>Incorporates a theoretical concept (the user engagement model - Figure 2.6) to develop theory</p> <p>Use of both CAQDAS and manual coding</p> <p>Use of analytic memos after each interview</p> <p>Existence of a full audit trail relating to the research</p>
<b>Sincerity</b>	<p>Application of self-reflexivity (the author is a beer drinking digital-immigrant)</p> <p>Limitations of the research acknowledged in section 9.4.1</p> <p>Transparency about methods used and challenges faced given in Chapter 4</p>
<b>Credibility</b>	<p>All interviews recorded and transcribed verbatim (see example in Appendix 5)</p> <p>Verbatim quotations from anonymised respondents used throughout the data analysis Chapters, 5, 6, 7 and 8</p>
<b>Resonance</b>	<p>The research moves beyond a basic organisation-customer perspective and brings in issues of lifestyle among all actors connected with the topic</p>

	The research presents a practical explanation and guide for small independent breweries
<b>Significant Contribution</b>	The research is problem driven, revelatory and prescient (as outlined in Section 1.5) The original contribution to knowledge is described in Section 9.3.5
<b>Ethical</b>	Institutional and procedural ethics followed throughout All permissions sought and agreed, respondents anonymised and audit trails kept (Section 4.2.4 gives details)
<b>Meaningful Coherence</b>	Research aim, objectives and questions presented in Section 1.3 Aim, objectives and questions answered in Section 9.4, bringing the thesis full circle Inclusion of a justified research methodology (Chapter 3) Brings together theory and research in an abductive way

**Table 3.1: Application of Tracy's (2010) "Eight 'Big Tent' Criteria for Excellent Qualitative Research" to this study**

### **3.8: Chapter Summary**

An ontological position of constructivism is adopted in this research because the subject involves social phenomena and social interaction, which the author believes are experiences of those involved, rather than a separate reality existing independently of

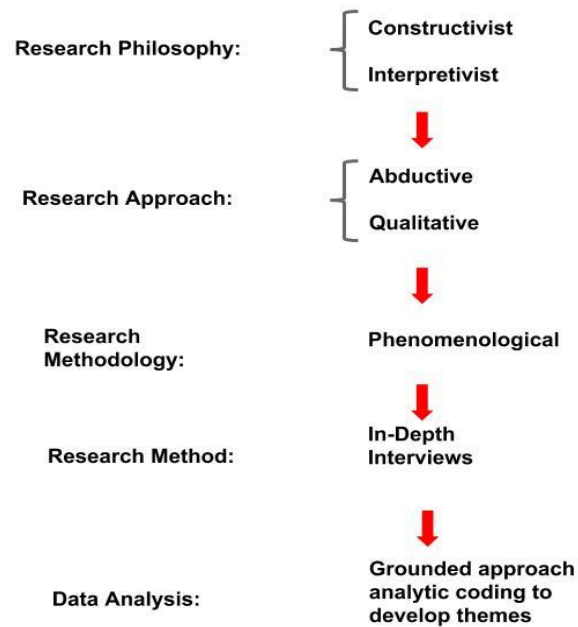
the actors. This leads to the rejection of a positivist paradigm, which is untenable with the researcher's belief that social media relationships cannot be studied objectively. At the other end of the scale, a postmodernist approach is also rejected because the researcher does not accept that a social reality exists which is shaped by the underlying constructs and discourses of social media engagement. Of the remaining epistemological paradigms an approach based around realism is rejected because it cannot accommodate the reflexivity required in what the author believes is a dynamic and ever-shifting environment. Instead, an interpretative approach is adopted because it emphasises the subjectivity of the actors involved in the study, and the potential emergence of multiple realities.

In determining a research approach, a mixture of inductive and deductive is proposed, referred to here as an abductive approach. This will use a conceptual framework, which the author advances from social media engagement theory, to develop themes and concepts from the research data. The research itself is predominantly qualitative in nature, being concerned with the breweries' subjective experiences of social media engagement and the perception of worth, or value, created therefrom. The nature of these experiences and perceptions leads here to the adoption of a methodology based around phenomenology, because this enables a consideration of the deeper emotions and values through which the actors give meaning to their experiences.

Having adopted an interpretative, phenomenological methodology, the use of in-depth, semi-structured interviews with brewery owners or managers is proposed to gather the research data. Ethnography is rejected here because it would not be practical or feasible for the researcher to immerse himself fully with the social media operations of a brewery from within. At the same time a case study method is rejected because this would involve drilling down into a single brewery or breweries, whereas the intention here is to gather data across a number of breweries to develop a broader picture. The use of semi-structured, in-depth interviews enables data gathering in an iterative way



which fits the abductive approach taken. In this way the data is collected and analysed simultaneously in what is described as a grounded method (as opposed to the use of pure grounded theory) in order to develop themes and concepts. A convergent interviewing technique is proposed to develop these themes, which are then coded and sub-coded in the analysis process, using a CAQDAS application. Throughout the whole process, rigour is ensured using Tracy's (2010) 'Big Tent' criteria as a yardstick (Table 3.1). The approaches described in this chapter are summarised in Figure 3.1.



**Figure 3.1: A summary of the research approaches taken in this thesis  
(source: Author's own)**

## **Chapter 4**

### **Data Collection and Analysis**

#### **4.1: Introduction**

The previous chapter outlined how the research follows an interpretative approach using in-depth interviews with owners or senior managers of independent breweries. Whilst an element of quantitative secondary data is used to get a better picture of the sector parameters, the bulk of the data analysis is qualitative. This comprises analytic abduction techniques using iterative explanation building to develop existing theories. Those theories are summarised at the end of Chapter 2 in the user engagement model (Figure 2.6).

The purpose of this chapter shifts to how the research was carried out, detailing the interviewee selection process, the development of the interview questions and the justification behind the approach that was taken. The practical obstacles encountered along the way are described along with an acknowledgement of the research ethics adhered to in this study. The chapter goes on to describe the data analysis process and concludes by showing how the findings were developed into the four major themes examined in chapters 5, 6, 7, and 8.

#### **4.2: The Research Process**

Whilst the issue of statistical sampling is not significant in qualitative research (Bryman, 2014) the focus of this study is to consider how small breweries engage with social media. Confining the study to independent breweries maintains the criteria of

considering small businesses, as it excludes multi-national corporations such as AB InBev, Carlsberg or Molson Coors, and large national brewery groups, such as Greene King, Marston's or Charles Wells. Whilst these companies take a large share of the total UK beer market, they are relatively few in number compared to the many hundreds of smaller, independent breweries.

#### **4.2.1: Secondary research findings on the independent brewery sector**

For the purpose of this research a spreadsheet was compiled incorporating 1,195 independent breweries operating in the UK in 2016 (see Appendix 1). This list was put together from the not-for-profit wiki site, Quaffale, run by beer enthusiasts, which was then cross referenced with the brewery listings in CAMRA's 2016 Good Beer Guide. It is not intended to be definitive, largely because the sector is dynamic, with some of those listed ceasing trading since the list was compiled, new breweries coming along and others brewing periodically as part of a wider set of business activities (e.g. brewpubs). However, it serves as a reasonable estimate of numbers, given that the independent breweries trade body, SIBA, has a membership of around 840 and claims to represent around 80% of the independent brewery sector by volume (SIBA, 2017). The purpose of compiling this list was to get a picture of how much social media was being used by the independent breweries. As such each brewery's website was visited, to establish that it was a genuine beer brewing business and also to identify which, if any, social media platforms the brewery was using. This was followed up with exploration across the most prominent social media sites (Twitter and Facebook) to identify the breweries that were active there.

Brewpubs (defined here as pubs brewing beer solely for sale in their own outlet) were not considered in this analysis as these businesses might be classed as predominantly service, as opposed to product based. It was noted in Chapter 2 that it was easier for

service providers to build on customer experience and co-creation around a relationship encounter, than it was for product manufacturers (Brodie et al., 1997; Vargo & Lusch, 2004; Zineldin & Philipson, 2007). Whilst Hudson et al. (2016) acknowledge that social media can provide a platform for manufacturers to engage in relationship building with their end consumers, it will be far easier for a pub to develop personal relationships with its customers than it will be for breweries that rely on intermediaries to sell their products. Furthermore, the nature of the relationship will be different as with a brewpub it will be more likely based around the location and activities of the pub (e.g. quiz nights, new menus, accommodation, etc.) than it will be about the beer itself. As the objective of this research is to explore the co-creation of value between breweries and their social media users, brewpubs, and others whose brewing of beer is a side-line to their core activities, have not been included here. This is not to say however that none of those breweries interviewed had a service element to their business. Many breweries undertake online sales, have a brewery shop or visitor centre, offer brewery tours and take part in beer festivals and other events. Accepting this, the key consideration in this research is that their core activity is the brewing of beer and that their social media engagement is predominantly based around this, rather than any service they offer.

Having refined the list in this way, it could be seen that 90% of independent breweries were using some form of social media. All of these were using Facebook and/or Twitter, with Twitter coming out marginally on top. A diverse range of other platforms was also being used, albeit in small numbers as illustrated in Table 4.1.

Twitter	70%
Facebook	66%
Twitter and Facebook together	55%
Personal blog	1%

Instagram	1%
YouTube	0.5%
Others	2%

**Table 4.1: Percentage of independent breweries using social media platforms  
(source: Author's own)**

The secondary data gathered in this way was valuable for two reasons. First, it narrows down the research population. Saunders (2012) reminds us that qualitative research is usually approached through a non-probability sample, and that in such situations the specification of a population is not necessary. However, he goes on to point out that the researcher must use his or her judgement to determine who should be included in the research and who should be left out, based upon the need to meet the overall research aims. As explained above, brewpubs, and other predominantly service based brewery businesses have necessarily been omitted from consideration.

Second, the secondary findings reveal a background picture to assist the researcher develop an interview guide based on a semi-structured interview approach. Bryman (2014) suggests that such an approach is appropriate where the topic under investigation has a fairly clear focus; where the researcher has a clear idea of how the data will be analysed (more on which later); and where multiple examples are being considered in order to enable cross-case comparability. Thus, the secondary data led to interview questions around the nature and choice of social media platforms being used in the independent brewery sector. In this way, basic secondary research into the use of social media in the sector is able to support and guide the primary research that follows.

#### **4.2.2: Towards a non-probability sample**

In selecting respondents for the depth interviews, a non-probability approach was taken for a number of reasons. First, the list of independent breweries described above cannot be taken as a definitive sampling frame, thus ruling out probability sampling (Bradley, 2012). Second, the number of breweries interviewed is likely to be fewer than the suggested minimum of 30 (Stutely, 2003) required for statistical analysis, thus again precluding the use of a probability sample. In any case, the underlying epistemology of this research is not one of positivism, it being based on the researcher's judgement rather than statistical probability (Saunders, 2012).

Of the non-probability sampling techniques described by Saunders (2012), a purposive approach was deemed the most suitable for this research. Purposive sampling requires the researcher to use his or her judgement to select respondents best able to address the research aims (Miles & Huberman, 1994). In this case breweries were selected who were prominent engagers with social media. No attempt was made to select what Saunders (2012) describes as 'critical' or 'extreme' cases, the researcher preferring to interview 'typical' cases that represent the sector in general (albeit not in a statistical way). In this way the nature of social media engagement across the sector might be gauged. The list of independent breweries compiled for this research was able to assist in this purposive selection.

In practice an element of 'convenience' sampling was also employed. Whilst Saunders (2012) describes the risk of convenience samples being 'haphazard', he acknowledges that they can often meet the sample selection criteria. In this research the breweries initially approached were based in the South Yorkshire and North Derbyshire region where the researcher himself is based. Not only was this convenient from a practical point of view, in terms of travel and setting up interviews, it also presented a large cross-section of typical independent breweries. Research undertaken by the University of

Sheffield in 2016 suggested that this region has 57 independent breweries, the highest number per capita of population in the UK (Brown, 2016b). Furthermore, whilst still conforming to the criteria of 'independents', these breweries ranged in age, size, beer styles and social media usage. Notwithstanding this, a number of breweries in other areas were contacted, partly through the researcher's existing contacts and partly through 'snowballing' recommendations from breweries already interviewed. These were in North and West Yorkshire, Lancashire, Greater Manchester, Oxfordshire, Cornwall, Dorset and Kent. In all 27 breweries were contacted, and a total of 16 interviews undertaken.

In terms of the sample size needed in a qualitative study, there are no hard and fast rules, as statistical validity is not an objective. Here, the validity of the research is dependent on the quality of the data analysis rather than the size of the sample (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Saunders, 2012; Silverman, 2010). Nevertheless, a number of commentators suggest a minimum of 15 (Bertaux, 1981) or a figure between 5 and 25 (Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009). The 16 interviews secured fitted both of these recommendations. In practice the sample size of 16 was determined sufficient when it appeared that saturation was being reached in the data generated, a point described by Daymon and Holloway (2011) as when *"no new data emerge that are important for the agenda of the study"* (p 217). Thus, the data analysis commenced in parallel with the data collection, such that a form of convergent interviewing technique was used (Williams & Lewis, 2005). In this way, concepts raised in the first interviews were used for developing questions in the following interviews and after around 12 interviews, no new conceptual areas were generated in the further four that followed.

#### **4.2.3: Conducting the interviews**

The interviews took place between August 2016 and March 2017. Selected breweries were contacted by e-mail or social media messaging, in batches of two or three so as not

to overwhelm the researcher and to allow time for analysis of the data between each interview. In this way, the interviews were spread out more or less evenly across an eight month period. The initial approach briefly outlined the nature of the research and the requests were tailored to each brewery, using the researcher's prior knowledge of that brewery's history and products. Some breweries responded almost immediately to the request, and these ended up being the ones that were interviewed. Those that did not respond were followed up two or three times, but in none of these cases was an interview successfully secured. Where e-mail addresses were not available, the breweries were contacted through Facebook messaging. Ironically, given the subject of the research, none of those contacted through social media replied to the researcher!

It was originally envisaged that the researcher would travel to the respondent's brewery to conduct the interview, but in fact only three of the 16 interviews conducted took place in the breweries' offices. Daymon and Holloway (2011) remind us that qualitative interviews can be conducted face-to-face, over the telephone, or online via e-mail. In this research all three of these techniques were used, in each case the method adopted being the preference of the respondent. The different locations and interview methods are summarised in Table 4.2 (pseudonyms have been used here for each of the respondents to hide their real identities - these pseudonyms will be used for the remainder of this thesis).

**Table 4.2: The interview respondents**

<b>Brewery</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Brewer?</b>	<b>Interview Location</b>
IB1 <i>DI</i>	Dom <i>DI</i>	Manager	N	Pub where IB1's beers on sale
IB2 <i>DI</i>	Adam <i>DI</i>	Manager	N	Telephone interview
IB3 <i>DN</i>	Ewen <i>DI</i>	Director	Y	Brewery Office
IB4 <i>DI</i>	Sam <i>DI</i>	Director	N	Brewery visitor centre



<b>Brewery</b>	<b>Respondent</b>	<b>Position</b>	<b>Brewer?</b>	<b>Interview Location</b>
IB5 <i>DN</i>	Seb <i>DN</i>	Manager	N	Brewery visitor centre
IB6 <i>DN</i>	Charlie <i>DN</i>	Director	Y	Pub where IB6's beers on sale
IB7 <i>DI</i>	Joe <i>DN</i>	Manager	N	Brewery Office
IB8 <i>DN</i>	Harry <i>DN</i>	Director	Y	Pub where IB8's beers on sale
IB9 <i>DI</i>	Kate <i>DN</i>	Manager	N	Brewery Office
IB10 <i>DN</i>	Tom <i>DI</i>	Director	Y	Brewery visitor centre
IB11 <i>DN</i>	Andy <i>DN</i>	Director	N	Telephone interview
IB12 <i>DN</i>	Jack <i>DN</i>	Director	Y	Pub where IB12's beers on sale
IB13 <i>DN</i>	Zee <i>DN</i>	Director	N	Telephone interview
IB14 <i>DN</i>	Emily <i>DI</i>	Director	Y	Telephone interview
IB15 <i>DN</i>	Kris <i>DN</i>	Director	Y	Telephone interview
IB16 <i>DI</i>	Holly <i>DI</i>	Manager	N	Via e-mail

For the purpose of this thesis, each of the breweries has been given a number, IB1 through to IB16, where IB stands for “Independent Brewery”. All of the respondents were in senior positions within their breweries, either at manager or owner/director level. The suffixes 'DI' and 'DN' are based upon Tuten & Solomon's (2013) terms to depict whether the brewery and the respondent are 'digital natives' or 'digital immigrants'. For the purposes of this study breweries founded before 2005 have been classed as 'DI' and those 2005 or after as 'DN'. Similarly respondents born before 1990 have been classed as 'DI' and after 1990 as 'DN'. These distinctions have some bearing on the later analysis of the data. A column has been included to indicate whether the respondent actually did the brewing of the beer or not – later analysis of the data indicated that the use of social media by the actual brewers themselves, as opposed to non-brewing employees of the brewery, was a significant factor in the nature of that brewery's engagement in social media. The final column indicates how and where the

interviews took place. Those that took place in brewery visitor centres and pubs did so whilst the venues were open and in at least three of the interviews, the respondent had to break off to deal with customers.

Before each of the interviews, including those undertaken by telephone, permission was sought to audio record them. The one e-mail interview in this study was by its nature already recorded. Bryman (2014) describes the importance of recording the interview in this way, based upon a number of considerations. First, it releases the interviewee from the need to make notes during the interview, thus enabling the maintenance of eye contact and concentration on what is being said. Second it allows everything that is said to be captured, so anything which might have been overlooked can be picked up and expanded in further interviews. It also provides a definitive record of what was said, thus contributing to the rigour of the research (Tracy, 2010). Such records not only assist in the analysis process, but also allow the respondent to see what has been recorded and agree to its use in the research. In this study a small, digital recording device was used which picked up dialogue quite clearly, even in noisy pubs. Each interview lasted between 35 and 75 minutes and at the end, the respondent was thanked and the recording device switched off. No comment or discussion made outside of what was recorded has been used in this thesis. In one of the interviews, customers in the pub joined in the conversation, not realising that it was an interview. In this case, the comments made by customers were not used in the research because they had not given their permission to take part in a research interview. In truth their comments did not add anything particularly relevant anyway, but they did help spur the respondent on to talk more.

Although laborious, Daymon and Holloway (2011) recommend that the researcher undertakes the transcription him or herself, in order to become fully immersed in the data and sensitive to potentially important issues. The researcher thus chose to transcribe each of the recordings himself, because of the ongoing analysis and the desire

to truly 'own' the data. All of the interviews were transcribed verbatim, including pauses and hesitations, once again, contributing to the rigour of the process (an example of one of these transcripts can be seen in Appendix 5). In this way, the respondent's own subjective interpretation of social media engagement, expressed in their own words was captured, mirroring the interpretative nature of the research (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). At the end of each transcription an 'analytic memo' was produced documenting the researcher's thinking and reflections on the data produced (Saldaña, 2016).

#### **4.2.4: Ethical considerations**

The need to take an ethical approach was taken very seriously in this research study. Whilst on the surface the research subject was not sensitive, nor concerned with people who might be considered vulnerable, it did involve commercial organisations for whom privacy might be an issue. In common with all university based research projects, a research ethics checklist (SHUREC 1) was prepared in advance and signed off by the university Research Ethics Committee. However, Daymon and Holloway (2011) remind us that institutional ethics approval is only the first step and that ethical issues develop and apply throughout the whole research process. They suggest three broad areas to address in this respect: gaining access to participants; obtaining informed consent; and maintaining privacy. In this study, participants were initially contacted by e-mail, and the purpose and nature of the study explained. It was made clear from the start that the research was part of a doctoral study and the university's logo and contact details appeared on the e-mails sent. Copies of this correspondence, and the consent of the participant have been kept as supporting documents to this thesis.

Once the interview had taken place and the notes transcribed, a copy of the transcription was sent to the respondent. This was not only to ensure that what had been transcribed was an accurate record of what had been said, it was also to gain the

agreement of the participant that what had been recorded could be used for analysis purposes in the research. In this way, informed consent was gained from all of those interviewed. In terms of privacy, all participants were advised that the data would be anonymised in terms of names, places, brands and other associations which might enable them to be identified. In practice, only one respondent showed any concern that the information he disclosed might be of interest to his competitors, but he was happy to proceed under the reassurances of anonymity given. The others were remarkably open, generally feeling that their competitors knew everything that they were doing anyway, and that nothing disclosed was not already in the public domain. All of the respondents were offered a copy of the thesis upon completion, or alternatively a synopsis of the main findings, and all expressed an interest in receiving this.

#### **4.3: Formulating the Interview Questions**

A semi-structured interview approach was taken using an interview guide which laid out general areas to be explored. It must be stressed that these were not hard and fast questions, the objective being to allow flexibility to pursue alternative avenues of interest that might arise (Bryman, 2014). The purpose of the interview guide was to keep the researcher focused on the overall objectives of the study and help to produce data that would address the research questions. Whilst it is sometimes recommended that a pilot interview be carried out to test the interview questions (Silverman, 2010), this was rejected here as the research was developmental (Daymon & Holloway, 2011) and the question areas changed as the interviews revealed new topics of interest. Nevertheless, as described in the following sub-section, care was taken to ensure that the nature of the questions used was able to generate data of a high quality.

#### 4.3.1: The nature of the questions

Although the interview guides were based around the research questions, these questions did not represent precisely those used in the interviews. Silverman (2010) warns against presenting the study research questions directly to respondents as it can lead to what he calls 'lazy research', whereby detailed analysis is replaced with simple repetition of what the respondent has said. As such the actual questions asked in the interviews were varied and intended to elicit different facets of the topic under discussion. Patton (2002) describes six different types of questions which might be used to this effect. The main ones used in this research were as follows:

*'experience and behaviour questions'*, where the respondents were asked to describe their experience and use of social media within their breweries.

*'opinions and value questions'*, where the respondents, and his or her brewery's own attitudes to social media, were explored.

*'knowledge questions'*, for example; relating to how the outputs from social media engagement might be measured.

*'background questions'*, relating to the defining characteristics of the respondent's brewery.

In addition, in an attempt to draw comparisons and contrasts between the breweries interviewed, further types of question were asked:

*'structural questions'* (Daymon & Holloway, 2011) to discover how the various respondents utilised their feelings and knowledge of social media in a business sense.

*'idealisation questions'* (Schatzman & Strauss, 1973) to explore the respondent's ideal use of social media in their brewery. It was from these questions that the concept of the imaginary 'social media nirvana' was born.

*'closing question'* (Bryman, 2014) to capture an overall personal view of the issues covered. This tended to be along the lines of *"what do you think will be the biggest issue affecting your brewery's future use of social media?"*

#### **4.3.2: A convergent interview approach**

In line with the abductive approach taken, elements of the user engagement model, developed in Chapter 2 were used to guide the questions in what has been described as a convergent method (Rao & Perry, 2003). Williams and Lewis (2005) suggest the use of such a method when the research subject area is complex, with different lines of potential enquiry, as might be construed in a study of social media engagement and co-created value. As previously acknowledged the researcher approached the subject in a very exploratory way, with areas identified in literature, but little knowledge of how or why they might apply in independent breweries. As such in-depth interviews were used which were *based upon a convergent approach*, but did not comply with the highly structured method outlined by Rao & Perry (2003).

At the end of each interview an 'analytic memo' was produced to begin the analysis process. Saldaña (2016) describes these memos as 'analytic sticky notes', written up immediately following the interview *"to 'dump your brain' about the participants, phenomenon, or process under investigation"* (p 44). In this way, emergent reflection takes place and ideas start to develop. Saldaña contends that these memos can be used as research data in themselves, but in this study they were primarily used to develop themes which guided the following interviews. As such they fed into a convergent

approach and led to the coding of data and thematic analysis. An example of the key themes emerging from the first interviews is shown in table 4.3.

		IB1	IB2	IB3	IB4	IB5	IB6	IB7	IB8	IB9	IB10	IB11	IB12	IB13	IB14	IB15	IB16
DIDN	Age/Generation																
	Employees/Customers/																
	Change/Acceptance																
Community	Networking																
	Relationship																
	Belonging																
	Collaboration																
	Beer Geeks																
Identity	Brewery Tribes																
	Walled Garden																
Melting Pot	Customer Value																
	Authentic Voice																
	Human Side																
Control	Empathy																
	Communications																
	Social vs. Commercial																
	Ubiquity / Way Of Life																
	Personal / Work Life																
Control	Social Trends																
	Strategy																
	Ownership																
	Co-creation																
	Management																
	Inexact Science																
	Organic/Spontaneous																
Managing Followers																	
Paving The Way																	

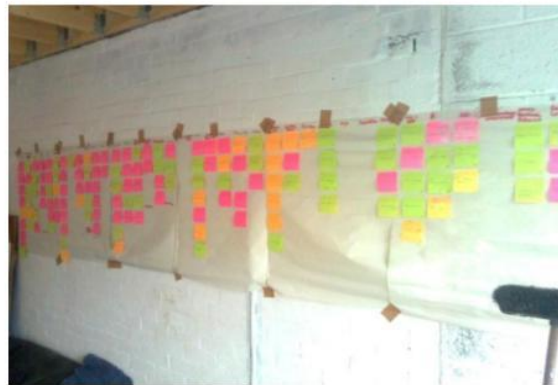
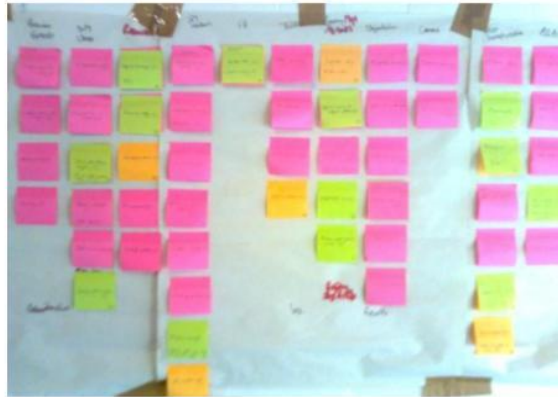
**Table 4.3: An example of the convergent interview themes arising from this study (source: Author's own)**

Table 4.3 shows five key themes emerging from the first interviews. These were labelled '*Digital Immigrant/Digital Native*' (DIDN); '*Community*'; '*Identity*'; '*Melting Pot*'; and '*Control*'. These themes were pursued throughout all of the interviews, but were developed into smaller themes as new angles came to light. Sometimes the smaller themes were quickly expired as no new ideas were generated (as in '*change and acceptance*' under the DIDN theme). At other times, related themes developed in much later interviews (e.g. the notion of followers being a '*walled garden*' within the community theme). The themes illustrated in this table are only some of those generated by the process. As the interviews progressed, the amount of data generated and the ideas coming out of the analytic memos began to multiply. At this stage, the researcher was faced with a choice of pursuing the data analysis manually, or using a CAQDAS (computer-assisted qualitative data analysis software) system.

#### **4.4: Conducting the Analysis**

The initial intention was to use CAQDAS in this research. Bryman (2014) highlights the ability of CAQDAS to make the coding and data retrieval process much quicker and more efficient. As such the researcher downloaded an Nvivo 11 programme and undertook some rudimentary training in its use. As the interviews were transcribed, the data was uploaded to Nvivo for coding purposes. Saldaña (2016) reminds us that the CAQDAS programme does not do the coding for us, but it does allow us to store, organise, manage and reconfigure the data to enable *“human analytic reflection”* (p 30). As this was the researcher's first time using Nvivo it was decided to code the first interview manually, in order to come to terms with the coding process before transferring it into Nvivo. In practice this led to a 'belt and braces' approach, as data from all of the interviews was subsequently coded manually as well as in Nvivo, for reasons described later. Figure 4.1 shows the sticky post it notes used for the manual coding.





**Figure 4.1**  
**The author's manual**  
**approach to data coding**

#### **4.4.1: Coding the data**

Miles et al. (2014) strongly advise that the analysis of qualitative data is done concurrently with its collection, and the first part of this analysis is coding. The process of coding breaks up the interview data into sentences or sections which are then assigned a word or short phrase to capture their essence or deeper meaning (Saldaña, 2016). In this way the data becomes organised, with similarly coded pieces of data grouped together in categories, such that patterns start to emerge. In order to facilitate this, the interview transcripts were printed off with large margins down the right hand side, in which codes were inserted against highlighted pieces of text within the data. The analytic memos which had been prepared at the end of each interview were a big help here. Additionally, as the process of coding can be very subjective, the whole procedure was undertaken twice for each interview, with a gap of several days between

each run through. The purpose of this was to triangulate thought processes and see if different interpretations were possible from the same data. Saldaña (2016) describes this as recoding with a more attuned perspective of the data. Around 60% of the codes generated thus, were the same for the first and second run-throughs. Of the 40% that were not the same, the final codes allocated were taken from those which seemed to offer the most promising insight. In this way the researcher ensured that the codes were directly reflective of the data.

It was at this stage where the Nvivo software proved its worth, as it was possible to organise the smaller codes within the larger ones, a process usually described as creating first and second cycle codes from a larger number of free codes. (Bryman, 2014). The data in this research was broken down into 14 second cycle codes, from 45 first cycle codes, themselves resulting from 266 free codes. In developing these codes the researcher was mindful of the need to be consistent in his approach. Saldaña (2016) describes 25 different coding approaches, which he divides into seven subcategories. The choice of approach is dependent on what is being analysed, for example, the nuance and texture of data, or the participant's emotive and subjective experiences. In order to determine the best approach here, the researcher returned to the overall research questions.

A key feature of these questions is how the independent breweries engage with and potentially benefit from social media. It was thus decided that an element of 'descriptive coding' was necessary to determine which social media platforms they were using, and for how long, and what they were actually doing on those platforms. Saldaña (2016) warns against an over-reliance on descriptive codes as they do not necessarily give a deep insight into the data. As such, their use was mixed with 'concept coding'. Concept coding fits the abductive methodological approach of this research as it relates to theory and theory development. For example, the term 'Beer Geeks' was applied as a concept code to describe a wide audience of social media users whose relationship to

beer ran at a deep, lifestyle level. Finally, an element of 'values coding' was also used, as this brought out the affective nature of the participant's own attitudes and experience, which was needed to address the overall research objectives. Each of the codes was thus given a suffix of 'D', 'C' or 'V' to signify which of the coding types they were. In the manual coding process, this entailed using different coloured post-it notes for each of the different types (see Figure 4.1). In practice, this proved somewhat challenging as determining the difference between what constituted description and what might be considered a personal value, or a concept, was not always straightforward. Ultimately anything developing heuristically from the ideas of the researcher was considered potentially conceptual and as the coding progressed a large number of these types of code were produced.

#### **4.4.2 Reaching the themes**

Thus far the process had followed what Miles et al. (2014) describe as 'first cycle' coding whereby a large number of free codes are reduced to a smaller number of categories called first order codes. In this thesis the 266 free codes were reduced to 45 first order codes. The second cycle involves grouping the first order codes into even smaller categories, themes called pattern codes. Here, the 45 first order codes were reduced to 14 second order pattern codes. These pattern codes then begin to pull the data into emergent themes. This proved to be a laborious process as many of the first cycle codes appeared to cross into different patterns. Once again the researcher returned to the original research objectives to try to prioritise what was important and what was less so. So, for example, a number of codes relating to the brewery venue (where the brewery had a visitor centre) were left out of the second cycle coding, as the research objectives did not relate to service based aspects of the businesses. It was at this stage that the researcher valued the use of a manual coding process, as he found it much easier to peel off the post notes and re-assign them to pattern codes, than doing so on Nvivo. Sometimes the codes were re-assigned several times and some of the codes ended up

not being assigned to any second level pattern codes (for example, the breweries' relationship with consumer organisation CAMRA). These outlying codes were considered against the research objectives and were subsequently dropped from the research process. As a result of this process, the large number of first cycle codes was reduced to 14 second cycle, or pattern codes, all of which can be related directly back to the interview data:

**'Nature of sector'** – this drew together a number of largely descriptive codes relating to the brewery industry, including the nature and size of the breweries, their age and history, and the market structure itself.

**'Control and Ownership'** – this was a key part of the research, reflecting the respondents' personal reflections on social media, as it developed from the conceptual user engagement model developed in Chapter 2, and also the underlying theory of co-creation.

**'Digital immigrant/digital native'** – this has been a constant theme in this thesis, cropping up first in the literature review and then strongly in the analytic memos produced after each interview. Although coined by Tuten & Solomon (2013) the term is used here to describe the age related issues arising from the interview data.

**'Lifestyle'** – this issue stood out in the interview data, and was initially labelled 'melting pot' by the researcher, to reflect the way in which social media appeared to have infused into all aspects of business and home life, and blurred the boundaries between them.

**'Community'** – this was another key part of the underlying research theory, around online communities. Here the codes relating to beer consumers (as perceived by the breweries themselves) were used, as well as those relating to the brewers and the breweries themselves.

**'Identity'** – this pattern emerged through the descriptive and conceptual first order codes and could be seen strongly in many of the interviews. Possessing identity and personality appeared to be significant issues in using social media.

**'Routes to market'** – it quickly became apparent that different breweries were using social media to connect with their end markets as well as their distribution chains in different ways, and this code attempts to bring these issues together

**'Product issues'** – this built on the discussion in the literature review around customer co-creation and the hedonic values associated with beer. Its significance lies in the distinct way in which social media and beer can work together.

**'Users and followers'** – related to the nature of the 'beer geek' community. This was a significant area as it informed the mix between social media engagement of the breweries, and their perception of customers and other online followers.

**'Management and strategy'** – although similar in nature to 'ownership and control' this was distinguished by its practical approach to handling social media from a business perspective (as opposed to the more values-based concept of 'owning' it). This addressed the research questions directly and underlined a fractured and often uncertain approach to social media in this sector.

**'Social media platforms'** – this was a relatively small area but was included as a pattern code because it did not fit easily with other areas. Its purpose is largely contextual, although some conceptual areas were developed (e.g. '*anonymity*' and '*social media opens doors*').

**'Content and communication'** – this area represents an embodiment of what is said on social media and how messages are spread. It also included codes relating to the interface between offline and online marketing, including the breweries' use of websites in conjunction with social media.

**'Employees'** – this area was included as a second level code because it included a number of areas not easily covered elsewhere, and appeared highly relevant to the research questions relating to how and why independent breweries used social media and the nature of their engagement here. There was some overlap in this area with 'control and ownership' and also with 'lifestyle' and 'identity'.

**'Relationships'** – this area also overlapped other patterns, but stood out as a fundamental essence in much of the data. In particular, a large number of codes associated with 'B2B or B2C' were generated, an area which was not expected when the research commenced. It was also strongly supported by codes relating networking within the sector and brewery collaborations.

Notwithstanding the reduction of the data in this way, the pattern codes described above still represented a large amount of data from which to draw analytical conclusions. Additionally, there was still some overlap between these codes. As such, Miles et al. (2014) advise the researcher to determine what is more or less important in order to develop core themes which can be taken forward. The 14 pattern codes were thus further absorbed into four broad themes, which were deemed significant in the light of the overall research objectives. This meant that some areas, which seemed less important here were set aside, perhaps for the data to be used in future research (for example all of the data around website usage and website synthesis). These themes can be summarised as follows:

**Sector (context):** This relates to issues which don't necessarily transmute to other industries. A recurring theme of the interviews was that the SME independent brewery

sector is unique in many respects and this has a bearing on how social media operates in this sector. This theme adds originality to the research.

**Change (lifestyle):** This represents what has been termed here 'melting pot', an observation that social media is blurring the boundaries between things like business and home life; between traditionally separate business functions; between end consumers and intermediaries; etc. It represents the digital immigrant-digital native concept and brings in the values and attitudes of those who were interviewed.

**People (relationships):** This might be construed the most striking of the four themes in that it brings the research together more acutely than the others. All of the data ultimately boils down to people, whether it be the values of the respondents, the role of employees, or the perceived behaviour of users and followers. This theme represents the idea that social media is 'humanising' businesses.

**Management (control):** This theme incorporates issues of control and ownership, which can be viewed organically; and management issues in terms of mechanical tools and metrics. There are contradictions to be explored here, between hard and soft; spontaneous and planned; and the whole theme is inextricably linked with underlying theoretical and methodological issues around co-creation and inductive interpretations.

These four broad themes form the basis of the next four chapters, each of which undertakes a deeper analysis of the data findings.

#### **4.5: Chapter Summary**

Having determined an overall research approach in the previous chapter, the purpose here was to describe how the research and initial data analysis took place. Secondary research was used to define the scope of the independent brewery sector and justify its

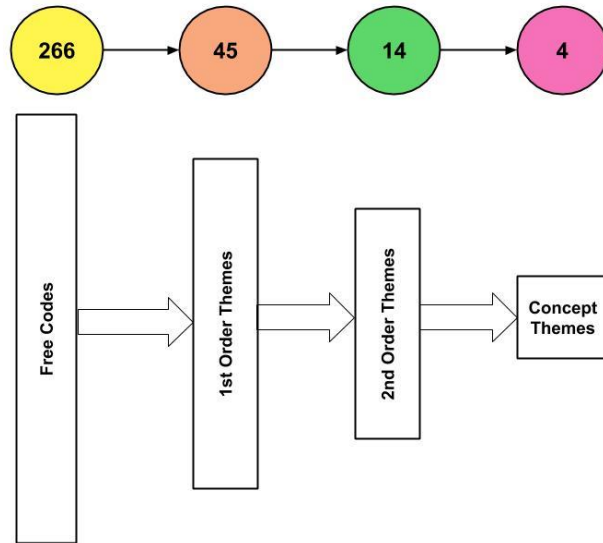
parameters for the purpose of this study. A list of 1,195 independent breweries was compiled and further contextual data gathered about the amount and type of social media they were using. This provided a useful base for determining a research sample, and also to start developing the interview guides for the primary research that followed. Although sampling was not a critical consideration given the qualitative approach adopted here, a broad based non-probability method was used to select respondents, 16 of whom were interviewed for this study. This number was determined through saturation, after no significant new data was emerging for the study (Daymon & Holloway, 2011).

The interviews were carried out in a semi-structured manner, drawing on an interview guide with broad question areas laid out. These questions were initially guided by the overall research objectives, then subsequently developed from data gathered in the previous interviews. In this way a convergent based approach was used (Williams & Lewis, 2005), with new or emergent areas of interest being followed up in subsequent interviews. Analytic memos (Saldaña, 2016) prepared after each interview, were used to gauge the nuance and direction of the data, and to identify emergent themes for further study. All of the data was gathered with the full permission of the respondents. Transcriptions of the interview were then sent to them for approval, on the basis that all data used in the thesis would be anonymised.

Analysis of the data was conducted using an Nvivo CAQDAS programme alongside a manual process to break the data up into free codes and look for emerging patterns and themes. The data was coded using the overall research objectives as a guide in order to keep it focused, and yet hundreds of codes were still produced. These were divided between descriptive (contextual); conceptual (generating ideas) and values (based on the individual perspectives of the respondents). In Nvivo 266 free 'nodes' were incorporated into 45 'parent nodes', which were then reduced to 14 second cycle pattern codes. These were then further reduced to four concept themes: 'sector'



(context); 'change' (lifestyle); 'people' (relationships); 'management' (control). These are the themes which are taken forward into to the next four chapters for a deep analysis of the data findings. The whole process is summarised in Figure 4.3.



**Figure 4.2: Arriving at four broad themes**

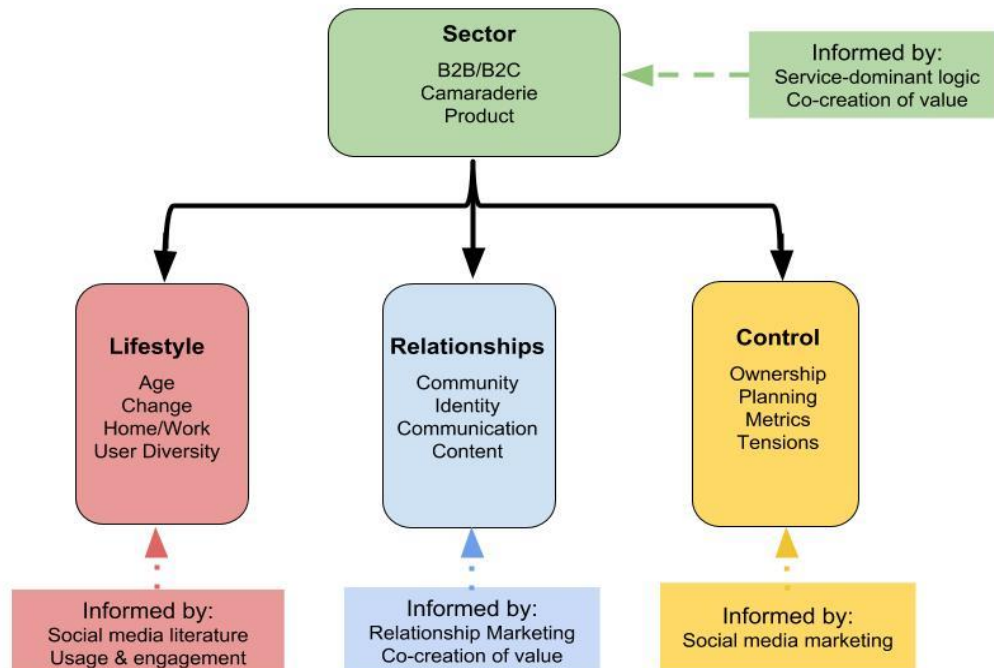
## Chapter 5

### Key Theme 1 - Sector Related Drivers

#### 5.1: Introduction

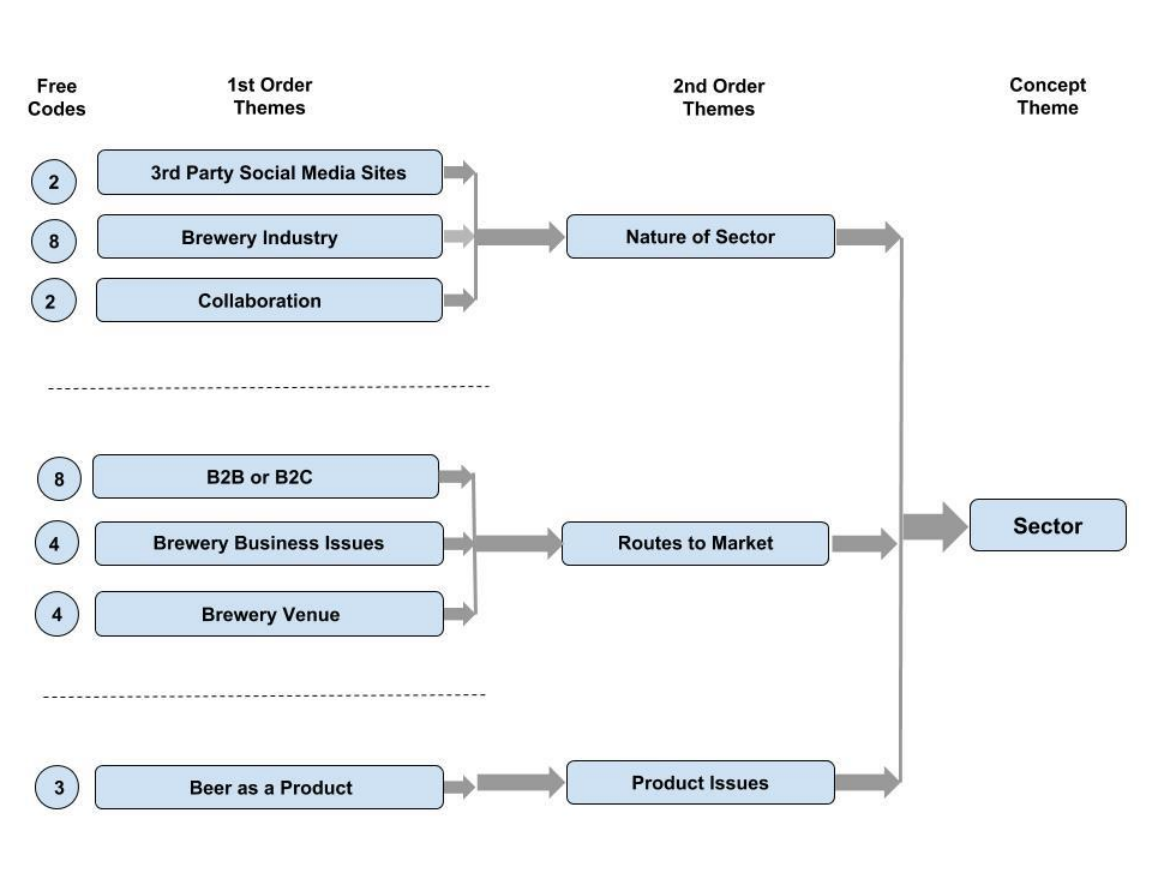
This is the first of four chapters, each based around core themes emerging from the first and second cycle coding process described in the previous chapter. These themes represent issues related to the independent brewery sector; contemporary lifestyle; relationships; and control. Figure 5.1 shows how the four areas are connected, with the independent brewery sector itself driving issues in the remaining three areas. This figure also shows which areas of the literature these four themes draw upon and develop.

**Figure 5.1:**  
**Structure of the analysis chapters**  
(source: Author's own)



The subject of this chapter is 'sector related drivers', a broad theme relating to issues that are peculiar to the independent brewery sector and that might not necessarily apply to other industries. A recurring theme of the interview data is that the brewery sector - and in particular the SME independent brewery sector - is unique in many respects, and this has a bearing on how social media is used across this sector. Observing this, the initial consideration was to include such issues into a 'contextual' or 'background' section of the thesis. After further reflection however, it was decided that the nature of the sector was directly relevant to the first and second research objectives and inherently linked to the research findings. It is partly the uniqueness of this sector that gives the research originality.

The chapter is divided into four distinct areas which have emerged from the data analysis relating to the first and second cycle codes. The first area relates to the complex network of distribution routes from brewery to end consumer, and is underpinned by those codes associated with how the beer is sold, whether this be through B2C or B2B channels, the role of intermediaries, and in some cases the breweries' own venues. The second area discussed in this chapter is the camaraderie which exists within the sector, supported by those codes relating to social media collaboration and the support of a tight knit community and belonging seen in the sector. The third area is concerned with the existence of social media based third party stakeholders, whilst the fourth draws upon the social nature of product itself – beer – and how social media enables the co-creation of value here. Each of these areas is supported directly by codes relating back to the verbatim interview data. The full node path from Nvivo leading to the overall theme can be seen in Figure 5.2.



**Figure 5.2: Code path to 'Sector' theme**

### 5.2: Splintered Distribution Routes in the Independent Brewery Sector

The varied distribution routes from brewery to end consumer and the nature of the relationships within the distribution chain create a rich and complex social media scenario. Initially the objectives of this research were to consider how independent breweries' use of social media played out in their relationships with consumers – i.e. a study of business to consumer (B2C) or consumer to business (C2B) relationships. However, data from the interviews quickly pointed to a significant element of business to business (B2B) relationships being conducted through social media within the breweries' distribution channels. Clear examples of breweries working with pubs and bottle shops in joint social media activity were seen in several of the interviews, albeit in an unstructured and informal way. As such traditional business-to-business (B2B) and

business-to-consumer (B2C) communications started to become merged and handled in an informal way.

### **5.2.1: The nature of B2B relationships in the independent brewery sector**

The independent brewery sector is diverse; not only in terms of its product output, but also in terms of how it gets its products to the final consumer. Generally speaking independent breweries have four broad routes to market:

Pubs and bars

Bottle shops and other 'off-sales' retailers such as supermarkets

Tied outlets - i.e. venues owned or run by the brewery themselves

Direct sales of packaged product on line - either through the brewery's own online shop, or through national online beer retailers.

All of these routes can be supplied directly by the brewery, and most of the breweries interviewed worked in this way. There exists however, the propensity for a further link in the chain when national distribution companies such as East-West Ales, are used to deliver to pubs and bars. This is usually the case where large national pub chains (e.g. J.D. Wetherspoon) are selling the beer.

Naturally, those at the end of the chain will have the most direct contact with the final consumer and, arguably, the most control over consumer relationships. Conversely the brewery cannot interact directly or form relationships with the end consumer very easily. Some breweries attempt to overcome this by running their own pubs or visitor centres based at the brewery, or by selling direct online from their own websites. Other than wine, which it could be argued bears similarities to beer in terms of product features, branding and consumption, it is difficult to think of other products with such a

varied and splintered distribution arrangement. For small brewers in particular, reaching an end market is one of the biggest challenges they face (Holden, 2017) and so it is perhaps not surprising to find such a plethora of outlets being used. Most of those interviewed cited strong social media connections with these distributors, whether prompted by the brewery or not. Furthermore, the social media was not always used in a 'social' way – it was used as a business tool to place orders, find new outlets and as a direct selling tool. These issues were contextualised in the Nvivo nodes: '*B2B Communications*' and '*Kill 2 Birds With One Stone*' the analysis of which led to four general strands in this area. These were social media enabled 'co-creation' (killing two birds with one stone); 'piggybacking' on the social media marketing of others; the replacement of conventional business communication tools like e-mail and telephone with social media; and finally the 'inexact science' resulting from different levels of social media adoption.

### **5.2.2: Co-creation – killing two birds with one stone**

It was noted in Chapter 2 that co-creation might be viewed from two perspectives, one being 'intrinsic' and leading to direct, tangible value added for both parties, the other being 'extrinsic' and leading to a more psychological gratification (Holbrook, 2006). Several examples of intrinsic co-creation were observed, whereby the brewery and the distributor colluded with each other using social media to benefit each other. From a brewery perspective this theme was labelled 'killing two birds with one stone' because it enabled them to support the distributor at the same time as telling the end consumer where they could buy their beer:

*“...we do work with I've said the pubs that are plugged into it. We will help them promote stuff, or do joint stuff with them on it.”*

*Ewen; IB3*

*“And then that kind of goes a bit of cross-promo, so anybody that might be interested can see “oh look, if I sell some beer, they will advertise my pub for me”, and vice versa, hopefully they'll re-share it and say “thanks for having us [IB8]” and all that.”*

**Harry; IB8**

*“...if we've got like a new pub, or their pub's first time in having one of our beers, I think it's about promoting each other as well as yourself, and I'll do a bit of sharing, a bit of tweeting, a bit of Facebooking, about each other.”*

**Kate; IB9**

In the examples above the breweries are using the features of social media, such as tagging, to gain greater exposure, not only for themselves, but for their B2B customers the pubs, as well. Such use of social media requires that both parties are using social media and that at least one party has a significant following in order to spread the message further. Not only is this a virtually cost free means of promotion, it helps both parties offer something worthwhile to their followers – breweries can tell their followers where they can find their beer, and the pubs, or outlets can tell their followers that they now have that particular brewery's beers available.

In effect social media is enabling a three way relationship between the brewery, the middleman and the consumer, a relationship which benefits all of them. It demonstrates the ability of social media to reach diverse audiences with relevant messages simultaneously. On the surface this is an intrinsically beneficial form of co-creation between the brewery and the middleman/distributor, as both of them clearly benefit from the publicity to the final consumer. It could be argued however that both parties enjoy extrinsic benefits through the sharing of risk, the mutual reliance on each other and the security that this brings. Who relies on whom here? The breweries need

the pubs and bottle shops to reach the market, but the latter need the brewery's following on social media. Social media provides an environment where both can benefit each other. Within the context of the independent brewery sector, social media represents a 'win-win' scenario.

### **5.2.3: 'Piggybacking' on distributors' social media**

Whilst co-creation suggests an equitable division of input from both parties to create an output of value (Saarijärvi, 2012), there is evidence of breweries relying on the social media of the distributor, or retailer:

*“...what we've found is that some of our trade partners use it probably better than we do...”*

**Andy; IB11**

This raises questions about who controls the relationship with the final consumer. By relying on the social media of a retailer, a brewery is in effect ceding that relationship with the final consumer. This appears to contradict an initial presumption that breweries were using social media to develop relationships with the final consumer. However, the brewery's brand still requires recognition among consumers to make it worthwhile for the retailer to stock it. The flexibility of social media allows breweries to connect with followers of retailers and vice-versa, thus maintaining the three-way relationship. It can be argued that 'piggybacking' on the social media of another, represents a sharing of the strengths of both the brewery and the retailer as community members. Although one party (in this case the retailer) might be construed a leader, all parties benefit through the use of social media. The benefits of using the retailer's social media to promote brewery products are first that the retailer's site becomes a destination for beer followers in general and second that the brewery does not need to



develop and resource its own social media skills to the same extent. The retailer benefits from the brewery's beer knowledge and kudos, enabling it to present relevant and exciting social media content and the consumer benefits both psychologically and materially from being part of a wider, beer based online community.

#### **5.2.4: Replacement of traditional B2B marketing communication tools**

Social media is not simply used in a B2B context to jointly reach the end consumer however. The data suggests that it is being used as a much wider communication tool, and replacing traditional media like e-mail or telephone:

*“...there is a growing trend in the B2B, so for instance I'll see tweets at night from a pub who says, oh you delivered the beer, but you forgot the pump clip, can you send me a pump clip...”*

**Dom; IB1**

*“...we do liaise with a lot of pubs through Twitter especially. Errm, I'd say Twitter we get more interactions with pubs...”*

**Joe; IB7**

It could be construed therefore that social media is being increasingly used as an alternative B2B management tool by the breweries, based around naturally occurring social interaction. This underlines the ubiquity of the medium in its ability to reach diverse audiences in a quick and convenient way. At the same time, it represents an extension of the media user's lifestyle into the running of a business and this fits the splintered nature of the independent brewery sector's distribution arrangements. This builds into a broader theme which has been labelled 'lifestyle' and will be considered in more depth in the next chapter. It should be noted here however, that any suggestion

that social media is a 'management tool' is problematic because social media tends to be organic, not mechanical. In the words of one of the breweries interviewed it is an “an inexact science”.

### **5.2.5: An inexact science...**

The problem with trying to use social media as a universal management tool within a splintered distribution system is that different organisations have different levels of engagement with the media:

*“There's a bit of a sort of, 'all or nothing' with some of them, so you either get a pub that is massively into it, the whole ethos of what they do is driven through that. Or you get, like you said before, someone who's never even seen the Internet, and they just simply don't exist on it. So we, yeah, we do quite well with those pubs that are engaged...”*

**Sam; IB4**

Use of social media in this way comes down to gauging each opportunity for co-promotion individually. It relies on both parties being active on social media, with their own bands of followers, but also both parties using the same social media platforms. Where large distribution companies are used (e.g. when selling to large pub chains), they tend to stick to rigid rules about communication, using formal channels, and they do not use social media. However, these large distribution companies have no involvement with the end consumer, they have no public face. Thus, whilst splintered and varied distribution channels used in the independent brewery sector can provide opportunities to use social media very effectively in a B2B context, this very diversity turns the use of social media for business purposes into an inexact science. Just as there are no rules about how and with whom we use social media in our personal lives, so

there are no universal rules applying to small businesses. So whilst social media might offer an alternative means of communication, which fits the general lifestyle of those associated with the independent brewery sector, it cannot fully replace the more traditional forms of communication that are needed to be able to deal with all parties.

#### **5.2.6: Summary of this section**

Social media is particularly suited to the splintered nature of the distribution chains in this sector because of its ubiquity in modern lifestyles and its ability to bring diverse individuals together under one common interest. As such, the relationships engendered cross the boundaries of traditional B2B and B2C communications.

This develops Vargo and Lusch's (2017) updated theories of service-dominant logic, by providing a practical application at the 'meso' level of theory, concerning the roles of multiple actors determining the co-creation of value. Social media provides the 'service eco-system' described by Vargo and Lusch (2017) to support resource integration and co-creation. The ability of social media to achieve this in the way described above builds upon Halliday's (2016) and Ramaswamy & Ozcan's (2018) views of value co-creation taking place around interaction, and the ability of social media to reflect the cultural life-world of the various actors. Whereas these articles concentrated on consumer life-worlds, the research here suggests a wider range of actors. In effect social media is enabling three way relationships between the brewery, the middleman and the consumer, which benefits all of them. The breweries need the pubs and bottle shops to reach the market, but the latter need the brewery's following on social media. Social media thus provides an environment where both B2B parties can benefit each other in a 'win-win' scenario. The introduction of the B2B element in value co-creation supports the concept of the 'interacted actor' in IMP network theory (Håkansson and Snehota, 2002), but develops this by considering social media as the 'service eco-system'

described by Vargo and Lusch above. Whilst the possibility of breweries 'piggybacking' on the social media of their B2B retail partners remains a possibility, the flexibility of social media allows breweries to connect with followers of retailers and vice-versa, thus maintaining the three-way relationship. However, the suggestion that social media is a 'management tool' is problematic because it tends to be organic and associated with individuals, not mechanical and associated with traditional business planning. This suggests that social media usage in a business sense is taking on the characteristics of individual, personal social use, whether it be B2B or B2C. Just as there are no rules about how and with whom we engage with social media in our personal lives, so there are no universal rules applying to small, independent breweries. In other words it is an "an inexact science".

### **5.3: Camaraderie in the Independent Brewery Sector**

This 'personal' approach to using social media is particularly suited to the close relationships which characterise the independent brewery sector. The camaraderie observed within this sector stands out as being a potentially unique feature here. This was captured in the Nvivo nodes of 'Tight Knit Brewery Community' and 'Collaboration', each of which fell under the broader theme of 'Brewery Industry Characteristics'. All of those interviewed mentioned the heavily networked nature of the business and this manifested itself in the large number of collaborations between breweries which enable them to bring unique, one-off products to the market. Additionally the networks of brewers themselves, as opposed to the breweries they worked for, provided a social and 'fun-based' release for employees. Although many of these breweries are rivals of each other, there was little evidence to suggest that this is how they considered themselves:

*“...obviously there is a competition between all the breweries, but I think everybody appreciates that working with each other, and knowing what each other are doing, keep following on with market trends and all that kind of thing, benefits everybody...”*

**Joe; IB7**

*“...brewing is a very friendly place. And, erm, for anyone that says your competitors are XXXX and YYYY and ZZZZ and that sort of thing, I say no, they're not...”*

**Tom; IB10**

This sentiment was replicated in one way or another in all of the interviews, and it is clear that the people in this industry see themselves as part of a group of like-minded individuals, rather than out-and-out competitors. Whilst this might be expected in terms of the brewers, who all technically belong to the same profession, the camaraderie also extended to those not directly employed in the brewing process, suggesting a tight feeling of belonging, whatever one's role in the brewery. Collectively then, the breweries appear to represent a community in themselves. Whilst various studies have considered belonging and online communities from a consumer's perspective (Cova & Pace, 2006; Dessart et al., 2015; Närvänen et al., 2013), studies relating to communities of businesses are fewer. Social media is undoubtedly an enabling medium used by these businesses to maintain this camaraderie, friendship and belonging, and as in any community sharing and collaboration is common.

### **5.3.1 Collaboration**

This sharing and collaboration overrides the competition which might be expected between breweries selling into the same markets. As already noted, these breweries do

not see themselves particularly as competitors of each other. Rather they see themselves competing against the large national and multi-national brewers whose products dominate the market in terms of volume sold. Whilst the smaller breweries are arguably more agile anyway than bigger companies, the sharing and collaboration afforded by social media provides an additional innovative edge to their operations. New and varied beers are thus produced on a regular basis, usually in short runs:

*“...it was just a chance comment I made on something XXXX posted on Facebook. I made some chance comment and it led very quickly to “well come down and do a collaboration”. “*

**Jack; IB12**

*“Facebook is err, has been our main source of collaborations...”*

**Emily; IB14**

A deeper consideration of the data suggests that social media plays a significant role within these collaborations in three broad ways. First, on a *practical* level it enables the collaborations to take place by connecting different brewers to one another. For one of the respondents this led to collaboration with a large national brewery, albeit via the personal network of the brewer employed by that national brewery. Second, at an *emotional* level these collaborations reflect a social release for the brewers themselves. Several of them mentioned that brewing is a lonely process and the chance to get out, travel somewhere different and experiment with new beers was a huge attraction for them. Third, social media is used by the breweries to publicise the collaborative brew, thus operating at a *relational* level, by meeting the needs of their followers in terms of being involved in a 'beer scene' (these 'relational aspects of social media engagement are considered in chapter 7).

All of the respondents confirmed that their use of social media was an important part of who they were:

*"...we've got a very strong story... which helps, and people remember it, and the name sticks in people's minds."*

**Sam; IB4**

*"...we're sort of... we're not like the sort of breweries like Cloud Water, or Lost and Grounded."*

**Kris; IB15**

*"...as a small company we have the opportunity to... to express a genuine personality, err, through social media."*

**Tom; IB10**

The practical, emotional and relational benefits of using social media enabled them to develop their own personas within the industry, just as an individual might through his or her own social media platforms. Social media is thus enabling each brewery to be part of something, whilst maintaining its own identity. Again this mirrors the way in which social media is used by individuals for social purposes, maintaining friendships, keeping in touch and promoting one's own personality. For breweries it is about being part of something and being relevant, whilst still being recognisable as an individual entity. The data suggests that the personal networks of those working within the breweries are a big part of this, and one which particularly characterises the independent brewery sector.

### 5.3.2: Brewer networks

Whilst the camaraderie and friendship can be applied at a brewery level, there is clear evidence that the brewers themselves (i.e. those who actually brew the beer, and might be classed as employees) are networked at a separate level. Social media has enabled these networks to flourish at a national and even an international level, such that the brewers themselves are tightly bound:

*“...it's a very beer geeky one, because he's a brewer, and he's in touch with thousands of brewers from Hawaii to Barnsley, you know, it's really weird (laughs) and we learn from each other!”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“I can't think of many others, where you get in, you find you've got no yeast, so you ring the brewer down the road and say can I borrow some yeast, and he's like, yeah, carry on. It's like there's not many businesses, not many industries' market sectors like that...”*

**Jack; IB12**

Networks of brewers transcend those of the breweries they work for, and it is not unusual for brewers to have their own social media sites, with their own followers. This builds upon the observation made earlier that the social media characteristics demonstrated by the brewery reflect the personal characteristics of individuals within the brewery. Doubtless the personal employee networks would exist without social media, through beer festivals or other events but social media enables more frequent contact and broader networks, all of which lead to a large element of sharing and collaboration within the sector.



### **5.3.3: Summary of this section**

The independent brewery sector is characterised by a strong sense of camaraderie, belonging and friendship which largely override issues of the breweries competing with each other. The availability of social media as a networking and communication tool has driven this camaraderie to high levels. Within the breweries, the brewers themselves are a tightly networked group and their close connections regularly lead to collaborations between breweries to produce new beers. These collaborations build upon the levels of benefit described by Dessart et al. (2015) when considering online brand communities: practical; emotional; and relational. Whereas Dessart and his colleagues were considering consumer based communities focusing on large brands, the data here describes employee/peer based communities, focused around a small industry sector, thus widening the scope of the derived benefits of social media engagement. These benefits are able to provide the independent brewery sector with an innovative edge in new product development and keeping abreast of market trends. In this way the smaller breweries are able to compete with larger national and multi-nationals and serve the needs of a distinct market sector. The closeness of relationships within the sector potentially fulfils deeper, more psychological needs, usually found in individuals, not businesses. Social media provides the brewery with an identity among its industry peers and thus a sense of relevance and belonging.

These issues will be considered in more depth under the themes of lifestyle and relationships in the subsequent chapters. Continuing here with the factors that characterise the sector, it is pertinent to consider the role played by third parties within beer focused social media.

## **5.4: Third Parties**

The existence of third party stakeholders who cannot be classed as producer, distributor or customer, but nevertheless have a major influence within the sector represents a further distinction within the independent brewery sector in terms of social media. The existence of these parties is the result of an interest in beer in general as a subject, and their frequency in the interview data prompted the allocation of a separate Nvivo node: '3rd Party Social Media Sites'. Prominent examples are RateBeer, a beer forum with an estimated half million signed up members (RateBeer Members Forum, 2017), and Untappd, an online app and social media site claiming over three million members worldwide (CNBC. Com, 2016).

Sites such as these have been described as 'cyber-mediaries' (Sarkar et al., 1995) as they represent a bridge between the supplier and the consumer through a digital medium. Acting in a similar way to Trip Advisor in the travel industry, they add a further dimension to social media relationships between the brewery and its customers.

### **5.4.1: The third dimension**

Most of these third party sites owe their existence to the widespread use of smartphones, because they enable beer consumers to post online at the point of consumption, sharing their views and experiences with a wide audience. This not only supports Gummesson's (1987) notion of the customer as a co-producer, it also fits Lusch & Vargo's (2006) conceptual transition from 'goods-dominant logic' to 'service dominant logic' where promotion by the organisation gives way to dialogue between all parties. All those breweries interviewed were aware of these third party fora, but some gave them greater prominence than others:

*“Untappd...[ ]...because that's, from a business to a consumer point of view, it's massive”*

**Charlie; IB6**

*“...another thing that's not done us any harm whatsoever is we've tried to be involved in as many beer forums as well, as possible...”*

**Andy; IB11**

In general it was the smaller of those breweries interviewed that had most to say about third party beer forums like Untappd, but their opinions differed markedly between those that saw them as an opportunity to promote their products and get involved with their consumers, and those that saw them as a potential drawback because they removed an element of control:

*“I just go on and like, you know...”oh, you've given it a three out of five have you, oh right” (laughs) “oh you've given it a four out of five that's fine”...”*

**Charlie; IB6**

*“...whether you like it or not, they're on Untappd.”*

**Charlie; IB6**

Those with established brands and market shares were more likely to feel confident in their ability to control consumer perceptions, and had less to say about third party sites, whereas newer entrants felt that they had to play along with sites like Untappd, even if they did not agree with what was being said. The newer, 'digital native' breweries tend to be more involved with these sites, accepting them as an established part of the online beer scene. It might be possible for a brewery to 'ride on the coat tails' of these fora, when for example one of their beers gets a high rating, or get into discussions about particular brands or styles of beer with the forum posters. However, the nature

of engagement will depend on the individual attitudes and personalities of those within the brewery doing the engagement. This underlines the lack of hard and fast rules on how to engage on social media fora.

#### **5.4.2: Third party site users**

This raises a further question; to what extent do 'cyber-mediary' forum posters represent mainstream consumers? One of the themes running through the interview data has been the existence of what have been described 'Beer Geeks'. This term is loosely applied to those with a deep interest and knowledge of beer and breweries. However, there is a difference between those following a brewery's social media site and those following third party sites. Brewery followers generally seek to further their knowledge or become involved or associated with the brewery, thus fulfilling a sense of belonging. Those following third party sites however, tend to be there more to expound their own knowledge and self-esteem. In other words they are there for themselves and not the brewery. Using Kozinet's (2015) terminology, users of third party sites might be described as 'devotees', rather than 'minglers' and 'tourists' on the breweries' own sites. On third party sites the breweries can take part themselves, either as individuals with their own profiles, or by engaging in on-site conversation. The brewery thus becomes a 'devotee' or an 'insider' as they are now acting in the same way as individual users, albeit from an expert opinion position. The individual from the brewery taking part will thus require kudos in their own right, either as proprietor and/or brewer. Nevertheless, they will be unable to fully control what is said, and evidence from the data suggests that this is a source of frustration:

*“Yeah, it's like I've tried... they're multiple beer tickers, the books, you know, “I've tried 40,000 beers” and I think, “well that sounds depressing!”*

*Charlie; IB6*

*“... like I've got a blonde ale, they just go, yeah it's a blonde beer, because what they're expecting is a raspberry ripple twist, served with vermouth or whatever, do you know what I mean? And they'll have paid £8.99 for a 33cl bottle.”*

**Harry; IB8**

Whilst this might be frustrating, breweries can perhaps take solace from studies of online communities which suggest that posters - those actively participating in online fora - are less behaviourally loyal than 'lurkers' - those who observe without getting involved (Shang et al., 2006). From the brewery perspective it is important to recognise that posters on third party sites are more likely to be there for their own self-aggrandisement. Lurkers on the other hand - who according to Shang et al. (2006) are likely to significantly outnumber posters - will be there to check out different beers and find those that they like. In this sense they are likely to be more attractive to the brewery from a behavioural point of view. The implication is that it is in the breweries' interests to engage with third party social media sites where possible, even if they do not have full control over what is being said. Simply being there gives them relevance and an identity, in much the same way as the devotees described by Kozinets (2015).

#### **5.4.3: Summary of this section**

The prominent role of third party sites, described here as 'cyber-mediaries' is a further distinguishing feature of independent breweries, and the consideration of social media usage around this sector. These sites have significance for newer, 'digital-native' breweries, and although content on these sites is largely uncontrollable, simply engaging with them gives the brewery relevance and an identity. In this way it is an accepted part of their lifestyle, in much the same way as it is for individuals engaging with social media fora. This represents a practical application of Kozinets' (2015)

distinction of social media users, whereby these breweries are acting as 'devotees' or 'insiders', being there as autonomous experts. Those breweries fitting the 'digital-immigrant' descriptor can rely more on established branding and thus have less need to engage with the 'cyber-mediaries'.

The users of these online sites have been labelled 'beer geeks' denoting a deep interest in beer in general rather than any specific brewery or beer brand. Whilst posters on these sites are likely to have their own agendas in terms of self-advancement, non-posters, or 'lurkers' are more likely to be there through a general interest in the product. Breweries can therefore benefit from engaging with all site users through raising the brewery's profile as a 'devotee' or 'insider' and thus impressing those who are simply observing. It must be borne in mind however, that engaging with third party sites from a commercial objective is not something that can be controlled easily, much as Hennig-Thurau et al.'s (2010) describe in their pinball analogy seen in Chapter 2.

The beer geek theme is discussed in greater depth in Chapter 7 when looking at the 'people' element of brewery social media involvement.

## **5.5: Product**

The final key area which distinguished the independent brewery sector from others was the product itself. It was noted in Chapter 2 that whilst beer might be described as a 'fast moving consumer good', it is possible to apply elements of service logic to its consumption (Vargo & Lusch, 2004), supported by notions of experience marketing (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009) and consumer co-creation (Ramaswamy & Ozcan, 2018). The existence of 'beer geeks' and the large followings on beer and brewery related social media sites suggest that beer is different from most other fast moving consumer goods. Indeed, interest in beer has led to huge social media followings in some areas.

In recent years this interest has been fuelled by the rise of 'craft beers', and the ability of small independent breweries to produce one-offs and specialist beers has tapped into this.

The product category is wide ranging, featuring a plethora of different beer styles, strengths, brands, packaging and dispensing methods. Furthermore, new product development in the sector is rife, and product lifespans are often kept deliberately short, thus perpetuating a continual churn of product and sense of anticipation among followers. The large number of independent breweries in the UK covers all of these different product variants and is often at the forefront of innovation. These market characteristics are one of the elements which give the study of social media in this sector a unique and dynamic quality.

#### **5.5.1: Market characteristics**

The beer market in the UK demonstrates a classic Pareto effect with a few large MNC and national breweries taking the bulk of the market, leaving a relatively small market share to the hundreds of SME independent breweries (Key Note Market Report, 2015). That the market can support such a large number of small breweries is testament to the appetite that consumers have for something that is different to the mainstream. Whilst most of the breweries interviewed had a standard beer or range of beers which was always available, all of them were involved in brewing 'one-offs' or specials. Sometimes these were brewed for special occasions or times of the year, or at other times they were the result of collaborations with other breweries. With so much going on at any one time, social media thus becomes an invaluable tool for communicating the latest news and keeping people updated:

*“...we've got the XXXX, which is an additional one, just for the Olympics, and we did one for the World Cup, we did one for the rugby, so we always like, trying to get a beer for everything really...”*

**Seb; IB5**

*“...breweries have to be constantly brewing new beers, and you know, the range, constant rotation...”*

**Joe; IB7**

*“...we did a load of events in XXXX in January, like kind of, food and beer dinners that were matching, and beers like XXXX, and XXXX. and a few other breweries around the different [outlets], and then kind of, specials. So that was good that we were able to push a lot through social media.”*

**Kris; IB15**

This constant rotation of beers and new product launches characterises the SME independent brewery sector. It could also be said that it mirrors the nature of social media in that there is always something new to talk about every day. Without these regular updates a site becomes stale, and finding material which is new and engaging for users can be a challenge for organisations (Chan & Guillet, 2011). Whilst it might be going too far to suppose that the need to feed social media drives this constant churn of product development in the sector, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the product churn drives social media in the sector. However, social media is more than just a communications tool to tell people about these product developments – websites and traditional advertising can do that. It is very much about creating a buzz, a relevancy, and being part of people's lives. Whilst it is possible to see similar things in other sectors (e.g. music or films) the fact that beer is, on paper at least, a fast moving consumer good, makes it somewhat unique in this relationship with social media. It's about saying to users *we belong on social media, just as much as you and your friends*



*do, we're part of the crowd.* Once again the brewery takes on the role of an individual engaging on social media. A key part of this is perhaps the social associations that beer possesses.

### **5.5.2: “There is nothing more social than beer...”**

The social aspect of beer is acknowledged in the slogan above from a prominent independent brewery. It is consumed in a relaxed setting, usually with friends, and whilst there is certainly an element of enjoying the product in itself, the emphasis is also on the social atmosphere created rather than the product itself. This social element distinguishes beer from other fast moving consumer goods, and helps support the notion that consumer co-creation and elements of experience marketing are applicable. When consuming a pint of beer the consumer is buying into an experience, be it taste, contentment, intoxication or social inclusion. Social media not only allows consumers to share this experience at the point of consumption, it enables them to connect to networks of like-minded people:

*“...there's that sense of community so I'm a XXXX drinker in Plymouth and yet I can relate to other XXXX drinkers...”*

**Dom; IB1**

*“We often see groups of friends commenting on each other's comments, so in a way it can bring people together socially with a topic they have mutual interest in.”*

**Holly; IB16**

The research data reinforces the social associations of beer and confirms the existence of online social interaction around the product. There is however a difference between

these online social interactions and the kind of social interaction which might take place in a pub or bar. In the online examples, social interaction is facilitated by the brewery through their own social media sites, whereas in the pub it is not. The ability of commercial organisations with commercial products to effect social interaction and social inclusion is a significant departure from their traditional marketing and operational activities. In this sense social media is changing traditional roles and the brewery, driven by the social associations of the beer it brews, becomes an active facilitator of social interaction alongside its more traditional role of brewing and supplying the beer.

'Connectedness, collectivity, closeness and belonging' was one of the Nvivo nodes used in the data analysis when considering the user benefits of being part of a social media network. It is worth remembering that the breweries themselves are users of social media and thus part of these networks, and the benefits of connectedness, collectivity, closeness and belonging thus apply to them too. This reaffirms the suggestion that traditional roles are changing and leads to a supposition that the boundaries between suppliers and consumers are blurring. Breweries, brewers, pubs, bottle shops, consumers and other interested individuals are all following each other on social media. This observation has led to a theme which has been labelled 'melting pot' in this thesis and the implications of this will be discussed more fully in the next chapter when considering the impact of lifestyles. The unique nature of the independent brewery sector has made this possible.

### **5.5.3: Summary of this section**

It can be argued that beer is more than just a product. Associations and traditions linked with beer are supported by the large 'beer geek' following that the product attracts. Social media enhances the potential relationship dynamic with this following by enabling closer, interactive relationships akin with experience marketing and co-

creation of value. The unique and dynamic nature of the beer sector lends originality to this research as few, if any other products can boast the same characteristics. The continued growth and diversity of the sector feeds social media usage, whilst at the same time social media usage feeds the dynamism, thus creating a self-perpetuating relationship. This expands extant theory around consumer-brand interaction, which tends to focus on global brands such as McDonald's, Starbucks, or Pepsico (e.g. Divol et al 2012), or those with large fan bases such as Rangers FC, Coldplay, or Nutella (Dessart et al., 2015). Here the principles of social media engagement, as described in the user engagement model, go beyond simple consumer-brand interaction into something involving all stakeholders, and associated with something that is more sector based than brand based.

Ultimately, social media usage in the independent brewery sector is driven by the nature of the sector, which is characterised by three things: a huge diversity in product output; a highly dynamic rate of new product development; and a keen interest in beer among consumers and beer enthusiasts. The resulting buzz on social media creates an inclusive and social environment which transcends the traditional supplier-customer relationship and brings all parties together as part of a common community. Social media has enabled breweries to expand their traditional roles of beer producer into something based more around social interaction and inclusion within a community.

## **5.6: Overall Findings from this Chapter**

Whether the issues discussed above can be considered unique to the independent brewing industry, or applied to a wider consideration of SMEs per se is open to debate. What is proposed here is that the independent brewing industry can be distinguished by certain characteristics. Data from the interviews suggest the following recurring characteristics of the independent brewery industry which appear to impact directly on

the usage of social media in the sector: varied and splintered distribution routes from brewery to end consumer; camaraderie within the sector; the existence of influential third party stakeholders; the social nature of beer itself.

The splintered distribution routes end the engagement of social media a significant B-2-B (business-to-business) element as well as B-2-C (business-to-consumer). The resulting co-creation that takes place, and 'piggybacking' of one party on another suggests a large element of sharing, as in a community rather than a business environment characterised by traditional market factors. Social media thus represents an alternative means of communication in the business world. It not only changes the dynamic of the communication, by for instance making it more immediate, it begins to blur the line between business and social use in lieu of it being transmitted on a universal medium used as part of most people's daily lives, whether they are at work or not. Furthermore, the networking ability of social media means that any number of participants can be involved at any one time, thus enabling three way relationships, for example B-2-C-2-B, or B-2-B-2-C, or even C-2-B-2-B.

The networking potential of social media also underpins a further distinguishing feature of the independent brewery sector – the camaraderie that exists here. The resulting close knit communities and collaborations provide three levels of benefit to the breweries which are practical, emotional and relational, mirroring arguments in Larivière et al.'s (2013) utility theory on why an individual might use social media. In terms of networking, it tends to be brewers themselves (individuals within the brewery) that take part, lending character to the brewery they work for and tightening the camaraderie within the industry. The personal, emotional and relational driven collaborations give small independent breweries a potential edge over larger competitors in a practical sense. They also provide the independent breweries with an identity within the community and an emotional release for employees. Once again this is the way in which individuals benefit from engaging with social media.

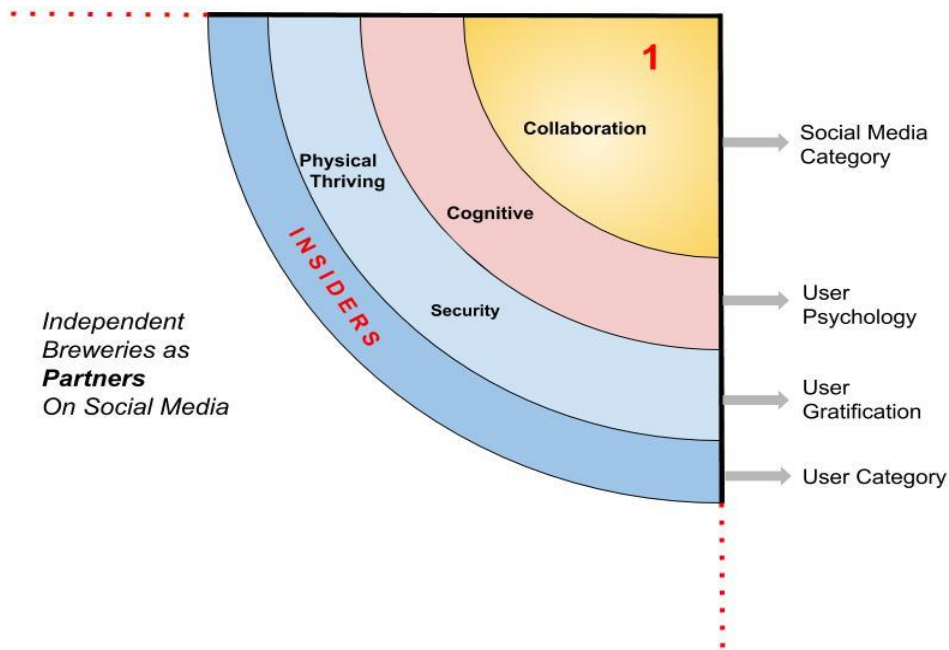
The existence of third parties represents a further unique characteristic of the sector. Social media has enabled these third parties to flourish, at once representing both a threat and an opportunity for small breweries, as control of marketing messages is arguably now in the hands of consumers. In this sense the concept of consumer is broadened to represent a wider 'beer geek' community. Breweries have to engage with beer geeks in a way that reflects that the brewery itself is part of the beer geek community and are themselves beer geeks. This has the potential to give the brewery a relevance, or presence, from which to develop a commercial approach to the market as a whole. The notion of the brewery being an inclusive part of a wider community is underlined by the final distinguishing feature of this sector, the product itself – beer. The social associations and traditions around beer make it more than just a product, and enhance the potential relationship dynamic within the sector. The research data suggests that breweries are not simply providing a product around which social interaction takes place, they are themselves part of that social interaction. As such, the dynamism of the independent brewery sector feeds social media usage in this sector and the nature of social media itself feeds this dynamism.

It is therefore construed that independent SME breweries are demonstrating behaviour more usually associated with individuals than business organisations. They can't help using it, but their use is varied and unpredictable and can be seen in softer factors associated with the personality of the business. This expands upon the ethos of social media being a platform on which people (individuals) can find belonging, express themselves, seek entertainment or learn from each other (Zhu & Chen, 2015) into something that is applicable to organisations too. In these circumstances it is inevitable that a personality will be evident and that the user will behave and be perceived as an organic entity rather than a machine. Hudson et al. (2016) suggest that a brand will do better on social media if it has an anthropomorphic (human) element attached. Here it is suggested that the whole brewery needs to have a presence akin to an individual in

order to engage with other individuals using the social media. This goes beyond Hudson et al.'s (2016) description of an anthropomorphic brand, it involves real human interaction at a genuine level.

It is finally argued here that the uniqueness of the independent brewery sector, and the resulting complexities in terms of merging business and personal lifestyles, the close camaraderie and networks that exists and the social nature of the product itself, give this research originality in terms of a study of social media in business. All of the sub-themes included in this chapter (distribution structures; camaraderie; 3<sup>rd</sup> party sites; and beer as a social product) revolve around knowledge and belonging, in what can be construed a specialist area. Dividing the user engagement model into sections, or quartiles, the issues of collaboration, cognitive knowledge and being part of a community, can be predominantly associated with Quartile 1 of the model, (Figure 5.3). This quartile represents a tight knit, highly knowledgeable community, supporting one another, whatever their individual roles might be, in terms of brewery, bottle shop, publican, end consumer, or just generally interested beer geek. Social media feeds and nourishes this area, and from the breweries' perspective their role becomes one of 'partner'.

**Figure 5.3**  
**Application of sector based issues - the brewery as a partner on social media**  
**(source: Author's own)**

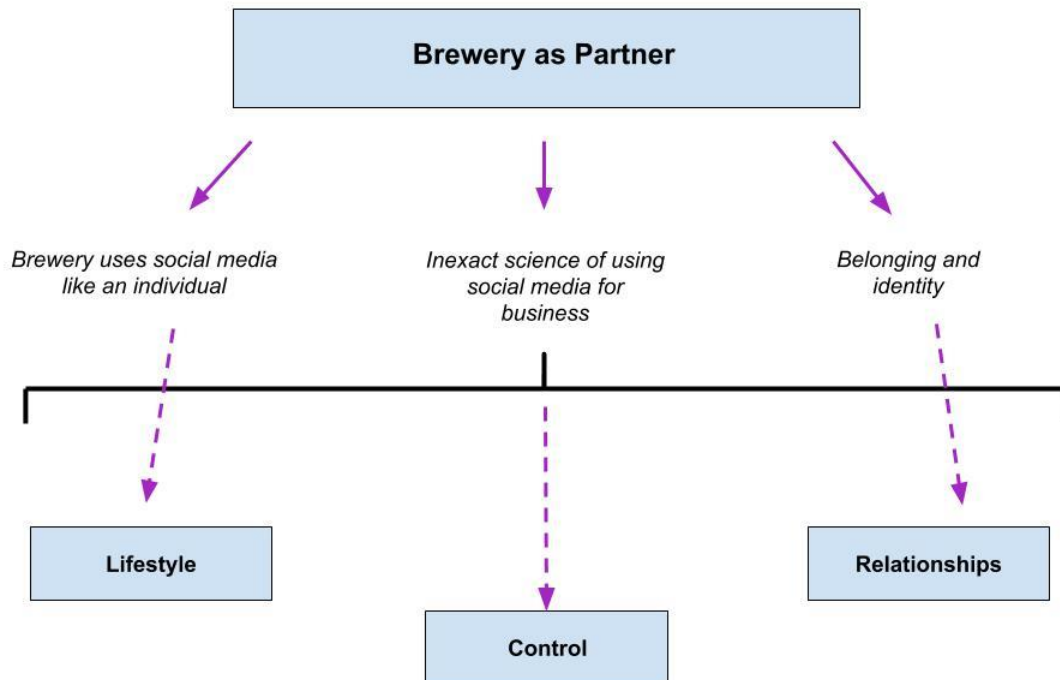


In terms of contemporary literature around service-dominant logic; co-creation of value; and social media engagement, a number of advancement are proposed here. First, Vargo and Lusch's (2017) call for the development of more meso level theory around service-dominant logic has been met, by considering the roles played by multiple actors in the co-creation of value, with social media representing a 'service eco-system' to support resource integration and co-creation. Second, the notion of social media enabled 'cultural life-worlds', espoused by Halliday (2016) is expanded beyond the consumer dynamic described and into a much wider range of actors, including the breweries, middlemen, and consumers. Similarly, contemporary studies of social media user utility (such as Dessart et al., 2015) have been expanded here beyond consumer communities, which are based around large brands, into wider employee-peer based communities focused around a specific sector. Third, by considering the breweries themselves as 'insiders', develops Kozinets' (2015) typology of user roles into a practical application for organisations. Finally, the findings here suggest that contemporary literature around social media engagement and utility, as depicted in the conceptual

user engagement model, is expanded beyond traditional consumer-brand interaction to something that involves all stakeholders and is sector based rather than brand based.

Unlike traditional marketing much of this is built upon individual personality and genuine human engagement. Building on these sector based issues leads directly to the following three chapters: lifestyle; relationships and control. This pathway is illustrated in Figure 5.4.

**Figure 5.4: Impact of the sector on the research themes**  
(source: Author's own)







## Chapter 6

### Key Theme 2 - Lifestyle

#### 6.1: Introduction

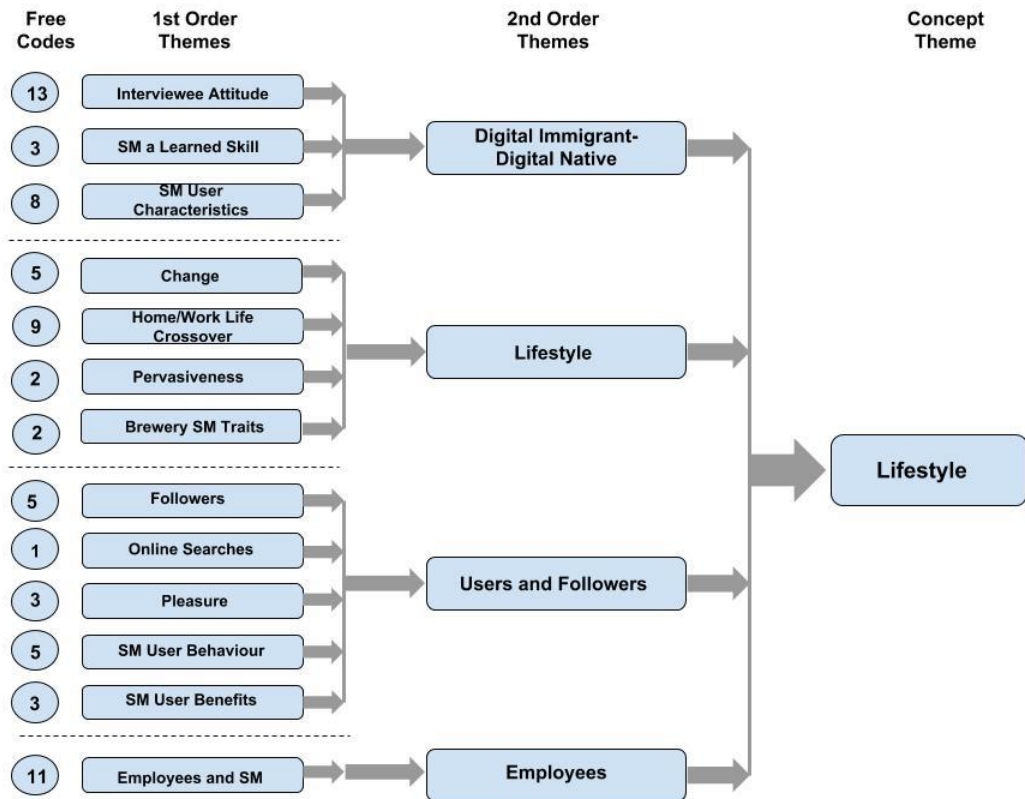
This is the second of four chapters, each based around core themes emerging from the first and second stage coding processes. These core themes are *sector context; lifestyle; relationships; control*.

The previous chapter considered how contextual issues associated with the independent brewery sector drive social media engagement. Analysis of the data identified three key areas of significance here. First, when engaging with social media, breweries exhibit the behaviour and characteristics of individual human beings, as opposed to business organisations. This is seen in the softer factors associated with the personality of the brewery, usually deriving from individuals within the business. The independent brewery sector is particularly character driven, both in terms of branding and in the individuals associated with the various breweries. The suggestion that these businesses behave more like individuals than organisations affects the way in which the different breweries engage with social media.

The notion of the business as an individual leads to a second proposal, that belonging and identity are significant elements of a brewery's engagement with social media. The independent brewery sector is characterised by camaraderie and networks of relationships, which can give these businesses a potential edge over larger rivals. The third proposal is that small independent breweries are part of a wider community, made up of brewers, consumers and others, all with a common interest in beer. The theme of

being part of a community is a common thread running through the data, and it is thus proposed that engagement with social media expands the brewery's role from being a producer of consumer goods to an enabler of relationships. The concepts that have emerged here of blended lifestyles, multi-level relationships and the role of the brewery itself form the basis of this, and the following chapters: lifestyle; relationships and control.

The subject of this chapter is *Lifestyle*, as underpinned by the proposal that independent breweries are engaging with social media in the same way that an individual might. On the surface this reflects generic changes over the last two decades resulting from the digital revolution. Underneath however, it also represents an observation that social media is blurring boundaries between business and home life; different stakeholders within the sector; and traditionally separate roles within the business itself. It represents the digital immigrant-digital native concept and brings in the attitudes of those individuals interviewed in the research. It also brings to the fore the nature of social media users and the role of employees within the breweries. Ultimately it's about personality. These themes can be traced back to the data through the node path described in Figure 6.1 and analysis here directly supports the questions associated with the first and second research objectives, relating to brewery use of social media and the nature of the various actors' engagement.



**Figure 6.1: Code path to 'Lifestyle' theme**

The structure of this chapter follows these paths, analysing in turn the implications of age related factors, exemplified in the concept of the digital immigrant and digital native; the changing lifestyles brought about through the pervasiveness of social media and its ability to cross between home life and work life; the activities and drivers of the various users and followers of brewery based social media; and the part played by employees of the breweries themselves as part of a new digitally enabled population. It is argued that issues around lifestyle factors, coupled with the nature of relationships in the sector (looked at in the next chapter) raise questions around control and management, which is examined in Chapter 8.

## 6.2: Age Related Factors

Age-related factors are a common theme in the data, and are considered here around the digital immigrant-digital native concept (Tuten & Solomon, 2013). Digital natives have grown up with social media and thus take it for granted as a natural part of their lives. Digital immigrants on the other hand have experienced a life without social media and thus have a choice of how far to accept it as part of their lives. It could be argued that the concept could equally apply to businesses in terms of how long they had been set up, with more recent start-ups beginning their lives on social media and using it as a matter of course:

*“They were doing it [social media] a long time before they were even brewing...”*

**Kris; IB15**

The rapid growth of the independent brewery sector has seen a great number of new start-ups, and generally speaking these newer breweries are staffed by digital natives. Conversely older breweries that have been in existence ten years or more, conform to a digital immigrant description, with the memories of older members of staff living through change being a regular topic, particularly in terms of working practices:

*“Yeah. Because it's... I mean even I've seen it change. When I started we were still doing a lot of traditional advertising I guess. You know, print advertising and people ringing you up trying to flog you advertising space and what have you, and the volume of those calls in the last four or five years has gone like that (gestures downwards).”*

**Sam; IB4**

*“...and back then, you know, I did a monthly newsletter, where I'd do something on PowerPoint, print it off, get a lot of envelopes and send it out to people...”*

## *Dom; IB1*

It is perhaps inevitable that these working practices would change in time, as technology moved on, and both Sam and Dom are making the point that the new way of doing things, using social media, is much better than the old way. This might be construed as the general evolution of technology, something taken for granted and inevitably experienced as one grows older. For a business it can be seen in the shift from typewriters to word processors, and then onto computers, and so on. Being inevitable, it does not lend any depth to the concept of being a digital immigrant where the emphasis is on choice of how far to go along with the new media, not inevitability. Rather, the distinction between digital immigrants and digital natives (be they individuals within breweries, or the brewery themselves) is about the priority given to social media. Digital immigrants tend to see it as useful, but as an addition to other communication tools. Digital natives tend to see it as an automatic way of doing business. In this sense, the nature and level of social media engagement represents a lifestyle choice whether one is taking the perspective of a business or of an individual. The issues of choice and individual lifestyle thus become themes in helping to understand independent breweries' engagement with social media, and form the basis of the following sub-sections.

### **6.2.1: Choice**

Given that social media usage among breweries is observed to be variable, and thus more the result of conscious choice, it is argued here that age-related factors alone are insufficient to explain how and why breweries use social media, or indeed how effective their engagement with social media is. Instead, as Bolton et al. (2013) note, individual differences between users of social media appear to be a better base from which to analyse engagement. These include socio-geographic factors and life-cycle stages, along

with endogenous factors such as personal goals, emotions and social norms. Whilst Bolton et al. (2016) are writing about individuals, and not businesses, looking at the data it is possible to apply these factors to breweries, as it is proposed that they behave on social media in much the same way as an individual might in terms of their goals, personalities and engagement levels.

As such, the data reveals large divergences in approach, not only in levels of acceptance of social media and but also in levels of commitment. These differences appear to bridge simple age-related variables usually associated with digital immigrants and digital natives, and reflect instead individually held attitudes of the respondents themselves. The differences underline the choice factor in terms of how far social media plays a part in different breweries. Most respondents accept that social media is here to stay, but when asked how much value is placed on social media within the brewery, differences in enthusiasm are apparent:

*“Very clever, and it'll get even better.”*

**Harry; IB8**

*“I think it's a very important part of it when you're only a small brewer, definitely”*

**Andy; IB11**

*“I don't think we're slaves to it either, in that we recognise it plays a part...”*

**Dom; IB1**

*“Because, not everyone lives a fluffy wonderful life where you know, everyone has a beard and is very relaxed (laughs) – you know what I mean?”*

**Sam; IB4**

All of these comments reflect the personal attitude of the respondent. The first two suggest genuine enthusiasm, but the second two suggest a level of defiance towards social media, either by asserting an independence and ability to stand with or without the medium, or maintaining that social media conforms to a stereotypical image which the brewery does not necessarily have to go along with. Each of these underpin the notion of the digital immigrant, by acknowledging that social media acceptance, and the way in which one engages with social media is a choice, not an inevitability. However, it is argued here that this choice is based around personal attitude and beliefs rather than age per se.

Differences between digital natives and immigrants is evident, where digital native employees (some of whom were the interviewees in this research) apply their own social media expectations in terms of platform used and content posted, to the brewery's social media engagement. For breweries set up in the last ten years, who might be classed as organisational digital natives, the issue is not one of acceptance of social media, but more of how to make the most from it. In other words, for newer businesses, social media is part of the landscape, and each business finds its own way of engaging with it, usually drawing upon the personal preferences and attitudes of individuals within the brewery. The key point is that this is not a nuanced business approach, it is simply incorporating something that is already there into the establishment of the business. The examples below, both relating to digital native breweries, illustrate this:

*“I was aware of the importance of social media, erm, in terms of awareness and things, err, and so was trying to build that right from, you know [the brewery] being a concept...”*

**Tom; IB10**



*“we started off with Facebook, errm, and pretty swiftly realised we also needed to use Twitter.”*

**Andy; IB11**

These examples underline how digital natives not only bring acceptance and expertise; they also influence the types of social media used and the nature of engagement. In this sense they mirror the way in which the personal attitudes of the digital immigrants influence the social media engagement of the brewery. Whether digital immigrant or digital native, the approach tends to be an extension of personal self rather than a nuanced business approach. This represents an organic, natural approach to using social media, based around individual lifestyle, albeit applied in a business context.

### **6.2.2: Individual lifestyle approach to business issues**

The organic approach alluded to above does not mean that no consideration of business needs is taken into account. Just as in our personal lives we work out which social media platforms work for us and find the best ways to get what we need from them, evidence suggests that the breweries are doing the same thing. For some this involves a trial and error approach, seeing what works and what doesn't. For others it is a conscious evaluation activity to determine the best way forward. Either way, their adoption of social media in their businesses mirrors processes seen in individual lifestyles, rather than a 'rule-book' management technique.

*“...the more you use it, the more used you get to the form of reply you need to put out or observation, or new tweet”*

**Adam; IB2**

*“...we started out not being very savvy about the use of hashtags, but now we're doing quite a lot...”*

**Tom; IB10**

*“I researched, researched what I needed to make it successful, worked out that Instagram only allow up to thirty hashtags, err which not many people know, a lot of people I think should know...”*

**Zee; IB13**

These comments come from a mixture of digital immigrants and digital natives. They suggest an individual, learning approach to engaging with social media as a business, in an environment with no hard and fast rules. In the examples above, Adam and Tom are learning about social media in their businesses simply by living it, in what appears to be a very organic approach. Zee has made a conscious effort to learn in what appears to be an environment with no clear rules and a general ignorance around the subject. Each of these examples suggests a natural adaptation to circumstances, with breweries learning as they went along.

A learning approach can also be seen in the choice of social media platforms, which vary between the different breweries. Zhu and Chen (2015) divide social media platforms into four types depending on the extent to which their content was customised to individuals, or broadcast to a wider audience; and whether content was user/social focused or subject focused. Such a typology might guide a business in selecting the best platform for its needs, but this would require clear cut social media business objectives which, as discussed in Chapter 8, are not observed in the data. The comments below illustrate differences of opinion between the respondents, each of which carries through into the brewery's use of a particular platform.

*“Facebook is on point in terms of, you know, social media brand presence, it's much better than any other platform.”*

**Harry; IB8**

*“...but on Facebook I went to change the name, but can't do that for another ninety days, and I was like aargh, I can't be bothered with this, so I just shut that page down...”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“Twitter is certainly where most breweries seem to be spending most of their efforts these days, and you can see why, it's instant it's err, it's direct to the people who are interested in what you want to say...”*

**Emily; IB14**

*“Twitter tends to connect us more with businesses...”*

**Holly; IB16**

Whilst these views express personal opinion, their context reveals that all were borne out of experiential learning through business use as opposed to personal use. What comes through however is that there is no consistency of opinion, no indication of a right way or a wrong way. Some of the views expressed are practically based, as in the example given by Ewen, whilst others are more about noticing where the most followers or links come from. It is clear that big divergences of opinion exist, claiming respectively that both Facebook and Twitter are better than one another. It reinforces the notion already advanced here that the breweries are behaving as individuals rather than businesses, in that we all lean towards whatever works for us personally. In this sense hard planning (based for example on a mechanical model like Zhu & Chen's 2015 typology) is overridden by a more organic approach, based around human experience and generic lifestyles.

### 6.2.3: Summary of this section

Whilst age related variables might be observed in digital immigrants and digital natives, they are insufficient in themselves to explain or predict social media usage in small, independent breweries. Rather, it is suggested that attitudes of individuals within the breweries are the key driving factor behind social media usage. Although these attitudes might be an outcome of one's age, they are also a function of an ongoing learning process in both a personal and a business sense. Digital immigrants have seen life with and without social media and whilst their acceptance of the medium is not in dispute, they have a choice in terms of the value placed on it. This sometimes plays out in defensiveness or even defiance as in '*we're strong enough to be successful in spite of social media*'.

Digital natives bring knowledge of how to use social media, but despite growing up with the medium, they also have a choice. Their choice is not in terms of value or priority, but more about how to engage with the medium. Here their personal preferences are primarily evident, with no clear cut right or wrong way and conflicting views on which was the best media to use. In this sense business planning takes a back seat to a more organic approach based around human experience.

With both digital immigrants and digital natives, social media is adapted to a business use, not through planning but more through trial and error. Breweries learn as they go along what works and what doesn't and again, there appears to be little consistency or commonality in the nature of engagement. Building upon Zhu and Chen's (2015) user objectives from an organisational perspective, breweries can be engaging with social media for any number of reasons, be it to develop relationships, seek collaborations, promote themselves or simply for the fun of it. The approach taken by any particular

brewery will depend upon the personal views and preferences of those within the brewery who are instigating it.

### **6.3: Changing Lifestyles**

Change is a constant theme running through the research data. The previous section acknowledges this when considering the digital immigrant and the digital native and it is seen there how breweries are adapting to what is a relatively new communications medium. This section builds on this by analysing the sheer impact of social media across all areas of life and business. The ubiquity of social media and its effect on modern lifestyles is a common theme in the data and is clustered around two nodes. The first is labelled *pervasiveness*, describing how social media has seeped into our everyday lives to the extent that it is used as a default tool for many of the day to day functions we need to manage. The second node is related to this but goes further, by specifically describing how social media brings about a blurring of traditional lines between home and work, and business and pleasure. This node is labelled *home/work-life cross over*.

#### **6.3.1: Pervasiveness of social media**

64% of the UK's population has a social media account, and the average user spends 1.48 hours a day on there (We Are Social Ltd., 2018). With such penetration it is inevitable that businesses will also get involved. Whilst the research here has identified some breweries with no social media presence, the vast majority (90%) do. All of the breweries interviewed here have social media sites and are active engagers. As has already noted, this engagement is driven by individuals within the breweries, who bring with them their experiences and expectations. However the interactive nature of social media means that it is not just individuals at the brewery communicating with

consumers, it is potentially everyone, including brewery employees, people in the supply chain, employees at other breweries, customers, consumers and others who have an interest in breweries or beer. In this sense, it is evident from the research data that breweries' use of social media has developed in much the same way that usage in the general population has developed:

*“And then obviously social media has grown, our use has grown...”*

**Joe; IB7**

*“With Facebook, I think pretty much everyone's on Facebook...”*

**Kate; IB9**

*“We wanted to make sure we were keeping up with how people communicated and we realised that as more people were connecting via social media, it would create opportunities for us to let people know about our business...”*

**Holly; IB16**

These examples illustrate a certain inevitability in the adoption of social media, with businesses simply following trends in society. The key consideration here though, is the fact that social media *is social*. It was developed as a social networking medium, not a business communication tool (Fournier & Avery 2011). If businesses are now using it to communicate with their customers, then either the nature of the media has shifted from being social to being commercial, or the traditional buyer-seller roles have changed. It is acknowledged in Chapter 3 that a school of thought exists which sees social media as an addition to the marketing promotions mix (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). In this sense marketers are able to stir the mix and remain in control, and the nature of social media has indeed shifted from social to commercial. It is argued here that this is not the case. None of the examples above mention customers or consumers specifically. Rather, they talk about “people” in a wider sense, suggesting society in

general. The breweries are a part of that society, as are all of the individual stakeholders in and around their business – including their employees as well as the consumers of the beer.

It is therefore suggested that by engaging in social media the role of the breweries has expanded, from simply brewing and selling beer to being part of a society. This suggestion of belonging and community is the nub of the next chapter which considers the role of human relationships in the breweries' social media engagement. What is proposed here is that breweries, and their individual employees, are practising a lifestyle, and once again behaving in the same way as individuals when engaging with social media. In doing so, they are not just interacting with consumers as individuals; they are interacting with everyone in the supply chain as individuals and potentially altering the whole dynamic of both B2B and B2C relationships.

It is argued in the previous chapter that the independent brewery sector is characterised by splintered and sometimes complex routes to market and that each of the players in this scenario is engaging in social media in their own way. When this research was begun, it was assumed that breweries would be engaging with social media in a B2C, or C2B context, but it became apparent from the first interview that there was a very large B2B element in the use of social media. This is evident in comments about individuals in the B2B chains who were using social media as part of their lifestyle – in other words it was simply an extension of what they did, whether for business or pleasure.

*“The beer buyer at [XXXX supermarket chain], she's on our Facebook list, so she'll say to me, oh yeah, I saw that on your Facebook page, so there's ermm, you know, no separation in that sense, it filters out to them all.”*

**Dom; IB1**

*“...we have picked up on beer that's gone off on there and been able to get in touch with the pub and get it back.”*

**Joe; IB7**

These comments demonstrate two significant areas that distinguish social media from more traditional business communications tools. First, they are informal in that the outcomes of the engagement appear to be more the result of chance than specific design. In the first example, the supermarket buyer happens to see something posted by the brewery on social media before any formal buyer-seller processes, such as dedicated sales pitches employed by the brewery, have been undertaken. In the second example, the brewery learns of a problem with its beer, not because the pub tells them officially, but because it is posted on social media by third parties (most likely drinkers in the pub). The speed with which both of these messages are picked up reflects how social media is used 24 hours a day, 7 days a week as part of an individual's lifestyle. Being able to tap into this lifestyle is of benefit to the brewery and forms an additional link to markets over and above more formal communications channels. In other words it represents a link between individual lifestyle outside of business, to the way in which relationships are conducted within a business to business setting.

The second area distinguishing social media from traditional business communications tools is that the former is able to simultaneously involve a wide range of stakeholders, irrespective of their position or role in the beer sector. Whilst it might be construed that this makes social media a basic, broadcast communications tool, such as advertising, where the marketer decides what is sent and everyone receives the same message (Gordon, 1998), the fact that it has the potential to be interactive changes the dynamic of the communication because it gives the message recipients an element of control. In other words it ushers in the possibility of co-creation. It also enables the messages to travel further through things like re-tweeting and message sharing through networks. In this way, social media messages, even when sent in a marketing context to



a targeted list of users, has the potential to involve stakeholders who might not even be directly connected to each other. This represents something much more complicated than a simple linear relationship between buyer and seller which traditional marketing communications might entail. It can be argued that it represents a blending of what have been traditionally separate roles and relationships. This theme is recognised throughout the data under a theme labelled 'melting pot'.

### **6.3.2: Melting pot**

The melting pot label is assigned to try and reflect the way in which social media is blurring the boundaries between traditional relationships, such as buyer and seller. It is increasingly noted that whilst these users have a common interest in beers and breweries, they represent a wide range, from potentially influential supermarket beer buyers to general beer geeks, and also including the employees of the breweries themselves. This is illustrated in the descriptions of various followers below:

*“The people that follow him are wide ranging, but usually other brewers, assistant brewers, people that work in pubs, people that know him, ermm, and the odd customer.”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“I think it's a split between a few different types of people, but generally just beery... beery folk of one way or the other, as you'd expect...”*

**Kris; IB15**

Whereas traditional marketing sets out to define discrete customer segments and target them, social media makes no distinction, as its use is open to anyone who has an interest in the subject, for whatever reason and whether or not they are customers,

consumers, or anyone else for that matter. In other words it corresponds with their lifestyle as an individual rather than their role in a market sector. It may be possible to divide this amorphous group of users into categories according to their social media based needs, as for example in Larivière et al.'s (2013) typology of users' gratification and utility needs. However the examples above show that these cross the boundaries of traditional roles like brewer, distributor or consumer. As a result, a brewery using social media is likely to attract a myriad of followers, and is likely to be a follower itself of a wide range of other users.

The use of social media as a pure marketing tool, aimed at traditionally defined audiences such as customer, consumer or middleman, therefore appears limited. Whilst it can be used to send messages out to interested parties, including customers and consumers, the brewery cannot fully control where these messages end up or how they are used, as in Hennig-Thurau et al.'s (2010) pinball analogy. Only one brewery interviewed demonstrates a perceived control over the way in which they use social media for business purposes. Harry, a confident digital native, had a clear vision of how he was using social media and how it fitted into his longer term plans:

*“...for me it's a brand tool, Facebook for the minute for us, it's a brand tool, and then it's a case of how am I going to flip that brand, err, into sales when I get that capable market.”*

**Harry; IB8**

*“I think having a good Facebook presence and a decent amount of followers, means that when you approach a new [stockist] you just put them onto your Facebook and they see, oh look, we've got two thousand followers or whatever, and then that kind of reinforces your sales patter to a buyer...”*

**Harry; IB8**

These examples demonstrate how it is possible to use social media in a purely commercial sense, although even here it is acknowledged that social media is being used to leverage traditional marketing tools such as branding and sales rather than as a tool in itself. Harry's brewery is the exception rather than the rule. They use metrics to divide their Facebook followers into segments which they then target according to their business plan. They use the number of followers they have to persuade pubs to stock their beer. However, to achieve any of this, they have to be relevant in themselves on social media in order to attract followers in the first place. Not only do they tap into the lifestyles of people who are using social media for their own purposes, they become part of a lifestyle and their traditional role as a marketer is subsumed. That the outcomes of their involvement can subsequently be used for marketing purposes is discussed in chapter 9 when issues of management and control are considered. For now it is suggested that social media involvement is not an overtly commercial engagement, it is something that engages with individual's lifestyles. As such, traditional roles in a business sense are overridden by individual lifestyle choices.

*“The walls between the brewer and the eventual customer and the middle people, the wholesalers and retailers, it's err, I find it hard to see that wall any more...”*

**Zee; IB13**

### **6.3.3: Summary of this section**

Social media has steadily increased in usage and now pervades the everyday lives of an increasing amount of the population. Breweries have been unable to ignore this phenomenon, as it not only involves their customers, it involves everyone else with an involvement or interest in their sector, including themselves through their own employees in what might be termed a 'melting pot' based around lifestyle choice. This does however create an oxymoron, in the sense that a business engaging in social media

appears to contradict the 'social' nature of 'social' media. Evidence from the research data suggests that whilst breweries are undoubtedly using social media for business purposes, be it spreading messages or monitoring markets, underneath they are simply tapping into a lifestyle based phenomena of which they themselves are a part.

Social media is not therefore simply another marketing tool, although it can be leveraged for marketing purposes, just as any social based network can. Rather, social media is an organic and unpredictable medium with the capacity to involve anyone in any way. As such it is at once chaotic yet inclusive, and traditional roles in a business context, such as buyer and seller, are replaced by the utility and gratification drivers of individual users, be they social, personal, cognitive or entertainment based. What is proposed here is that contemporary literature around the utility and gratification of social media users (such as Larivière et al., 2012) is expanded beyond the perspective of individuals, into a consideration of organisational use. On social media therefore, the role of the brewery expands from being a commercial organisation to being a member of society, and their engagement within this society is based around individual lifestyle choice factors rather than commercial objectives.

#### **6.4: Home/Work Life Cross Over**

If social media represents a pervasive change to lifestyle, where traditional roles melt, it is perhaps inevitable that the boundaries between home life and work life become blurred. In some respects this has always been the case for those running small businesses where a traditional nine-to-five working pattern does not necessarily apply. With social media however, the propensity for a home-life work-life cross over is magnified because the media is used for both business and private social purposes. As a

result, a tool which is used for work ends up in the non-work part of users' lives, and vice versa, as illustrated in the examples below:

*“Twitter, you can do it from your phone, any time of day or night, at the weekends, you know. So it's one of those applications that's very easy to use and very quick so, ermm, for instance, I don't have to be here thinking about business. I might be, it might be eight o'clock on a Saturday morning in my pub, and I just... oh, I've got some new beers on, guest beers...”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“It's... all the time actually. You know, from getting up in the morning, to going to bed at night.”*

**Andy; IB11**

*“I do find that the first thing I do when I get up most days is check my Twitter messages and see if there's anyone I need to reply to, or see if anything relevant has happened on there, which err, which makes me sound incredibly sad, but...”*

**Emily; IB14**

The references to 'getting up' and 'going to bed' support the assertion that social media is a '24-7' lifestyle phenomenon, but there is little evidence from the data to suggest that respondents find this a bad thing. Indeed, Ewen is pleased about the versatility it gives him to run his business. Whilst these timing issues represent an advantage from a business sense, there is however evidence of a desire to keep an element of one's personal life separate. Many of the respondents confirm that they have separate social media accounts for their business use and for their private use. In the main this is to protect their privacy and allow them to cultivate their personal friends and networks:

*“...the way I run my personal account is, err I'm quite... depending on how you look at it, security conscious, paranoid, however you want to call it. So I'll only accept a friend request if I actually know the person, I don't – I won't accept a friend request from someone who just likes the beer...”*

**Jack; IB12**

*“I'm quite good at keeping them separate, errm, purposely.”*

**Kate; IB9**

There appears to be a tension here between using social media for the benefit of the brewery, whilst keeping your own personal usage private. If breweries are using social media in the same way as individuals, then where is the separating line between the brewery as a person on social media, and the individual at the brewery who is posting on behalf of the brewery? It might be argued that this comes down to personality and the way in which personality is projected through social media. Some of those interviewed, particularly in the very small breweries where one person was generally responsible for multiple tasks, use their own personal networks and followings to develop their brewery based social media presence. In this sense, they were the brewery and the brewery was them. In other cases, employees within the brewery, particularly those doing the brewing, are encouraged to develop their own social media followings on behalf of the brewery:

*“...so we use that, they [employees] use it err, socially, as well as in business. So we kind of ermm, try and foster that so that it, it transcends from pleasure, if you like, into business as well...”*

**Adam; IB2**

*“XXXX here my brewer, he's got [a Twitter account]. We're not too precious about it here, it's not like these are my views and not necessarily the views of my employer, we don't do that...”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“I let the brewer handle that because I feel like Twitter's a more personal voice kind of social media, rather than a brand social media network.”*

**Harry; IB8**

These examples suggest that individuals' personality, and a personal approach to developing social media content, is important from the brewery's perspective and that this is valued by other users. In this sense the original function of social media is not being compromised as it is being used in a social and not a commercial way. This raises two issues. First, the breweries are acknowledging a difference between commercial and social engagement on social media, and that a personal message is important. Even those that are using social media in an overtly commercial way, such as Harry, recognise the value in having a personal element. This illustrates a clear distinction between corporate brand messaging, as might be expected in traditional marketing, and the more social and personal interaction associated with being a member of an online community. The fact that Harry's brewer looks after this side of social media suggests that he has his own presence on social media as an individual and is able to engage with other users of Twitter at this level. There is no suggestion that the brewery identity is masked in these personal interactions. Rather, it represents a dual approach, where social interaction at an individual level acts as an addition to more traditional marketing messages. This additional level of engagement supports the assertion that the brewery is tapping into the social capital of individuals associated with the business.

This raises a second issue associated with the personal element of social media, in that by using an individual's personality and personal approach online, the brewery is valuing

something over and above the core skills which employees bring. In this case the core skill is brewing, but if the brewer also has a high profile social media following in his or her own right, this acts as a further resource for the brewery in general. To some extent it could be argued that this is inevitable. Big personalities have the capacity to raise the profile of the organisation that employs them, just as charismatic owners will colour the external perception of their businesses. Social media postings are a continuation of this, albeit allowing the messages to travel to much larger audiences. This raises questions of control and trust, particularly when it is the employees of the brewery that are representing the business on social media. The issue here is that individuals are extending part of their home or personal life into their working environments for the benefit of the organisation. This view is encapsulated in Emily's comment:

*"I think social media has now extended to the point where it's kind of blurred the lines between your err, your personal life and your work life in that regard..."*

**Emily; IB14**

There are some attendant risks here however, because unless an individual's home life and personality are completely in tune with the image that the brewery wants to project, there exists the potential to confuse or even offend a social media audience. In such scenarios, the carefully controlled messages of professional public relations are subsumed under a personality laden, 'warts and all' approach. This conflict was seen in an earlier comment from Sam, who sardonically referred to the *"fluffy wonderful life where you know, everyone has a beard and is very relaxed..."* world of social media users, which to him appeared at odds with the commercial reality of selling beer. This potential conflict between home life personality and business etiquette can be seen below:

*"I suppose there is a danger in that with - in the past with other forms of err, profile building err, tools, so if we put a press release out we check it and sign it*



*off, or if we put an advert out we check it and sign it off and proof read it and stuff, and check it for legals. And with social media it's very difficult to do that, and it's err, kind of straight out. We don't say to our Sales Manager, you know, we need to check everything we do before we tweet, it just gets done."*

**Harry; IB8**

*"We don't set out to offend or whatever, but some of the things he can say, if he's had a beer or two."*

**Ewen; IB3**

*"So for example a few years ago, one of the boys went down to the Great British Beer Festival – we didn't go – and they put like, I think it was a Facebook post, and I was just like "oh my God, that is worded so wrong, that can't go out as [IB9]", so I removed it and said I'm really sorry but..."*

**Kate; IB9**

This reinforces the notion that social media posts are not the same as other marketing communications. For one thing, they are organic, coming from individuals and reflecting the thoughts of that person at that particular time. Whilst this spontaneity gives the messages a natural tone, akin to a conversation, in a social setting, it makes it difficult for the organisation to control. When a strong personality is involved (as in Ewen's comment) it might be construed that the propensity for social media conversation to become 'banter' is magnified. Banter is generally seen as good natured, playful or jokey exchanges of teasing remarks, something that fits the approach described by Ewen - *"I'll just put anything that's humorous or funny on it..."*. This emotive based approach conforms to Larivière et al.'s (2013) use of gratification and utility theory, and Dessart et al.'s (2015) typology of psychological needs, when applied to social media users (be they posters or followers). The natural, good humoured banter enables social interaction, reinforcing the popularity or influence of the poster

and the entertainment, or pleasure derived experience of the media users. It represents natural interaction, as between friends in a social setting. Sometimes however, the communication does not conform to these ideals of friendly, good natured banter:

*“...they only really come out of hiding to tell people to buy their beer, or to call people the 'c' word on Untappd...”*

**Zee; IB13**

This comment, made about a brewery not interviewed as part of this research, suggests a darker and potentially more damaging side to being yourself on social media. If people are transferring their home life persona, including the way in which they engage with their friends and family into a work based situation, there is a risk that this may come across as unprofessional, particularly if that persona is going out on a public forum representing the brewery. That is because it reflects an organic, natural form of communication and an approach which might easily be witnessed in naturally occurring conversation. At the end of the day, whether the interactions are good natured or not, they are not the same as traditional business communications. Rather, they conform to the norms of social media usage, fitting the psychological and gratification theories of engagement, rather than the more tailored and prescriptive approaches of a marketing public relations strategy. By engaging in social media, breweries are leaving behind their corporate selves and adopting a more individual approach that reflects personality and inclusion in a community. Being organic, it is understandable that the home life personas of individuals within the breweries will colour the nature of the brewery's social media engagement. It is also perhaps understandable that breweries will tolerate an element of risk, if it helps them stand out from the crowd with a strong social media personality:

*“there are so many breweries, so many breweries that are tweeting and stuff, that really I think sometimes it's kind of easy to be just lost and a voice in the crowd...”*

**Kris; IB15**

#### **6.4.1: Summary of this section**

As social media becomes an increasingly ingrained feature of modern lifestyles, so the transference of its use for both private-social and business purposes appears more notable. The data suggests that this use of social media as a single platform to manage all aspects of one's life is blurring the boundary between home life and work life. Whilst most try to keep a distinct line between their personal and business use of social media, this can create a tension between *being yourself*, which social media requires, and *representing a business*.

Hudson et al. (2016) suggest that organisations should develop anthropomorphic brands in order to succeed on social media. It is purported in this thesis that strong personalities can attract large numbers of followers and raise the profile of the business, and some breweries encourage this through their employees. However, the findings here go beyond Hudson et al.'s focus on developing a human face in order to help the corporate image. The sense here is that the social element is trumping the business focus, and the brewery is engaging with social media as an individual rather than as a business. This represents a change in role for the breweries and to some extent for the people in them (as for example where a brewer is a popular social media figure in his/her own right). Employees can now be valued for their social media presence as well as their brewing skills. Here, the concept of 'social personality' among employees represents a resource within independent breweries. This element of individual personality carries with it a down side however, in that the image created cannot easily

be controlled and may cause alienation or even offence among other users. Individual personalities are organic and unpredictable and using them for social media business purposes could be construed risky. The approach does however, give the breweries' social media engagement legitimacy that makes it an equal and individual member of the community. To play its part in that community and have its voice heard, a strong and recognisable character is needed and possessing social personality becomes a significant resource requirement for the business.

### **6.5: Diversity of Users and Followers in a Commercial Sense**

The pervasive use of social media as part of a lifestyle does not distinguish between customers, suppliers, distributors, other brewers or generally interested individuals. It is used homogeneously across the population both at home and in the work place. Whilst some of these users will undoubtedly be of commercial interest to breweries, the sheer diversity of users and followers presents a challenge in terms of business engagement. It must also be acknowledged that the breweries themselves, along with their employees, are part of this diverse population of social media users. Rather than attempting to engage on the basis of the role they undertake (consumer, supplier, distributor, etc.), the data suggests that the diversity of population can be addressed at three levels; the psychology of social media users; their online behavioural characteristics; and their offline behaviour in terms of their propensity to buy beer.

#### **6.5.1: Three levels of social media user**

The first of these levels relates to psychological user typologies, such as described by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) or Zhu and Chen (2015). They distinguish between users seeking some kind of self-actualisation or self-fulfilment and those seeking something

more relational or content based. For beer and brewery related social media users, those seeking self-actualisation might be people who set themselves up as experts or opinion leaders. Their presence on social media is as much about developing relationships with like-minded people, and raising their own profile through their knowledge and eclectic tastes, as it is about the subject content of their messages. These users fall into the 'relationship' and 'self-media' quadrants of Zhu and Chen's (2015) social media matrix. Examples were seen in Harry's description of some Untappd users:

*"...they just go, yeah it's a blonde beer, because what they're expecting is a raspberry ripple twist, served with vermouth or whatever, do you know what I mean? And they'll have paid £8.99 for a 33cl bottle."*

**Harry; IB8**

From a brewery perspective identifying these different psychological types might be useful if for example, they were able to influence opinion leaders. Here the brewery, or the person representing the brewery, might be construed as being part of the 'in-crowd' and attract followers in their own right as well as through those already following the opinion leaders. On the other hand, those users seeking something more content based might be more interested in learning about different beers or being associated with a particular brand or brewery. These users would fall into the 'collaboration' or 'creative outlets' quadrants of the matrix. Here the brewery can post information about new beers, where to buy its beers, forthcoming events, etc.

The second level of diversity among social media users can be observed in their online behavioural characteristics. Such observations are noted by Kozinets (2015) who divides them into 'tourists', 'minglers', 'devotees' or 'insiders', depending on how much they demonstrate an interest in the beer itself, or how much they value the social aspects that come from using the media. Once again, a brewery using social media is faced with

a choice of how to engage with each of these types, and which type the brewery itself might represent. The contention here is that lifestyle based typologies do not transfer straightforwardly into hard commercial sales. In order to consider this angle, it is necessary to look at a third level distinction – offline behaviour resulting from social media engagement.

From a pure business perspective the third level of diversity describes the users' propensity to actually buy the beer. Thus, whilst people like pub landlords, supermarket buyers or drinkers in a pub do represent potential sales, others, such as brewery employees, or those outside the geographical market area do not. This then raises a question about how much beer is actually sold as a result of brewery engagement in social media. Most of the respondents thought that social media did have a business value, although the responses varied in terms of how this might apply:

*“It generates an emotional response from people, so it's a great way of tapping into that – which ultimately does help you sell beer, because people will walk in, they'll have a positive reaction to your brand on the bar.”*

**Sam; IB4**

*“...you wanna engage with them because to build a relationship in order to ultimately sell some beer, or you know, whatever...”*

**Charlie; IB6**

*“...get people talking about us on social media, and hope that their local pubs will want to order our beer in...”*

**Emily; IB14**

*“Ultimately we're only there [on social media] to sell more beer...”*

**Dom; IB1**

These comments reflect a generally loose approach in terms of the breweries' objectives with social media. For most it is used to create sales indirectly, by building a relationship or creating an emotional response, which makes its impact difficult to measure and difficult to control. Even Dom, in describing sales as the *ultimate* goal, is implying that social media might have to work in a roundabout, or indirect way to achieve this. The comments reflect the diverse nature of the social media audience, because they recognise that not everyone is there simply to buy and sell beer. Indeed for some breweries using social media, it is much more about engaging with people and being communal than it is about selling beer:

*“...it's about letting people know the beer's there, not so much to sell the beer, because I've already sold it, the pub's bought it. It will always sell out, it's more about letting people know to go and get it...”*

**Jack; IB12**

*“It wouldn't be something we use as a sales tool, I don't think... we want to move more towards it being a social tool, rather than err, rather than seen as a sort of marketing tool really.”*

**Joe; IB7**

Jack feels that he is providing a service to his followers by telling them where they can find the beer before it sells out. This not only suggests that he feels an attachment and a sense of duty to his followers, it also represents a shift in his role, from brewer to something more pastoral, making sure his loyal followers are provided for. For Joe, the objective of using social media is overtly social, and in this example the wall between the brewery as a separate business entity and its followers is minimal, if existent at all. Here the brewery has joined its followers and become part of an online brand community.

Studying brand communities, Muñiz and O'Guinn (2001) identify three characteristics exhibited by community members – shared consciousness; rituals and traditions; and a sense of moral responsibility. It could be argued that Jack is displaying a form of moral responsibility by making sure his community get advance notice of where the beer will be (the moral responsibility within the community will continue as the followers themselves spread this message within their networks). It could also be argued that Joe is part of a shared consciousness among beer drinkers, by entering into social networking with them in a communal, as opposed to a commercial sense. However, these assertions differ from Muñiz and O'Guinn's original brand community theory because here, the brewery (as brand owner) is actually part of the community and actively displaying the community characteristics which Muñiz and O'Guinn assign to consumers. The dividing line between organisation and consumer has melted and, notwithstanding the fact that one of them actually owns the brand, both assume characteristics of classic brand communities.

For some breweries however, diversity of social media user types according to buying potential does present a direct commercial opportunity. In the examples below social media is used as a one-to-one communications medium:

*“...well most of the custom that will come through social media will be err, umm, they'll send you a message on Twitter. or I'll see somebody - a pub in... oh I'm going there tomorrow, I'll just send them a message - hey guys I'm down in your area, I wonder if you'd like to buy some of our beer?”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“So, you know, on Twitter it's a lot easier, just to sort of 'like', 'retweet', get into a bit of small conversation, and then it's quite natural to say, you know, if you ever need any beer, then can I send you a price list and stuff like that.”*

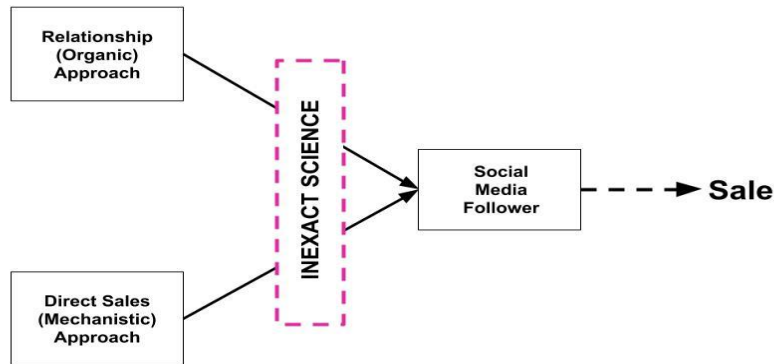


**Charlie; IB6**

*“...XXXX, who is in with me today, is to run through our social media followers, errm, and approach them and say “do you want to start stocking our beers?”. Anyone who's not trading with us, by virtue of the fact that they're following us, there's a potential interest there. Errm, so there's potentially a rich vein of prospect customers there.”*

**Tom; IB10**

These breweries are targeting specific individuals amongst their followers, acknowledging that among a diversity of user types some represent commercial potential. However, a contrast can be noted between the approaches taken. The first two are more nuanced and natural, using social media in the way it was intended, as a social medium. Here the primary consideration is about getting to know people, developing relationships, and if any business opportunities arise, following these up. This reflects the conventions of social interaction in general, whether online or offline. By using social media, the breweries are simply conforming to a modern lifestyle. The third example is different as it suggests a more direct approach, skipping the relationship building part of the interaction. Tom is adopting a more direct approach, using social media as a marketing resource rather than a means of developing relationships. The two approaches are summarised in Figure 6.2.



**Figure 6.2: Organic and mechanistic sales approaches via social media**  
**(source: Author's own)**

Whether taking an organic or a mechanistic approach, both represent the inexact science of trying to use social media for commercial purposes. Even where it is possible to identify social media users who might be in a position to buy beer, it is not readily apparent how clear a prospect they represent, nor how much they might buy. Rather than being a targeted sales medium, the use of social media comes back to being there, being involved and being relevant to a wider beer focused community who might or might not prove commercially valuable.

### **6.5.2: Summary of this section**

The melting pot of home and business life, and the engagement in social media as an individual rather than as a business, is carried into the actual users and followers themselves. People engaging in brewery sector social media represent a wide and diverse group, each with their own reasons for being there, and each potentially playing a part in the community as a whole. Trying to tap into this diversity of users from a

commercial angle (i.e. trying to sell more beer) is not easy. A better understanding might be gained by dividing users according to three dimensions: their psychological motivations for being on social media; the way in which they engage with the media; and their offline roles in terms of their propensity to buy beer.

Of these distinctions the third appears to offer the most immediate commercial opportunity, albeit in a loose and somewhat roundabout way (for example in raising the brewery profile such that its beers will be recognised and bought when seen). For some there is no pretension or desire to use social media to increase sales, but for those who do, it is not unusual to see one-to-one social media communication used to conduct B2B sales. However, even here the approach appears to be a nuanced, in that it is based around developing social relationships first and selling second.

Ultimately, as users of, and engagers in social media themselves, the breweries are a part of a community and have to fulfil a role within that community which is not based on hard selling. This develops contemporary literature around brand communities (such as Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001), or social media user types (such as Kozinets, 2015) beyond individuals and into an organisational setting. Once again, the onus appears to be on the brewery to engage as an individual, with an authentic voice and personality, rather than as a commercial organisation.

## **6.6: Overall Findings from this Chapter**

The rapid and ubiquitous spread of social media has led to a population of digital immigrants, who have had to come to terms with the new media, and digital natives, who having grown up with social media accept it naturally. This distinction can be seen in the extent to which breweries prioritised the use of social media within their businesses. Those who might be termed digital immigrants, tended to view social media

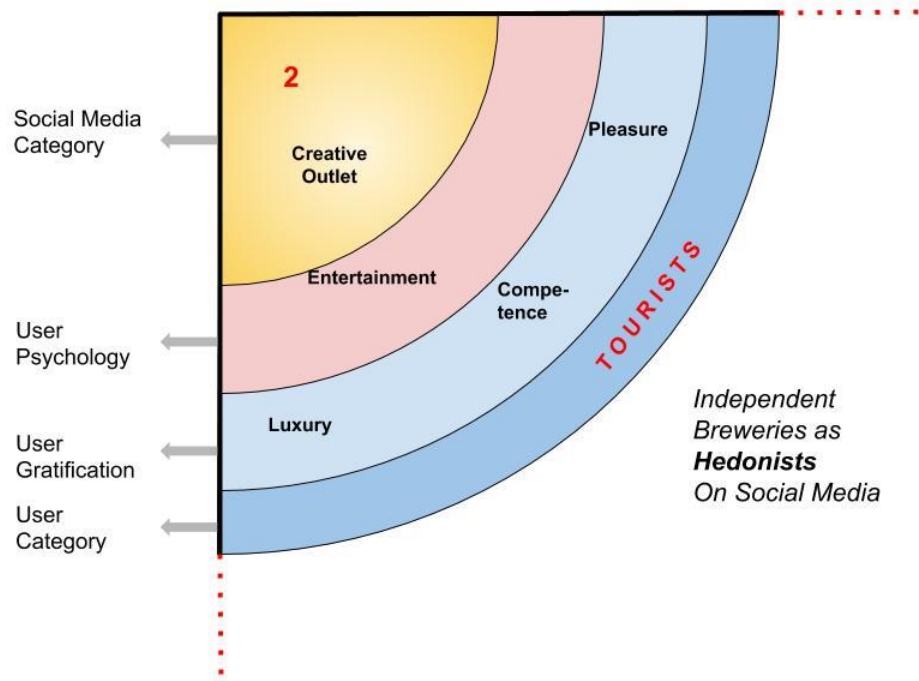
as important, but part of a wider set of considerations. They were faced with a choice of how far to base their business operations around social media. Digital natives also faced a choice, not so much about prioritising social media but more about how to use it in their breweries. For both digital immigrants and digital natives, use of social media in a business sense was based around personal experience and personal preference, making it an extension of self, rather than a separate business approach.

Using a common media for both business and pleasure inevitably blurs the line between home life and work life, and whilst some try to keep this separate, there is a general recognition that a personal approach is valued on social media. As a result, the personality and social capital of an individual built up as part of his or her life, becomes a resource for the business, and employees such as brewers can find themselves involved in the social media on behalf of the brewery they work for. In this way the brewery develops an individual persona, attracting followers and reaching wider audiences. However, behaving as an individual brings an element of risk, because unlike an offline social setting, where you are with friends and people that know you, on social media you are going out to a much wider audience, most of whom are strangers. There exists therefore a tension between maintaining a professional business image and being one of the crowd.

Furthermore, from a business perspective, social media users represent a wide and diverse group whose reasons for being there can vary enormously. Whilst most of the respondents believed that engaging with social media was good for business, actually pin pointing how and where was problematic. Commercial opportunities exist, but in a loose and roundabout way, through tapping into networks and developing relationships. Rather, it was the presence as part of a community, and of being relevant and of value within that community that was important. In this sense the breweries were fulfilling roles within the community and their presence there was one of an equal, not a controller. Whilst the issues raised in this chapter could apply across the user

engagement model, it is proposed here that the incorporation of individual lifestyle choice can be captured in Quartile 2 of the model. Breweries (and other actors) are engaging here because it feels right for them, it is their choice and it brings satisfaction and pleasure to them as individuals. Their involvement here is at a casual, personal level, reflecting a pleasure seeking lifestyle, and this represents the brewery as a 'hedonist' on social media (Figure 6.3).

The use of social media in this way appears far removed from a commercial application. As such the findings develop contemporary literature around social media user objectives (e.g. Zhu & Chen, 2015); the utility and gratification of users (e.g. Larivière et al., 2013); and brand communities (e.g. Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001) into an organisational setting, where the brewery engages like an individual. This develops Hudson et al.'s contention of the need for an anthropomorphic brand to succeed on social media. Here the onus is on a genuine personality on the part of the brewery, supporting a social, as opposed to a corporate involvement.



**Figure 6.3:**  
**Application of lifestyle issues - the brewery as a 'hedonist' on social media**  
 (source: Author's own)



## Chapter 7

### Key Theme 3 - Relationships

#### 7.1: Introduction

This is the third of four chapters, each based around core themes emerging from the first and second stage coding processes. These core themes are *sector context; lifestyle; relationships; control*.

The previous chapter considered the ubiquity of social media and how it has become part of an everyday lifestyle for many. Breweries engaging with social media are not only tapping into a lifestyle followed by their customers and other users, they are living their own lifestyle, or at least that of their employees. Use of social media in a business sense thus becomes an extension of the individual self, and the line between business use and personal use is blurred. Users of social media from all walks of life blend together, each with their own expectations, agendas, opinions or patterns of engagement.

From a business perspective, engagement with social media involves the development of *social capital* and subsequent networking within a diverse group of users, and this takes precedence over traditional marketing activities like advertising and promotion. Social capital thus becomes a resource, and personalities within the brewery colour the brewery's presence on social media with a personal touch. Here the brewery fulfils a role, not as a commercial entity, but as an equal member with the other users of that media. If the brewery is to function effectively as a part of a community then it is necessary to understand what that role is and what the nature of relationships within



that community might be. This chapter therefore considers what the research data reveals about these relationships and what this means for breweries using social media. In doing so it addresses the second and third of the research objectives, and leads directly onto Chapter 8 which looks at the implications for management and control of social media engagement.

The structure of this chapter is based around the Nvivo parent nodes which fed into the broad theme of relationships. These are; 'community'; 'identity'; 'content and communications'; and 'relationships'. These paths are illustrated in Figure 7.1.

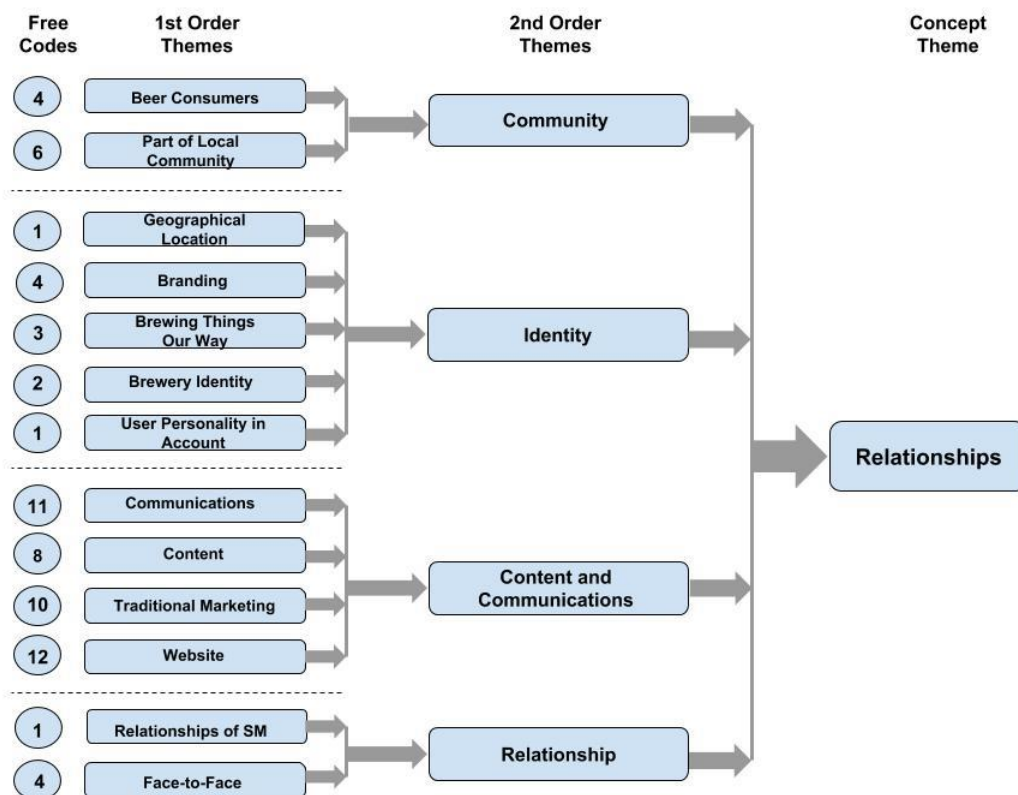


Figure 7.1: Code path to 'Relationships' theme

## 7.2: Community

It is noted in Chapter 2 that a key feature of all social media is its ability to simultaneously engage large numbers of users in interactive dialogue with each other (Hunsinger & Senft, 2014), thus creating potentially large online communities. Different studies of online communities have considered how this 'socialisation' has played out from the context of being a consumer (Chan & Guillet, 2011; De Kare Silver, 2011; Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010) and there appears to be some consensus that online socialisation among consumers affects attitudes and subsequent purchase intention (Hennig-Thurau et al., 2015; Wang et al., 2012). As such, these examples of consumer collectivity are often referred to as 'brand communities' (Wirtz et al., 2013) or 'consumption communities' (Stokburger-Sauer & Wiertz, 2015). It is posited here however that these online communities are more than just collectives of *consumers*. Analysis of the data suggests that they are made up of a wide range of people. Unlike much of the literature on online communities, the issue here is not simply one of consumers, it involves everyone, including the breweries themselves:

*"...it is a community in the same way that you're walking down the street, you say hello to someone you know, you know, it's exactly the same, you'll still be representing yourself and your business at that time, if you see what I mean..."*

**Emily; IB14**

*"Social Media platforms are a community in themselves..."*

**Holly; IB16**

Emily's comment above likens social media engagement to the physicality of living in a town or village and interacting with the people you meet there in a way that is consistent with your role within that town. In this sense, the word *role* describes who

you are and what you do. Thus the people you meet may be friends or neighbours, or they might be other businesses, or even consumers. They might also be strangers. The way in which you interact with the people you meet is a function of who you are and the nature of the relationship you have with that person. Holly's comment confirms this analogy by suggesting that social media platforms are self-contained communities, like a village or town, albeit existing as 'virtual communities' online. This view of social media communities differs from the *brand* or *consumption communities* described in Chapter 3, in that it reflects more a general lifestyle, as suggested in the previous chapter, and not simply a brand-consumer dynamic.

How then does this notion of a virtual community with no physical boundary fit with an independent brewery business whose physical locality may be tied to a particular city or region in lieu of its distribution capabilities? In other words how might the identity of a local brewery play out in a community spanning regional, national or even international borders? Data from the interviews suggests two broad levels of social media relationships: the existence of a large 'beer geek' community; and the propensity of the breweries to see themselves as part of a local community based around their geographical location. Whilst the beer geek community has no hard borders, being open to anyone with an interest in beer, the second is delineated by geographical boundaries, usually based around cities or regions of the UK such as Sheffield, North Yorkshire, Kent, etc. In this sense the community can have a significant physical presence, as well as an online dimension. It is argued here that brewery engagement with social media communities, whether beer geek or geographical, is not overtly commercial but more about fitting in, fulfilling a role and being a relevant member of that community.

### **7.2.1: The beer geek community**

The data reveals the existence of a wide, social media based community which for the purpose of this research has been labelled 'beer geeks'. This follows the conventional descriptions given to members of this community by the breweries interviewed. It should be made clear that the term 'beer geek' is not intended to be derogatory. Rather it is a term commonly used by the breweries to describe not only their followers on social media, but themselves and their employees too. It acknowledges that there exists around beer a huge level of interest, not only here in the UK, but globally as well. Whilst they share a common interest in beer, from the perspective of this research, beer geeks represent diversity in terms of traditional demographics, usage behaviour and the role they play in the beer world (e.g. brewer, buyer, landlord, consumer, etc.). As such they represent the recurring theme of the 'melting pot', used in this thesis to describe the way in which social media has homogenised populations. Direct reference to 'beer geeks' is made in ten of the sixteen interviews, suggesting that the existence of such a group is a taken for granted feature of the brewing world. This is apparent when discussing why followers engage with the brewery's social media:

*“...there's a lot of people who are really interested in beer, so I think they find that sort of, errm.... you know the information about the making element of it to be quite, quite interesting...”*

**Charlie; IB6**

*“...when people see something, or decide they like something, they want to know – especially beer drinkers, you get a lot of followers, and the odd few people collecting beer mats and that kind of thing.”*

**Kate; IB9**

*“I think in some cases... some cases, I think people just follow any brewery and just curious to see what's going on in the beer world.”*

**Jack; IB12**

Descriptions like these are applied to people who engage with brewery based social media and third party sites like Untappd. It cannot be said that these beer geeks are part of a brand community as their interest in beer tends to be generic and not focused on one particular brand. What then is the relationship between the brewery and the beer geek on social media? Can a buyer-seller dynamic be seen here where the beer geeks are the consumers and the brewery is the supplier? Whilst it is likely that at some level these people will be consumers of beer, it is not clear to what extent they represent hard and fast sales prospects for the brewery engaging in social media. From the descriptors above they range from those who are simply curious and follow any brewery, through to those with a more technical interest in brewing itself. Whilst raising the profile of the brewery through social media engagement with the beer geek community might be good thing, it was surmised in the last chapter that this could only be an indirect and imprecise way of actually increasing sales. As Emily (IB14) puts it, social media presence might: *“...get people talking about us on social media, and hope that their local pubs will want to order our beer in...”* In this way social media can be seen as a good medium to spread messages and develop awareness of the brewery, but the relationship between the brewery and the community is not an overtly commercial one, as there is scant evidence in the research data of direct selling to the beer geek community. Indeed, in some instances this is impossible, as the physical production capacity of the brewery capacity would not necessarily be able to fulfil a market made up of their followers:

*“...I don't have the volume of beer – you know we've got two thousand Facebook followers nearly, and if I wanted to make two thousand bottles of beer, well, that would be an entire brew run, then I'd have no casks for a week...”*

**Harry; IB8**

*"...I'm not just trying to sell more beer; I can't brew any more beer than I brew..."*

**Jack; IB12**

Both Harry and Jack are prolific engagers in social media and both enjoy large followings in the beer geek community. Their statements confirm that it is not intended to view this community as simply a market through which to sell more beer. Similarly, other breweries describe a geographically dispersed community, whose members are often in foreign countries, and to whom it would be impossible to sell beer. Likewise, there is much evidence of engagement with other breweries and employees of breweries, again none of whom represent direct sales prospects.

If then, the relationship between the brewery and the beer geek community is not an overtly commercial one, how then might it be characterised? Evidence from the data suggests that rather than the breweries targeting an existing community (beer geeks), either by attracting them as followers or reaching them as friends of fans, they are joining that community as members, and attempting to establish themselves as an integral part of the community. This is backed up by the assertion in the previous chapter that breweries are engaging in social media as individuals, and that strong characters within the breweries can just as much be classed as beer geeks as anyone else on beer related social media. These characters might be opinion leaders themselves, but their role in the community is not to sell beer, it is something more akin to being a friend. This friendship may extend to giving followers a heads up of where to get the latest brew, feeding a general interest in beer, or simply bantering with like-minded people:

*"...it's about letting people know the beer's there, not so much to sell the beer..."*

**Jack; IB12**

*"...we want to make people aware that we do different things, that we are err, using certain kinds of hops that not everybody's using and ermm, that kind of thing..."*

**Joe; IB7**

*"...and these two [brewers from different breweries] are just like geeking out: that's a live beer, that's a Flanders red, and I can't wait to... but these are head brewers both going well how do you do that?"*

**Ewen; IB3**

This idea of friendship supports Fournier and Avery's (2011) assertion that “[social media] was created not to sell branded products, but to link people together in collective conversational webs” (p 193). It reinforces the view that relationships between the breweries and the beer geek community is not a commercial one but rather one of belonging or being a part of their world. Beer geeks exist because there is an emotional attachment to the product, either through brewing it, or drinking it, or both. From the brewer's perspective the beer geek characteristic can be seen in the strong camaraderie and networks within the sector, described in Chapter 6. From the drinker's perspective the beer geek label flows from an experiential and emotive relationship with beer, which goes above simply drinking the product. The beer geek's relationship with beer is based around the imagining, searching, sensory, emotional, social, enjoyment, nostalgia and evangelising stages of the consumption process described by Tynan & McKechnie (2009). This emotional relationship with beer crosses the divide between breweries and consumers and forms the base of what Holbrook (2006) describes as a hedonic form of co-creation. It thus reinforces the assertion that the beer drinkers and breweries are at one with each other in a large beer geek community.

Social media has given cohesion to this community, but has also greatly expanded its potential membership, nationally and internationally. With around 1,800 small

independent brewers in the UK alone, making one's voice heard within this vast community is not going to be easy. If independent breweries are to have any kind of meaningful relationship with the other members, they need to have relevance within the beer geek community. At a national, or even an international level this might be achieved through a strong brand name and a product which is available across a wide geographic area, but for many small breweries this level of reach is not possible. The previous chapter suggested that big personalities with an individual, as opposed to a commercial approach, might help to establish a role within the beer geek community, but again, unless the brewery itself has some sort of presence, or a direct relevance to the community members, it will struggle to raise its profile. Unlike an individual person, who arguably can exist 'virtually' in an online environment, a brewery relies on some sort of physical presence (e.g. a beer to drink) to underpin its social media relationships. This supposition is backed up in the data, which suggests that social media plays a significant role in enabling smaller breweries to become part of localised, geographically based communities, where it is able to relate to other community members in both an online sense and in a physical way.

### **7.2.2: Locally based considerations**

Being associated with a geographical location is one of the defining characteristics of independent breweries, first because their small size tends to restrict them in terms of geographical market coverage and second because many of them play up their local heritage. The breweries interviewed for this research are generally limited to a specific geographical areas, although it is possible, either through distribution contracts, online sales, or collaborations with other breweries, to move further afield. The data suggests that whilst the breweries aren't strangers to selling further afield, or even internationally on occasion, they first and foremost perceive themselves to be in a local, regional market.



*“...a lot of brew... like the micro guys, are typically a Yorkshire business. There's more micros in Yorkshire than any other region, and they all work fantastically well in Yorkshire, but take them out of Yorkshire and you won't sell a drop of it.”*

**Sam; IB4**

*“...we don't provide any of our beer in small pack at the moment, so how our beer is able to be drunk is a little bit more regionalised...”*

**Joe; IB7**

*“...we're very like, traditional and [XXXX region], because we don't go off currently everywhere left right and centre, we don't try and take over the world...”*

**Kate; IB9**

This geographical element to the breweries' business adds a further layer to the social media community relationships already considered. Whilst the breweries can still relate to online communities through social media, the boundaries of the community become tighter, because many of the members will be locally based in a physical sense as well. The locally based online community thus differs from the wider beer geek community in that it has a physical element to it and breweries building on their local roots or the geographical heritage of their region start to ingrain themselves as part of a local community in a physical way, as well as online. For these breweries, being part of the social fabric of their local community is important, as it helps them to connect with the local community:

*“...building our profile as a business in [XXXX], irrespective of that business is, ermm, that we are a successful [XXXX] business, and we try to get that message across to other businesses in [XXXX] when we possibly can...”*

**Adam; IB2**

*"It's all part of business really isn't it, because we're local... local approachable, traditional, so it's all part of the community for us – it is important."*

**Kate; IB9**

*"...we're a genuinely local business. Errm, you know, this place was built by local craftsmen, errm, with locally sourced materials and everything else..."*

**Tom; IB10**

In each of these examples, respondents use the word 'business', not 'brewery', suggesting that they value being part of a wider community consisting not of not just 'beer geeks' but other businesses and the local population in general. There appears here a need for relevance within a community. All of them are using social media in one way or another to develop these community roles. For example, Joe's branding rests heavily on images of local heritage associated with the name of his brewery and its location. For him, social media is an invaluable tool to convey the imagery and artwork of this branding: *"...we always have a lot of new artwork – errm, we're doing a rebrand as well, so social media will be critical in showing people what's changed, and making sure they're familiar with the beer before it even gets to the bar."* Ewen fulfils a different community role, by using his social media sites as platforms, like social clubs, where people can come to enjoy themselves and have a laugh. Similarly Holly talks of providing a venue (Facebook) to bring people together. Finally, it could be argued that Jack fulfils the role of pastor, or mentor, by displaying a sense of care to his followers, and a desire to look after local pubs by mentioning them on his social media posts: *"...and err, certainly locally I like to help promote the pubs as well."*

Thus whilst social media can undoubtedly be used to raise the profile of the business, it is also used in a less commercial way simply to assert the brewery's presence as part of a localised regional community. From the consumer perspective, there are parallels

with the French notion of 'terroir' in relation to wine production, where the historical and cultural associations of the winery's location elevate the consumption experience (Tresidder, 2015). The localised element lends an air of physicality to online relationships in the sense that community members can relate to each other offline as well as online through social media. Being able to interact online and offline enhances the brewery's ability to be relevant within a community, by for example using online social networks to set up off line collaborations (such as 'meet the brewer' events in local pubs) or vice-versa, by using offline events such as brewery based beer festivals to drive online social media crowdfunding. In this way the physical, geographical presence and the brewery's online presence feed off each other.

The combination of both offline and online approaches adds to the quality of the relationship between the brewery and the community of which it is a part, and arguably gives an advantage to the small independent breweries because they are more likely to have a localised, physical connection to the community. This view is supported by studies of organisations adopting digital communication technologies (such as social media), which generally conclude that quality of relationship is a more significant success factor than big budgeted IT structures and systems (McMahon & O'Donnell, 2010). Rowley (2004) similarly suggests that organisational based community websites are more likely to be effective if the relationships are brought down to a local level. The small independent brewery, with local connections, might therefore be viewed as being more related to its communities at an organic, or personal level. This follows Gummesson's (1998) concept of an 'imaginary organisation', where the boundaries between the firm and its market give way to a mutually beneficial series of networks of personal relationships. It therefore follows that breweries relating to communities along these lines will need a human face and a distinct identity if they are to be accepted within that community.

### 7.2.3: Summary of this section

Contemporary literature around social media brand communities tends to view them as consumer based (Dessart et al., 2015; Närvänen et al., 2013; Stokburger-Sauer & Wiertz, 2015), but the findings here suggest that online communities go far beyond a simple brand-consumer dynamic. In the brewery sector, social media communities are virtual versions of physical, offline communities, whose members possess individual identities and associated personalities, each fulfilling various roles within that community. As well as smaller, offline local communities associated with their physical location, breweries are engaging in large, social media driven 'beer geek' communities. However, whilst these communities represent a potential market for selling beer, it is difficult to engage in an overtly commercial way with the beer geek because the breweries are part of the beer geek community themselves. Breweries and beer geeks are at one with each other, representing co-creation at a psychological level, whereby camaraderie, expertise, social inclusion and self-fulfilment are able to thrive. In order to establish relationships within the beer geek community, breweries must have relevance beyond that of simply being able to sell beer. They must represent something that is of interest or value to the community, and it is argued here that this can be achieved by being there in a physical sense, as well as online.

The breweries interviewed here perceive themselves as belonging to physically based communities, as well as wider, online communities. The physical presence enjoyed by the brewery adds a further layer to their online presence, because it gives them relevance, similar to wine producers associated with terroir. Breweries are able to draw upon their offline associations to fulfil roles in an online community through for example, their heritage based personalities. Similarly, they are able to use an online presence to leverage relationships as part of an offline community, being able to reach out to people more easily through the ubiquity of social media. In other words geographical presence and social media presence feed off each other in helping the

brewery to establish relationships at a personal level, as opposed to an overtly commercial relationship. It follows that breweries establishing relationships at this level will require a human face and a distinct identity if they are to be accepted as equal members within a community.

### **7.3: Brewery Identity**

Social media thrives on the individual identities of its users. Users relate to other users based on their identities, be it through knowing them as friends, feeling some kind of an affinity with them, or simply admiring who they are. Identity is the basic currency which a user brings to social media if he or she is there to engage in an interactive relationship with other users. Identity in this sense tells us who someone is and distinguishes them from others. More than just a name, identity is conveyed in our personality and characteristics. For a business, identity is usually conveyed through branding, and it thus follows that for a business on social media, its brand will be how it is recognised by others. Analysis of the data however, suggests that whilst branding does play a significant part in the breweries' engagement with social media, personality plays a more significant role in developing relationships. It has already been argued here that the personality of individuals within the breweries supports social media relationships, but it is further suggested that the brewery itself seeks to project a personality through social media. Can then a social personality be squared with a business driven convention of branding?

#### **7.3.1: Branding**

Branding is a significant marketing strategy in most of the breweries interviewed. For instance, Dom (IB1) talks of the historical marketing skills his brewery possesses:

*"...we've always been quite good at... in general terms marketing and promotion, but we've just got to take up that sort of [social media] approach as well..."* Here he is referring to the strong brand that his brewery has developed and which is now helping them to engage with social media communities. Unlike newer, digital native breweries, which have used social media to develop their brand relationships, the pre-established, digital immigrant breweries are using their brands to further their social media relationships. In a similar way, Adam (IB2) mentions his brewery's existing customer base, built up before the days of social media: *"...we've built up a ermm, err, a good solid customer base before the explosion really started..."*. However, with social media now in everyday usage, developing or maintaining brand awareness through this medium is a key factor for all:

*"It's mainly just to make people aware..."*

**Seb; IB5**

*"...it's sort of important to keep that up, because it's just you know, expanding the brand awareness..."*

**Charlie; IB6**

*"It's brand development really. Like I say, we're only a year old..."*

**Harry; IB8**

However, using social media simply to raise brand awareness is not necessarily the same as using it to develop relationships. Instead of taking the time to get to know someone, the brewery promotes itself in an untargeted way. In doing so they broadcast a profile-message, where they themselves are the focus, and social media thus becomes 'self-media' (Zhu & Chen, 2015). In a theoretical context this fits the tenets of a transactive rather than a relationship marketing approach and this can be seen in Tom's (IB10) concern about his brewery's lack of engagement with social media users: *"I've got a*

*sense at present that we're talking at people, and using it for awareness of what we're doing, rather than it being properly social, you know, conversational and that sort of thing, as it can be...".* The implication is that by sticking to a 'self-media' approach, social media is not being used to its full potential.

Zhu and Chen's (2015) typology suggests that self-media users are concerned with personal gratification, fulfilling needs of self-esteem and autonomy. However, whilst it might be possible for individuals as users to fit this profile, it does not seem to fit the objectives of a business who is trying to raise or maintain its brand awareness. After all self-esteem and autonomy do not appear to be qualities which will help a business reach its customer base. There appears therefore to be a dichotomy between businesses engaging in *self-media*, which tends to be inward focused, whilst at the same time trying to be outward focused in terms of their customer audience. If businesses are using social media platforms in an undifferentiated way, simply to raise brand awareness, it suggests a lack of forethought and a missed opportunity in terms of getting closer to other users. They are using social media in the way that traditional marketing might apply through PR and advertising. Promotions are not equivalent to social relationships and in this sense are not fulfilling the ethos of social media, and thus missing an opportunity.

This returns to the oxymoron of company involvement in social media. It was seen in chapter 3 that 'fertilised' messages on social media (those instigated by companies) did have a value to users, but that this was more influential on developing their *functional brand attitudes* rather than *hedonic brand image* (Bruhn et al., 2012). For breweries functional brand attitudes revolve around things like the taste, colour, strength and style of beer, along with the type hops used and the brewing process followed. In other words, the brand name is simply communicating what the beer is. Hedonic attitudes on the other hand, describe the more emotionally laced feelings and attitudes held about the brand, including liking and preference. It might be concluded therefore that

brewery initiated content might be effective in letting other users know about beers, but that it is not particularly conducive to developing interactive relationships. Kate's (IB9) comment below reveals something almost desperate about the need to be on social media, in order to keep in with the crowd; *"...we try to use it probably a couple of times a week just to keep out there."* This does not fit with a close relationship approach. It is at best a functional, business oriented approach simply to maintain presence. The *hedonic* attitudes and feelings of beer drinkers are more likely to be played out among peers interacting on peer driven social media platforms like Untappd - *"whether you like it or not, they're on Untappd..."* (Charlie, IB6). Breweries can still engage here, but their role will need to shift from brand owner to peer. In other words a more natural, less commercial approach is needed which focuses on relationship building, rather than broadcast publicity. It is thus suggested here that the brewery needs to develop its own unique persona, akin to an individual user with their own personality and social media engagement style, rather than an impersonal corporate entity. The data reveals a high tendency for breweries to see themselves as possessing unique characteristics, and examples of this were clustered under an Nvivo node labelled *'Brewing Things Our Way'*.

### **7.3.2: Brewing things our way**

It was seen in the previous section that breweries could be considered de facto members of social media communities. In this way the brewery's identity is perceived more through their personality than their brand name, in the same way that individuals in a community are seen as three-dimensional characters, rather than simply names. This three dimensional personality (3DP) represents individually held attitudes, beliefs and opinions and the ability to interact in a two way relationship as a real person. It is evident in what people say and what they do, and their name simply becomes a



representation of who they are and what they stand for. The concept of independent breweries possessing 3DP can be seen in the comments below:

*"...the way that we've approached things has always been like, fairly tongue in cheek and a pretty light approach to the way we do things, and people have bought into that over the years. And I think that naturally draws people to the brand if you like."*

**Sam; IB4**

*"...as a small company we have the opportunity to... to express a genuine personality, err, through social media. I think you can be a lot more genuine than a bigger brand."*

**Tom; IB10**

*"...when I'm putting stuff on, it's always try and be a bit in the vein of this thing, of what the brewery is and all that, rather than just being another small brewery talking about their beers..."*

**Kris; IB15**

To project a 3DP the brewery is eschews a corporate face and adopts instead a more human approach to which people can relate. For this reason, most of those interviewed were scornful about letting external marketing agencies run their social media, citing the need for an 'authentic voice'.

*"...at the beginning, [we] said 'oh, our PR agency can do a bit of tweeting for us' and it just ends up being a farce, because the way that they present talking and the way that they're doing it comes across as being very clunky and corporate, and the punters, the consumers, can easily pick up on that. So, yeah, I think you have to do it yourself..."*

**Sam; IB4**

As a result, breweries on social media need to bring along a personality if they are to develop relationships with an online community. This would explain why some of them leave the social media side of communications to employees like brewers, who are not necessarily customer facing. It explains why those employees with large, or at least distinct personalities tend to take on the social media mantle of the brewery. In one of the comments above, Tom suggests that small businesses are more able to project their personalities through social media than large ones. This is perhaps because employees in small breweries take on multiple roles, and arguably reflect a real picture of a working brewery - in other words they represent an *authentic voice*. Whilst larger companies can undoubtedly spend more on creating a brand image, the ultimate relationship that that brand commands will depend on the acceptance of the online social media community:

*“It's like Doombar. They had a little window where they got away with saying it's craft beer, and then after a while everyone cottoned on – oh Carling make that, oh right, fair enough.”*

**Harry; IB8**

The implication of this is that smaller breweries, demonstrating 3DP through an authentic voice, can develop relationships with other users on social media at a deeper, more personal level. This gives smaller breweries a potential edge over larger national or multi-national breweries, whose social media approach might be construed as more manufactured and less personal. Smaller breweries can thus differentiate themselves from larger ones by being personal as opposed to being corporate. However, it also enables small independent breweries to differentiate themselves from each other, in what is a crowded market place, by projecting a unique persona. Most independent breweries would claim differentiation in a tangible way, through particular brewing

processes, different hops used, or specific beer styles brewed, and this would be projected in their traditional marketing and branding. However, social media adds an additional dimension to this by enabling the breweries to differentiate through personality. As Emily (IB14) observes; *"you do get a feel for the personality of various different breweries through social media"*. This would explain why new breweries can command big social media followings even before they have started brewing. Although consumers have no experience of the actual beer at this stage, they form a character judgement of the brewery based on the content and personality projected through social media. This character judgement then feeds into their expectations regarding the product itself and how it might fit into their lifestyles.

### **7.3.3: Summary of this section**

Social media presence requires a recognisable identity, which in a business sense is usually conveyed through the brewery's branding. From a social perspective however, branding is not enough and the brewery requires a personality too. Simply using social media to promote brand awareness is an uneasy fit with the social roots of the medium and a missed opportunity to create a more sustainable relationship. Such promotional messages may influence the functional brand attitude, but in order to develop a more holistic relationship (or as Bruhn et al., 2012, describe a hedonic attitude), breweries are using a more natural, less commercial approach.

This builds upon Hudson et al.'s (2016) suggestions of an anthropomorphic approach by proposing the development of what has been termed here a 'three dimensional personality' (3DP). 3DP is more than just a brand name; it represents the brewery as a real person who can interact naturally with other members of the social media community. Social media permits the development of a 3DP, but in order to do so the brewery must eschew a corporate face. It is argued here that smaller breweries, such as

the independents are much better positioned to do this than their larger competitors, because they tend to use real employees with an authentic voice. This authentic voice is critical to the development of a 3DP and is able to give independent breweries an edge on social media as they differentiate themselves through personality. Other users of social media will form character judgements about the breweries, even before they have tasted their beer, to the extent that their own lifestyle fits the brewery 3DP they see on line. In this sense it is important that the communication and content put out by the breweries on social media supports the 3DP that they are projecting.

#### **7.4: Communication and Content**

Communication in this context refers to the way in which breweries relate to other users through social media. Content is what is posted on these media, usually comprising messages, blogs, wikis, pictures, videos, message board posts, etc. It was acknowledged in Chapter 6 that the adoption of an overtly personal approach in posted content brought risks of inappropriate behaviour, as interaction at this level tends to be from the heart and not necessarily the head. However it is argued here that if breweries engage with social media in an interactive and peer associated way, then communication from the heart is most likely to achieve the natural persona from which to relate to the communities that are there. This means that the content cannot be overtly corporate (in terms of character) or commercial (in terms of objective). It has to be one of a friend, companion or peer, and someone who the other members of the community respect and enjoy being around. This correlates with Lusch and Vargo's (2006) conceptual shift from inward facing 'goods-dominant' logic to a more outward facing 'service-dominant' logic whereby basic organisational *promotion* is replaced with *dialogue*. From the breweries' perspective, as well as needing to produce excellent beers, they will also need a strong social identity, backed up with a chatty and informal approach, if they are to communicate effectively on social media. The following sub-

sections consider issues surrounding such an approach, the resulting interaction that ensues, and the possible outcomes in terms of networking and word of mouth.

#### **7.4.1: Chatty & informal content**

Chapter 3 describes how user generated content is a key feature of social media, representing the ability of any individual user to create content in various forms and make these publicly available to other users. This supposition supports the theoretical concept of 'co-creation', as described by Holbrook (2006) and the 'melting pot' theme of user interaction identified earlier. It is further posited here that interaction enabled by social media increases the need for a social identity, as users seek to establish relatedness with each other (Tynan & McKechnie, 2009). The need for chatty and informal content, backed up by a genuine personality, is a common theme in the data:

*“...if you go full business on it, full bells and whistles, lovely graphic design, erm, names, dates, places, prices, erm, then your regular customers – well your regular craft beer customer – can smell BS a mile away...”*

**Kris; IB15**

*“...they [corporate PR copywriters] might be passionate about what they do, but whether they're passionate about the beer that is being brewed or not is another question.”*

**Emily; IB14**

*“...it's an emotional thing, so people respond if they feel like it's come from the heart, kind of thing. It can't be... you can't dress it up as a corporate message.”*

**Sam; IB4**

Use of words like *passionate* and *emotional* underline an organic, human approach to social media communications. In this sense carefully crafted messages and images, as Kris describes, are seen as none-genuine and thus of less value to other users. In Kris's description the brewery now becomes corporate rather than social, and this alters the relationship dynamic from one of inclusion to one of exclusion. True, the brewery would still have a relevance to the community because they are producing beer and this is what the beer geek community is interested in, but their presence would be one of an outsider, rather than an accepted member. The propensity to be more informal in social media communications is reflected in the following examples:

*"We want it to be more chatty, err, so we're trying to put a few more things in there to say "here's what we're doing" really."*

**Joe; IB7**

*"Like yesterday we got a photo out – it was a really sunny day yesterday – and it took five minutes to put it on everything."*

**Kate; IB9**

*"...both of us in a way, when we've got time, keep a bit up on what's going on Twitter anyway, so it's kind of just, you know, when people post to us and just generally if we've got anything to talk about to be honest."*

**Kris; IB15**

Sometimes, taking an informal approach is a conscious objective, reflecting a desire to be part of a local community, but either way it reflects a natural approach by people just being themselves. As Kris puts it; *"...neither of us are social media people, neither of us are, you know... we're just brewers..."* As a result the content tends to be spontaneous, such as taking a photograph on a sunny day and posting it online, or posting something funny that will get a laugh; *"Hundreds of people like it because it was a bit jokey."*

(Ewen, IB3). This appears to be in the spirit of social media as the content on anyone's home page is likely to be littered with spontaneous pictures, chatty news, or jokey anecdotes. It also fits with the working practices of many small breweries, particularly among those employees who are actually doing the brewing. This was affirmed by interviewees who described the loneliness of the brewing process; *"...there are long periods where you are waiting for things to happen, so you're waiting for the mash to finish, you're waiting for the boil to err, to finish, etcetera, etcetera."* (Emily, IB14). It seems only natural under such circumstances to engage with the beer geek community in a social way. This use of social media by the people doing the brewing, is a common theme in the data, with the breweries seeing two benefits. First, it is accepted that the brewer has a social media persona in his or her own right, thus enabling them to connect with large numbers of other users. Second, it is seen as a form of relaxation, or tension release for employees; *"...it's good fun, I mean the guys that mainly use it enjoy it. They enjoy the networking element, like it's great to see other comments coming back in."* (Adam, IB2). Both of these observations are in direct contrast with taking an overtly commercial approach with social media content.

Informal, chatty interactions with users clearly soften the boundary between the brewery as a business entity and the social media user communities with whom they engage. It is thus suggested here that the role of the brewery has taken on an additional dimension, from the brewing and distribution of beer to being a community member with peer status. Indeed, for some, social media engagement becomes as big a part of what they do as the brewing of the beer itself: *"They were doing it a long time before they were even brewing..."* (Kris, IB15). This raises the question: how does the social media role described above square with the practical role of brewing beer? Whilst it can be argued that it helps raise the profile of the business could there be a deeper, more conceptual link between brewing beer and being on social media? Put simply, what does beer as a manufactured product have to do with being part of an

online community? The comments below suggest a closely held connection between the brewery and beer consumers at the actual point of consumption.

*"...some breweries, like XXXX, he's really good at like to talking to people on err, on Untappd..."*

**Charlie; IB6**

*"You know it's seems quite natural to be drinking a beer, and to say "oh, I'm really enjoying that, I'm going to tweet the brewery"..."*

**Joe; IB7**

*"...if people are tweeting about the beer and they're drinking it, we'd probably try and engage with that as well..."*

**Kris; IB15**

It was acknowledged in Chapter 6 that beer is a social product, which is as much about enjoying the atmosphere created around the consumption of the product, as it is about the intrinsic features of the product itself. The comments above acknowledge the ability of social media to instigate relationships at the point of consumption, a key tenet of the co-creation of value, and the concept of the customer as co-producer in relationship marketing theory (Grönroos, 1994). That the beer consumer is able to interact with the producer of the beer in this way is a validation of relationship marketing principles applied in a product, as opposed to a service based context. In the first example above, Untappd is the conduit between the two parties, but in the subsequent comments from Joe and Kris it can be seen that the breweries' own social media accounts can also be used in this way. Here the drinker in the pub is chatting directly with the brewer, whilst they are enjoying the beer. That they feel inclined to do so suggests that they consider the relationship informal and on a casual level, as with friends or people they know. As Seb (IB5) puts it, social media is *"...a great way to*



*interact with the customers in a more chilled out, informal way.*”. Accepting this approach, two questions are raised; first, who should initiate the informal dialogue between brewery and other users; and second, how feasible is it for the brewery to maintain one-to-one individual relationships with other members of the social media community?

#### **7.4.2: The Nature of interaction**

Examples of interaction with social media users at the point of consumption, reveals a split between brewer initiated contact (as with Charlie and Kris) and consumer initiated contact, as with Joe. Generally speaking, those interviewed believed that the onus in engaging with social media users was with the brewery; *“...my philosophy is that it's not for the customer to be the first to be the interactive one. Errm, it should be the brewery being the interactive one...”* (Tom, IB10). There is a possibility here however of being seen as a business pushing into a none-commercially based social community, as in the 'seeded' messages described earlier. Whilst this may be an effective way to convey the function of the brand, it does not particularly lend itself to developing social interaction (Bruhn et al., 2012). It is thus suggested that if the brewery can establish itself as a fellow community member then its contributions to a conversation will be accepted and engaged with on an equal basis. This can be seen in the examples from those who proactively engage with users on Untappd; *“...we interact as much as we can on sites like Untappd for instance. Errm, that would probably be the main sort of contact.”* (Andy, IB11). This is perhaps to be expected as Untappd is a third party forum external to the brewery. Here the brewery has to engage with users who are already there, and base the interaction on comments made by users about their beers. Metaphorically, it is the brewery coming to the party and being accepted, rather than gate-crashing it. Here the brewery is a 'guest' and how far the interaction is accepted is a function of their user personality and their chatty, informal approach.

What happens however on the brewery's own social media platforms, where to continue the metaphor above, it is in effect the host of the party? Here the nature of the relationship shifts as the brewery now has to attract people to its party, in the shape of followers on its social media platforms. Now it is the brewery that makes the first move by posting content on its message board, or tweeting messages that it hopes its followers will find relevant and interesting. The content posted by the breweries does not in itself constitute interaction – that only occurs when followers respond directly. However, social media connects to a wide community, most of whom will be strangers to the brewery. To what extent is it practical to have a two way relationship with these users? In practice the data suggests that only a relatively small amount of users are in frequent contact with the brewery, and that these can be recognised by the brewery as 'regulars':

*“We have a lot of regular customers that will like do it, that they keep following and always comment on content and pictures. Yeah, you know if you put a photo on, you know who's going to like that (laughs)...”*

**Kate; IB9**

*“...there's a few that pop up nearly every day, or will always - especially on Untappd – you know, we know who the number one [beer brand] drinker is. Errm, I think that's definitely the one where you can tell the really loyal drinkers.”*

**Joe; IB7**

The notion of 'regulars' conjures up an image of customers in a physical setting, such as in a bar or pub. There it would be taken for granted for the bar staff to recognise regulars, get to know them and interact with them on a one-to-one basis. The difference here though is that the pub is a service business and one-to-one interactions are one of the characteristics of a service. The conversational interaction that takes

place in a pub is done through staff who are employed in customer service roles. Conversely the brewery's core role is producing beer and selling it through relatively narrow distribution chains. They do not generally employ customer service operatives, and even if they did, there is a propensity for these to be seen as not having an authentic voice. Any one-to-one communication that breweries engages in on social media has to be undertaken by a brewery employee, often the brewer him or herself. In practice, the data reveals different attitudes around this issue:

*“...we really do appreciate all the feedback we get from people and erm, like to - even if it's something that's negative – like to respond to people to make sure that they know that they're being listened to, we've taken their comments on board.”*

**Joe; IB7**

*“I don't know them, they're just people who are interested in beer.”*

**Jack; IB12**

These comments highlight a potential problem with one-to-one interaction on social media. For Joe, being part of the local community is an important consideration, and so he is keen to pursue a policy of direct interaction wherever possible. This creates tension though; *“...if we've had a really busy day in the brewery, we've not been able to dedicate as much time to it, because it's never going to be a number one priority...”*. Jack on the other hand appears to be taking a pragmatic relationship approach with his social media followers by acknowledging that they are strangers, most of whom he will never get to know personally. Applying the user engagement model from Chapter 2, Joe's approach appears to be one of using social media primarily as a relationship platform (Zhu & Chen, 2015), providing social gratification (Larivière et al., 2013) to users and meeting their psychological needs of relatedness (Dessart et al., 2015). In contrast, Jack's approach suggests a role which is separate from the other users. Here

he is giving them what they want but without getting personally involved. Such an approach might be likened to the use of social media as a creative outlet (Zhu & Chen, 2015), providing entertainment (or at least fulfilling an interest under McQuail's 1983 gratification theory) and satisfying users' psychological needs of hedonic pleasure (Sheldon et al., 2001).

These contrasting approaches underline the difficulty that a breweries face in being seen as a community member with equal status with other users. By their very nature breweries will command a different role within the communities, because they are the ones who provide the beer, they are the communities' raison d'etre. Without the breweries, there would be no beer geeks and no social media communities talking about beer and brewing. The only way that they can initiate conversation in a neutral sense is by posting neutral content, such as a picture of a sunny day, or a personal comment relating to something the poster is doing (as opposed to something the brewery is doing). Here, interaction in a neutral sense reflects the eclectic mix of content typically seen on an individual's social media page. There are no rules of engagement on social media and the nature of the interaction is unpredictable. From a business perspective finding a path that works on social media can thus be a hit and miss affair:

*"I've put adverts on there. and at the same time I'll just put anything that's humorous or funny on it..."*

**Ewen; IB13**

*"I think it was a couple of Sundays' ago, somebody posted to us a picture of them sitting in their garden with their feet up. Literally, it was their feet and a bottle of beer in the picture, and that suddenly took off, ermm, you've studied this more than I do, maybe you know why that should be?"*

**Sam; IB4**

*"I'm not really sure to be honest, because I don't know what people expect from accounts, brewery accounts these days..."*

**Kris; IB15**

None of the respondents have a clear answer as to why users engage with brewery based social media sites; *"...that's a question I've asked myself quite a lot, errm, and I do wonder..."* (Zee, IB13). As a result, a mixture of styles and approaches is seen, leaving an overall impression of 'anything goes'. Despite studies that treat it otherwise (Edelman, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009), it is purported here that social media is not simply another marketing tool, like advertising, promotions or PR, because social media is owned by the people. To engage effectively, the brewery can either become one of the people (as discussed in the previous sections) or leverage the networks that exist on social media in order to exploit word-of-mouth opportunities. The final sub-section below considers this area in more depth.

#### **7.4.3: Networks and word of mouth**

Sam's comments about the seemingly unremarkable picture which suddenly took off on social media, underline the power of the medium to spread messages very quickly and very far. Recognising this phenomena, a number of studies seek to understand how messages travel by distinguishing between 'posters' - users who actively contribute by posting content; and 'lurkers' - users who are predominantly consumers of content (Bolton et al., 2013; Lai & Chen, 2014; Petrovčič & Petrič, 2014; Preece et al., 2004). These studies generally conclude that lurkers, who significantly outnumber posters (Shang et al., 2006), tend to be attitudinally and behaviourally more interested in the content subject, whilst posters tend to be there for reasons more to do with self-expression. Thus, non-participative lurkers, who are following a beer, or brewery based

social media site because they are interested, represent warm prospects in a marketing sense. It follows therefore that if the brewery can engage with posters, as opinion leaders in the beer geek world, they can reach a potentially lucrative market. Evidence from the data suggests that this is recognised by some of the breweries:

*“...tag a few people that do - that all they do is talk about Sheffield beer - and before you know where you are it's been sent out to thousands of people.”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“...anyone interested in real ale products, beer festivals etc. will choose to follow/like people associated with these things...”*

**Holly; IB16**

*“...beer people and that kind of crowd are generally more active on Twitter, or so it seems to me anyway. At least the kind of people that are talking a lot about it.”*

**Kris; IB15**

Opinion leaders might be prolific bloggers or those with a high social media presence in the beer world. Engaging with them would tap into the networking power of social media, and enable breweries to reach peripheral users, such as 'friends of fans'. Lipsman et al. (2012) suggest that the ratio of 'friends of fans' to 'fans' themselves is 34:1, thus opening up a larger audience, some of whom will be of potential commercial value. In this sense, social media can be used in a practical marketing way, but the issue remains that any content posted by the brewery must be of interest and of relevance to the opinion leader who is tagged or targeted. Examples from the data suggest that blatant marketing messages, like *“we're launching a new beer next week”* can be spread very effectively on social media, as long as the brewery already commands a respect among the beer geek social media community. In other words, the brewery must have

established a relationship already. For new set up breweries, this justifies building up the social media relationship before even starting to brew. For existing breweries it requires the development of a human persona, alongside the corporate identity, from which to establish a relevant role within the beer geek social media community. Once the brewery is accepted into this community as a fellow beer geek, then it can tap into the networks associated with it.

If the brewery (or at least the individual within the brewery who 'owns' the personality on social media) commands enough respect, they may become opinion leaders in their own right. This lends them the ability to promote their beers, but more in the sense of *"this is what we are doing and this is where you can find it"*. The character of posts like this is not an overt selling message. Rather, there is an implicit assumption that the beer will automatically be successful, with or without social media, and that the content poster is helping out his or her followers. Such an approach can be seen in Jack's (IB12) comment: *"...it's about letting people know the beer's there, not so much to sell the beer, because I've already sold it, the pub's bought it. It will always sell out, it's more about letting people know to go and get it..."*. Having a role of opinion leader can also give the brewery an advantage among its peers within the brewing industry. Several examples from the data illustrate how collaborations with other breweries, who were often much bigger and more widely recognised in the market, resulted from a recognition and respect of the smaller brewery through its position on social media:

*"I didn't know **they** were following me, but people that I kind of admire, so that's quite interesting..."*

**Ewen; IB3**

*"I was pleasantly surprised that they'd actually heard of us and like our work etcetera..."*

**Jack; IB12**

*“...one of our most recent collaborations with XXXX in Manchester, err, that came about because of a forum on Facebook...”*

**Zee; IB13**

Whilst these examples underline the power of a strong personality on social media, they also indicate a level of blindness in that the brewery cannot see all of its followers, unless they are directly approached. Being a 'leader' on social media, with lots of followers is like a panopticon in reverse. All the other users can see you, but you can't see them, unless they choose to reveal themselves. Here, the onus on initiating interaction is on the followers, so the outcome following any initial content posting is to a large extent speculative and unpredictable. This reaffirms the organic nature of social media as a communications tool, in that interactions are not planned or managed in a systematic way. Simply using it as a billboard to tell other users what you are doing misses an opportunity to engage at a deeper level. Whilst it might be valuable to reach large numbers of people with one-way messages, these people are to a certain extent hidden. One-to-one interaction must be instigated by the follower, not the leader, and the conversations that follow can only be with selected members of the user community.

#### **7.4.4: Summary of this section**

If breweries are going to engage with social media in an interactive and peer associated way, then communication from the heart is required to project a natural persona. From the breweries' perspective, as well as needing to produce excellent beers, they need a strong social identity, backed up with a chatty and informal approach if they are to communicate effectively on social media. The nature of the content posted on social media determines the relationship dynamic between the brewery and other users. An



informal, natural approach fits with the working practices of many small breweries, particularly among those employees who are actually doing the brewing. Ramaswamy and Ozcan (2018) suggest that interactional co-creation online means tapping into capabilities of all actors and mobilising them accordingly. Breweries using their employees to develop a 3DP develops this thinking, although in the data it appears to be more of a natural consequence of individual lifestyle, rather than a mobilisation per se. Indeed, using the natural persona of employees within the brewery appears to be in contrast with taking an overtly commercial approach with social media content. The role of the independent brewery has thus taken on an additional dimension – that of maintaining an identity and peer status in an online community.

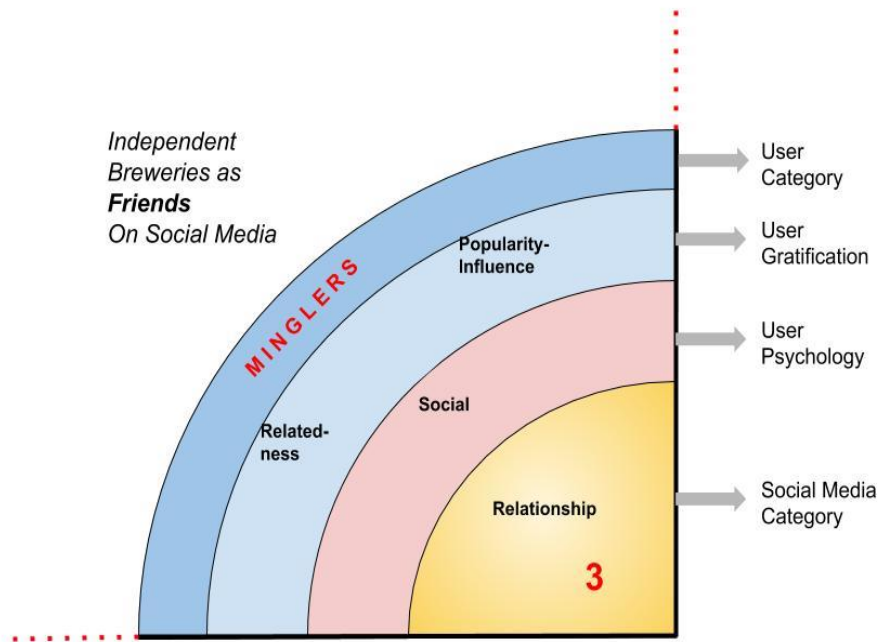
This new dimension in the breweries' activities can be squared with the more practical consideration of brewing beer because of the social associations around the consumption of beer as a product. Social media enables consumer involvement and direct interaction at the point of consumption, where the brewery can either fulfil the role of 'guest', being a fellow community member with equal status to other users, or 'host', where it can provide more of a service to interested followers. Either way, engagements on the part of the brewery have to be undertaken by employees who can interact naturally and spontaneously. The resulting eclectic mix of posted content is difficult to categorise from a business marketing perspective as the brewery is taking an individual approach to its own engagement on social media. For some breweries, this entails exploiting networking opportunities afforded by social media, through engaging opinion leaders or by becoming an opinion leader in their own right. This again requires the involvement of an individual within the brewery with his or her own ability to relate to the beer geek community. Here the brewery only interacts directly with a relatively small number of users, in the hope that their associated networks will spread 'word of mouse' to the wider and largely unseen online community.

## 7.5: Overall Findings from this Chapter

Existing studies of social media communities (e.g.: Dessart et al., 2015; Närvänen et al., 2013; Stokburger-Sauer & Wiertz, 2015) tend to view them as made up of consumers, but the findings here develop this assumption. Online communities associated with the independent brewery sector go beyond a simple brand-consumer dynamic, reflecting instead virtual versions of physical, offline communities. Members of these communities possess individual identities and associated personalities, each fulfilling various roles within that community. Breweries engage in large, social media driven 'beer geek' communities, the nature of which is unique to the sector because it includes not just beer consumers, but also the brewers themselves. It represents the 'melting pot' of roles and lifestyles introduced in the previous chapter and enabled by social media. Here, Hudson et al.'s (2016) notion of an anthropomorphic brand, to soften the corporate image online, is developed into a three-dimensional personality (3DP) on the part of the brewery. In this way, a social, none-corporate image is projected through social media. Breweries using their employees to create a 3DP, develops Ramaswamy and Ozken's (2018) thinking around mobilising the capabilities of all actors engaging on social media.

The relationship dynamic between the breweries and the beer geek community replaces traditional marketing communications relating to sales and promotional activity with a '3DP'. This 3DP is that of an individual user of social media and goes beyond just a brand name as used by a business organisation. It requires the involvement of brewery employees such that the brewery can project an 'authentic voice', borne out of the everyday, and individually experienced events in the working lives of those individuals. It entails spontaneity, originality, and conversational skills. Whilst the underlying purpose of the business remains beer brewing, engagement in social media thus expands its role to one of maintaining an identity and peer status in an online community. The brewery's unique identity and 3DP becomes its online currency and

enables it to engage effectively in a community of consumers, employees, opinion leaders and other breweries. Applying these concept the user engagement model suggests a focus on those activities associated with Quartile 3, as they are all about being accepted as part of a larger crowd – in this case the beer geek community (Figure 7.2). This quartile represents the brewery as a 'friend' on social media.



**Figure 7.2**  
**Application of relationship issues - the brewery as a 'friend' on social media**  
**(source: Author's own)**



## Chapter 8

### Key Theme 4 – Control

#### 8.1: Introduction

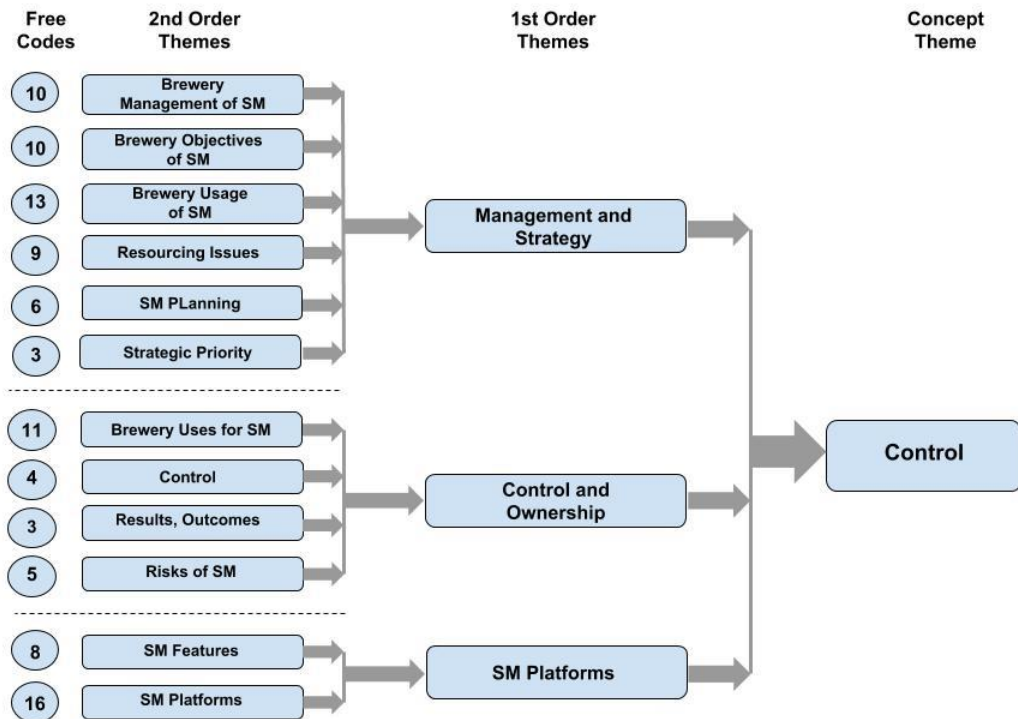
This is the final one of four chapters, each based around core themes emerging from the first and second stage coding processes. These core themes are *sector context; lifestyle; relationships; control*.

The previous chapter considered the nature of the relationships resulting from breweries' engagement with social media. It was noted that by engaging with social media, the breweries became part of a diverse 'beer geek' community, whose common interest was anything to do with brewing and beer. As members of this community themselves, breweries require a three dimensional personality, or '3DP' to underscore their standing in the community. Individuals within the business drive this 3DP and as a result, the roles played by the brewery in online social media vary according to the different attitudes, opinions and characteristics of these individuals. In terms of initiating these relationships breweries can be leaders or followers, but a significant factor in maintaining their presence is being relevant to that community. The key point is that the brewery itself is a member, even if it is hosting the social media site on which the engagement takes place, and unless it conforms to user expectations it will fail to carry any weight within the community.

This then raises a question: how much control can the brewery have over its social media relevance and subsequent presence? Social media is not owned by the breweries. The user generated content acknowledges that it is open to all in what has

been described as a 'democratisation' of users (Ryan, 2015; Tuten, 2008). Here the word democracy suggests that everyone has an equal right and that mutual consent replaces dominance and submission. What then are the implications for breweries, who at the end of the day are commercial entities hoping to use social media to get closer to beer consumers and ultimately sell their product? Whilst it has been suggested that breweries need to adopt a 3DP, akin to individual users, they are still at the end of the day, businesses.

This chapter therefore considers what the research data reveals about management and control issues surrounding the use of social media. In doing so it not only addresses the third and fourth research objectives around the value of social media to independent breweries, it takes us full circle back to the first of those questions relating to how and why independent breweries use social media in the first place. It also brings together the themes from the previous chapters: *sector context; lifestyle; relationships*, in terms of how far social media can be harnessed to meet individual business objectives. The structure of the chapter is based around the Nvivo nodes which fed into the broad theme of control. These begin with '*control and ownership*', exemplified by what the brewery uses social media for, the control it has, the measurable outcomes of this engagement and the attendant risks encountered. The next section looks at how the brewery incorporates social media into its '*management and strategy*', incorporating those codes associated with objectives, planning and resourcing. The final section acknowledges an impossibility of consistency, fed by those codes relating to the vast array of social media platforms and features, used not just by the brewery, but by those with whom they are engaging. These paths are illustrated in Figure 8.1.



**Figure 8.1: Code path to 'Control' theme**

## 8.2: Ownership and Control

It is acknowledged in Chapter 2 that social media marketing has become a recognised activity in management literature (Molenaar, 2012) and that it represents a potential new communications platform from which organisations can engage with their customers. It was also noted there, that a split exists in contemporary literature between those suggesting that the organisation can use social media like another marketing tool (Divol et al., 2012; Edelman, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009; Pitta [Ed], 2010) where the organisation is in control, and those suggesting that by engaging with social media the organisation has ceded some of its marketing control to customers (De Kare Silver, 2011; Fournier & Avery, 2011; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Larivière et al.,

2013). As such the question of how much control the brewery had over its social media engagement became a key issue in the interviews. Evidence within the data supports both sides of the argument:

*“...you decide the content, you decide what goes out...”*

**Jack; IB12**

*“...the customers are ultimately the ones who dictate what brewery is going to be popular, what brewery people are going to talk about, and that kind of thing.”*

**Zee; IB13**

As a member of the social media community, with equal rights to post content, the brewery is of course able to say and do what it likes, just as any other user can, and this has been seen in the plethora of personality based approaches identified in the previous chapters. In this sense, the breweries *are* in control of what they put out on social media. However, this only represents a part of the picture as the very nature of social media democratisation means that they are unable to control how their messages are received or acted upon. Other members of the social media community determine the value of posted content by engaging with it through, likes, retweets, replies, ratings, etc. It might be construed then that *control* represents two sides of the same coin. Whilst individual users have control over the content that they post, it is the community as a collective that determines the overall nature of the relationship. This at once gives the brewery an opportunity to meet business objectives, by for example initiating engagement around the launch of a new beer, or reaching a wide audience with its messages. At the same time however, it raises a potential threat in terms of its inability to control the outcomes of its social media engagement, as the content it posts is open to manipulation by anyone within the wider community. This supports Hennig-Thurau et al.'s (2010) analogy of social media messages being like the balls shot into a pinball machine, with just a few flippers to try and steer them around.



These two broad areas are discussed below under the sub-headings 'new horizons' reflecting the wider opportunities open to the breweries through social media engagement, and 'protective ownership', recognising the potential threat of not having full control over the outcome of the social media engagement.

### **8.2.1: New horizons**

'Control and Ownership' is a major theme in the data, represented by 23 Nvivo nodes. Two of these nodes in particular - '*3<sup>rd</sup> Party Sites*' and '*Brewery Uses for Social Media*' – suggest that social media affords a much greater opportunity to the brewery than had initially been envisaged. As a marketing academic, the researcher's initial assumption had been that social media was principally an issue for the marketing of an organisation, borne on the back of it being a communications medium and contemporary literature around social media marketing as a concept. It soon became apparent however that the use of social media in small breweries went much further than notions of traditional marketing. This phenomenon was identified in Chapter 7, when it was noted that social media engagement brought elements of contemporary lifestyle into the breweries' communications activities. This thinking is expanded here by noting that social media can be used by the brewery as a universal management tool to help run all parts of its operations:

*“...there's one particular community, UKCBF [UK Craft Beer Forum], which we go on very actively. Err, and that's full of brewers, err, bar owners, managers, and craft beer drinkers as well. And that's err, seven, just over seven thousand people on there.”*

***Andy; IB11***

*“Errm, I'm using it all the time, I'm using it constantly. It's err, like I'm on the UK Craft Beer Forum, UK Craft Beer Network, Beer and Brewing Industry Professionals, err, Drinking Craft Beer in Sheffield, Sheffield Bar Tending Group, like, there's always like... basically every single point of reference that I could need to try and sort something, is pretty much on Facebook.”*

**Harry; IB8**

These comments relate to third party social media platforms, i.e. those set up independently and where the brewery plays the role of guest or member. The breweries here are using the networking capability of social media, connecting large amounts of individuals with each other. Two things stand out that are worthy of further consideration. First, not all the groups alluded to in the examples above have been set up for social purposes, some of them are specifically there for business networking purposes. Furthermore, some of those that are on the surface socially based platforms, such as the UK Craft Beer Forum, can be used for non-social purposes, for example to keep abreast of new developments or market trends. Second, the scale and range of the sites which are out there present something akin to a universal business tool, making social media platforms like Facebook a 'one stop shop' as implied by Harry above. In this sense, social media is more than just social, it is very much a business medium. In a single application it represents an opportunity for small breweries to keep their finger on the pulse of what is happening in their industry; network with their peers for collaborative purposes; keep in touch with suppliers and distributors; and participate in industry bodies. Thus, in the same way that social media has become an invaluable part of people's personal lives (Thoumrungrroje, 2014), so it can be seen to have taken on a similar role in people's working environments.

The use of social media thus enables a small brewery to quickly and easily access a range of external supporting resources to help them manage their business more effectively. As members of wider communities they are able to assist, and be assisted

by other members of those communities, thus making it a mutually advantageous arrangement to all users. Social media represents a ready-made conduit to the outside world, something that is automatically there, and can be tapped into by anyone. As such it overrides separate business functions such as purchasing, distribution, operations, sales, marketing and human resource management and provides an opportunity for individuals in small businesses to undertake multi-functional roles. This is clear from the examples below showing how it is used internally for human resource management:

*“...we're advertising for another member of staff via Twitter.”*

**Adam; IB2**

*“I use a lot of the Facebook as well for staff organising. You know, we've got all our rotas on Facebook, time-off booking on a Facebook route and so they can go on and if they want to change what they've got booked off for the next month, they can just edit a comment, and it's done. They don't need to come in the office, or write in a book, or...”*

**Harry; IB8**

That the breweries can use social media in this way underlines the ubiquity of the medium in the way in which people run their lives around their Facebook, or Twitter accounts. Here social media is becoming a universal communications medium, eclipsing other media such as telephone, e-mail or traditional print media. There is an implication in one of the examples above that it is even replacing face-to-face communication in the sense that employees no longer need come into the office in person. This represents a potential advantage to small breweries because larger corporations, who are more likely to have specific functional departments to manage their various business activities, are unable to harness social media in the same way. In the smaller brewery, social media content is generally 'owned' by and related back to a single point of contact, with sole

responsibility for the nature of the engagement and the content that is posted. The fact that social networking is a relatively low cost activity and is universally accessible to all (Harris & Rae, 2009) gives these smaller breweries an opportunity to move in wider circles. Furthermore the involvement and ownership of single individuals within the brewery gives them an agility and flexibility, as they are in sole control of how they use it and what they use it for. It might be construed therefore that smaller breweries can operate within the cut and thrust of social media engagement more naturally than larger competitors, because they are able to use it in a similar way to that in which an individual might in his or her personal life.

This flexibility enables the breweries to use social media to enhance their knowledge, as demonstrated by significant elements of learning observed in the interview data:

*"...Twitter is also a great way for us to get feedback about our beers and see who is drinking what, where!"*

**Seb; IB5**

*"...we send all the beer out, we don't deliver much directly, it's all through wholesalers, so for us at the moment it's a really good way of finding out where the beer's going..."*

**Kris; IB15**

*"I mean, Twitter is a tool for instance, for ermm, finding pubs, outlets that you don't know about..."*

**Ada; IB2**

*"...it's a good way of seeing what's going on, because there's so many brewers, well we've got nearly 1600, 1700 brewers in the UK, so there's a lot of activity out*

*there, and a lot of noise, so it's a good way of keeping up with the Jones's and what's happening..."*

**Sam; IB4**

*"I want to have an idea of what's going on at least in the breweries around Manchester and all the pubs, and who's doing what..."*

**Kris; IB15**

The ability to learn about competitors, consumers, distributors or the industry in general, is a major benefit of using social media. The knowledge it gives represents power, which the smaller breweries might not otherwise have. For example Emily (IB14) talked about how she no longer had to rely on pub landlords to find out how popular her beer was: *"I'm not sure why publicans are so err, reluctant to give that feedback, but through social media I've found out that various beers have been incredibly popular, so I've brewed them again. Other beer's been less popular and so I've err, left them off the brew schedule."* In this example, power is shifting from the middleman to the producer in what Gummesson (1999) refers to as the relationship with the customer's customer. For a small business this is a significant opportunity to gain some control over relationships in the distribution chain, as the knowledge gained can be used as a leverage factor when persuading publicans to take particular beers. Learning develops knowledge and knowledge gives the breweries power in the distribution chain.

In the other examples, power comes from seeing the big picture and being able to position yourself accordingly. Thus, breweries are able to see what others are brewing, spot gaps in the market, or identify potential collaborative partners. In all of the examples, the brewery is acting as an observer in a passive sense, as in the centre of a panopticon, where they can see everyone else, but they themselves cannot be seen. This is the opposite of the suggestion made in the last chapter where being a 'leader' on

social media, with lots of followers, was likened to a panopticon in reverse, where the other users can see you, but you can't see them, unless they choose to reveal themselves. The implication seems to be that whilst power can emanate from the passive observation of following others, that power can be lessened once one reveals oneself through proactive engagement. Here an element of control is ceded as the nature of the engagement shifts from one sided observation to community based interaction.

It might therefore be thought that whilst breweries remain within harbour walls, where they own the content they send out on social media and they learn from what others are doing, they are in control and they have power. The problem however is that social media is not an enclosed harbour, controlled and owned by the brewery, it is, to continue the analogy, an open ocean with no protection. As long as those breweries have a social media presence, whether through their own site or through a third party site, they will be unable to control the swells and currents generated by the social media community. This is evident in third party sites such as Untappd and RateBeer which are specifically there to discuss, compare and judge different beers. The existence of these sites means that all breweries, irrespective of whether they have their own social media sites, will be subject to the vagaries of the social media community.

In such an environment the brewery must work hard, not only to keep its head above water in the sense of maintaining a presence, but also to ensure that its voice is heard in terms of maintaining its position within a large and independently controlled community. It must assert a personality and defend its position in the community by protecting its integrity and identity. The research data reveals a strong protective instinct relating to ownership and identity and the following sub-section considers this in more depth.

### **8.2.2: Protective ownership**

When categorising the data, *'ownership'* cropped up as a significant code under the broader theme of control. This links back to what was seen in the last chapter where the breweries valued the need to generate their own social media content using an 'authentic voice', in order to relate to their communities. That sentiment is expanded here in terms of how breweries are attempting to maintain ownership of their image and identity:

*"I don't think I'd want to use somebody externally, it would have to be somebody within the company. Errm, and that way they're gonna really truly have their hand on the pulse and understand, what we... how we feel as a brewery and how we want to be perceived."*

**Andy; IB11**

*"I wouldn't want to leave it to someone who didn't know about the beers, and wasn't involved in the brewing process to be on that side of things. I'd want to make sure that anyone that was running the social media for knew about the subject."*

**Emily; IB14**

The overriding impression is one of protecting something valuable and being distrustful of outsiders. The importance of knowing about the beers and the brewing process is emphasised, as this enables the brewery to speak with an authentic voice, thus giving them relevance and credibility in a community of knowledgeable and opinionated 'beer geeks'. Such an approach requires the involvement of someone within the brewery who may be considered a beer geek themselves, and can thus interact with confidence and a level of authority within this social media community. This resonates with Chan and Guillet's (2011) study, which identified the need for a 'champion' to lead the implementation of a social media strategy. Such a champion might be a 'power

promoter' at the top of the organisation, or a 'knowledge promoter' contributing know-how rather than hierarchical power (Rickards & Clark, 2006). Either way that champion must feel a sense of ownership with the identity and values of the brewery, as well as the confidence and authority to engage with a beer geek community. Individuals possessing such combinations of characteristics can be found within small breweries, particularly where those individuals are responsible for multi-tasking, as they will know the business inside out.

It might thus be conjectured that ownership and knowledge breed confidence and authority when engaging with social media. However, evidence from the data suggests a general lack of confidence among many breweries in this area. Such sentiments generally result from the personally held perceptions of those interviewed that the brewery was not making the most of social media, or using it to its best advantage:

*"...for us I mean we're, well I don't know where we are, we don't use it nearly as much as you possibly could..."*

**Adam; IB2**

*"I still think there's a lot more we can do, I mean it's one of our major challenges now, to improve both the quantity and quality of our social media..."*

**Tom; IB10**

*"To be honest, we're pretty crap at it..."*

**Andy; IB11**

These perceptions appear to reflect different issues. For some it is the belief that others are doing it better, particularly those breweries that are young (digital native) and conceivably fashionable. As Sam (IB4) puts it: *"...if you look at some of the key... craft guys, whether you're Brewdog, or Beavertown, these sort of guys, they've built*



*everything around social media and they are much more dynamic with it than we are, and they've based all of their messaging around it.”* For others it's more about a personal lack of understanding or commitment which leads them to believe that they could do better if they had the inclination. Andy's comment above, whilst given in a throwaway nature, represents an awareness of social media's potential, but a lack of drive to do much about it. The nuance that *'we ought to do more...'*, as opposed to *'we should do more...'* crops up in several of the interviews, suggesting a mild neglect of duty, but something that ultimately is of secondary importance to the brewery. In all of these comments there is a sense that it is possible to reach high levels of achievement with social media, that some kind of social media Nirvana is possible, but that the brewery is not at this level. In practice, given the huge diversity of potential uses of social media and the different engagement styles that have been observed in this study, it is likely that such a Nirvana cannot exist except in the sense of an imaginary yardstick against which the breweries are judging themselves. What it does reveal is a general lack of confidence among breweries in the way in which they use social media, despite the existence of the authoritative social media champions described earlier.

This lack of confidence can be linked to an impression that the brewery has to accept a certain loss of control. Hatch and Schultz (2010) describe a number of areas where social media engagement shifts power away from the organisation. These include exposure through transparency, loss of one's ideas through copying by others, and potentially overlooked opportunities through engaging with too narrow a set of stakeholders. These are in addition to the attendant risk of brand damage through uncontrolled viral networking, or even brand hijack as described by Wipperfurth (2005). Examples of these issues are revealed in the comments below:

*“It's [a throwaway customer post] taken more of an interest than a beer that's taken us two years to develop, and we're really proud to announce it...”*

**Dom; IB1**

*“...you'll see that err, you know, Dave's following you and the next one Dave has added you to the list, 'Excellent English Beer', or something like that. And then somebody else will add you to a list, a craft brewery list, things in Sheffield, you know, so people are compartmentalising what they want, out of you...”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“...you know, because it's like a ten second video and once it's gone it's gone, like it's a very... there's no control from me on that”*

**Harry; IB8**

The first of these comments reflects how the spontaneous and organic nature of social media can trump carefully constructed content – in this case the launch of a new beer, which is important to the brewery - is overshadowed by a frivolous photo posted by a follower on the brewery's Facebook page which goes viral. In this sense, users' ability to use a brewery's own social media site to launch their own viral content, whether intentional or not, could be construed as a form of brand hijack as it is wresting control away from the brewery. However, it must be recognised that that control does not go elsewhere – it ceases to exist. That is because whilst individual social media users may be leaders with lots of followers, or experts in their field, they have no control of what will take off or how a network will spread something. This thesis contends that the concept of control, from any direction, is not applicable in social media based relationships. To underline this point, in Ewen's example above, fictional user 'Dave' is creating his own lists of beers and breweries, perhaps to project his own competence to those seeking knowledge or information. Here the brewery is powerless, and simply represents a resource which Dave can use to further his personal agenda. Although the brewery can make content available to people like Dave, they are passive in their control over what he does with that content. However, it can be further argued that

Dave himself has no control over the way in which his posted content will be received, or how it will be used - the concept of control is irrelevant.

### **8.2.3 Summary of this section**

Corresponding with divisions seen in the literature, the data shows that independent breweries' engagement with social media can be viewed as either an opportunity or a threat. On the plus side, the versatility of social media lends itself to a wide range of management applications, enabling the small brewery to achieve more, with less resource. Engaging as an individual, as opposed to a business entity, gives the small brewery a flexible and natural approach, and a potential advantage over larger competitors. Additionally the learning which is enabled through social media engagement gives the breweries knowledge, which they might not otherwise have had, and therefore an element of power over their distribution chains. On the negative side, by engaging with social media, the breweries are exposed to a much wider range of forces, made up of all the other online community users, of which they themselves are only a part. Any power afforded by being involved with this community is thus mitigated by the inability to control what others are doing and saying. In this environment, the breweries are faced with a challenge to assert their ownership of their integrity and identity.

In order to protect their ownership, breweries draw upon 'champions' within, who can project a 3DP and authentic voice. However, and notwithstanding the presence of these champions, there exists a general lack of confidence among the small independent breweries in terms of what they're doing with social media. This is demonstrated in the perception of a social media Nirvana which they cannot reach, and is symptomatic of an uncertainty and lack of control. Whilst a loss of control is acknowledged in some social media marketing theory (e.g. Felix et al., 2017; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Labreque et

al., 2013) these papers go on to show how the organisation might mitigate this. It is not the contention in this thesis that losing or regaining control is the issue, rather, the findings take the argument in a different direction. Any suggestion that the control lies elsewhere is refuted, as none of the other online social media participants can control the community either. In this sense, control is not shifted from the brewery to the consumer, it ceases to exist in a social media networked environment. Lack of overall control by any one party means that the focus of management becomes one of managing relationships in order to maximise the potential benefit from social media involvement. The following section therefore considers how independent breweries go about managing their social media engagement.

### **8.3: Management and Planning**

The notion that social media engagement, at least from a business sense, entails a certain lack of control on the part of the brewery is consistent with relationship marketing theory whereby all parties are active and relationships are not characterised by controlling others, but through consensus and sharing (Gummesson, 1987). Engagement with users on social media also fits the notion of co-creation advanced by Grönroos (1994), as well as Vargo and Lusch's (2004) theories of service-dominant logic whereby consumers become co-producers of value. The direction of these theories however is not to suggest that because they cannot be in sole control, businesses should abandon their marketing management objectives, but rather that they should apply these according to a wider perspective – in this case the open channels of social media. The purpose of this section therefore is to analyse how small breweries might go about planning and managing their social media strategies.

The data provides a wealth of material here, including how different respondents manage their social media objectives, strategic prioritisation, resourcing, follower

management and monitoring of outcomes. There appears a lack of consensus among those interviewed, both in terms of their objectives for social media and in an absence of hard and fast rules when undertaking social media marketing management:

*"...it is all ultimately about building sales and business..."*

**Dom; IB1**

*"It's all about building up relationships..."*

**Joe; IB7**

*"But for me, yeah, Facebook - Facebook's the one..."*

**Harry; IB8**

*"Twitter is certainly where most breweries seem to be spending most of their efforts these days..."*

**Emily; IB14**

*"...generally it's kind of, just something to pass the time..."*

**Kris; IB15**

*"It's finding the time to do it, along with everything else."*

**Kate; IB9**

These contrasting views illustrate the diversity that exists around the use of social media in a business context. They underline the need for a full understanding among breweries, not necessarily of what social media is, but how the business can be aligned effectively with it and what it can achieve. Given the scope of these differences, the remainder of this section represents an analysis of social media management. The following sub-sections are therefore concerned with: the metrics used to measure the

impact social media engagement; the practical outcomes of this engagement; and the barriers that prevent independent breweries from engaging.

### **8.3.1: Measurement metrics in social media**

Whilst a lack of consensus might exist, this does not necessarily imply a lack of management intent on the part of the breweries. Ryan (2015) posits that analytic tools such as Google Analytics, Flurry, Adobe Marketing Cloud, and others are available to businesses wishing to measure pre-defined key performance indicators (KPIs) associated with social media engagement. However, the data reveals that many breweries have not established clear KPIs in respect of their usage of social media, relying instead on one broad objective: 'covering all bases'. Whilst some take an interest in who follows them and make some attempt to gauge who they are, others concentrate on their own messaging and take little interest in what followers are doing:

*"I'm not sure how many followers we have at the moment, err, you can get a better indication of that..."*

**Adam; IB2**

*"...we get them from all over, but I'd say it's... from Twitter it must be from all over, but I don't really know..."*

**Charlie; IB6**

*"We do need to do a lot more analysis of our user base and contacts..."*

**Tom; IB10**

*"...generally anyone that's following, we try to have a look at it..."*

**Kris; IB15**

*“We also measure it with the counting of increased likes and followers, and we can also use statistics to see where our followers are based.”*

**Holly; IB16**

Basic metrics, such as counting followers or monitoring the number of likes and retweets are straightforward, but do not tell the brewery much about how effective their social media is at reaching the right people, raising the brand profile or selling more beer. In order to get a better grasp of these KPIs, breweries need to use specific analytics tools. Looking at the data, clear divisions are noticeable between those who take what might be described as a casual approach by simply counting followers, and those who take a more 'structured' approach, using online analytics tools. This thesis contends that small breweries exhibit three distinct approaches in their use of social media. The first is a 'laissez-faire' approach, going out and engaging on social media but without taking much notice of what is happening out there. The second is casual engagement through personal curiosity rather than a focussed business perspective. The third approach is specifically attempting to manage their engagement in a business sense, and using dedicated analytics tools to do so. It could be argued that the first two are akin to the way in which an individual might manage his or her social media engagement on a personal basis, and thus represent an organic approach, compared to the third which is mechanistic, using analytical tools.

In terms of the user engagement model developed in Chapter 2, those following a laissez-faire approach are demonstrating the characteristics of self-media, being there as experts or oracles, whose knowledge is of interest to followers. Their engagement is driven more through their own personal fulfilment, rather than as a part of a community. The deeper implication here is that their greater objective has been reached, that of being seen by lots of people and being relevant, with the actual

recipients' behaviours themselves being of less interest. An example of this can be seen below:

*“I'll find people who will like something that I've put on there, that I've no idea who they are, because there's seven and a half thousand people following the company...”*

**Ewen; IB3**

The second organic approach, casual engagement, suggests that breweries are open to relationships and are there for social purposes. Their role here is similar to that of 'hosts', being there to provide a service and mingle with people within the community. Although the approach appears casual, it can be undertaken in a nuanced way, depending on whether the brewery has a manageable number of followers and the time to look at them. Examples of this can be seen in the comments below:

*“We have a lot of regular customers that keep following and always comment on content and pictures. Yeah, you know if you put a photo on, you know who's going to like that (laughs)...”*

**Kate; IB9**

*“I mean if it's a brewery [that's following us] then I'll normally have a look and well, I'll likely have heard of them already. And if it's a good brewery I'm not already following them, I might follow back. Errm, if it's not a brewery and I don't know the person, then I probably won't follow back – in fact almost certainly I won't.”*

**Jack; IB12**

These examples represent a conscious awareness of being part of a larger community. Jack's approach to followers is nuanced in that he looks at his follower base and chooses



who to engage with, whereas Kate's is more about recognising fellow community members, akin to nodding hello to people you see at work or in your local pub. You are all part of the same community, so they are acquaintances, but you don't necessarily know them as close friends. In both scenarios the breweries are demonstrating an attitude of being inside the community.

The third approach to monitoring social media activity is mechanistic in its use of analytic tools. This approach requires advanced planning, suggesting that the brewery has clear business objectives and KPIs. Some of these tools are free to use, whilst others such as Facebook's options to boost or promote specific posts, are paid for, thus requiring dedicated investment decisions, again reinforcing a business-like approach:

*“Like I said, the Facebook Pixel thing is a really interesting err, development, you know, like as if you were putting a small sticker code into your website, they can then track this person's visited, and even if it's not one of my Facebook followers, I can still get a display out onto their Facebook feed. Very clever, and it'll get even better...”*

**Harry; IB8**

*“...making use of... one of the platforms that allows us to manage media, and do posts at different times, is really important, because we're an under-resourced business...”*

**Tom; IB10**

*“We often use post boosts when we have a particular offer available or when we have released a new product...”*

**Holly; IB16**

These examples imply a clear commercial strategy in using social media. Boosting posts is a paid for activity, which will require budgeting, so in this sense social media truly is being used as any other marketing tool. However, unlike the organic approaches, breweries taking the mechanistic approach cannot readily be placed against the user engagement model. It might therefore be construed that using social media analytics tools diminishes, or even negates altogether the notion of the brewery being a part of the social media community with equal rights and legitimacy. Its presence feels more like traditional, transaction based marketing, which treats customers as people *to* whom something is done, rather than people *for* whom something is done Grönroos (1994). Here the community exists as a resource which the brewery can tap into, rather than something to become involved in, or develop a relationship with. The logical question then becomes whether any of these approaches produces better, or more tangible results.

### **8.3.2: Outcomes and results**

Ultimately, whether a brewery is following an organic or a mechanistic approach to social media involvement, it will need to consider outcomes of that involvement. The data here is inconclusive, with some breweries clearly tying their social media activity into increases in sales, and others being more reticent about its overall impact:

*“... if we launch a beer it goes out on social media a lot quicker than anything I could do in old methodology, and we can see an immediate spike in sales in our online shop...”*

**Dom; IB1**

*“...the results are often immediate, with customers in our shop saying they have seen it on Facebook.”*

**Holly; IB16**

*“But I think it's very... almost unmeasurable.”*

**Sam; IB4**

*“How well what we're doing is err, working I don't know...”*

**Kris; IB15**

A distinction should be made between those outcomes which are tangible and thus relatively easy to measure, for example sales; and those that are intangible and consequently more difficult to measure, such as awareness. Both of the positively observed outcomes described above are sales related and both of them come from breweries that also control their own retail outlets and could thus see sales increases at first hand. The second two comments are unspecific in terms of whether social media usage is directed at increasing sales, or more generally raising awareness.

However, with the exception of Harry (IB8), those breweries using mechanistic tools to promote their businesses only did so periodically, as for example boosting posts when launching a new beer. For the rest of the time their posts are of the general chit chat type seen in every-day social media usage. The overriding impression is that social media presence is valuable, whether or not hard metrics are used to monitor its worth, as summed up by Kate, when asked about what would happen if she could not use social media any more:

*“...people see things on Instagram and Twitter, so I think maybe it would be loss of sales, because we do get to a certain amount of customers that way.”*

**Kate; IB9**

Kate's comment is borne on a belief that by engaging on social media, her brewery is relevant to the community, playing the role of 'host' and being there for relationship purposes. She knows who her regular followers are and is able to predict who will react to pictures posted on Instagram. Whilst she cannot systematically prove that her brewery's engagement on social media leads to sales, she believes that it does, and would be reluctant to drop social media for this reason. Kate's sentiment is echoed across many of those interviewed, with none of those directly questioned stating that they would be willing to do without social media. It is purported here that social media has thus become a part of the lives of these breweries, in the sense of who they are and what they take for granted, irrespective of whether it can be tied directly to hard sales results. In this way social media is fulfilling a dual role. On the one hand it is a business tool, in the form of a marketing communications medium, but on the other it is an expression of lifestyle, being used in much the same way that an individual might use it. The distinction between these two functions is not fully appreciated by the breweries using it, which might partly explain the fuzzy objectives and inexact science the data reveals.

It is construed here that whilst social media can be used as a management tool, it represents much more than this in that it is ingrained into what people do. Whilst the mechanical analytical tools can be used to manage customers, the softer organic side of social media gives breweries an identity, a way of being themselves, and a place in the community. Whichever approach is taken the brewery must commit resource to their social media engagement activity, but it is quickly seen in the data that most breweries find this aspect of social media engagement challenging. The following sub-section therefore considers the barriers to social media engagement on the part of the independent brewery, and how these are managed.

### **8.3.3: Barriers to social media engagement**

It is argued in the previous section that breweries are tied to their social media in much the same way that individuals are. Whilst there may be a nominal correlation to hard business objectives, such as raising awareness, breweries' individual motives for using the medium are sub-consciously societally based, reflecting their roles within the community and the individuals who work in those breweries. In this sense mechanistic management techniques tend to co-exist with (or are over-ridden by) more organic factors. As such the brewery needs the ability to engage with social media as an individual would in a natural or spontaneous way. However, studies suggest that smaller businesses lack the skills or resources to engage effectively through social media (Day et al, 2004; Fournier & Lee, 2009). To mitigate this, Fournier and Lee (2009) suggest involving employees, whose personal social media knowledge and networks can be used on behalf of the business. Such involvement has already been acknowledged here, in order to present a natural and spontaneous approach and an authentic voice. From a practical perspective however, a major restraint coming out of the data is one of finding time to engage with social media. The Nvivo node supporting this sentiment was one of the largest, with 18 separate references from 13 different breweries:

*“No, I do get people saying why aren't you on Instagram and all this kind of thing, but err, I don't have time, I'm trying to run two businesses...”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“I wish we all had a bit more time to dedicate to the blog...”*

**Charlie; IB6**

*“...to be honest, at the moment, we can't really afford to spend any more time on social media.”*

**Andy; IB11**

*“...so I'm brewer, drayman, social media, err sales, customer acquisition, customer relations...”*

**Zee; IB13**

*“I'm the Head Brewer and in fact the only brewer. Everything [is down to me] from social media to designing pump clips to delivering beer...”*

**Emily; IB14**

In these examples, employees are attempting to keep on top of their social media whilst performing other roles within the business. This represents a desire to keep social media engagement in-house in order to maintain the authentic voice which gives breweries their identity and validity in social media communities. However, whilst it might be expected that keeping things in house will keep costs down, the comments above support Fournier and Lee's (2009) assertion that there is still a resource commitment in terms of employees' time in managing social media. This is borne out in Chan and Guillet's (2011) study of hotels, which finds that keeping social media sites up to date, with fresh and relevant material, is a big challenge because they need to be on top of it every day. Furthermore, as users engage with social media as part of a lifestyle, they expect other users to do the same, interacting regularly and not just within business hours:

*“...when people are tweeting on there ermm, they're expecting somebody to be tweeting back almost immediately...”*

**Dom; IB1**

*“...and you just have to be on it all the time, with engagement and putting things into it.”*

**Sam; IB4**

The breweries are thus in a difficult position. On the one hand they want the social media to be undertaken internally by someone who is an insider and closely associated with the business, a key employee who to maintain relevance is expected to display a round the clock commitment in terms of posting content and interacting. On the other hand that person will have other, often more pressing duties, particularly in those operations with just one or two employees. Notwithstanding the fact that they are businesses, small breweries are trying to behave as individuals would on social media, being spontaneous, engaging, entertaining, and above all, being themselves. The question they face then, is how far to resource social media activity, given the other priorities of their operations:

*“...if we've had a really busy day in the brewery, we've not been able to dedicated as much time to it, because it's never going to be a number one priority...”*

**Joe; IB7**

*“It's unbelievable, I certainly wouldn't pay anybody to do it. It's not, err, a game changer.”*

**Ewen; IB3**

*“...it's one of those classic things, you get as much out of it as you put in.”*

**Sam; IB4**

These comments illustrate the problem of prioritising resources. For Ewen and Joe social media is something that is good to have, but should not impede their core activity which is brewing and selling beer. This potentially conflicts with the data which suggests that breweries value their social media and would not wish to be without it. Ideally social media becomes part of what breweries do, without at the same time dominating them. As Dom (IB1) puts it; *“I don't think we're slaves to it either, in that we recognise it plays a part...”*. Just as most individuals will enjoy social media as part of their lives, but

not to the extent that it impedes their jobs or day to day tasks, so will the breweries. The resourcing issue does however, raise an important difference between individuals and breweries. Individuals tend to use social media in their leisure time. Breweries do not have leisure time in the same context and must thus find time within their business to engage in social media. Business is still business and the use of social media within this context presents a potential conflict of interest – be social and part of the community, or brew beer and sell it.

#### **8.3.4: Summary of this section**

Social media engagement entails a shift in control of marketing communications, from being owned by the brewery to shared ownership among all users. This does not however imply that small breweries shouldn't plan their activity around marketing objectives; rather, they should apply these according to a wider perspective reflecting the open channels of social media. The data suggests a lack of consensus, and widely differing experiences in four areas: the choice of social media platform; the metrics used to measure engagement outcomes; the outcomes themselves; and the impacts of resourcing issues.

In terms of platform choice, the reasoned approach advanced by Zhu and Chen (2015) basing media selection according to specific communication objectives, does not seem to apply in the independent brewery sector. Instead, two broad techniques are observed: first the desire to 'cover all bases', resulting in a scatter gun approach with multiple platforms; second using a single platform based on the personal preference of the brewery. These correspond respectively to external and internally focused ways of viewing social media on the part of the brewery, but neither represents a carefully planned, business oriented way of doing things. The external approach represents the brewery attempting to fit into a community, whereas the internal approach is more



about the brewery being on social media for self-gratification purposes. Both of these mirror the way in which an individual, as opposed to a business might behave on social media.

Three distinct approaches to measurement metrics are identified here. The first is 'laissez-faire', doing one's own thing without taking much notice of what anyone else is doing. The second approach is one of casual interest, being aware of followers, but in an unstructured way, whilst the third is more methodical using specific analytics tools to segment followers for marketing purposes. Whereas the first two approaches represent a personal, organic way of engaging with social media, the third is mechanical, and diminishes, or even negates the role of the brewery as an equal member of the social media community. Ultimately, whichever measurement approach is taken, the actual outcomes of social media engagement are not easily observed. Whilst some immediate tangible results can be seen in sales increases following a social media promotion, the longer term impact from a strategic perspective is less clear.

In their attempt to apply a strategic approach to social media marketing, Felix et al. (2017) propose a framework dependent upon the organisation's culture, scope, structure and governance, recognising that these would vary among different firms. Whilst this is supported in this thesis, it is further contended that the notion of taking a strategic approach to social media is of secondary importance to many small breweries, who appear more concerned with getting the social approach right. What is apparent is an intangible belief on the part of the breweries that social media involvement is not only desirable, but is a necessary part of what they do. In this sense social media is more than a management tool, it is a way of life, a legitimate identity and a place in the community. However, this view leads to a conflict for breweries. By engaging with social media in the same way that individuals do, they need to make time for their employees to post content, reply to messages and keep up the 3DP identified in the last section. The problem is that these people also have a brewery to run. Whilst an

individual would normally use social media in their leisure time, the concept of leisure time does not exist in a business, which returns us to the oxymoron of social media being used as a business tool, and the application thereof becoming one of an 'inexact science'. Contemporary literature such as Zhu and Chen (2015) and Felix et al. (2017), which develops frameworks for a strategic approach to social media marketing, are thus countered by a dichotomy between using social media for leisure or business.

#### **8.4: Impossibility of Consistency**

The notion of social media usage being an 'inexact science' is advanced in Chapter 5 where it is noted that organic, or naturally evolving approaches are more prevalent than those derived from structured planning. The phrase "inexact science" originates from Sam (IB4) who acknowledges that a consistent approach is impossible because of different levels of social media adoption within the distribution chain. This lack of consistency is seen across all users, including the breweries themselves, and is particularly apparent in the objectives that the respondents attribute to social media engagement. These range from; building relationships: *"...build that sort of friendship with people, errm, customers and stuff like that, you know, or pubs..."* (Charlie, IB6); developing awareness: *"It's mainly just to make people aware..."* (Seb, IB5); raising the brewery profile: *"...raise that profile on social media, because it's difficult to sell more beer..."* (Jack, IB12); sell more beer: *"...it is all ultimately about building sales and business..."* (Dom,IB1); keep people informed: *"Our objectives of using social media are to get messages to our customers and suppliers..."* (Holly, IB16). These diverse, and sometimes conflicting objectives underline how individual views and preferences determine the thinking behind social media usage, and the lack of a universal management approach. This diverse thinking is illustrated in the most commonly cited broad objective for using social media - as a means of 'covering all bases':

*“...makes everything a little bit more inclusive in a way, because certain customers prefer e-mailing to place order, others would rather ring up, and others would rather just send us a message and it's really good that they have all those kind of feedback access available to them...”*

**Charlie; IB6**

*“...it's more like communicating to... everyone, instead of just businesses, it's like everyone's got it.”*

**Kate; IB9**

*“So yeah, it's kind of – it's a bit of both – it's kind of a scatter gun approach really, erm, because you can't really target either [B2C or B2B ], but you can... you can try...”*

**Zee; IB13**

Here, covering all bases represents the opposite of precise, targeted planning, and construes an uncertainty around how best to use social media. This uncertainty is backed up in contemporary literature where finding a hard and fast definition of what social media marketing actually is proves difficult. It explains why so many different metaphors have been applied to the presence of social media within business activities and is the key underlying factor of Hennig-Thurau et al.'s (2010) 'pin-ball' analogy. Although people want to use it because it is a medium associated with current lifestyles, they are unsure what to do with it in a business sense. Ultimately social media is universal in that it reaches almost everyone in one way or another, making it an ideal way of engaging with as many different stakeholders as possible. However, whilst this offers benefits in terms of wider reach, and an increased choice of platforms through which stakeholders can engage with the brewery, it dilutes the ability to develop nuanced marketing communications to specific target groups. As can be seen in two of

the comments above, it even struggles to distinguish between B2C and B2B message recipients.

If social media marketing can be viewed as an inexact science, the argument by some management commentators (Divol et al., 2012; Edelman, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009) that it represents another marketing communications tool looks flimsy, because unlike other tools this one cannot be used dextrously, and with easily predictable outcomes. As a result breweries use an array of social media platforms in order to appeal to different groups, as acknowledged by Tom (IB10) when justifying his use of three different platforms: *"...different groups like the female audience, like the business audience, you know, use different social media..."*. Furthermore, some breweries, whilst acknowledging that they use different platforms to reach different audiences, go on to say that the same broad messages are communicated across each of the channels, once again suggesting a scatter gun approach to reach as many people as possible rather than nuanced targeting. For many of these small breweries, social media marketing is not a management science in the traditional sense, but represents a more organic means of communicating with the outside world. The divide between what is used by individuals for social purposes, and what is used organisationally for commercial purposes becomes blurred, reinforcing the 'melting pot' metaphor advanced in Chapter 6. In the light of these observations, it is construed here that social media is not a management science in the traditional sense, it is more an organic means of communicating with the world outside the organisation.

#### **8.4.1: Summary of this section**

The term 'inexact science' reflects the impossibility of consistency in social media usage. It overrides those who see social media as a marketing communications tool (e.g. Divol et al., 2012; Edelman, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009) and develops an alternative view.

Small breweries display diverse and sometimes conflicting objectives, behaviours, expectations and attitudes towards the use of social media. Users of social media are adopting social media as part of a personal lifestyle and the notion of social media being a precise and manageable marketing communications tool is diminished. The mixture of scatter gun and personal preference approach reflects a lack of clarity, which is mirrored in contemporary literature around the concept of social media marketing. Social media cannot be viewed as a management science in the traditional sense. Rather, it is an organic means of communicating with the outside world.

### **8.5: Overall Findings from this Chapter**

Independent breweries have taken to social media in a big way, using it not just for marketing communications purposes, but a whole raft of other functions too. Their ability to engage in a flexible and natural way, much as an individual user might, gives them a potential edge over large corporations, as they can become an integral part of a community. However, from a business perspective this can be seen as something of a double-edged sword, for whilst they enjoy the benefits of a communal existence, they are engaging in an environment over which they have little control. Indeed, control as a concept is irrelevant in social media engagement, whoever the participant. The only control the brewery can exercise is whether or not to engage in the first place. Once there, they are open to the ups and downs of a natural environment.

As a result, the concept of belief comes to the fore. Breweries believe that there is a level of social media usage equating to 'Nirvana', a sort of perfect state, where social media defines existence and brings success. Whether or not this Nirvana exists in reality is a moot point, because the breweries are finding their own level of social media usage, based on their own personal notions, attitudes and opinions. These range from being internally focused in terms of self-gratification, and being externally focused in terms of

belonging to a community. Neither focus reflects careful business planning. Instead there is an intangible belief, or acceptance that social media involvement is not only desirable, but is a necessary part of what they do. The breweries are using their social media accounts in the same way that individuals do, taking them for granted and accepting them as part of their everyday lives. Whilst this fits with the user engagement model developed in Chapter 2, it does not provide a blueprint for how businesses might engage with social media. In developing the user engagement model, the researcher was attempting to categorise social media users in such a way that businesses might engage with them more effectively as customers. In the end the model has ended up categorising the breweries themselves.

The only exception to the natural, organic approach to engaging with social media, is seen in the use of online analytic metrics tools. Usage of social media in this way does not fit with the user engagement model, and diminishes, or even negates the role of the brewery as an equal member of the social media community. With this exception however, analysis of the data suggests that independent breweries are engaging with social media in a natural and organic way. Even when using the mechanical analytics tools, a large element of personal belief in what was the right platform to use, with clear contrasts between different breweries' approaches can be observed.

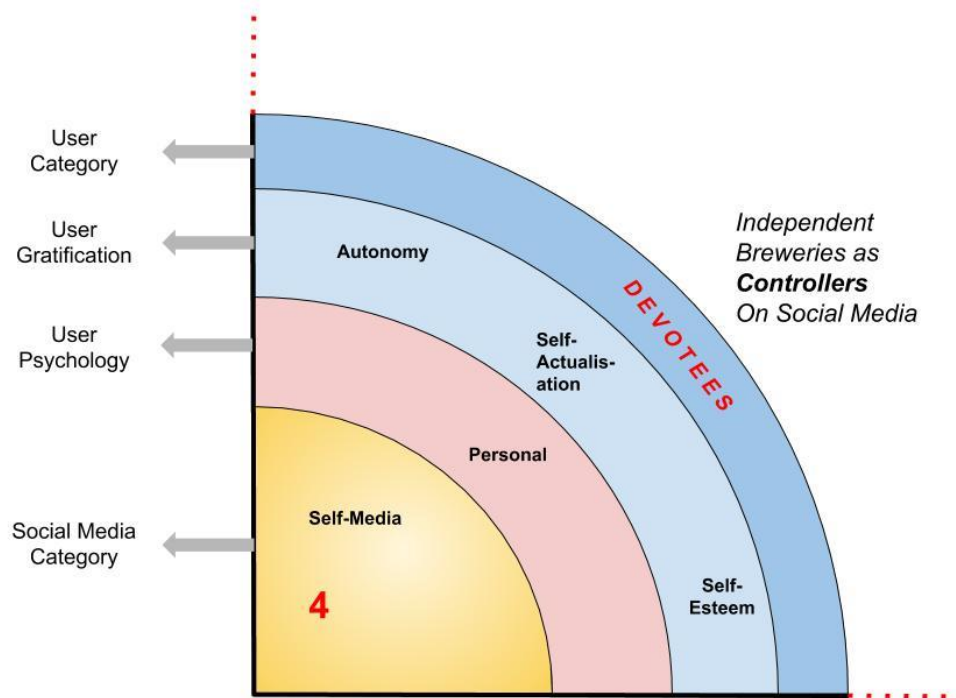
As a result it is purported that brewery engagement on social media is an inexact science, reflecting an impossibility of consistency with so many different users, each with different attitudes and expectations, performing different roles, on different platforms with different outcomes. In this scenario, treating social media marketing as a management science in the vein of marketing communications theory becomes problematic. Instead, social media is more than a management tool; it is ingrained into people, reflecting the lives of those using it and giving breweries an identity, and a way of being themselves as part of a community. Attempting to square this with hard business objectives creates a conflict, because unlike individual users, the breweries as

businesses do not have leisure time to spend surfing and posting content to social media sites. The people within the breweries who lend an authentic voice also have other roles and responsibilities associated with the business. Given the level of social media penetration into modern lifestyles, and the belief of independent breweries that it is something they need to be involved in, perhaps it is better to view its use by businesses as a Nirvana.

In terms of developing literature, arguments around who has control in social media (e.g. Felix et al., 2017; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Labreque et al., 2013) are taken in a different direction by these findings. It is argued here that control, as a concept, becomes irrelevant when breweries are engaging as equal members of a community. These findings run counter to existing studies such as Zhu and Chen (2015) which develop frameworks for a strategic approach to social media marketing. Indeed, a dichotomy is observed between using a 3DP to give an authentic voice, and trying to maintain a business focus. In this sense, the whole concept of social media *marketing* is potentially undermined. Literature which sees social media as another marketing communications tool (e.g.: Divol et al., 2012; Edelman, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009) is advanced by an alternative view that questions whether social media can be viewed as a management science in the conventional sense.

The concepts discussed in this chapter fit the fourth and final quartile of the conceptual user engagement model depicted in Quartile 4 (Figure 8.2). Of all the quartiles this one is closest to viewing social media engagement as a management strategy because it is inwardly focused around dimensions like autonomy, self-actualisation and self-esteem, as opposed to the relational, collaborative and outwardly creative natures of the other quartiles. Here the brewery focuses in on itself, and adopts the role of 'controller' on social media. However, by adopting this inward focus, the very nature of using a 'social' media is negated, and from a commercial perspective, if breweries wish to attract

followers they must revert in some form to the organic approaches discussed in the previous chapters.



**Figure 8.2:**  
**Application of Control issues - the brewery as a 'controller' on social media**  
(source: Author's own)



## Chapter 9

### Conclusions and Contribution to Knowledge and Practice

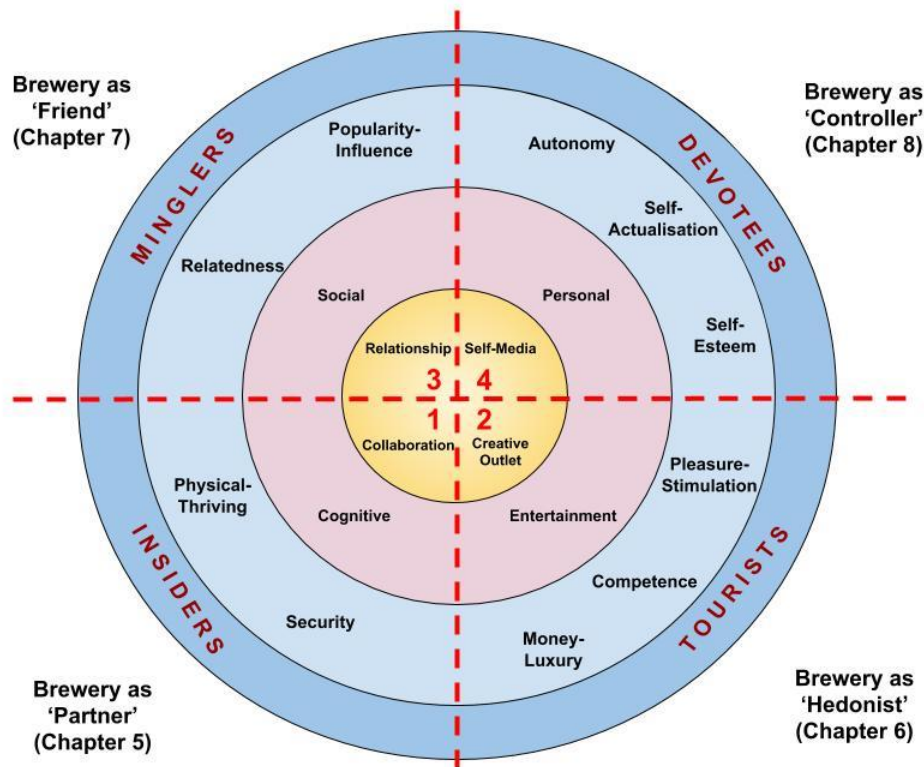
#### 9.1: Introduction

This research was begun in 2012 but since then some elements pertinent to the study have moved on or changed. Initially the intention was to focus on locally based, cask ale producing microbreweries, but it was quickly discovered that in the UK there is no hard and fast definition for a 'microbrewery', and that most UK breweries were developing wider portfolios of beer than cask ale anyway. As a result, the focus of the research was shifted to independent breweries fitting an SME definition. Additionally, the researcher realised that telephone interviews offered the opportunity to include breweries from across the UK, and so the geographical boundary of the research was expanded. At the same time, the use of social media by both businesses and individuals, has continued unabated, and new platforms have come along. Whilst Twitter and Facebook remain dominant, they are increasingly seen as belonging to an older generation of users (eMarketer, 2017). Throughout the whole process however, the researcher has stuck to his original objective – to discover what value, if any, smaller breweries are gaining by using social media. The purpose of this chapter is to bring the research full circle, returning to the original aims and objectives and considering how these have been met.

The chapter brings together the overall findings, considering these against the conceptual model developed in Chapter 2, and relating them back to the original aims and objectives of the research. In doing so, an original contribution to knowledge and practice is made. The chapter goes on to acknowledge the limitations of the study before concluding with a consideration of potential future research in this area.

## 9.2: Theoretical Contribution

The study was borne out of a genuine sense of curiosity on the part of the researcher around the role of social media in small breweries. A review of contemporary literature proved inconclusive, with some viewing social media as a new marketing communications tool (Mangold & Faulds, 2009) and others seeing it as representing a fundamental change in the marketing landscape (De Kare Silver, 2011). Against this background, the researcher set out to explore the nature of social media relationships around independent breweries, with the intention of revealing how these breweries might benefit from social media engagement. Whilst a broadly inductive research approach has been taken, a 'user engagement model' was developed in an attempt to combine various theories supporting social media engagement. These were exemplified by Zhu & Chen's (2015) social media typology; Larivière et al.'s (2013) application of gratification and utility theory; Dessart et al.'s (2015) application of categories of user psychology; and and Kozinet's (2015) user typology (Figure 2.6). Rather than using it deductively, the model's intention was to represent 'sensitising' concepts (Blumer, 1954) as a reference and guide to data collection and analysis. In this way the model led to the four broad themes of 'Sector'; 'Lifestyle'; Relationship; and 'Control', with each of these areas being developed further as conceptual quartiles of the original model, representing different potential roles on social media, respectively: partner; hedonist; friend; or controller (Figure 9.1).



**Figure 9.1: Research themes developed from the user engagement model  
(source: Author's own)**

The conceptual roles in Figure 9.1 are more than just labels to describe a particular type of user. They represent three-dimensional personalities displayed by breweries, giving them an existence within the online community which is seen and recognised by others. They are the essence of the '3DP' described in this thesis as the breweries' validity and currency on social media, and they represent an alternative way of viewing organisational engagement in this medium.

### 9.2.1: Nature of contribution

Interpretation of the research findings makes an original contribution in the following ways. First, when considering Tracy's (2010) three areas where research can have theoretical significance – heuristically; practically; and methodologically - the author's research is of practical significance because it helps shed light on a contemporary problem around the worth of social media as a business marketing tool, how it can add value for small businesses, and to what extent it empowers participants (in this case small independent breweries) to see things differently. Given that the research presented in this thesis is intended as a contribution to a Doctor in Business Administration degree, the need to apply analysis from a practical, as well as a theoretical perspective has thus been respected, and the implications for independent breweries are outlined in Section 9.4.2 (*be yourself; make time for social media; find your own level; be aware of the boundaries; recognise the value of a 3DP*).

Second, the research is prescient (Corley & Gioia, 2011) because the findings explore the impact of social media on generic lifestyles and the melding of roles between what is individual or personal, and what is related to work life, and this is an ongoing issue affecting our society in general. Furthermore, and following Corley and Gioia's (2011) criteria for contribution to knowledge, the contention that social media relationships can be mechanical or organic, expands the scope of the findings, by advancing a dichotomy between genuine personality and corporate engagement.

Finally, in arguing that the contribution is revelatory the author is guided by Nicholson et al. (2018), drawing upon a 'problematization' approach to social media marketing literature, by challenging its value as a conventional marketing tool and questioning the range and scope of the medium in the independent brewery industry. This again is borne out in the findings that these breweries can use social media either organically or

mechanically, but that the organic approach changes their role (and relationship) with various 'actors' in the social media engagement process.

### **9.2.2: How the research develops contemporary literature**

A number of advancements are proposed here. First, Vargo and Lusch's (2017) call for the development of more meso level theory around SDL is addressed, by considering the roles played by multiple actors in the co-creation of value, with social media representing a 'service eco-system' to support resource integration and co-creation. This brings SDL down to a granular level, by applying it to specific actors in a specific sector, and expanding its application into an omni-channel setting.

Second, the conceptual 'user engagement model' depicted in Figure 2.6 develops literature around social media categorisation (Zhu & Chen, 2015); user psychology (Dessart et al., 2015); the utility and gratification of users (Larivière et al., 2013); and user typologies (Kozinets, 2015), into a holistic world where the brewery can play different roles and engage in the same way that individual users do. Existing studies of social media communities (e.g.: Dessart et al., 2015; Närvänen et al., 2013; Stokburger-Sauer & Wiertz, 2015) view them as made up of consumers, but the findings here go beyond this by including the brewery itself in the community. Breweries engage in large, social media driven 'beer geek' communities, the nature of which is unique to the sector because it includes not just beer consumers, but also the brewers themselves. It represents the 'melting pot' of roles and lifestyles enabled by social media. Here, Hudson et al.'s (2016) notion of an anthropomorphic brand, to soften the corporate image online, is developed into a full three-dimensional personality (3DP) on the part of the brewery. Breweries using their employees to create a 3DP also extends Ramaswamy and Ozken's (2018) thinking around mobilising the capabilities of all actors engaging on social media.

Finally, the conceptual user engagement model is itself developed to depict the breweries as 'partners', 'hedonists', 'friends', or 'controllers' (Figure 9.1). This not only expands Kozinets', 2015 typology of user roles into a practical application for organisations, it also takes contemporary literature around who has the control in social media (e.g. Felix et al., 2017; Hennig-Thurau et al., 2010; Labreque et al., 2013) in a different direction. That is because the findings suggest that control as a concept becomes irrelevant when breweries are engaging as equal members of a community. These findings run counter to existing studies like Zhu and Chen (2015) which develop frameworks for a strategic approach to social media marketing. Instead, a dichotomy is observed between using a 3DP to give an authentic voice, and trying to maintain a business focus. In this sense, the whole concept of social media *marketing* is potentially undermined. Literature which sees social media as another marketing communications tool (e.g.: Divol et al., 2012; Edelman, 2010; Mangold & Faulds, 2009) is problematised by an alternative view that questions whether social media can be viewed as a management science in the conventional sense.

### **9.3: Practical Contribution**

The theoretical contribution described above increases knowledge of social media usage in and around the independent brewery sector, and this gives the research originality. The combination of a splintered distribution network; the existence of a large beer geek community; the strong camaraderie of brewers; and the social nature of the product itself, make the sector particularly suited to social media. The very dynamism of the sector fuels social media and the immediacy and inclusive nature of social media drives the sector. Independent breweries and social media feed off each other. Realisation that the research was tapping into a world that was much more holistic than a simple business driven consideration leads to the first of five broad findings from the research

data: the notion that independent breweries cannot be separated from the online communities with whom they engage.

### **9.3.1: First finding – being part of an inclusive community**

A key feature of social media is that it is inclusive, and non-hierarchical. Anyone can take part and on the surface there are few, if any rules of engagement. In the independent brewery sector, social media is dominated by a large beer geek community, the members of which, save for an interest in beer, are diverse in their user characteristics, needs and objectives. As users of social media, independent breweries and their employees cannot be separated from the online communities in which they engage, they become part of a wide community of beer geeks, with equal rights of engagement. Their involvement in a wider community based around the products they make, characterises the sector and makes it unusual if not unique. The wider community includes other breweries, intermediaries, consumers and generally interested parties, some of whom might never be in a position to actually buy the brewery's beer. In this sense the use of social media from a commercial perspective is diluted and any link between business objectives and social media usage becomes articulated, if not separated altogether. The nature of the independent brewery's social media engagement will depend on their weight or standing within the community. The old saying *'it takes one to know one'* is true here, and being beer geeks themselves, breweries can relate to others in the community. However, the role of beer geek is not the same as beer sales person, and any commercial intention can only be achieved in an indirect way, by for example raising the brewery's profile in the community. Traditional sales and marketing approaches will still be required to sell beer.

As members of the online beer geek community themselves, the breweries display the diverse characteristics, needs and objectives seen in other users. This supports SDL

theories around co-creation and the notion of operating within a different marketing landscape advanced in Chapter 2. However, it also means that the user engagement model (Figure 2.6), which was originally intended to guide breweries by getting a better understanding of customers' engagement with social media, ends up categorising the breweries themselves. Whilst they might be businesses, the underlying notion is that breweries are using social media in their own personal way, as an individual might. This leads to the second broad finding – that personal social capital is a universal currency on social media.

### **9.3.2: Second finding – personal social capital overrides traditional user classifications**

When trying to understand who might be better positioned to get the most out of social media, age related factors feature prominently in the research data, as underpinned by the 'digital immigrant/digital native' notion (Tuten & Solomon, 2013). Analysis here however, suggests that age is an irrelevant consideration on which to base the study. Use of social media is an extension of self, irrespective of one's age. The choice faced by individuals (and businesses) is not *whether* to engage with social media, it is about *how* to engage, and this decision is driven by personally held attitudes, values and opinions. At the same time, the supplier-consumer dynamic is overridden and replaced with identities and community roles. Traditional exchange based relationships, and the classic dyad between the organisation and its customer (Gummesson, 1999) becomes problematic on social media, as users are not only there on an equal status, the nature of their engagement is driven by their own personality. As in any social gathering, whether online or offline, people are there for their own reasons – to have fun; to meet others; to talk about things that interest them; to be themselves. Control is an irrelevant concept here and traditional relationships associated with a commercial context are overridden.



This observation not only negates the supplier-consumer dynamic, it blurs the distinction between traditional B2B and B2C relationships. Beer geeks engage in beer related social media activities in a natural way, irrespective of their roles outside the community. Beer based social media is a part of their lives and inside the social media community, individual social capital is more important than whether one is a buyer or a seller; an intermediary or a consumer. Without this social capital the user will carry little weight as a proactive social media engager. If independent breweries are to engage effectively on social media, they will need social capital, and this leads to the third finding – they possess a potential advantage here.

### **9.3.3: Third finding – individual personality gives independent breweries an edge**

Individual members of social media communities experience various benefits associated with utility theory (Larivière et al., 2013). For breweries these benefits can be classed as practical, emotional or relational, representing collaboration around the sector; a social release for employees; and an ability to engage as equals with the beer geek community in general. This gives them an edge over larger, national or international breweries that arguably lack the genuine personality of an individual. Independents have agility because of their small size, and can thus be spontaneous, quirky, innovative, entertaining or even controversial, in a way that large corporations cannot easily emulate. Social media supports the independent breweries' personality and uniqueness, and by engaging like an individual, the content posted by them can be seen as organic, not mechanical as in traditional marketing and direct selling approaches.

The ability to be organic relies on having an 'authentic voice' which other users can trust and relate to. Whereas traditional marketing communications, such as advertising or promotion, can project a brand personality, it is argued here that the authentic voice of independent breweries develops a 'three-dimensional personality' (3DP) which lifts it

above the flat imagery of a branded pump clip or bottle label. Small breweries are uniquely positioned to develop this 3DP as the people posting content are generally those who are much more closely associated with the business than an external PR agency. If social capital is the universal currency of social media, then 3DP is the brewery's wealth, buying it legitimacy, relevance and respect in a way that large national competitors will struggle to match. However, whilst this is a benefit for independent breweries it can create a tension between being a three-dimensional online personality and running a business, and this leads to the fourth finding.

#### **9.3.4: Fourth finding – tension between organic social media engagement and mechanistic business objectives**

It is argued here that projecting a 3DP gives the independent brewery social capital which it uses to effectively engage with social media based communities. As such, social capital becomes a resource, to be nurtured and valued. This does however create a dilemma for independent breweries, because developing the authentic voice needed to generate social capital requires the involvement of brewery based employees. As a result tensions arise, borne out of the need to create spontaneous, personality driven content and the commercial realities of brewing and selling beer. Paying someone to do the social media side of the brewery activity was anathema to some of those interviewed, and for the very small ones, it was expected that employees would do this in between their core activities. Whilst employees might enjoy running the brewery's social media, under-resourcing them to do the job puts them under pressure.

These tensions reflect a deeper rift between organic and mechanical approaches. Ultimately there are conflicts between engaging with social media as an individual and running a business. Individuals engage in social media in their leisure time, but breweries do not have leisure time in the same context. They must find time within

their business to engage in social media. A further clash can be seen between the use of mechanistic metrics and organic engagement. Segmenting, targeting and positioning social media followers for marketing purposes is at odds with being an equal member of the community. Breweries are therefore faced with a choice of using social media organically, through personality driven community engagement, or using it mechanically, for overt marketing purposes. It is possible to do both at the same time, as Harry in IB8 is doing, but this requires the use of different media platforms for each, with different mind-sets for each (in Harry's case he is using Facebook analytical tools, whilst his brewer engages with an authentic voice on Twitter). However, whilst a mechanical approach can be built into plans, and resourced accordingly, the organic approach appears to be on an ad-hoc basis, reliant on individuals within the brewery to find the time to develop the content. The mechanical approach uses social media for business purposes, whereas the organic approach uses social media for social purposes. It can be argued that the mechanical approach relies upon the organic, because it is the latter which builds up social capital and attracts followers to a brewery's social media sites in the first place. Without followers, there would be nothing to apply mechanical metrics to. This distinction leads to the fifth and final finding, that social media does not replace traditional marketing communication tools.

#### **9.3.5: Fifth finding - social media does not replace traditional marketing communications**

It is argued here that the independent brewery sector suits an organic approach to social media where they can project distinct personalities, network with other brewers, and engage with consumers and other interested stakeholders at a personal level. Being individually driven from within the brewery, social media becomes an extension of self, and something that is much more holistic and versatile than traditional marketing communications. Individually driven social media is not there simply to promote and

sell; it can be used for a multitude of day to day tasks, from searching and socialising, to spreading messages and just generally 'being out there'. Although a strong social media presence can indirectly meet marketing objectives, by for example raising the profile of the brewery, it overrides the distinction between seller and buyer because it involves everyone on an equal basis at the same level. What one makes of one's presence on social media is not the result of a role, or position in a market structure, it is about the ability to develop a three-dimensional personality, earning trust, liking and respect.

### **9.3.6: Direct contribution to practice**

The five broad findings described above are intended as a guide for independent breweries seeking to engage with social media as part of their business. Whilst these breweries can use elements of traditional marketing in social media, such as promotions or press-releases, it is unpredictable and uncontrollable. In the words of one of the respondents it is an 'inexact science', reflecting the impossibility of consistency, and the personal attitudes and values of the users themselves. In this way it becomes difficult to define, plan, objectify or strategize social media in the same way that traditional marketing communication tools can be. Attempting to do so would risk losing the authentic voice and advantage that small breweries have over their larger rivals. The problem of trying to manage something that is an inexact science is that a perceived 'Nirvana' develops, a never ending quest to find the perfect social media approach for the brewery. In practice, breweries using social media organically, find their own level, not as the result of careful planning, but from being oneself, behaving as an individual would, and using social media for one's own gratification, whatever that might be. For independent breweries therefore, the concept of 'social media marketing' as a social science, in the vein of traditional marketing theory, becomes problematic. There is still a need for traditional sales and marketing to sell beer, but social media can add another layer to the brewery's identity.

It is intended therefore that the contribution to practice is applied at a more granular level. Rather than suggesting a 'one size fits all' approach to the use of social media in independent breweries, the five broad findings can be used by individual breweries, based around their own circumstances. These circumstances go beyond simple demographics such as age, size or market served, they take into account the personality of the brewery itself, and the role the brewery seeks to play in the wider beer geek community. The practical implications for breweries are summarised in section 9.4.2 (*be yourself; make time for social media; find your own level; be aware of the boundaries; recognise the value of a 3DP*).

#### **9.4: Achieving the Research Aims**

Wisker (2007) reminds us that during the course of the research plans change, new avenues of interest emerge and our findings may not conform to the initial research proposal or expectations. She suggests that a study which only finds out what the researcher initially set out to find, with no risks, revelations, surprises or developments along the way, is in danger of being sterile and unimaginative. It was explained earlier how the initial scope of this study expanded as the nature of the object (small breweries and social media) became clearer. It must also be acknowledged that initial expectations around the subject of the research (social media as a potential marketing tool) also developed as findings emerged. What was expected to be a study of the brewery-consumer dynamic through social media, expanded to include a much wider range of stakeholder relationships, including roles, personalities and communities. Throughout this process however, the researcher has stuck to his original aim – to discover what value, if any, smaller breweries are gaining by using social media. To this end it is necessary to revisit the original objectives and research questions such that the thesis can be brought full circle. Mindful of the cascading nature of aims, objectives and

questions, designed to give structure to the research, it now makes sense to reverse the cascade, by addressing the questions first, followed by the research objectives and finally the overall research aim. In this way the circle will be closed and an original contribution is made.

#### **9.4.1: Addressing the research questions**

After consideration of the research's aims and objectives in Chapter 1, a number of specific research questions were set. Accepting that this is an interpretative study, the intention was not for these questions to be 'SMART', but rather to guide the research design and analysis process. These research questions were used to steer the data analysis chapters: 5; 6; 7; and 8; and are indirectly addressed in the overall research findings outlined in the previous section. However, to summarise, the following paragraphs outline how the three broad question areas have been answered in the findings of this thesis.

Questions associated with the first objective were designed to explore how and why independent breweries used social media, and to what extent this usage was informed by contemporary literature in this area. The findings reveal that the breweries tend to use social media not as businesses, but more in the way an individual might, based around their own beliefs, attitudes, needs and personalities. Social media is of our time and is part of a lifestyle, it lets us be ourselves, tells others about us and makes us feel like part of a family, and so it is for the breweries using it. Contemporary theory, which generally takes a consumer perspective, suggests that value is created among customers engaging in social media in a social or relational way. The findings of this research go further than this by suggesting that small breweries can co-create value with a wider set of actors in an organic way, reflecting their engagement as more of a lifestyle choice than a commercial business decision.

Those associated with the second objective were of a more granular nature, asking who the 'actors' in and around brewery associated social media are, and questioning the nature and value of the co-creation that takes place in this arena. The findings revealed the existence of a large 'beer geek' community, where traditional off-line roles such as buyer and seller were subsumed under a peer borne trust and respect, borne out of a genuine personality. Value is created by allowing all actors to be themselves, in order to fulfil whatever psychological or functional need they may have. On the part of the brewery this involves developing a 'three-dimensional personality' (3DP) from which to engage with the community. A raft of psychological and functional outcomes for different users leads to a distinction between organic and mechanistic views of social media as illustrated in the user engagement model depicted in Figure 2.6. From the brewery's perspective social media is an inexact science, being both unpredictable and difficult to control. Whilst social media analytical tools can be used to manage followers, those followers will need to be maintained through organically driven social inclusion.

Finally, those questions based around the third objective, were practice based, being concerned with the way in which the defining characteristics of the independent brewery sector lend themselves to social media engagement and how such engagement might benefit individual breweries in a competitive market. The findings show that the sector is particularly suited to social media for four reasons: the ability to share value across multiple stakeholders in the distribution chain; the ability to engender camaraderie and collaboration with other brewers; the ability to co-exist within a large beer geek community; and finally the ability to tap into, and exploit the social nature of the product itself (beer) via social media. They can do this by developing their own 3DP, being themselves and pursuing an organic approach which not only differentiates them from each other, but gives them an advantage in an area which large national and multi-national competitors cannot follow. The organic approach can indirectly help breweries' marketing objectives by raising awareness, but an overtly mechanistic approach is likely

to undermine any organic personality and inclusive community status. Commercial opportunities exist but in a loose and roundabout way – being relevant and of value within a larger community are more important to the breweries.

It was seen in the findings that the ubiquity of social media blurs the distinction between home life and work life, and as such employees become key resources in the establishment of online relationships. They have the ability to develop 3DP, and can thus be seen as a resource over and above their core role in the brewery. However, the blurring of home and work life brings risks of inappropriate behaviour or unprofessionalism, so trust is needed in whoever looks after the social media. This also brings along a resourcing problem, as those who can speak with a genuine voice do not always have the time to commit to social media engagement on a daily basis. Ultimately, attempting to square a lifestyle based medium with traditional sales and marketing is difficult. The two represent a split between organic and mechanistic. Both are required if social media is to be used effectively and one does not replace the other.

To sum up, the research questions reveal that independent breweries are adopting a natural, unstructured approach to social media, which enables them to be themselves and relate to their contemporaries, consumers and others in a wide beer-related environment. Unable to match the large marketing spends of national and multi-national brands, use of social media gives them an alternative means of establishing their presence and relevance in the sector. In short, use of social media does add value for independent breweries, but in an organic way which is different from traditional, mechanistic marketing communications.

#### **9.4.2: Meeting the research objectives**

The user engagement model developed in Chapter 2 (Figure 2.6) conceptualises various theories applied to social media usage. These theories relate to user types, user



gratification, user generated content and associated platform typologies. However, whilst the model was originally intended to help understand consumer engagement with brewery based social media, small breweries may be better served by using the model to understand themselves in a social media context. In this way they can engage with other users in a natural, unforced way. Using the model to assess brewery engagement underlines the point that on social media, all users are equal, and free to give or take in whatever way adds value for them. In this scenario, the concept of marketers and consumers is irrelevant. Not only is the user base much wider than this, the whole relationship dynamic is different, being one of mutual appreciation and acceptance.

The problem is that engaging in social media mechanistically negates the organic benefit outlined in the research questions above. An organic approach stems from individuals within, giving the brewery its own character and personality, and thus enabling them to co-create value with customers and the wider beer geek community. Such an approach perfectly suits the unique nature of the independent brewery sector outlined in Chapter 5 and this is evident in the brewery playing the role of 'partner' in social media relationships. It is reflected in the high levels of camaraderie and collaboration seen in this industry. Taking an organic approach allows breweries to create and nurture an identity, by involving employees and accepting social media as part of their lifestyle. This can be seen in Chapter 6, where the boundary between home lifestyle and work lifestyle become blurred, and by behaving as an individual might on social media, the brewery is playing the role of 'hedonist', being there for self-gratification rather than corporate intention. For the small breweries in particular, the engagement of employees gives their social media content an authentic voice and enables the development of a three-dimensional personality. These issues are explored in Chapter 7, and the role of the brewery now becomes one of 'friend' who engages in the community as an equal. The final potential role played by breweries on social media is that of 'controller', but it is argued in chapter 8 that this role is incompatible with taking

an organic approach because it negates the role of the brewery as an equal member of the social media community. The very use of *social* media for *business* purposes thus becomes an oxymoron (Fournier and Avery, 2011) and attempting to square the organic with the mechanistic becomes a 'Nirvana' which cannot be achieved.

It is clear that from the brewery perspective, there are opportunities and benefits to be had from engaging in social media, but what then are the practical implications of doing so? Just as the user engagement model highlights large variances underpinning social media engagement, so the data reflects diversity in attitudes and opinions, objectives and usage patterns, tensions and conflicts, and the belief in an as yet unattained ideal level, or 'Nirvana'. This reflects breweries' social media usage as part of an individual lifestyle rather than a business strategy. It leads to a number of implications for the independent brewery engaging in social media:

Be yourself. Social media is of the people and for the people. It thrives on individual characters and personalities, and the need for an 'authentic voice' from the brewery perspective is of paramount importance. The moment the content takes on a more corporate tone, the medium shifts from being social to being commercial, and the organic benefits of engagement are either lost or significantly diluted.

Make time for social media. Speaking with an authentic voice is not easy because it requires people within the brewery to do this. If this takes them away from their core job, conflict and tension arise. However, millions of people find time every day to engage with social media – it is part of their lifestyle, and if breweries are to engage as individuals, they must find a way of building it into their 'organisational' lifestyle.

Find your own level. Don't be fooled by the idyllic state of a social media Nirvana, and end up striving to achieve the unachievable. The idea of an idyllic state stems from the conflict of trying to force a social medium into a business strategy – ultimately the two

are incompatible. If breweries are to engage like individuals on social media they need to use it in their own way. Some individuals using social media will run their lives on it, whilst others dip in as and when it suits them. In this way users find a level that fits their lifestyle, and as long as they are engaging with, and engaged by, the people that matter to them then social media is working.

Be aware of the boundaries. Whilst breweries may behave like individuals when it comes to social media, they remain business entities that rely on the successful manufacture, distribution and sale of a product. It has been shown in this study that the use of social media is an inexact science and it cannot replace traditional business tools, particularly in sales and marketing. It is perhaps best seen as an addition, which can support the brewery by giving it presence, relevance and validity within the beer community.

Recognise the value of social capital and a three-dimensional personality (3DP). Whilst the independent brewery can use traditional branding to create an identity at the point of purchase, development of a 3DP behind the brand can be achieved through social media. The brewery's 3DP gives it the social capital which is needed for fruitful social media engagement, and employees who can speak with an authentic voice can help to develop this. The possession of a 3DP not only gives the brewery a presence among consumers, it also feeds into the strong networking and camaraderie seen in the brewing industry.

Large national and international competitors, who rely on high marketing spend and external agencies to deliver their marketing messages, will struggle to match the authentic voice generated by the independents and this enables the smaller breweries to carve out a niche for themselves based on personality and community inclusion. Not only does the use of social media enable independents to compete against larger rivals,

it also allows them to differentiate from each other and at the same time work together in collaborations. Furthermore, social media engagement allows them to develop relationships in the distribution channels, with mutually beneficial arrangements between the breweries and bottle shops and pubs that sell their beer. In short, use of social media can give independent breweries a competitive advantage over larger competitors. The use of social media therefore carries significant implications for independent breweries, if used in an organic way. Not only does it present them with a niche from which to compete with larger rivals, it also differentiates them, supports collaboration and allows them to be a part of a large beer geek community. Above all it gives them identity and relevance in a crowded market place. With these observations the circle undertaken by this research begins to close and the overall research aim, which began this study has been achieved.

#### **9.4.3: Achieving the research aim**

This study's overall research aim is to develop a better understanding of how social media is shaping relationships between businesses and their customers, and determining the value (if any) of its use in the UK independent brewery sector. This aim was borne out of a simple question posed by the researcher when looking at a beer mat in a pub inviting consumers to *"Follow us on Twitter"*. His natural reaction was *"why?"*. The ensuing research came at this question from a brewery perspective – why would that brewery, represented on that beer mat expect or desire anyone to follow them on social media? The answer to this question presents an understanding of how social media relationships work. From a business perspective, relationships can be mechanistic or organic, depending on whether social media is used for overt marketing purposes; or if used to engage as part of an online community. The organic approach is particularly suitable for the independent brewery sector because it taps into a distinct

'beer geek' community and enables breweries to differentiate themselves and steal a march on larger breweries that rely on their financial marketing muscle to gain exposure.

In short, independent breweries engaging on social media are doing so as part of an inclusive community, giving them presence, relevance and identity. In place of large marketing budgets they are using personal social capital, and overriding the traditional market delineations of supplier, consumer, employee, middleman, producer and competitor - they are there as one of the community. In business terms the individual personality afforded by social media gives them an edge over large national and multi-national breweries. The independents remain small, but social media gives them the ability to exist and thrive at a specialist level alongside the multinationals. Using social media organically taps into the very core of what the medium was originally intended for and mirrors personal lifestyles. These lifestyle influences are seen in Figure 9.1, where three-dimensional personalities associated with partners, hedonists, friends and controllers, describe the various roles of users, including the breweries themselves. Independent breweries are good at using social media in a personal way, but it does create tensions in terms of control, ownership and resourcing and for this reason it cannot be claimed that social media has replaced traditional marketing in this sector.

#### **9.4.4: Contemporary dimensions of this research**

As this chapter was being completed news broke that pub chain company J.D. Wetherspoon was pulling out of social media and closing all of its Twitter, Facebook and Instagram accounts. Company Chairman, Tim Martin claimed that people spend too much time on social media and using it kept his pub managers from undertaking their proper jobs (BBC News, 2018). The story opened up a debate on how much value social media actually has for businesses, and is timely because it underlines the topicality of this research. The interpretative study undertaken here suggests that it does have value

for small independent breweries because it gives them relevance, presence and identity. It differentiates them from each other and enables them to take part in a wide beer geek community, on which they rely for their existence. It is contended here that these benefits are potentially unique to this sector. Use of social media in this way would not work for large national and multi-national breweries because it is impossible for them to develop a genuine, three-dimensional personality. Instead they use social media commercially to promote themselves and their products – which is what Wetherspoon has been doing. In deciding to drop social media, Wetherspoon no longer believes that the promotion afforded by social media is worth it and intends to concentrate instead on its traditional marketing media - website and printed material.

Wetherspoon's decision feeds into the key finding of this research. Businesses can use social media in two ways, either as a marketing tool for promotion purposes, or as a social tool for communal purposes. These approaches have been described here as mechanical and organic. Larger companies will tend to use the mechanical approach because they struggle to find the authentic voice needed for the organic approach. Smaller companies can use either approach, but the organic method works particularly well with independent breweries because of the unique characteristics of their sector. A further distinction can be made between service based businesses, like pubs, and product manufacturers, like breweries. The service business is more suited to mechanical social media usage as it has lots to tell people (pub quiz nights, new menus, big screen football matches, special deals, etc.). Whilst the brewery will also have news to tell, this is unlikely to be on a daily basis and so they revert to general chatty and informal content, which characterises the organic approach.

The separation of social media engagement into mechanical and organic approaches mirrors Gummesson's (1999) distinction between 'pseudo' and 'genuine' membership schemes. Pseudo membership is something which customers only sign up for in order to get a reward (e.g. a supermarket loyalty card scheme). Genuine membership schemes

are those where the customer goes out of his or her way to join because they want to get close to, or be associated with a brand (e.g. the Harley Davidson Owners Group). Applying Gummesson's distinction to social media, it could be that from a business perspective there exist pseudo and genuine levels of engagement. Genuine, organic social media engagement falls in the camp of relationship marketing, with its attendant features of co-creation and service-dominant logic, and it is in this area that independent breweries can thrive.

### **9.5: Limitations of the Research and Potential for Further Study**

Care has been taken to maintain rigour, but there are limitations to this study which must be acknowledged. Being a novice researcher, the author struggled with a number of areas, not least the use of Nvivo for data analysis purposes. At the same time a number of unexpected avenues were revealed and not all of these could be pursued in this study. These areas are thus suggested as potential future study directions.

#### **9.5.1: Limitations of the research and their implications**

Whilst the selection of statistically significant samples is not a requirement in qualitative research (Bradley, 2012), use of multiple cases gives a broader base, and helps improve the reliability of the research through replication (Eisenhardt, 1989). As such the breweries interviewed here should be representative of their sector, as intended in the research objectives. An important consideration was that they should be beer focused and not pub, or venue focused, which would make them more like service based businesses. Some difficulty was encountered securing interviews and as a result an element of convenience sampling was relied upon. This led to the inclusion of several breweries who operated large service elements within their businesses and which were

also served by their social media. In these cases care was taken to concentrate the interviews on the beer side of social media engagement, but complete separation was not always possible. In some ways this reinforced the findings that beer based social media thrives on an organic approach (for example one respondent relied on his brewer to run the organic social media, whilst he concentrated on the mechanical approach, mainly supporting his pubs). Nevertheless a future study in this area could focus on brewery only businesses.

In analysing the data more use could be made of Nvivo. As previously stated, the researcher struggled to fully master Nvivo, and thus relied on a belt and braces approach using manual coding alongside Nvivo. In this study, Nvivo was predominantly used for the data coding and retrieval process, and the search engine, query and modelling functions offered by the software were not used. As such it is possible that a greater depth of data analysis could have been achieved and, time permitting, it would be useful to use some of these analytical tools to see if the same conclusions could be drawn. The researcher is confident that the data analysis procedure used here is robust, so in this case greater use of Nvivo analytical tools would be to support the findings, not to develop new ones. Whilst Nvivo can make our lives easier, Bryman (2014) reminds us that traditional methods of qualitative data analysis are still very much a valid approach.

A final limitation leads onto an opportunity for further research, in that it was originally intended that the subject would be approached from two directions. First, a study of the breweries' perspective of social media engagement, using depth interviews. Second, a 'netnographic' (Kozinets, 2015) study of user behaviour to gain a consumer perspective of brewery based social media. Time restraints precluded the netnographic part of the study and as a result only the perspective of the breweries has been taken into account. This still yields a lot of useful data, from which findings have been drawn, but a study of the wider user perspective may be useful to triangulate these findings. Notwithstanding



the fact that netnography is a relatively new, and topical research method, such a study would enable the findings of this research to be taken further.

### **9.5.2: Opportunities for further research**

Contrary to the initial expectations of the researcher, social media engagement by independent breweries involves a much wider set of stakeholders than just breweries and beer consumers. Social media relationships were observed between the breweries themselves, including their larger rivals; between the brewery and its employees; between the employees of different breweries, between members of the entire B2B distribution chain; between large national and even international beer geek communities; and between consumers themselves. Given that social media was originally developed for social purposes, its use in any of the areas above could form the base of further study, either in the independent brewery sector, or in other sectors.

The question of transferability of the study's findings to other sectors is also a potential base of future research. It is repeatedly suggested here that the independent brewery sector is unique in terms of a combination of characteristics, which simultaneously feed off and fuel the use of social media. Whilst it is unlikely that another sector would possess exactly the same characteristics as the independent brewing sector, the findings of this study may be applicable depending on their own peculiar circumstances.

Ultimately this study has concluded that businesses are faced with two types of social media engagement – organic and mechanistic. It is argued that smaller businesses can use either, but that for independent breweries an organic approach can bring benefits relevant to their business. Following Wetherspoon's much publicised announcement, questions of social media effectiveness for businesses have arisen. Now is perhaps a

good time to look into this from the perspective of 'pseudo' versus 'genuine' social media engagement.

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## Appendix 1:

### UK Breweries Social Media Engagers (2016)

	Brewery	Location	Web-site?	Social Media
1	Abbey Ales	Bath	Yes	None
2	Abbey Ford Brewery	Chertsey	Yes	None
3	Abbeylea Brewery	Sheffield	Yes	F; T; Untappd; Blog
4	Acorn Brewery	Barnsley	Yes	T; F
5	Acton Ales	Ashington	No	T
6	Ad Hop Brewing	Liverpool	No	F; T
7	Adkins Brewery	Wantage	Yes	None
8	Adnams PLC	Southwold	Yes	F; T; YT; Pin; G+; Ins;
9	Adur Brewery	Steyning	Yes	T
10	Ainsty Ales	York	U/C	F;T
11	Alcazar Brewery	Notts	Yes	Brewpub
12	Alchemy Brewing	Livingston	No	None
13	Alfred's Brewery	Winchester	Yes	T; F
14	All Hallows Brewery	York	Yes	Brewpub
15	Allendale Brew Co Ltd	Hexham	Yes	F; T
16	Allgates Brewery	Wigan	Yes	Ins; T; F
17	Almasty Brewing Co Ltd	Newcastle	U/C	F; T
18	Almasty Brewing Co Ltd	Newcastle	U/C	F; T
19	The Apha Project	Edinburgh	Yes	Brewpub
20	Alphabet Brewing Ltd	Manchester	Yes	T
21	Amber Ales Ltd	Ripley	Yes	F; T
22	Ambridge Brewery Ltd	Worcester	Yes	None
23	Anarchy Brew Co	Morpeth	Yes	T; F; Ins
24	Anchor Springs Brewery	Littlehampton	Yes	Brewpub
25	Andrews Ales	Anna	Yes	F
26	Andwell Brewing Company	Hook	Yes	T; F
27	Angel Ales	Halesowen	Yes	None
28	Anspach & Hobday	London	Yes	F; T
29	Appleby Brewery	Penrith	Yes	F; T
30	Appleford Brewery	Abingdon	Yes	None
31	Arbor Ales	Bristol	Yes	F; T
32	Arkells Brewery	Swindon	Yes	T; F
33	Arran Brewery	Isle of Arran	Yes	R; F; T; Tum; P
34	Arundel Brewery	Ford	Yes	T
35	Ascot Ales	Camberley	Yes	F; T; G+
36	Ashelayhay Brewery	Wirksworth	No	F
37	Ashover Brewery	Chesterfield	Yes	F' T; YT
38	Atlantic Brewery	Newquay	Yes	None
39	Atom Brewing Co Ltd	Hull	No	F

40	Attwood Ales	Kidderminster	Yes	T
41	Axholme Brewing Compnay	Scunthorpe	Yes	F; T
42	The Axiom Brewing Co	Wrexham	Yes	F; T; Blog
43	The Aylesbury Brewhouse	Aylesbury	Yes	Brewpub
44	Ayr Brewing Company	Ayr	Yes	F;T
45	B & T Brewery	Shefford	Yes	None
46	Bacchus Brewing	Sutton-On-Sea	Yes	Brewpub
47	The Backyard Brewhouse	Walsall	Yes	F; T
48	Bad Co Brewing & Distilling	Thirsk	Yes	T; F; YT; G+; Ins; Unt
49	Bad Seed Brewery	Malton	Yes	F; T
50	Baildon Brewing Compnay	Shipley	Yes	None
51	Baker's Dozen Brewing Co	Stamford	Yes	T; F
52	Ballards Brewery	Petersfield	Yes	F; YT; T; Newsfeeds
53	Bank Top Brewery	Bolton	Yes	T; F; Blog
54	Barearts Brewery	Todmorden	Yes	F
55	Barkston Brewery	Tadcaster	Yes	None
56	Barlick Brewery	Colne	Yes	None
57	Barlow Brewery	Dronfield	Yes	F; T
58	Barnet Brewery	Barnet	Yes	Brewpub
59	Barney's Beer	Edinburgh	Yes	F; T; Blog
60	Bargates Brewery	Ambleside	Yes	T; F
61	Barrell & Sellers	Harleston	Yes	T
62	Bartlebury's Brewery	Brighton	Yes	T
63	Bartrams Brewery	Bury St Edmunds	Yes	F; T
64	Barum Brewery	Barnstaple	Yes	None
65	Baseline Brewing	Henfield	Yes	F; T
66	George Bateman & Son	Skegness	Yes	F; T; YT
67	Bath Ales	Bristol	Yes	T; F; Ins; YT; Blog
68	Daniel Batham & Son	Brierley Hill	Yes	Brewpub
69	Battledown Brewery	Cheltenham	Yes	F; T
70	Battlefield Brewery	Shrewsbury	Yes	F;T
71	Bays Brewery	Paignton	Yes	F; T
72	Bear Hug Brewing	London	No	T
73	Beartown Brewery	Congleton	Yes	F; T
74	Beavertown Brewery	London	Yes	T; F; Ins; V
75	Beckstones Brewery	Millom	Yes	None
76	Bedlam Brewery	Hassocks	Yes	T; F; Ins
77	Beer Brothers	Preston	Yes	F
78	Beer Me Brewery	Eastbourne	Yes	G+; T; F
79	Beer Nouveau	Manchester	Yes	T; Blog
80	The Beer Refinery	Chester	No	F; T
81	The Beer Refinery	Chester	No	F; T
82	Beeston Brewery	Kings Lynn	Yes	None
83	Beeston Hop	Beeston	Yes	F; T
84	Belhaven Brewing Co	Dunbar	Yes	None
85	Belleville Brewing Co	London	Yes	T

86	Bellingers Brewery	Wantage	Yes	None
87	Belvoir Brewery	Melton Mowbray	Yes	F; T
88	The Bespoke Brewing Co	Mitcheldean	Yes	F; T; P
89	Betteridge's Brewing Co	Andover	Yes	T; F
90	Bewdley Brewery	Bewdley	Yes	F; T
91	Bexar County Brewery	Peterborough	Yes	T
92	Big Bog Brewing Co	Caernarfon	Yes	T
93	The Big Clock Brewery	Accrington	Yes	Brewpub
94	Big Hand Brewing Co	Wrexham	No	F
95	Big Lamp Brewers	Newcastle upon Tyne	Yes	Brewpub
96	Big Rabbit Brewery	Collumpton	No	T
97	Big Shed Brewery	Shrewsbury	Yes	None
98	Big Smoke Brew Co	Surbiton	Yes	Brewpub
99	Biggar Brewing Co-op	Barrow-in-Furness	Yes	T; F; G+
100	Billericay Brewing Co	Billericay	Yes	F; T
101	Binghams Brewery	Reading	Yes	F; T
102	Birds Brewery	Bromsgrove	Yes	F; T
103	Bishop Nick	Braintree	Yes	T; F; P
104	Bishop's Crook Brewery	Preston	Yes	None
105	Bishops Stortford Brewery	Much Hadham	No	F
106	Black Cat Brewery	Uckfield	Yes	T
107	Black Country Ales	Dudley	Yes	F
108	Black Flag Brewery	Truro	Yes	F; T
109	Black Hole Brewery	Burton upon Trent	Yes	None
110	Black Horse Brewing	Louth	Yes	F; T; Blog
111	Black Iris Brewery	Nottingham	No	F; T
112	Black Isle Brewing Co	Munlochy	Yes	T; F; G+; YT; Blog
113	Black Lodge Brewing	Liverpool	Yes	Brewpub
114	Black Metal Brewery	Loanhead	Yes	F; T
115	Black Paw Brewery	Bishop Auckland	Yes	F; T; YT
116	Black Rock Brewing	Falmouth	Yes	F; T
117	Black Sheep Brewery	Masham	Yes	T; F; P; Blog
118	Black Tap Brewing Co	Stafford	Yes	Brewpub
119	Black Tor Brewery	Exeter	No	F; T
120	Black Bar Brewery	Cambridge	Yes	T; F
121	Blackbeck Brewery	Egremont	Yes	None
122	Blackedge Brewing Co	Bolton	Yes	T; F; Blog
123	Blackhill Brewery	Stanley	Yes	F; T
124	Blakemere Brewery	Nothwich	Yes	None
125	Blindmans Brewery	Frome	Yes	None
126	Blue Bee Brewery	Sheffield	No	T
127	Blue Monkey Brewing	Nottingham	Yes	F; T; G+
128	Bluestone Brewery	Rochdale	Yes	F; T
129	Bluestone Brewing Co	Newport	Yes	F; T
130	Boggart Hole Clough Brewing C	Manchester	Yes	None
131	Bollington Brewing Co	Macclesfield	Yes	F

132	Boot Beer Brewery	Derby	Yes	Brewpub
133	Borough Brewery	Lancaster	Yes	Brewpub
134	Boss Brewing Co	Swansea	Yes	F; T; G+; Ins
135	Bosun's Brewing Co	Wakefield	Yes	F; T
136	Boundary Brewing Co-op	Belfast	Yes	F; T
137	Bournemouth Brewing Co	Poole	Yes	F
138	Bowland Beer Co	Clitheroe	Yes	F; T
139	Bowman Ales Ltd	Southampton	Yes	F; Ins; T
140	Bowness Bay Brewery	Windermere	Yes	T; F
141	Box Steam Brewery	Trowbridge	Yes	T
142	Bradfield Brewery	Sheffield	Yes	F; T
143	Bradford Brewery	Bradford	Yes	F; T
144	Bragdy Twt Lol	Pontypridd	Yes	F; T
145	SA Brain & Co	Cardiff	Yes	T; F
146	Brakspear Bell Brewery	Henley on Thames	Yes	None
147	Brampton Brewery	Chesterfield	Yes	F; T; G+
148	Brass Castle Brewery	Malton	Yes	T; F
149	Braunton Brewery	Barnstaple	Yes	T; F
150	Brecon Brewing	Brecon	Yes	F; T; G+
151	Brentwood Brewing Co	Brentwood	Yes	T; F; Blog
152	Brew Buddies	Swanley	Yes	F; T; Unt
153	Brew By Numbers	London	Yes	F; T; Blog
154	The Brewshack Microbrewery	Wimborne	No	F
155	Brewdog Ltd	Ellon	Yes	F; T; Ins; V; YT
156	The Brewery at Dorking	Dorking	Yes	T; Unt
157	The Brewery Tap Brewhouse	Leeds	Yes	Brewpub
158	Brewhouse & Kitchen	Various	Yes	Brewpub
159	Brewmeister	Keith	Yes	F; T; Blog
160	Brewshed Brewery	Bury St Edmunds	Yes	Brewpub
161	Brewshine Brewery	Kendal	Yes	F
162	Brewsmith Beer Limited	Bury	Yes	T; Blog
163	Brewsters Brewing Company	Grantham	Yes	Blog
164	The Briarbank Brewing Co	Ipswich	Yes	Brewpub
165	Brick Brewery	London	Yes	T
166	Bricknell Brewery	Kingston Upon Hull	Yes	T
167	The Bridestones Brewing Co Ltd	Hebden Bridge	Yes	None
168	The Bridge Brewery	Holmbridge	Yes	Brewpub
169	Briggs Signature Ales	Huddersfield	Yes	F
170	Brighton Bier Brewery	Brighton	Yes	F; T; G+
171	Brightside Brewing Compnay	Manchester	Yes	T
172	Brigstock Brewhouse	Kettering	Yes	T
173	Brimstage Brewing Co	Wirral	Yes	T
174	Brinkburn St Brewery	Newcastle upon Tyne	Yes	F; T;
175	Bristol Beer Factory	Bristol	Yes	F; T; Ins; P
176	Brixton Brewery Ltd	London	Yes	F; Ins; T
177	Brockley Brewing Co	London	No	Tum; F



178	Brodies Beers	London	Yes	Brewpub
179	Broughton Ales	Biggar	Yes	F; T; Ins
180	Brown Cow Brewery	Selby	Yes	None
181	Broxbourne Brewery	Hoddesdon	Yes	F; T; Ins; YT; V; Blog
182	Bryncelyn Brewery	Swansea	Yes	None
183	Bucks Star	Milton Keynes	No	F; T
184	Bude Brewery	Bude	No	F; T
185	Bullfinch Brewery	London	No	Brewpub
186	Bullhouse Brewing Co	Newtownards	Yes	F; T; Ins; LI
187	Bumpmill Brewery	Alfreton	No	F
188	Buntingford Brewery	Royston	Yes	F; T
189	Burning Sky Brewery	Lewes	Yes	T
190	The Burscough Brewing Co	Ormskirk	Yes	T
191	Burton Bridge Brewery	Burton Upon Trent	Yes	T
192	The Burton Old Cottage Beer Co	Burton upon Trent	Yes	Blog
193	Burton Town Brewery	Burton upon Trent	No	F; T
194	Bushy's Brewery	Douglas	Yes	T
195	Butcombe Brewery	Bristol	Yes	T; F
196	Bute Brew Co	Isle of Bute	Yes	Blog; F
197	Butts Brewery	Hungerford	Yes	None
198	Buxton Brewery Co	Buxton	Yes	F
199	By The Horns Brewing Co	London	Yes	T
200	Byatts Brewery Ltd	Coventry	Yes	F; T; RSS
201	Cader Ales	Dolgellau	Yes	Blog
202	Caffle Brewery	Narberth	Yes	Unt; F; T
203	Cairngorm Brewery Co	Aviemore	Yes	F; T
204	Caledonian Brewing (Heineken)	Edinburgh	Yes	T; F; Ins
205	Calverley's Brewery	Cambridge	Yes	T; F; Ins
206	Calvors Brewery	Ipswich	Yes	F; T
207	The Cambridge Brewhouse	Cambridge	Yes	Brewpub
208	Cambridge Moonshine Brewery	Cambridge	Yes	T; F; Ins
209	Camden Town Brewery	London	Yes	F; Ins; T; V
210	Camerons Brewery	Hartlepool	Yes	F; T; RSS
211	Cannon Royall Brewery Ltd	Droitwich	Yes	None
212	Canopy Beer Compnay	London	Yes	T; Ins
213	The Canterbury Ales	Canterbury	Yes	None
214	Cap House Brewery	Batley	Yes	T
215	Carbon Smith Brewing Co	Edinburgh	Yes	T; F; G+
216	Carlisle Brewing Co	Cummersdale	Yes	Brewpub
217	Castle Rock Brewery	Nottingham	Yes	F; T
218	Castle Gate Brewery	Camarthen	No	F
219	Castles Brewery	Caldicot	Yes	F; T; Blog
220	Castor Ales	Peterborough	Yes	F
221	Cathedral Heights Brewery	Lincoln	Yes	None
222	Cats Brewing	Banbury	No	F; T
223	Caveman Brewing Co	Swanscombe	Yes	T; Ins; F

224	Caythorpe Brewery	Caythorpe	Yes	None
225	The Celt Experience	Caerphilly	No	F; T
226	Cerddin Brewery	Maesteg	Yes	Brewpub
227	Cerne Abbas Brewery	Bridport	Yes	F
228	Chadlington Brewery	Chipping Norton	Yes	T; Ins
229	Chadwick's Brewery	Kendal	Yes	None
230	Chantry Brewery	Rotherham	Yes	F; T
231	Charnwood Brewery	Loughborough	Yes	F; T; Ins
232	Cheddar Ales	Cheddar	Yes	F;T
233	Cheshire Brew Brothers	Chester	Yes	T
234	Cheshire Brew House	Congleton	Yes	T; F; Unt
235	Chew Valley Brewery	Bristol	Yes	T; F; G+
236	The Chiltern Brewery	Aylesbury	Yes	T
237	Chorlton Brewing Co	Manchester	Yes	F; T
238	Church End Brewery	Nuneaton	Yes	F; T; RSS
239	Church Farm Brewery	Warwick	Yes	F; T
240	Clanconnel Brewing Co	Craigavon	Yes	None
241	HB Clark & Co	Wakefield	Yes	None
242	Clarkshaws Brewing	London	Yes	F; T; LI
243	Clearsky Brewing Co	Dungannon	Yes	F; T
244	Clearwater Brewery Co	Torrington	Yes	F; T; Blog
245	Cliff Quay Brewing	Stowmarket	Yes	T; Blog
246	Clockwork Beer Co	Glasgow	Yes	Brewpub
247	Clouded Minds	Banbury	Yes	Unt
248	Cloudwater Brew Co	Manchester	Yes	Blog; T; F; Ins
249	The Coach House Brewing Co	Warrington	Yes	T
250	Coastal Brewery	Redruth	Yes	F; T
251	Colchester Brewery	Colchester	Yes	F; T
252	Collingham Ales	Wetherby	Yes	F; T
253	Colonsay Brewing Co	Isle of Colonsay	Yes	F; Ins; T; P
254	Compass Brewery	Carterton	Yes	T; F; G+; P
255	Concrete Cow Brewery	Milton Keynes	Yes	F; T; Flickr
256	The Coniston Brewing Co	Coniston	Yes	F; T
257	Consett Ale Works	Consett	Yes	None
258	Conwy Brewery	Colwyn Bay	Yes	F; T
259	Copper Dragon Brewery	Skipton	Yes	F; T; G+
260	The Copper Kettle Craft Brewery	Rushden	Yes	F; T
261	Corfe Castle Brewery	Wareham	Yes	T
262	Corinium Ales	Cirencester	Yes	F
263	Cornish Chough Brewery	Helston	Yes	None
264	Cornish Crown Brewery	Penzance	Yes	F; T
265	Cotleigh Brewery	Taunton	Yes	T; F
266	Cotswold Brewing Co	Bourton-on-the-Water	Yes	F; T; Ins; P
267	Cotswold Lion Brewery	Cheltenham	Yes	F
268	Cotswold Spring Brewery	Bristol	Yes	F; T; G+; RSS

269	The Cottage Brewing Co	Castle Cary	Yes	None
270	Cotton End Brewery	Northampton	No	Brewpub
271	Country Life Brewery	Bideford	Yes	T; F
272	Crackle Rock Brewing Co	Southampton	Yes	None
273	Craddock's Brewery	Stourbridge	Yes	None
274	Crafty Beers	Cambridge	Yes	Brewpub
275	The Crafty Brewing Co	Dunsford	No	F
276	Crafty Devil Brewing Co	Cardiff	Yes	F; T
277	The Cranky Cobbler Brewery	Northampton	No	F
278	Crate Brewery	London	Yes	Brewpub
279	Credence Brewing	Morpeth	Yes	F; T
280	Cromarty Brewing Co	Cromarty	Yes	T; F; Blog
281	The Cronx Brewery	Croydon	Yes	T; F; G+; LI
282	Crooked Brook Beer Co	Crawley	Yes	F
283	Cross Bay Brewery	Morecambe	Yes	F; T
284	Crossed Anchors Brewing Co	Exmouth	Yes	Blog; F; T; LI
285	Crouch Vale Brewery	Chelmsford	Yes	F; T
286	Cryptic Ales	Stockport	Yes	F; T
287	Crystalbrew	Brough	No	T
288	Cullercoats Brewery	Wallsend	Yes	T; F
289	Cumberland Breweries	Carlisle	Yes	None
290	Cumbrian Legendary Ales	Ambleside	Yes	T
291	Cwm Rhonda Ales	Treorchy	Yes	Blog; F; T; Unt
292	Cwrw Iâl Brewing Co	Mold	No	F; T
293	Daleside Brewery	Harrogate	Yes	F; T
294	Dancing Duck Beer	Derby	Yes	T; F
295	Dancing Man Brewery	Southampton	Yes	Brewpub
296	Dark Star Brewery	Horsham	Yes	T; F; RSS; Ins
297	Dartmoor Brewery	Princetown	Yes	F; T (F for one brand!)
298	Darwin Brewery	Sunderland	Yes	F; T
299	Davenport's Brewery	Walsall	Yes	F; T
300	Dawkins Ales	Bath	Yes	T; F
310	De Brus Brewery	Dunfermline	Yes	Brewpub
302	Deeply Vale Brewery	Bury	Yes	F; T
303	Deeside Brewery	Banchory	Yes	F; T
304	Demonbrew	Edinburgh	Yes	F; T; Ins
305	Dent Brewery	Seburgh	Yes	T; F
306	Derby Brewing Co	Derby	Yes	T; F; ins
307	Derventio Brewery	Derby	Yes	T; F
308	Derwent Brewery	Wigton	No	T
309	Deva Craft Beer	Sandycroft	Yes	F; T; G+
310	Devon Ales	Alloa	Yes	Brewpub
311	Dickensian Brewery	Telford	Yes	T
312	Digfield Ales	Peterborough	Yes	None
313	The Dog and Rabbit Brewery	Newcastle upon Tyne	Yes	F; T

314	Dominion Brewery Co	Ongar	Yes	F; T
315	Doncaster Brewery	Doncaster	Yes	Brewpub
316	Donnington Brewery	Cheltenham	Yes	F; T
317	Dorking Brewery	Dorking	Yes	Unt; T
318	Dorset Brewing Co	Dorchester	Yes	T; F
319	Dove Street Brewery	Ipswich	Yes	Brewpub
320	Dow Bridge Brewery	Lutterworth	Yes	F; T
321	The Downlands Brewery	Henfield	Yes	F; T
322	The Downton Brewery Co	Salisbury	Yes	T; F
323	Dragonfly Brewery	London	Yes	Brewpub
324	Drayfield Brewery	Buckden	Yes	None
325	Driftwood Brewery	St Agnes	Yes	Brewpub
326	Drink Up Brewing	Bolton	No	T
327	Drygate Brewing Co	Glasgow	Yes	Brewpub
328	DT Ales	Weymouth	Yes	Brewpub
329	Dukeries Brewery	Worksop	Yes	T; F
340	Dunham Masey Brewing Co	Altrincham	Yes	T; F
341	Dunscar Bridge Brewery	Bolton	Yes	F; T; Flic
342	The Durham Brewery	Durham	Yes	Blog; T
343	Dynamite Valley Brewing Co	Truro	Yes	F; T; Ins
344	Earl Soham Brewery	Stowmarket	Yes	F
345	Earl's Brewey	London	Yes	Brewpub
346	East London Brewing Co	London	Yes	T; F; Ins; P
347	Eastbury Brewing Co	Marlborough	Yes	F; T
348	Eden Brewery	Penrith	Yes	T; F; YT
349	Edinbrew	Livingston	Yes	Blog; T; F
350	The Edinburgh Beer Factory	Edinburgh	Yes	F; T; Ins
351	Edmunds Brewhosue	Birmingham	Yes	Brewpub
352	Eight Arch Brewing Co	Wimborne	Yes	Blog; T; F
353	Electric Bear Brewing Co	Bath	Yes	Ins; T; F
354	Elgood & Sons	Wisbech	Yes	F; T
355	Elixir Beer Co	Edinburgh	Yes	T
356	Elland Brewery	Elland	Yes	T; F
357	Elmtree Beers	Norwich	Yes	F; T
358	The Ennerdale Brewery	Frizington	Yes	F; T
359	Enville Brewery	Stourbridge	Yes	None
360	The Erddig Brewing Co	Wrexham	Yes	T
361	Errant Brewery	Newcastle upon Tyne	Yes	Blog; T; F
362	Essex Stret Brewing Co	London	Yes	Brewpub
363	Ethical Ales	Mauchline	Yes	F; T; G+; YT
364	Evans Evans Brewery	Llandeilo	Yes	F; T
365	Everards Brewery	Leicester	Yes	F; T; Flic; P; YT
366	The Evesham Brewery	Evesham	Yes	F; T; Blog
367	Exe Valley Brewery	Exeter	Yes	F; T; Blog
368	The Exeter Brewery	Exeter	Yes	T
369	Exit 33 Brewing	Sheffield	Yes	T

370	Exmoor Ales	Taunton	Yes	None
371	Facer's Flintshire Brewery	Flint	Yes	None
372	Fakir Brewing Co	Norwich	Yes	T; F
373	Fallen Brewing Co	Stirling	Yes	F; T
374	Falstaff Brewery	Derby	Yes	Brewpub
375	Farmageddon Brewing Co-op	Newtownards	Yes	F; G+
376	Farr Brew	Harpenden	Yes	T; F
377	Farriers Arms Brewery	Ashfold	Yes	Brewpub
378	Fat Brewer	Crook	No	F; T
379	Fat Cat Brewing Co	Norwich	Yes	F; T; G+
380	Fat Pig Brewery	Exeter	Yes	Brewpub
381	Felinfoel Brewery Co	Llanelli	Yes	T; F
382	Fell Brewery	Grange over Sands	Yes	Blog; T; F
383	Fellow Brewery	Cambridge	Yes	T
384	The Felstar Brewery	Dunmow	Yes	F
385	Fierce Beer Co	Aberdeen	Yes	T; F
386	Fighting Cocks Brewhouse	Burnley	Yes	Brewpub
387	The FILO Brewing Co	Hastings	Yes	None
388	Firebird Brewing Co	Horsham	Yes	F; T
389	Firebrick Brewery	Blaydon-on-Tyne	Yes	None
390	First Chop Brewing Arm Ltd	Salford	Yes	Blog; T; F; Tum; P; LI
391	Five Oh Brew Co	Manchester	No	T
392	The Five Points Brewing Co	London	Yes	T; F; Ins
393	Five Towns Brewery	Wakefield	No	G+; T
394	Fixed Wheel Brewery	Halesowen	Yes	F; T; G+
395	Flack Manor Brewery	Romsey	Yes	F; T; Ins
396	Flipside Brewery	Nottingham	Yes	T
397	The Florence Brewhouse	London	Yes	Brewpub
398	Fool Hardy Ales	Stockport	Yes	Brewpub
399	Force Brewery	Cirencester	Yes	F; T; Ins
400	The Forge Brewery	Bideford	Yes	None
401	The Four Alls Brewery	Richmond	Yes	Brewpub
402	Four Candles Brewery	Broadstairs	Yes	Brewpub
403	Fourpure Brewing Co	London	Yes	T; F; Ins; LI
404	Fownes Brewing Co	Dudley	Yes	T; F
405	Franklin's Brewery	Bexhill	Yes	F; T; G+
406	Freedom Brewery	Rugeley	Yes	F; T
407	Freeminer	Cinderford	Yes	T; F; G+; P
408	The Freewheelin' Brewery Co	Peebles	Yes	F; T
409	Frensham Brewery	Farnham	Yes	T; F
410	The Friday Beer Co	Malvern	Yes	F; T; Ins; G+
411	Frodsham Brewery	Frodsham	No	F; T
412	Frog Island Brewery	Northhampton	Yes	F; T
413	Front Row Brewing	Congleton	Yes	None
414	Frontier Brewing Co	Derby	Yes	F; T
415	Full Mash Brewery	Nottingham	Yes	Blog; F; T

416	Fuller, Smith & Turner PLC	London	Yes	F; G+; T
417	Fulstow Brewery	Louth	Yes	F
418	Funfair Brewing Co	Newark	No	T
419	Fuzzy Duck Brewery	Poultton-le-Fylde	Yes	F; T
420	Fyne Ales	Cairndow	Yes	Blog; F; T; Ins; YT
421	G2 Brewing Ltd	Ashford	Yes	F; T
422	Gainford Beer Co-op Ltd	Gainford	Yes	None
423	The Gambling Man Brewing Co	Crook	No	T
424	Gaol Ale Brewery	Matlock	Yes	F
425	Geeves Brewery	Barnsley	Yes	T
426	Geipel Brewing Ltd	Corwen	Yes	T
427	George N Porter Brewing	Whitley Bay	No	T
428	George Samuel Brewing Co	Northallerton	Yes	F
429	George Wright Brewing Co	St Helens	Yes	T
430	George's Brewery	Southend-on-Sea	Yes	T; F
431	The Gipsy Hill Brewing Co Ltd	London	Yes	F; T; Ins
432	Glastonbury Ales	Somerton	Yes	Blog; F; T
433	Glenfinnan Brewry Co Ltd	Glenfinnan	Yes	None
434	Glens of Antrim Ales	Ballycastle	No	F
435	Gloucester Brewery Ltd	Gloucester	Yes	Ins; T
436	P & DJ Goacher	Maidstone	Yes	T
437	Goddard's Brewery Ltd	Ryde	Yes	T; F
438	Goff's Brewery Ltd	Cheltenham	Yes	None
439	Golden Duck Brewery	Swadlincote	Yes	F
440	Golden Triangle Brewery	Norwich	Yes	F; T
441	Goody Ales Ltd	Herne	Yes	F; T
442	Goose Eye Brewery Ltd	Keighley	Yes	F; T
443	Gower Brewery Co Ltd	Swansea	Yes	T; F
444	Grafters Brewery	Gainsborough	Yes	Brewpub
445	Grafton Brewing Co	Worksop	No	Brewpub
446	Grain Brewery	Harleston	Yes	F; T
447	The Grainstore Brewery	Oakham	Yes	Brewpub
448	Grampus Brewery	Ilfracombe	Yes	Brewpub
449	Granite Rock Brewery	Penryn	Yes	F; T
450	Graze Brewery	Bath	Yes	Brewpub
451	Great Central Brewery	Leicester	Yes	F; T
452	Great Heck Brewing Co Ltd	Goole	Yes	F; T
453	The Great Newsome Brewery Ltd	Hull	Yes	F; T
454	Great Oakley Brewery	Towcester	Yes	F
455	Great Orme Brewery	Colwyn Bay	Yes	F; T;
456	The Great Western Brewing Co	Bristol	Yes	None
457	Great Yorkshire Brewery	Pickering	Yes	F; T; Ins
458	Green Duck Brewing Co Ltd	Stourbridge	Yes	T; F
459	Green Jack Brewing Co Ltd	Lowestoft	Yes	F; T
460	Green Mill Brewery	Hyde	Yes	Brewpub

461	Green Room Ales Ltd	St Austell	No	T
462	Green King PLC	Bury St Edmunds	Yes	T
463	Greenfield Real Ale Brewery Ltd	Oldham	Yes	F; T
464	Grey Trees Brewery	Aberdare	No	T
465	Greyhound Brewery Ltd	Pulborough	Yes	F; T
466	The Gribble Brewery	Oving	Yes	Brewpub
467	Gun Brewery Ltd	Heathfield	Yes	T; F
468	Gun Dog Ales Ltd	Daventry	No	F
469	Gwaun Valley Brewery	Fishguard	Yes	None
470	Gyle 59	Chard	Yes	Unt; T; F
471	Hackney Brewery	London	Yes	Blog; F; T; P; G+; Ins
472	Hadrian Border Brewery	Newcastle Upon Tyne	Yes	None
473	Hafod Brewing Co Ltd	Mold	No	F; T
474	Half Moon Brewery	York	Yes	F; T
475	The Halfpenny Brewery	Lechlade	Yes	Brewpub
476	Halifax Steam Brewing Co Ltd	Halifax	Yes	Brewpub
477	Hall & Woodhouse	Blandford Forum		F; T
478	Nick Stafford's Hambleton Ales	Ripon	Yes	T; F; Unt
479	Hammerpot Brewery Ltd	Arundel	Yes	T; F
480	Hammerton Brewery Ltd	London	Yes	Blog; T; F
481	Handley's Brewery	Newark	Yes	Brewpub
482	The Handmade Beer Co	Carmarthen	Yes	F; T
483	Hanlons Brewery	Exeter	Yes	F; T
484	Happy Valley Brewery	Macclesfield	Yes	F
485	The Harbour Brewery Co Ltd	Bodmin	Yes	F; T
486	Hardknott Brewery	Millom	Yes	F; T; Blog Livestream
487	Haresfoot Craft Beer	Berkhamstead	Yes	F; T
488	Harrogate Brewing Co	Harrogate	Yes	T; F
489	Hart Brewery Ltd	Preston	Yes	F
490	Hart Family Brewers	Wellingborough	Yes	F; T; Ins; Blog
491	Hart of Stebbing Brewery	Dunmow	Yes	Brewpub
492	Hartshorns Brewery	Derby	Yes	F
493	Harvey & Sons (Lewes) Ltd	Lewes	Yes	F; T
494	Harviestoun Brewery Ltd	Alva	Yes	T; F; Unt; G+
495	Harwich Town Brewing Co	Harwich	Yes	F
496	Hastings Beer Co	St Leonards on Sea	No	T
497	The Havant Brewery	Havant	No	T
498	Hawkshead Brewery Ltd	Kendal	Yes	G+; Ins; P; T; F
499	Haworth Steam Brewing Co	Cleckheaton	Yes	Brewpub
500	The Hay Rake Brewery Ltd	Littleborough	Yes	Brewpub
501	Hearsall Brewery	Coventry	Yes	Brewpub
502	The Heart Of Wales Brewery	Llanwrtyd Wells	Yes	None
503	Heathen Brewers Partnership	Haywards Heath	Yes	T; F
504	Hebridean Brewing Co	Stornoway	Yes	None
505	Hedgehog Brewing Ltd	Virginia Water	Yes	F; T; Ins; Blog

506	Helm Bar Brewery	Appleby Westmorland	Yes	T
507	Helmsley Brewing Co	York	No	T
508	Hen House Brewery	Reading	Yes	None
509	Hepworth & Company Brewers Ltd	Horsham	Yes	None
510	Hercules Brewing Co (Yardsman)	Belfast	Yes	F; T
511	Hermitage Brewery	Thatcham	Yes	None
512	Hesket Newmarket Brewery Ltd	Wigton	Yes	F
513	Hetton Law Brewery	Berwick Upon Tweed	Yes	Blog
514	Hexagon Brew Co	Marple	Yes	T
515	Hexhamshire Brewery	Hexham	Yes	F
516	High Peak Brew Co	Chapel-en-le-Frith	Yes	F; T
517	Hill Island Brewery	Durham	No	F
518	Hillstown Brewery	Randalstown	Yes	F; T
519	Hilltop Brewery	Conisborough	Yes	Brewpub
520	Hobsons Brewery & Co Ltd	Kidderminster	Yes	F; T; LI; P
521	Hoggeys Brewery	Northhampton	Yes	F
522	Hogs Back Brewery ltd	Tongham	Yes	T; Ins; F
523	Hogswood Brewing Co	St Agnes	Yes	F; T
524	Holden's Brewery Ltd	Dudley	Yes	F; T
525	Holsworthy Ales	Holsworthy	Yes	T; F
526	Joseph Holt Ltd	Manchester	Yes	T; F; YT; Unt
527	Hooded Ram Brewing Co	Douglas	Yes	None
528	Hook Norton Brewery Co Ltd	Banbury	Yes	P; Ins; F; T
529	Hop & Cleaver	Newcastle Upon Tyne	Yes	Brewpub
530	Hop & Stagger	Bridgnorth	Yes	Brewpub
531	Hop Art Ltd	Alton	Yes	Blog; F; T; LI; Ins
532	Hop Back Brewery PLC	Salisbury	Yes	T
533	Hop Fuzz Brewery Ltd	Hythe	Yes	T; F
534	Hop Kettle Brewery	Cricklade	Yes	Brewpub
535	The Hop Studio	York	Yes	T
536	Hop Stuff Brewery	London	Yes	T; Ins; Flic; F
537	Hop Yard Brewing Co	Forest Row	Yes	F; T
538	Hopdaemon Brewery Co Ltd	Sittingbourne	Yes	T
539	Hope Brewery	Stanford-le-Hope	No	Brewpub
540	Hophurst Brewery ltd	Wigan	Yes	F
541	Hoppy Collie Brewery	London	Yes	F; T; G+
542	Hops & Glory	London	Yes	Brewpub
543	Hopshackle Brewery	Market Deeping	Yes	T
544	Hopstar Brewery Ltd	Darwen	Yes	T
545	Hornbeam Brewery	Manchester	Yes	T
546	Horncastle Ales	Horncastle	Yes	Brewpub
547	Hornes Brewery	Milton Keynes	Yes	F; T
548	Houston Brewing Co	Glasgow	Yes	F; T



549	Howard Town Brewery Ltd	Glossop	Yes	F; T
550	Howling Hops Brewery	London	Yes	Brewpub
551	Hoxne Brewery Ltd	Eye	Yes	T; F
552	Humpty Dumpty Brewery	Norwich	Yes	F; T; Blog
553	Hunter's Brewery Ltd	Newton Abbot	Yes	F; T
554	Hurst Brewery	Hassocks	Yes	F; T
555	The Hyde Park Microbrewery	Plymouth	Yes	Brewpub
556	Hydes' Brewery	Salford		F;T
557	The Icení Brewery	Thetford	Yes	T
558	Idle Valley Brewing	Retford	Yes	F; T; G+; YT; Ins
559	The Ilkley Brewery Co Ltd	Ilkley	Yes	T; Blog
560	Imperial Club & Brewery Ltd	Mexborough	No	T
561	Indian Summer Brewing Co Ltd	Saffron Walden	Yes	F; T
562	Indigenous Brewery Ltd	Newbury	Yes	T; F
563	The Inkspot Brewery Ltd	London	Yes	F; T
564	INNformal Brewery	Newbury	Yes	Brewpub
565	Intrepid Brewing Co Ltd	Bradwell	Yes	T
566	The Inveralmond Brewery Ltd	Perth	Yes	F; T; Tum; Inst
567	Irving & Co Brewers Ltd	Portsmouth	Yes	T
568	Irwell Works Brewery Ltd	Bury	Yes	F; T
569	Isfield Brewing Co	Uckfield	Yes	F; T; G+
570	Isla Vale Alesmiths	Margate	Yes	None
571	Islay Ales Co Ltd	Isle of Islay	Yes	F; T
572	Isle of Purbeck Brewery	Swanage	No	F; T
573	Isle of Skye Brewing Co Ltd	Isle of Skye	Yes	F; T; Unt
574	Isle of Wight Brewery Ltd	Newport	Yes	F; T; Blog
575	Itchen Valley Brewery Ltd	Alresford	Yes	F; T
576	The Jacobi Brewery of Caio	Llanwrda	Yes	None
577	James Street Brewery	Bath	Yes	Brewpub
578	The Jaw Brewery Ltd	Glasgow	Yes	F; T
579	Jennings Brewery (Marstons)	Cockermouth	Yes	T; F; G+
580	JoC's Ales	Fakenham	Yes	T
581	John O'Groats Brewery Ltd	Wick	Yes	F; T
582	John Thompson Inn & Brewery	Derby	Yes	Brewpub
583	Jolly Sailor Brewery	Selby	Yes	T
584	Joule's Brewery Ltd	Market Drayton	Yes	F; T
585	Keith Brewery Ltd	Keith	Yes	F; T; YT; Ins; Blog
586	Kelburn Brewing Co Ltd	Glasgow	Yes	F; T
587	Kelham Island Brewery Ltd	Sheffield	Yes	F; T; Ins; Blog
588	Keltec Brewery	Redruth	Yes	F; T
589	The Kendal Brewing Co	Kendal	Yes	Brewpub
590	The Kennet & Avon Brewing Co Ltd	Devizes	Yes	T; F
591	Kent Brewery	West Malling	Yes	Blog; F; T
592	The Kernel Brewery	London	Yes	F; T
593	Keswick Brewing Co	Keswick	Yes	T; F

594	Kew Brewery	London	Yes	T; F
595	Keystone Brewery	Salisbury	Yes	F
596	The Kiln Brewery	Burgess Hill	Yes	T
597	King Beer	Horsham	No	T
598	King's Cliffe Brewery	Peterborough	Yes	G+; F
599	Kings Clipstone Brewery	Mansfield	Yes	F; T
600	Kings Head Brewing Co	Ipswich	Yes	Brewpub
601	Kingstone Brewery	Chepstow	Yes	T
602	Kinneil Brew Hoose Ilp	Bo'ness	Yes	F
603	Kinver Brewery	Stourbridge	Yes	T
604	Kirkby Lonsdale Brewery Co Ltd	Carnforth	Yes	F; T
605	Kirkstall Brewery	Leeds	Yes	T
606	Kirrie Ales	Kirriemuir	Yes	F
607	Kissingate Brewery	Horsham	Yes	T
608	The Kitchen Garden Brewery	Uckfield	Yes	None
609	Knockout Brewing Co	Belfast	No	F; T
610	Knops Beer Co	North Berwick	Yes	F; T; Blog
611	Kubla Brewery Ltd	Taunton	Yes	F; T
612	Lacada Brewery Ltd	Portrush	Yes	T; F; Ins
613	Lacons Ales Ltd	Great Yarmouth	Yes	F; T
614	Laig Bay Brew Co	Isle of Eigg	Yes	T
615	Laine Brewery	Brighton	No	Brewpub
616	Laines Brewery	London	Yes	Brewpub
617	LAM Brewing Ltd	Oxford	Yes	T; F
618	Lancaster The Brewery	Lancaster	Yes	F; T
619	Landlocked Brewing Co	Ripley	No	F; T
620	The Langham Brewry Ilp	Petworth	Yes	F; T
621	Langton Brewery	Market Harborough	Yes	T; F
622	Larkins Brewery Ltd	Edenbridge	No	F; T
623	Late Knights Brewery Ltd	London	Yes	Blog; F; T
624	Latimer Ales Ltd	Corby	Yes	F
625	Lawman Brewing Co Ltd	Glasgow	Yes	F; T
626	Leamside Ale Co Ltd	Houghton-le-Spring	Yes	None
627	Ledbury Real Ales	Ledbury	Yes	F; T
628	The Leeds Brewery Co Ltd	Leeds	Yes	T; F; Ins
629	JW Lees & Co (Brewers) Ltd	Manchester	Yes	T; F
630	Left Bank Brewery	London	Yes	T
631	Leighton Buzzard Brewing Co	Leighton Buzzard	Yes	T; F
632	Lerwick Brewing Co	Shetland	Yes	F; LI; T; Blog
623	Leyden Brewing Ltd	Bury	Yes	Brewpub
634	The Liberation Brewery	St Saviour	Yes	F; T
635	Lincoln Green Brewing Co	Hucknall	Yes	Blog; F; T; Ins; Unt
636	Lincolnshire Brewing Co Ltd	Lincoln	Yes	F
637	Lion Heart Brewery Ltd	Coventry	No	F; T
638	Lion's Lair Brewery	Arbroath	Yes	F
639	Liquid Brewery	Edinburgh	Yes	T; F

640	Lister's Brewery	Arundel	Yes	T; F; G+
641	The Little Beer Corporation Ltd	Guidford	Yes	F; T
642	Little Brew	York	Yes	Blog; F
643	Little Bush Brewery	Ripley	Yes	Brewpub
644	Little Critters Brewery	Sheffield	Yes	F; T; Unt
645	Little Valley Brewery Ltd	Hebden Bridge	Yes	Blog; F; T
646	Littlelover Brewery Ltd	Derby	No	F
647	Liverpool Craft Beer Co	Liverpool	Yes	T
648	Liverpool Organic Brewery Ltd	Liverpool	Yes	T; F; Unt
649	Lizard Ales	Helston	Yes	None
650	Cwrw Llŷn Cyf	Pwllheli	Yes	F; T; Blog
651	Llangollen Brewery	Llangollen	Yes	F
652	Bragdy Lleu Cyf	Caernarfon	Yes	F
653	Loch Lomond Brewery	Alexandria	Yes	T; F
654	Loch Ness Brewing Co	Inverness	Yes	T
655	The Loddon Brewery Ltd	Reading	Yes	F; T
656	Lola Rose Brewery	Biggar	Yes	F
657	The London Beer Factory	London	Yes	F; Ins; T
658	London Brewing Co	London	Yes	F; Unt; Taplister
659	Long Arm Brewing	London	Yes	Brewpub
660	The Long Man Brewery	Polegate	Yes	T; F; YT
661	Longdog Brewery	Basingstoke	Yes	T; F
662	The Loose Cannon Brewing Co Ltd	Abingdon	Yes	Blog; T; F
663	Lord Conrad's Brewery	Cambridge	Yes	T; F
664	Lovibonds Brewery	Henley-on-Thames	Yes	Blog; T
665	Luckie Ales	Glenrothes	Yes	F
666	The Ludlow Brewing Co Ltd	Ludlow	Yes	F
667	Lymestone Brewery Ltd	Stone	Yes	F; T
668	The Lymm Brewing Co	Warrington	Yes	Brewpub
669	Lytham Brewery	Lytham St Annes	Yes	T
670	Bragdy Mŵs Piws (Purple Moose)	Porthmadog	Yes	F; T; P; G+; Ins
671	Mad Cat Brewery	Faversham	Yes	F; T; Ins
672	Mad Dog Brewing Co Ltd	Pontypool	Yes	F; T; Blog
673	Mad Hatter Brewing Co	Liverpool	Yes	T; F
674	Madcap Brewery	Annan	Yes	T; F
675	Madrigal Brewery	Ilfracombe	Yes	F
676	Magic Rock Brewing Co Ltd	Huddersfield	Yes	Blog; F; T; Ins
677	Magpie Brewery	Nottingham	Yes	T; F
678	Maldon Brewing Co Ltd	Maldon	Yes	Tumblr; T; F
679	Mallinsons Brewing Co	Huddersfield	Yes	T
680	Malmesbury Brewery Ltd	Swindon	Yes	T
681	Malt The Brewery Ltd	Great Missenden	Yes	T; F
682	Malvern Hills Brewery Ltd	Malvern	Yes	T
683	Manchester Brewing Co	Manchester	No	F; T

684	The Mannings Brewers Ltd	Congleton	Yes	F; T; Ins
685	Mantle Brewery	Cardigan	Yes	F; T
686	Marble Beers Ltd	Manchester	Yes	F; T; Blog
687	Maregade Brew Co	London	Yes	Brewpub
688	The Marlpool Brewing Co Ltd	Heanor	Yes	Brewpub
689	Marstons PLC	Wolverhampton	Yes	F; Ins; T
690	Martland Mill Brewery	Wigan	Yes	F
691	Mash Brewery Ltd	Winchester	Yes	T; F
692	Matlock Wolds Farm Brewery	Matlock	Yes	None
693	Mauldon's Ltd	Sudbury	Yes	T
694	Maule Brewing Co	Northampton	Yes	F; T; Ins; Unt
695	Maxim Brewery	Houghton Le Spring	Yes	None
696	Maypole Brewery	Newark	Yes	None
697	McGivern's Ales	Wrexham	Yes	Brewpub
698	McMullen & Sons Ltd	Hertford	Yes	G+; F; T; V; Ins; LI
699	Meantime Brewing Co Ltd	London	Yes	T
700	Medieval Brewery	Nottingham	No	F; T
701	Melin Tap Brewhosue Ltd	Pontypool	No	F
702	The Melwood Beer Co	Prescot	Yes	None
703	Mercian Brewey Ltd	Llanbydder	No	F
704	Merlin Brewing Co	Sandbach	Yes	T
705	Merriman Brewing	Towcester	Yes	F
706	Mersea Island Brewery	Colchester	Yes	T; F
707	Middle Earth Brewing Co Ltd	Derby	Yes	T
708	The Mighty Oak Brewing Co Ltd	Maldon	Yes	T
709	Mile Tree Brewery Ltd	Wisbech	Yes	None
710	Milestone Brewing Co Ltd	Newark	Yes	F
711	Milk Street Brewery	Frome	Yes	F; T
712	The Mill Green Brewery	Sudbury	Yes	F
713	The Millis Brewing Co Ltd	Dartford	Yes	F; T
714	Milltown Brewing Co Ltd	Milnsbridge	Yes	T
715	Milton Brewery Cambridge Ltd	Cambridge	Yes	T
716	Mithril Ales	Richmond	Yes	F; T; Blog
717	Mix Brewery	Hemel Hemstead	Yes	None
718	Mobberley Fine Ales Ltd	Knutsford	Yes	F
719	Moles Brewery	Melksham	Yes	F
720	Moncada Brewery Ltd	London	Yes	T; F; Ins
721	Mondo Brewing Co	London	Yes	F; T; Ins
722	Monkey Chews Brewery	London	Yes	Brewpub
723	Monty's Brewery	Montgomery	Yes	F; T; G+; P; Ins; Unt
724	Moody Goose Brewery Ltd	Braintree	Yes	Brewpub
725	Cambridge Moonshine Brewery	Cambridge	Yes	T
726	Moor Beer Co Ltd	Bristol	Yes	T
727	Moorhouse's Brewery Ltd	Burnley	Yes	F; RSS; T
728	Mordue Brewery	North Shields	Yes	F; T
729	Morton Brewery	Wolverhampton	Yes	F

730	Mountain Hare Brewery	Bridgend	Yes	Brewpub
731	Mourne Mountains Brewery Ltd	Warrenpoint	Yes	F; T
732	Mr Grundy's Brewery	Derby	Yes	Brewpub
733	Mr Majolica's Brewing Co Ltd	Grays	Yes	F
734	Muirhouse Brewery	Ilkeston	Yes	F; T
735	The Mulberry Duck Brewing Co Ltd	Hereford	Yes	F; T
736	Mumbles Brewery Ltd	Swansea	Yes	Blog; F; T
737	Musket Brewery Ltd	Maidstone	Yes	Blog; T
738	Naked Beer Co	Lancing	No	F; T
739	Bragd'r Nant	Llanwrst	Yes	F; T
740	Navigation Brewery Ltd	Nottingham	Yes	F; T
741	Naylor's Brewery	Keighley	Yes	T
742	Neath Ales Ltd	Port Talbot	Yes	T
743	Neatishead Brewing Co	Neatishead	Yes	Brewpub
744	Nelson Brewing Co UK Ltd	Chatham	Yes	T; F
745	Nene Valley Brewery	Peterborough	Yes	T; F
746	Neptune Brewery Ltd	Liverpool	Yes	T; Ins; F
747	Nethergate Brewery Co Ltd	Sudbury	Yes	T; F
748	New Bristol Brewery	Bristol	Yes	T; F; Ins
749	New Inn Brewery	Liversedge	Yes	Brewpub
750	New Lion Brewery	Totnes	Yes	F; T; G+
751	Newark Brewery Ltd	Newark	Yes	T; F
752	Newby Wyke Brewery	Grantham	Yes	None
753	Newcastle Brewing Co Ltd	Newcastle Upon Tyne	Yes	Unt; T; F; Ins
754	Nobby's Brewery	Kettering	Yes	F; T
755	The Nook Brewhouse	Holmfirth	Yes	Brewpub
756	Norfolk Brewhouse	Fakenham	Yes	T; F; G+; Ins
757	Norland Beers Ltd	Halifax	No	T
758	North Cotswold Brewery Ltd	Moreton-in-Marsh	Yes	F
759	North Curry Brewery	Taunton	Yes	Blog; Sharing...
760	North Riding Brewery Ltd	Scarborough	Yes	F
761	North Riding Brewpub	Scarborough	Yes	Brewpub
762	North Star Brewery	Ilkeston	Yes	Unt; T; F; Ins
763	North Yorkshire Brewing Co	Guisborough	Yes	F
764	Northbound Brewery	Londonderry	Yes	F; T
765	Northern Alchemy	Newcastle Upon Tyne	Yes	T; F; Ins
766	Northern FC Brewery	Newcastle Upon Tyne	Yes	Brewpub
767	Northern Monk Brew Co	Leeds	Yes	Blog; T; F
768	Northumberland Breweries Ltd	Bedlington	No	F; T
769	Norton Brewing	Runcorn	Yes	F; T
770	Noss Beer Works	Ivybridge	Yes	T
771	The Nottingham Brewery Ltd	Nottingham	Yes	F; T
772	Nutbrook Brewery Ltd	Ilkeston	Yes	F; T
773	D. O'Brien Brewery Ltd	Leicester	Yes	T
774	Oakham Ales	Peterborough	Yes	T

775	Oakleaf Brewing Co Ltd	Gosport	Yes	None
776	Oakwood Brewery	Wells-next-the-Sea	Yes	F; T; Ins
777	Oates Brewing Co	Halifax	Yes	F; T
778	Oban Bay Brewery	Oban	Yes	F
779	The Occasional Brewing Co	Exeter	No	T; F
780	The Odcombe Brewery	Yeovil	Yes	Brewpub
781	Odyssey Brew Co	Worcester	Yes	F; T; Ins
782	Offbeat Brewery	Crewe	Yes	F; T; Ins; YT
783	Okell & Sons Ltd	Douglas	Yes	T; F
784	Old Chimneys Brewery	Diss	Yes	None
785	The Old Dairy Brewing Co Ltd	Tenterden	Yes	T; F
786	Old Luxters Farm Brewery	Henley-on-Thames	Yes	Winery
787	Old Mill Brewery	Goole	Yes	T; F
788	Old Pie Factory Brewery	Warwick	No	F; T
789	Old School Brewery	Carnforth	Yes	F; T
790	Old Spot Brewery Ltd	Bradford	Yes	None
791	Oldershaw Brewery	Grantham	Yes	F; T
792	One Mile End Brew Co	London	Yes	Brewpub
793	Orbit Beers	London	Yes	F; T; Ins
794	Ordnance City Brewery	Bridgwater	No	F
795	Orkney Brewery	Orkney	Yes	T; F
796	Ossett Brewery	Wakefield	Yes	F; T; G+; Ins
797	Otherton Ales	Penkridge	Yes	F; T; G+
798	Otley Brewing Co Ltd	Pontypridd	Yes	F; T; P; Ins
799	Otter Brewery Ltd	Honiton	Yes	T
800	Ouseburn Valley Brewery	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Yes	T
801	Out There Brewing Co	Newcastle-upon-Tyne	Yes	F; T
802	Outstanding Brewing Co Ltd	Bury	Yes	F; T
803	Padstowe Brewing Co Ilp	Padstow	Yes	T
804	JC & RH Palmer	Bridport	Yes	T; F; YT; G+
805	Panther Brewery	Norwich	Yes	T; F; G+
806	Paradigm Brewery	Rickmansworth	Yes	T; F
807	Park Brew	Brechin	Yes	F; T; Ins; Unt
808	The Park Brewery Ltd	Kingston-u-Thames	Yes	T; Ins; F
809	The Parker Brewery	Southport	Yes	F; T
810	Partizan Brewing Ltd	London	Yes	T; F
811	Partners Brewery	Dewsbury	Yes	F; T
812	Peak Ales	Bakewell	Yes	F; T; Ins
813	Peakstones Rock Brewery	Stoke-on-Trent	Yes	F
814	The Peerless Brewing Co Ltd	Birkenhead	Yes	Blog; F; T
815	The Pells Brewing Co-op	Lewes	Yes	T
816	Pembrokeshire Brewing Co Ltd	Saundersfoot	Yes	F; T
817	Penlon Cottage Brewery	New Quay	Yes	F; T
818	Pennine Brewery Co Ltd	Bedale	Yes	F; T
819	Penpont Brewery	Altarnun	Yes	Blog; T; F; Ins
820	Pentrich Brewing Co	Ripley	No	T

821	Penzance Brewing Co Ltd	Penzance	No	F
822	Pershore Brewery Ltd	Pershore	Yes	T; F; Ins
823	Pheasantry Brewery	Newark	Yes	Events Location
824	Phipps Northampton Brewery Co	Northampton	Yes	T; F
825	Phoenix Brewery	Heywood	Yes	F
826	Pickled Pig Brewers	Nottingham	Yes	T; F; YT
827	Pictish Brewing Co Ltd	Rochdale	Yes	T; F; YT
828	Piddle Brewery	Dorchester	Yes	F; T
829	Pied Bull Brewery	Chester	Yes	Brewpub
830	Pig & Porter Brewing Co	Royal Tunbridge Wells	Yes	Blog; T; F; Ins
831	Pig Iron Brewing Co Ltd	Brierley Hill	Yes	None
832	The Pigeon Fishers Craft Brewery	Chesterfield	Yes	F; T; Ins
833	Pilgrim Ales	Reigate	Yes	T
834	Pilot Beer	Edinburgh	Yes	Blog; F; T; Ins
835	The Pilot Brewery Ltd	Swansea	Yes	T; F
836	Pin-Up Beers Ltd	Brighton	Yes	T; F
837	Pipes	Cardiff	Yes	F; T; Ins
838	Pixie Spring Brewing Co Ltd	Pontyclun	Yes	F; T
839	Plain Ales	Warminster	Yes	F; T
840	Platform 5 Brewing Co Ltd	Newton Abbot	Yes	None
841	The Plockton Brewery	Plockton	Yes	Blog
842	Poachers Brewery	Lincoln	Yes	None
843	Pokertree Brewing Co Ltd	Omagh	Yes	F; T
844	Pope's Brewery Ilp	Worcester	No	F; T
845	Pope's Yard Brewery Ltd	Watford	Yes	T
846	Poppyland Brewery	Cromer	Yes	Blog
847	Portobello Brewing Co Ltd	London	Yes	T; F
848	The Portpatrick Brewery Ltd	Stranraer	Yes	F
849	Potbelly Brewery Ltd	Kettering	Yes	F
850	The Potton Brewery Co Ltd	Sandy	No	F; T
851	The Poynton Brewery	Stockport	No	F
852	Prescot Ales	Cheltenham	Yes	F; T
853	Pressure Drop Brewing	London	Yes	T
854	Problem Child Brewing	Wigan	Yes	T
855	Prospect Brewery	Wigan	Yes	T; F; Unt
856	Purity Brewing Co Ltd	Alcester	Yes	F; T
857	Q Brewery	Leicester	Yes	F
858	Quantock Brewery	Wellington	Yes	F; T
859	Quantum Brewing Co	Stockport	Yes	T; F
860	Quartz Brewing Ltd	Burton Upon Trent	Yes	F; T
861	The Queen Inn Brewery	Winchester	Yes	Brewpub
862	The Queens Head	London	Yes	Brewpub
863	Quercus Devon Ales	Kingsbridge	Yes	F; T; YT; RSS

864	Quiet Brewery	Banchory	Yes	Brewpub
865	Radnorshire Ales	Presteigne	Yes	F; T
866	Ramsbottom Craft Brewery	Bury	Yes	Blog; T; F
867	The Ramsbury Brewery	Marlborough	Yes	T; G+
868	Ramsgate Brewery Ltd	Broadstairs	Yes	Blog; T
869	Ran Ales Ltd	Stoke-on-Trent	Yes	F
870	RW Randall Ltd	St Peter Port	Yes	None
871	Range Ales Brewery Ltd	Hythe	Yes	F; T; LI
872	The Rat Brewery	Huddersfield	Yes	Brewpub
873	Raw Brewing Co Ltd	Chesterfield	Yes	T; G+
874	RCH Brewery	Weston-Super-Mare	Yes	None
875	The Rebrel Brewing Co	Penryn	No	F; T; LI
876	Rebellion Beer Co	Marlow Bottom	Yes	T; YT; G+; Ins; Unt
877	The Red Brewery Co Ltd	Great Staughton	Yes	T; F
878	Red Cat Brewing	Winchester	Yes	F; T
879	Red Fox Brewery Ltd	Colchester	Yes	None
880	Red Hand Brewing Co	Dungannon	No	T
881	Red Rock Brewery Ltd	Teignmouth	Yes	F; T
882	Red Squirrel Brewery Ltd	Hemel Hempstead	Yes	P; Ins; T; F; G+
883	Red Star Brewery (Formby) Ltd	Liverpool	Yes	F; T
884	Redball Brewery	Chester	No	F
885	The Redchurch Brewery Ltd	London	Yes	Ins; F; T
886	Redemption Brewing Co Ltd	London	Yes	T; Ins; RSS
887	Redscar Brewery Ltd	Redcar	Yes	None
888	Redstone Brewery Ltd	Brecon	Yes	T
889	Redwell Brewing	Norwich	Yes	F; T; Ins
890	Redwillow Brewery Ltd	Macclesfield	Yes	Blog; T
891	Reedley Hallows Brewing Co	Burnley	Yes	T
892	The Revolutions Brewing Co Ltd	Castleford	Yes	T; Blog
893	Rhymney Brewery Ltd	Pontypool	Yes	None
894	Richmond Brewing Co Ltd	Richmond	Yes	T; LI
895	The Ridgeside Brewing Co Ltd	Leeds	Yes	F; T
896	Ringwood Brewery Ltd	Ringwood	Yes	T; F
897	Ripple Steam Brewery Ltd	Dover	Yes	F; T
898	River Leven Ales	Kinlochleven	Yes	None
899	John Roberts Brewing Co Ltd	Bishop's Castle	Yes	T
900	Frederic Robonson Ltd	Stockport	Yes	F; G+; T; YT
901	Rock & Roll Brewhouse Ltd	Birmingham	No	T
902	Rock Mill Brewery Ltd	High Peak	No	F
903	Rock the Boat Brewery	Liverpool	Yes	T; Ins; F
904	Rocket Science Craft Ales Ltd	Peterborough	Yes	F; T
905	Rockin' Robin Brewery	Maidstone	Yes	F; T
906	Rocky Head Brewery Ltd	London	Yes	T; F
907	Romney Marsh Brewery Ltd	New Romney	Yes	F; Ins; T
908	Roosters Brewing Co Ltd	Knaresborough	Yes	F; T; Ins
909	Roseland Brewery Ltd	Truro	Yes	None



910	Rossendale Brewery	Rossendale	Yes	F
911	Rother Valley Brewing Co	Rye	No	F
912	Round Tower Brewery	Chelmsford	Yes	Blog; T; F
913	Rowett Brewing	Brimsby	Yes	Blog; T
914	Rudgate Brewery Ltd	York	Yes	T; F
915	The Runaway Brewry Ltd	Manchester	Yes	T; Unt
916	Rusty Prop Brewing Co Ltd	Romsey	No	F; T
917	Ryedale Brewing Co Ltd	York	Yes	F
918	Rother Valley Brewing Co	Rye	No	F
919	S & P Brewery	Norwich	Yes	T; Unt
920	Sacre Brew Ltd	Wolverhampton	Yes	Blog; F; T; Ins; G+; YT
921	Sadler's Ales	Stourbridge	Yes	F; T
922	Saffron Brewery	Bishop Stortford	Yes	F; T
923	Salopian Brewing Co Ltd	Shrewsbury	Yes	F; T
924	Saltaire Brewery Ltd	Shipley	Yes	T; Unt
925	Sambrook's Brewry Ltd	London	Yes	T; F; Ins
926	Sandstone Brewery	Wrexham	No	F; T
927	Saxon City Ales	Hereford	Yes	None
928	Scarborough Brewery Ltd	Scarborough	Yes	T; F; Blog
929	Scotch Hop Brewery	Edinburgh	Yes	Brewpub
930	Seren Brewing Co	Clynderwen	Yes	F; T; Unt
931	Settle Brewing Co Ltd	Settle	No	F
932	Seven Bro7hers Brewery	Salford	Yes	Blog; T; F; Ins
933	Severn Vale Brewing Co	Dursley	Yes	F
934	The Shalford Brewery	Braintree	Yes	None
935	Sharp's Brewery Ltd	Wadebridge	Yes	F; T; YT; Ins
936	The Sheelin Brewery	Enniskillen	Yes	F
937	The Sheffield Brewery Co Ltd	Sheffield	Yes	F; T; Unt; Ins
938	Shepherd Neame Ltd	Faversham	Yes	F; T; Ins; YT; P; Blog
939	Sherfield Village Brewery	Hook	Yes	Blog
940	Shindigger Brewing Co	Manchester	Yes	Blog; T; F; V
941	Shortt's Farm Brewery	Eye	Yes	T
942	The Shotover Brewing Co Ltd	Oxford	Yes	F
943	The Shropshire Brewer	Shrewsbury	Yes	Brewpub
944	Signature Brew Ltd	London	Yes	Blog; F; T; YT
945	Silhill Brewery Ltd	Solihull	Yes	F
946	Silks Brewery Ltd	Halstead	Yes	T; Ins; F
947	Siren Craft Brew Lyd	Wokingham	Yes	Blog; T; F; Ins; P
948	Six Bells Brewery	Bishop's Castle	No	T
949	Six O'Clock Beer Co	Manchester	Yes	T
950	Six° North Brewery	Stonehaven	Yes	F
951	Skinner's Brewing Co Ltd	Truro	Yes	F; T; Ins
952	Slater's Ales	Stafford	Yes	F; T
953	The Slaughterhouse Brewery Lrd	Warwick	Yes	F

954	Sleaford Brewery	Sleaford	No	F; T
955	Slightly Foxed Brewing Co	Sowerby Bridge	Yes	F
956	Samuel Smith Old Brewery	Tadcaster	Yes	F
957	Snowdonia Brewery	Caernarfon	Yes	Brewpub
958	Solvay Society Brewery	London	No	T
959	Son of Sid Brewery	Sandy	Yes	Brewpub
960	Songbird Brewery	Nottingham	Yes	F; T
961	Sonnet 43 Brewhouse	Durham	Yes	F; Ins; T
962	South Hams Brewery Co Ltd	Kingsbridge	Yes	T; F
963	Southbourne Ales	Bournemouth	Yes	F; T; G+; LI
964	Southport Brewery	Southport	Yes	None
965	Southwark Brewing Co Ltd	London	Yes	Blog; F; T
966	Sperrin Brewery	Nuneaton	Yes	None
967	Spey Valley Brewery	Keith	Yes	T; F; Ins
968	Speyside Craft Brewery	Forres	Yes	Vlog; F; T; YT; Ins; Unt
969	Spitting Feathers Brewery	Chester	Yes	T
970	Springhead Fine Ales Ltd	Retford	Yes	T
971	Squawk Brewing Co	Manchester	Yes	F; T
972	St Andrews Brewing Co	Glenrothes	Yes	F; T; Ins
973	St Austell Brewery Co Ltd	St Austell	Yes	F; T; P; Ins; YT; Blog
974	St George's Brewery Ltd	Worcester	Yes	None
975	St Ives Brewery Ltd	St Ives	Yes	F
976	St Peter's Brewery	Bungay	Yes	T; F
977	The Stables Brewing Co	Stanley	Yes	Brewpub
978	The Staffordshire Brewery Ltd	Leek	Yes	T; F
979	Staggeringly Good Beer	Portsmouth	Yes	F; T
980	Stamps Brewery	Liverpool	Yes	F; T; G+' P
981	Stancill Brewery	Shreffield	No	F
982	Stanway Brewery	Cheltenham	Yes	None
983	Star Brewing Co Ltd	Peterborough	No	F
984	Station 119 Brewery	Eye	Yes	Blog; F
985	Steam Machine Brewing Co Ltd	Newton Aycliffe	Yes	T; G+
986	Steel City Brewing	Sheffield	Yes	Blog; F; T
987	Stewart Brewing Ltd	Loanhead	Yes	Blog; T; F; YT; P
988	Sticklegs Brewery	Colchester	Yes	None
989	Stocklinch Ales Ltd	Ilminster	Yes	F
990	Stockport Brewing Co Ltd	Stockport	No	T
991	Stod Fold Brewing Co	Halifax	Yes	F; T
992	Stonehenge Ales	Salisbury	Yes	None
993	Stonehouse Brewery	Oswestry	Yes	F; T
994	Storm Brewing Co Ltd	Macclesfield	Yes	None
995	Stowey Brewery	Bridgwater	Yes	None
996	Strands Brewery	Seascale	Yes	Brewpub
997	Stratfor-upon-Avon Brewery	Stratford-upon-Avon	Yes	T; Ins; F
998	Strawman Brewery	London	Yes	T; F

999	Stringers Beer	Ulverston	Yes	T
1000	The Stroud Brewery Ltd	Stroud	Yes	T; F; Ins; Feed; Unt
1001	Sulwath Brewers Ltd	Castle Douglas	Yes	None
1002	Summer Wine Brewery Ltd	Holmfirth	Yes	Blog; T; F; YT; Unt
1003	Summerskills Brewery	Plymouth	Yes	F; T
1004	Sunbeam Ales	Leeds	Yes	F; T
1005	Sunny Republic Brewing Co	Blandford	Yes	T; F; RSS
1006	Surfing Monkey Brewery	Cardiff	Yes	F; T
1007	Surrey Hills Brewery Ltd	Dorking	Yes	F; T
1008	Swan Brewery	Leominster	Yes	F; T
1009	The Swan Microbrewery	Maidstone	Yes	Brewpub
1010	Swannay Brewery	Orkney	Yes	T; F
1011	Talke o' Th' Hill Brewery	Stoke-on-Trent	Yes	None
1012	Tally Ho! Country Inn and Brewery	Okehampton	Yes	Brewpub
1013	Tanners Ales	Wiveliscombe	Yes	F
1014	Tap East	London	Yes	Brewpub
1015	The Tapped Brew Co	Sheffield	Yes	T
1016	Tapped Brewery	Leeds	Yes	Brewpub
1017	Tapstone Brewing Co Ltd	Chard	Yes	F
1018	Tarn Hows Brewery	Ambleside	Yes	F; T
1019	Tatton Brewery	Knutsford	Yes	F; T; Blog
1020	Tavernale	Newcastle upon Tyne	Yes	Brewpub
1021	Tavy Ales Ltd	Plymouth	Yes	F; T; Blog
1022	Timohty Taylor & Co Ltd	Keighley	Yes	T; YT; F
1023	Teignworthy Brewery	Newton Abbot	Yes	None
1024	Teme Valley Brewery	Worcester	Yes	None
1025	Tempest Brewing Co Ltd	Galashiels	Yes	Blog; T; F; G+; P
1026	Thames Side Brewery Ltd	Staines upon Thames	Yes	F; T
1027	T & R Theakston Ltd	Masham	Yes	T; F
1028	Third Eye Brewery Ltd	Chorley	Yes	F; T
1029	Thirst Class Ale	Stockport	Yes	Blog; T
1030	Thornbridge Brewery	Bakewell	Yes	Blog; F; T; Ins; YT
1031	Three Blind Mice Brewery	Ely	No	T
1032	Three Castles Brewery Ltd	Pewsey	Yes	None
1033	Three Daggers Brewery	Westbury	Yes	Brewpub
1034	The Three Legs Brewing Co	Rye	Yes	T; Ins
1035	Three Sods Brewery	London	Yes	T; F
1036	Three Tuns Brewery	Bishop's Castle	Yes	T; F
1037	The Ticketebrew Co	Stalybridge	Yes	T
1038	Tiley's Brewery Ltd	Berkeley	Yes	Brewpub
1039	Tillingbourne Brewery Ltd	Guildford	Yes	F; G+; LI; T
1040	Time & Tide Brewing Ltd	Deal	Yes	F; T
1041	Tintagel Brewery Ltd	Tintagel	Yes	F
1042	Tiny Rebel Brewing Co Ltd	Newport	Yes	Blog; T; F
1043	Tipples Brewery	Norwich	Yes	T; F; G+; Ins

1044	Tirril Brewery Ltd	Appleby-in-Westm.	Yes	Blog; F; T
1045	Titan Brewery Ltd	Derby	Yes	T; F
1046	Titanic Brewery Co Ltd	Stoke-on-Trent	Yes	F; T
1047	Tollgate Brewery	Ashby-de-la-Zouch	Yes	F; T
1048	Tombstone Brewery	Great Yarmouth	Yes	F; T
1049	Bragdy Tomos a Lilford Brewery	Llantwit Major	Yes	F; T; Blog
1050	Tomos Watkin Ales	Swansea	Yes	F; T; Ins
1051	Tonbridge Brewery Ltd	Tonbridge	Yes	T; F
1052	Toolmakers Brewery Ltd	Sheffield	Yes	T
1053	Top Out Brewery llp	Loanhead	Yes	F; T
1054	The Top-Notch Brewing Co	Haywards Heath	Yes	F; T
1055	Torrside Brewing Ltd	New Mills	Yes	F; T
1056	Totally Brewed Ltd	Nottingham	Yes	F; T
1057	Totem Brewing Co Ltd	Newton Abbot	No	F
1058	Totnes Brewing Co Ltd	Totnes	No	T; T
1059	Towcester Mill Brewery	Towcester	Yes	Blog; Ins; T
1060	Towles Fine Ales	Bristol	Yes	F
1061	Town Mill Brewery	Lyme Regis	Yes	T; T
1062	Très Bien Brewery	Leicester	Yes	T; Ins; F
1063	Track Brewing	Manchester	Yes	T; F
1064	Tractor Shed Brewing Ltd	Workington	Yes	T; F
1065	Traquair House Brewery Ltd	Innerleithen	Yes	None
1066	Treboom Brewery	Shipton-Beningbrough	Yes	F; T
1067	The Tring Brewery Co Ltd	Tring	Yes	T; F
1068	Trinity Ales	Lowestoft	Yes	F; T
1069	Triple fff Brewing Co	Alton	Yes	F; T; Unt
1070	Truefitt Brewing Co	Middlesbrough	No	T
1071	Truman's	London	Yes	F; T
1072	Tryst Brewery	Larbert	No	T; F
1073	Tudor Brewery	Abertillery	Yes	F; T; YT
1074	Tunnel Brewery Ltd	Nuneaton	Yes	None
1075	Tunnfield Brewery	Shrewsbury	No	F; T
1076	Turners Brewery	Lewes	Yes	F; T
1077	The Tweed Brewing Co	Hyde	Yes	Blog; YT; T; Ins; Unt
1078	Twickenham Fine Ales Ltd	Twickenham	Yes	T
1079	Twisted Barrel Ale Ltd	Coventry	Yes	F; T; G+; Ins; YT
1080	The Twisted Brewing Co Ltd	Westbury	Yes	F; T; Blog
1081	Twisted Oak Brewery Ltd	Bristol	Yes	T
1082	Two Bridges Brewery	Reading	Yes	None
1083	Two Cocks Brewery	Newbury	Yes	T; F
1084	Two Roses Brewery	Barnsley	Yes	Blog; F; T
1085	The Two Towers Brewery Ltd	Birmingham	Yes	F; T
1086	Bragdy Twt Lol	Pontypridd	Yes	F; T
1087	Tydd Steam Brewery	Wisbech	Yes	None
1088	Tyne Bank Brewery Ltd	Newcastle upon Tyne	Yes	T; F

1089	Uffa Brewery	Woodbridge	Yes	F; T
1090	Uley Brewery	Dursley	Yes	Forum
1091	Ulverston Brewing Co Ltd	Ulverston	Yes	None
1092	Unsworth's Yard Brewery Ltd	Cartmel	Yes	T
1093	The Untapped Brewing Co	Raglan	Yes	F; T; Blog
1094	The Upham Brewery Ilp	Southampton	Yes	T; F
1095	Upstairs Brewing Co	Croydon	Yes	F; Ins; T
1096	Urban Island Brewing Co Ltd	Portsmouth	Yes	F; T
1097	Andrew Usher	Edinburgh	Yes	Brewpub
1098	Vagrant Brewing	Manchester	Yes	Blog; F; T
1099	Vale Brewery Co	Aylesbury	Yes	T
1100	The Vale of Glamorgan Brewery	Barry	No	F; T
1101	Valhalla Brewery	Shetland	Yes	F; T
1102	Verdant Brewing Co	Truro	Yes	T; F; Ins; Tum; Unt
1103	Verulam Brewery	St Albans	Yes	Brewpub
1104	Vibrant Forest Brewery	Southampton	Yes	F; T
1105	VIP Brewery	Alnwick	Yes	F; T
1106	Vocation Brewery Ltd	Hebden Bridge	Yes	T; F; G+; Ins
1107	Volden Brewery	Croydon	Yes	F; Unt; T
1108	Wadworth & Co Ltd	Devizes	Yes	T; F; YT
1109	The Waen Brewery Ltd	Llanidloes	Yes	Blog; T; F
1110	Wainstones Brewery	Middlesborough	Yes	None
1111	Wall's Brewing Co Ltd	Nothallerton	No	F; T
1112	Walled City Brewery	Londonderry	Yes	Brewpub
1113	Wantsum Brewery Ltd	Canterbury	Yes	F; T
1114	Wapping Beers Ltd	Liverpool	Yes	Brewpub
1115	Warwickshire Beer Co	Royal Leamington Spa	Yes	F; T
1116	Watermill Brewing Co	Kendal	Yes	Brewpub
1117	Wayland's Sixpenny Brewery	Salisbury	Yes	T
1118	Weal Ale Brewery Ltd	Newcastle	Yes	F; T
1119	Weatheroak Brewery Ltd	Studley	Yes	T; F
1120	Weetwood Ales Ltd	Tarpoley	Yes	T
1121	Weird Beard Brew Co	London	Yes	T; F; Ins
1122	Welbeck Abbey Brewery	Worksop	Yes	F; T; Unt; Blog
1123	Wells & Youngs Brewing Co Ltd	Bedford	Yes	F; T; LI
1124	Weltons Brewery	Horsham	Yes	T
1125	Wensleydale Brewery Ltd	Leyburn	Yes	T
1126	Wentwell Brewery	Derby	Yes	F; T
1127	Wentworth Brewery Ltd	Rotherham	Yes	None
1128	West Berkshire Brewery Co Ltd	Thatcham	Yes	F; T
1129	Westerham Brewery Co Ltd	Edenbridge	Yes	T; F
1130	Whaley Bridge Brewery	Whaley Bridge	Yes	F; T
1131	Wharfedale Brewery	Ilkley	Yes	F; T; G+
1132	Whim Ales	Buxton	Yes	F
1133	Whippet Brewing Co	Leeds	Yes	T; F

1134	Whistling Kite Brewery Ltd	Kettering	Yes	F
1135	Whitby Brewery	Whitby	Yes	F; T
1136	White Horse Brewery Co Ltd	Faringdon	Yes	T; F
1137	White Park Brewery	Bedford	Yes	F
1138	White Rock Brewery Ltd	Guernsey	Yes	F; T
1139	Whitewater Brewing Co	Newry	Yes	T; F
1140	The Why Not Brewery	Norwich	Yes	F; T
1141	Wibblers Brewery Ltd	Mayland	No	T
1142	Wicked Hathern Brewery	Loughborough	Yes	F; P; T
1143	Wickwar Brewing Co Ltd	Wickwar	Yes	F; T
1144	The Wild Beer Co Ltd	Shepton Mallet	Yes	F; T; Ins
1145	Wild Card Brewery	London	Yes	F; T
1146	Wild Horse Brewing Co Ltd	Llandudno	Yes	F; Ins; T
1147	Wild Weather Ales Ltd	Reading	Yes	F; T; YT
1148	Williams Brothers Brewing Co	Alloa	Yes	Blog; F; Ins; T; Unt
1149	Willy Good Ales	Bradford on Avon	Yes	T; F; Ins
1150	Wilson Potter Brewery llp	Manchester	Yes	T; F
1151	The Wimbledon Brewery Co Ltd	London	Yes	T; F
1152	Winkle Beer Co Ltd	Winkle	Yes	F; T
1153	Windsor & Eton Brewing Co Ltd	Windsor	Yes	T; F; P; Ins
1154	Windswept Brewing	Moray	Yes	F; T; YT; G+
1155	Winster Valley Brewery	Windermere	Yes	None
1156	Winter's Brewery	Norwich	No	T
1157	Wiper & True Brewing Co	Bristol	Yes	T; F; Ins
1158	Wishbone Brewery Ltd	Keighley	Yes	Blog; F; T
1159	The Wobbly Brewing Co	Hereford	Yes	F; T; G+
1160	Wold Top Brewery	Driffield	Yes	F; T
1161	Wolf Brewery	Attleborough	Yes	None
1162	Wood Brewery Ltd	Craven Arms	Yes	T; F; RSS
1163	Wood Street Brewery	Sheffield	No	F
1164	Tom Woods Beers Ltd	Barnetby	No	T
1165	Wooden Hand Brewery	Truro	Yes	F; T
1166	Woodforde's Ltd	Norwich	Yes	T; F; YT; Ins
1167	Woodlands Brewing Co Ltd	Nantwich	No	F; T
1168	Wooha Brewing Co Ltd	Nairn	Yes	Ins; F; T
1169	Worsthorne Brewing Co Ltd	Burnely	Yes	T
1170	Wrekin Brewing Co Ltd	Wellington	Yes	F
1171	Wrexham Lager Beer Co	Wrexham	Yes	F; T
1172	Wriggle Valley Brewery	Sherborne	Yes	F
1173	George Wright Brewing Co	St Helens	Yes	T
1174	Wychwood Brewery Co Ltd	Witney	Yes	F; Ins; T; G+
1175	Wye Valley Brewery	Bromyard	Yes	F; T
1176	Wylam Brewery Ltd	Newcastle upon Tyne	Yes	F; T; Ins
1177	XT Brewting Company	Aylesbury	Yes	F; T
1178	Xtreme Ales	Peterborough	Yes	F; T; Unt
1179	Yates Brewery Ltd	Wigton	Yes	F

1180	Yates' Brewery	Sandown	Yes	None
1181	Yeovil Ales Ltd	Yeovil	Yes	F; T; Unt; PerfectPint
1182	Yetman's Brewery	Holt	Yes	None
1183	York Brewery Co Ltd	York	Yes	F; T
1184	Yorkshire Dales Brewing Co Ltd	Leyburn	Yes	None
1185	Yorkshire Heart Brewery	York	Yes	F; T
1186	12 Bar Brewing Co Ltd	Tonbridge	Yes	T
1187	The 1648 Brewing Co	Lewes	Yes	F
1188	The 3 Brewers Ltd	Hatfield	Yes	T
1189	3 Potts Brewing Co	Southport	No	F; T
1190	360 Brewing Co	Sheffield Park	Yes	T
1191	4T's Brewery Ltd	Warrington	No	T
1192	8 Sail Brewery	Sleaford	Yes	F; Unt
1193				
1194				

## Appendix 2

### Examples of Agency / Consultancy Based Social Media Categories

	<b>Mirna Bard (2010)</b>	<b>Decidedly Social (2012)</b>	<b>Cite (2012)</b>
	<b>Social Media Consultant</b>	<b>Social Media Marketing Agency</b>	<b>Digital Agency</b>
1	Social Networking <i>e.g. Facebook, Ning</i>	Social Networking <i>e.g. Facebook, Google+, CafeMum</i>	Social Networks <i>e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Google+</i>
2	Publishing <i>e.g. Slideshare</i>	Publishing Tools <i>e.g. WordPress, Blogger</i>	Blogs <i>e.g. WordPress, Blogger</i>
3	Microblogging <i>e.g. Twitter</i>	Microblogging <i>e.g. Twitter, Tumblr</i>	Microblogs <i>e.g. Twitter, Tumblr</i>
4	Aggregators <i>e.g. Google Reader, Digg</i>	Social Bookmarking <i>e.g. Digg, Delicious</i>	Social Bookmarking <i>e.g. StumbleUpon, Delicious, Digg</i>
5	Photo Sharing <i>e.g. Flickr</i>	Photo Sharing <i>e.g. Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest</i>	Multimedia <i>e.g. YouTube, Instagram</i>
6	Video <i>e.g. YouTube, Viddler</i>	Video Sharing <i>e.g. YouTube, Vimeo</i>	Online Rating Sites <i>e.g. Trip Advisor, Zagat</i>
7	Audio <i>e.g. Podcast.com, iTunes</i>	Personal Broadcasts <i>e.g. Ustream, Livestream</i>	Podcasts <i>(Syndicated Audio/Video Files)</i>
8	Live-Casting <i>e.g. Ustream, Livestream</i>	Collaboration Tools <i>e.g. Wikipedia, WikiTravel</i>	Forums Message Boards Chat Rooms
9	RSS <i>e.g. Feedburner</i>	Rating/Review Sites <i>e.g. Amazon ratings</i>	Social Knowledge <i>e.g. Wikipedia,</i>
10	Crowd Sourcing <i>e.g. Tweetbrain</i>	Location Based <i>e.g. Check-ins, FourSquare</i>	Geo-Location <i>e.g. FourSquare (Swarm)</i>
11	Mobile <i>e.g. AOL Mobile</i>	Virtual Worlds <i>e.g. Second Life World of Warcraft</i>	
12	Virtual Worlds <i>e.g. Second Life</i>	Widgets <i>e.g. 'Like buttons'</i>	
13	Gaming <i>World of Warcraft</i>	Group Buying <i>e.g. Groupon</i>	
14	Search <i>e.g. Bing, Google</i>		
15	Conversation Apps. <i>e.g. Skype</i>		



**Appendix 3**  
**Examples of blogger based social media categories**

	<b>Hootsuite (2015)</b>	<b>Physiotalk (2012)</b>
	<b>Hootsuite Blogging Site</b>	<b>Social Media Marketing Agency</b>
1	Relationship Networks <i>e.g. Facebook, Twitter</i>	Social Networks <i>e.g. Facebook, Lined In</i>
2	Media Sharing Networks <i>e.g. Flickr, YouTube</i>	Social Messaging <i>e.g. WhatsApp, WeChat, Snapchat</i>
3	Online Reviews (Inc. geo-located) <i>e.g. Airbnb, Uber</i>	Blogging <i>(Personal website where people write entries or posts)</i>
4	Discussion Forums <i>e.g. Reddit, Quora, Digg</i>	Microblogging <i>e.g. Twitter</i>
5	Social Publishing Platforms <i>e.g. WordPress, Blogger</i>	Media Sharing <i>e.g. Flickr, Instagram, Pinterest, YouTube</i>
6	Bookmarking Sites <i>e.g. StumbleUpon, Pinterest, Flipboard</i>	Forums <i>(Public or closed communities usually focused around a specific interest or thread)</i>
7	Interest Based Networks <i>e.g. Last.fm, Goodreads</i>	Wikis <i>e.g. Wikipedia</i>
8	E-Commerce <i>e.g. Polyvore, Etsy</i>	

#### Appendix 4: Example Interview Guide

- Thank you for seeing me. Explain what I am doing.
- Can you tell me a little bit about your brewery – history, size, beer range, etc.?
- I've seen that you're very active in your use of social media. When and why did you first start using it?
- How important is social media to your business now (has it changed the way in which you do business)?
- How do you anticipate social media as a marketing tool going into the future (will it ever replace traditional marketing)?
- Would you say that social media is more focused on developing relationships with the final consumer or does it have a place within business (supply chain/distributor) relationships?
- I've noticed that you follow, and are followed by lots of other breweries. To what extent is social media used for industry networking? (How does this compare with using it to develop consumer relationships?)
- Beer is a physical product. How do you envisage consumers experiencing your brands in an online context? (What role does social media play in developing brand relationships?)
- You've got x thousand likes on Facebook, and y thousand followers on Twitter. What do you think other users derive from independent brewery social media sites? (What makes them go there, what value do they derive?)
- How do you think social media affects consumer behaviour – does it sell more beer, or does it do something else?
- Some independent breweries don't use social media, and some only use it in a limited way. To what extent do you believe that your use of it give you a competitive advantage?

- Finally, what do you think is the biggest single issue that will affect your use of social media going forward?
- Thank you – I will transcribe the interview notes and send you a copy of approval before use.

## Appendix 5

### Example interview transcript (redacted for privacy)

Brewery Interview – XXX

Date: 05.09.16

Location: XXX

Time: 15.00

Duration: 45 Minutes

Interviewee: XXX

Position: Director

Interviewer: Mark Godson

...but what I'm doing is, err, it's not a PHD, it's a DBA – a Doctorate in Business Administration, so it's like an MBA, except it's a doctoral MBA. And basically, all the staff need to get doctorally qualified, so although I've been a lecturer there for nearly 20 years, errm, I've still go to become a doctor now. So I thought I'll do some research, but I'll do some research on something that actually interests me...

Yep...

...and I was sitting in the pub one night, and I think it was an Abbeydale beer mat I saw, and it said "*follow us on Twitter*", and I thought, why would anybody follow a brewery on Twitter and Facebook. So I thought let's do some research on that, because I'm not a big social media user myself,

Yep...

..it's kind of developed whilst I've been alive – I've not grown up with it.

No.

So, I'm really doing some research into independent brewers use of social media. It started off as micro-breweries, but some of the ones I've interviewed so far have been quite large, so I've just called them 'independent'...

Yeah, yeah,

...so it's not big ones like Marstons, or Greene King.

No,

Er-mm, so when I finally write this thing up I'll take out all names and references of brands,

Sure...

...so it will be totally confidential, and that's why I'm happy to send you a draft of what I'm doing so that you're happy. So you're obviously very active in the use of social media.

Yep.

You've got erm, as well as Facebook, Twitter and Pinterest, you've got a blog site as well.

Yes.

How and when did you first start using social media?

Errm, I think – I'm probably not going to be able to give you an exact date, but I think... in brewery terms we were a relative early adopter,

but not the earliest, if you see what I mean. So compared to our traditional peers, we were much further ahead of them. So I think probably we've been using it for the last (pauses to think) – six to eight years of so?

Yeah. And do you know where the instigation came from? Was it personal from people who work here...

It was probably from me, erm, you know I was on Facebook myself. I was living in XXX as well, because I worked for XXX Brewery down in XXX before I came back to the family business, so I was in XXX and I was on Facebook. And when I came back to join XXX six years ago, 2010 – sorry I moved to XXX in 2010 – 2008 I came back to work for XXX and that's when I started coming back and saying, right... *how are we using social media?* We had a Facebook page by then I think...

Yes,

...but we weren't actually doing much with it. Twitter also didn't really exist then...

No, it didn't did it...

...so we didn't have any – we weren't Twittering anything, it was, errm, Facebook mainly, and it was at that time...we always, as the brewery marketing side of things, Black Sheep had always been at the forefront of err, developing really good websites. So when people started getting websites I guess...in 2000...or maybe 1999 I guess...? Or a bit earlier. We probably had one by 97, so we were a bit earlier, quite early in having a web site, and we were quite keen on making it as good as we possibly could. And we used to quite regularly be winning awards for our website over the years, so that flipped over into the social media thing, when that started developing as well.

Yeah, yeah. And would you say it's now an indispensable part of your marketing package?

Yeah. Because it's... I mean even I've seen it change. When I started we were still doing a lot of traditional advertising I guess. You know, print advertising and people ringing you up trying to flog you advertising space and what have you, and the volume of those calls in the last four or five years has gone like that (*gestures downwards*). Because *a)* they know that they're going to get a “no” and *b)* they just know that they're fighting a losing battle against the social media



thing.

Yeah...

So yeah, I, I, when we sit down and look at our marketing plans every year, every year the social media part of it becomes a bigger and bigger topic in the conversation, and I guess it moves closer and closer towards the central part of what we do. We're not there yet – we probably should be but more [?] we employ... in the last two weeks we've employed a young lass whose sole purpose is media content management,

Right...

...which is a bit of a step for us, because before that we've just had people who dabble a bit within the marketing team, and now we've got XXX, who's come in, I mean that's what he's trained in. He's a good bloke, it's like you said earlier, he's grown up in that generation, so he knows how to manipulate it and get on with it.

Yes, I was going to ask you about... because there is this kind of feeling that social media is free, and that there is no cost involved, and

that's a myth isn't it?

I think so yeah. I think you're right there. You do have to... it's one of those classic things, you get as much out of it as you put in. And people think, well it's fine, I'll just get a Facebook and Twitter account and that's our social media sorted. But, as you know, it just sits there doing nothing, and you just have to be on it all the time, with engagement and putting things into it.

Yeah. I've compiled a, umm, database of all the brewers I can find in the UK, and this database, it's a huge great thing. And umm, most of them are using some form of social media, and err, there are still some that don't. There are some though that don't even have a website and just use Facebook or Twitter. Can you see a time when XXX might get to that stage, where umm, you don't really use the website?

Err, I err (long pause), possibly, I mean as it stands, the way that the Internet is set up, I guess, I couldn't see that happening in the next five or ten years. Beyond that, who knows what's going to happen. I think that's mainly driven by this place, because we have a proper retail establishment, where people need to find out some basic things, like 'when's the Visitor Centre open'; 'I'm on holiday here, we wanna

come and see the brewery', so this, you know, really the website mainly operates as that. If we were just purely a brewery, then that would probably accelerate that. And the other side of is we have a pretty solid growing online shop as well, which lives within the website. So, strip those two out of it, and if it was just purely a brewery, then I probably would say, yeah actually, you have a much more simplified web page, or you could probably get away without one.

Yeah, that's what I've seen, particularly with some smaller breweries, errm. But it leads me onto one of the other areas that really interested me, that, errm, a lot of businesses that use social media tend to be service based. So like, I don't know, restaurants, hotels, whereas beer is a physical product. How do you think social media helps you develop brand relationships with your customers?

*(pauses)*

That's a bit of a tricky one that isn't it? *(both laugh)*

Well, err, I think it... well it does. I don't think we've quite cracked it in err, in how we actually tap into it, which is what we've employed

Jack for, but errm, what it does do, which you never had before, because it was always filtered through the newspaper, or what you have you, it, it bypasses all the crap in the middle, and it means that you're going straight to your consumer, which is a great thing. So you can actually, at low cost, get messages out that can hit quite a lot of people if you do it in the right way, very cheaply. So it's definitely helped us do that. I think what we've realised very quickly, and we've tried it a number of different ways, is that everything that you say though, has to be completely authentic. You cannot get somebody else to do it for you, to do it credibly. And we've tried [?] at the beginning, and said 'oh, our PR agency can do a bit of tweeting for us' and it just ends up being a farce, because the way that they present talking and the way that they're doing it comes across as being very clunky and corporate, and the punters, the consumers can easily pick up on that. So, yeah, I think you have to do it yourself, it has to come... it's an emotional thing, so people respond if they feel like it's come from the heart, kind of thing. It can't be... you can't dress it up as a corporate message.

I think that comes down to the nub of what I'm really interested in, because social media is social, and yet it's being used by businesses. And, err, it's almost kind of breaking down this barrier, because, err, I

dunno, because I teach marketing and sometimes I find that there's more and more cynicism against traditional advertising, traditional marketing messages,

Yeah, yeah,

... and consumers are less willing to believe what they see as 'corporate speak', so it's interesting that you've said that, that kind of...yeah.

Yes, I mean from a marketer's point of view also, it's quite frustrating, because.... you do get to that point with social media like you said, where nobody will accept a corporate message, so it has to be dressed up in this very 'touchy-feely' often [?] bush frankly – you know what I mean?

I know what you mean, yeah,

Because, not everyone lives a fluffy wonderful life where you know, everyone has a beard and is very relaxed (laughs) – you know what I mean?

Yes, 'cos it's still a business that has to get a message out.

Yes (laughs) the messaging's very soft these days, it's erm, it's a tricky balance, I think that's the thing, of getting it right.

Is it, err, what value do you think customers get, and I'm talking about consumers here, the beer drinker. Errm, I mean you've got a phenomenal 25,000 I think followers on Twitter, and that's huge. I think that's bigger than of the brewers I've spoken to so far.

Mm-mm. We do better than most of the big brewers, yeah, we do really well.

Why do you think they're there, what are they following you for? What do they get out of it?

(Laughs), that's a good question...

I'm sorry, I, asking you some hard questions...

No, no, it's a good question. Errm, I think we, well XXX from it's inception, we've always had, the way that we've approached things

has always been like, fairly tongue in cheek and a pretty light approach to the way we do things, and people have bought into that over the years. And I think that naturally draws people to the brand if you like. And we are, never have been a crusty big business, corporate face, so that helps. And then I think, because we've actually been doing it than probably for a bit longer than some of the others, errm, and we've pushed as much as we can through that channel, that we've actually done quite well at engaging people with the content we're putting out. And we're not going mad with it, we could do a lot more with it, but I think we're giving people genuine stuff. We've changed the approach with, as you've seen today, with the beers. So we've gone from, maybe in the last five years we only had three or four mainstay beers, and that was all we brewed, to having very regular seasonal beers, new beers coming in, and the micro plant producing stuff, so we've got constant new stuff flipping around, and as you know people are very transient and they want..., they have an appetite for new things. So we've always got good stuff to feed into the pipeline which then, errm, people get into. And we've also done, particularly in XXX region, we've also been involved with certain things that people are interested in. I know that's, I mean we're sponsoring XXX, we do activity around the cricket. We had the XXX come to XXX, and we did a whole lot of stuff around the XXX, where XXX was born,

and all that goes with that. We've also keyed into some, pretty bigger scale, erm, Northern Yorkshire activities, that you know, just piggy backed on that I guess.

Yes, I think you did, erm, when I went to the XXX, you had the beer tent there.

Mm-mm.

It's a few years since I've been there actually.

Yes, we still do that. That's also, that's our biggest single event of the year, so that's another good, err, good touch point if you like, for people to come an experience XXX and [?] our road show and we go out.

And do you find that there's a lot of interest from much further afield in the UK, and even abroad?

Yeah. Yeah, I mean err, I think we're lucky in that we're one of the few brands, breweries, that works outside of our home turf. Because a lot of brew... like the micro guys, are typically a XXX business. There's



more micros in XXX than any other region, and they all work fantastically well in XXX, but take them out of XXX and you won't sell a drop of it. Because we've built a reputation that you can take our beer and plonk it in Truro in Cornwall, or London, a) people, the awareness levels – and we've just done a load of research actually, with XXX, on err, just those sort of questions about our awareness and how people feel about XXX, and we score very, very high on awareness levels, because we work hard on different marketing channels. You know, we've got a very strong story which helps... background story which helps, and people remember it, and the name sticks in people's minds. But we do the 'XXX' and we do sell quite a lot around the four corners of the country.

Yeah. I noticed when we walked through – I don't know whether they were beer mats, I think they were pump clips were XXX.

Yes, we have a XXX wholesaler and he approached us and said erm, you know the whole xxx theme thing, and he said, we're selling a bit, but I reckon we could do better if we translated it into XXX, so 'XXX', or whatever it is... XXX.

Yeah, it would really fit XXX very well wouldn't it?

Yeah, quite well, its quite a niche market (laughs).

Errm, one of the things I noticed, err, looking at all these brewers' err, Twitter and Facebook accounts, they're all followers of other brewers, and lot of other brewers are followers of other brewers... so to what extent is it an industry networking tool as well?

Errm, it's, yeah well, it's definitely... yes it is. It's more I guess... it's a good way of seeing what's going on, because there's so many brewers, well we've got nearly 1600, 1700 brewers in the UK, so there's a lot of activity out there, and a lot of noise, so it's a good way of keeping up with the Jones's and what's happening. And more than anything for us I think, it's good to see what your licensees are doing. For me, it's less the brewers and more the pub side of it. And the guys at certain pubs really embrace it. There's a bit of a sort of, 'all or nothing' with some of them, so you either get a pub that is massively into it, the whole ethos of what they do is driven through that. Or you get, like you said before, someone who's never even seen the Internet, and they just simply don't exist on it. So we, yeah, we do quite well with those pubs that are engaged.

Yeah. Err, do you use it, erm, presumably primarily it's a tool for communicating with the end consumer, but to what extent is it used in a business-to-business environment – I think you kind of touched on that.

We, err, we do a little bit. We're not anywhere near as much as we could do with that, and that's something I've been looking at and trying to change our focus over the next year or two, so let's use it more and more and more. And, so I think we have touched on it but we've got a long way to go with that. I mean we, we do work with I've said the pubs that are plugged into it . We will help them promote stuff, or do joint stuff with them on it. But it's erm, an inexact science at the moment, 'cos as I've said, some are doing it, some aren't. But we could get a lot more organized with targeting and using it a lot more proactively which is our aim.

Yeah, okay, erm, I think I'm more or less done, but there is one big question, which I've asked everyone, which is err, how do you think the social media affects the behaviour of your consumer? Does it sell more beer, or is it, does it do something else? Sorry, it's another difficult question...

Yeah, I err, I don't think anyone has proved yet that effective social media actually genuinely helps you sell more beer, and I, err, (pauses) well I don't think it does. What it does do is it generates awareness. It generates an emotional response from people, so it's a great way of tapping into that – which ultimately does help you sell beer, because people will walk in, they'll have a positive reaction to your brand on the bar. But I think it's very... almost unmeasurable.

It is. It's like most marketing isn't it, you can't measure how effective an advert is.

No.

Unless you've got a coupon attached to it which people send back or something.

Yeah, yeah.

No, I guess the question was really based around your objectives. Is it because you want to be there, because you want to create an image, or a buzz, or because you want to tell people something or because you want to sell more beer, or ultimately it will all come down to selling

more beer.

I think everything we do, everything we do that is marketing, you'll be aware, is based upon the premise that it should help to sell more products. As you then said it's hard to quantify whether that actually happens or not. Believe me, I sit in enough board room meetings going [?] 'and we didn't see the volumes going up' and I go 'well we didn't, but... we've generated this much awareness, we've done this, and that means that they'll come back and repurchase our beers, and they'll have a better feeling about our beers and therefore there is a much higher percentage that will choose our beers when they walk into the pub for the next visit'. The social media stuff, I guess at the minute, it's, we're still finding our feet with it I think, and we're still, we, we're at the point where we've done a bit of it, we're not anything like... if you look at some of the key... craft guys, whether you're Brewdog, or Beavertown, these sort of guys, and they've built everything around social media and they are much more dynamic with it than we are, and they've based all of their messaging around it. Also, they tend to be in much more urban areas – Beavertown are in East London, so everyone in London is much more plugged into it. So I think there's, there's a little bit around urban versus rural, and the profile of the consumer that you're talking to as well. So, someone

who's drinking Beavertown beer is likely to be maximum aged 40, or so my sort of age and below, whereas we as XXX, we have younger drinkers, but we also have a good plethora of guys who have grown up with us, who are now 50, 60,70, and with the best will in the world, social media means absolutely bugger all to them.

That's right.

So yeah, we sort of sit with our feet over both sides of that fence.

Yes, yes, that makes sense, I can see the sense of that. Like I said at the beginning, I don't really use social media that much, I kind of dabble in it, but err, as a key customer of yours, and lots of breweries, I mean I like drinking beer, but this really comes down to my original question – why are brewers using social media? I think that's it XXX, I think you've answered my question. Do you have anything you want to ask me about marketing or social media?

Well, what have you found from talking to other brewers? Are we...

Pretty much the same. Pretty much the same. What I've found is that more of them, well not more – some of them are using it increasingly

for the business-to-business side of things, so you know, I've had one brewery saying that the pubs will contact him directly on Facebook, and he's got to pick this up all over the weekend, because they haven't got a pump clip, or they need this or that, and instead of going through the traditional channels – a phone call on a Monday morning, or an e-mail, they're using social media. So as you've said, 'I've got to be on the ball...'

Yeah, I mean we... I don't think we get much of that, we still much more through the traditional channels with that, erm, it's a bit of an odd one as well, isn't it, it's kind of like, if that's visible as well to your whole customer base, that's not really what it's all about is it, but...

Yeah, well that's true. The other thing that's coming through is the geographical thing, the lack of boundaries, erm, as you've said you're known in all four *corners* of the UK and other brewers have said, you know, we get messages from guys in Germany when they've launched a new brew, suddenly, '*where can I get this beer in Germany?*'

Yeah, we get that as well, erm, because we do quite.. we don't do... well I'm working on that at the moment – export. We do a relatively small amount, but we've been doing it a while, and we have the XXX

official beer, which we've done for quite a few years, and we've just re-branded all that and we've given it a lot more push, and it goes very well in America, so... We get most of our hits on the website about errm at least a third of them come from America, so we've been looking at... what I want to do is actually is re-skin our landing page for example. So if it's coming from America, they'll actually see something different to what people see when they land in the UK, because generally they're looking for different things, they want to look at XXX, and there's a few variants in the States which aren't available here in the UK, so at the moment they'll land on our web page and they'll go *'I'm trying to find out about this beer and I can't see anything about it'* on our web page. So it's almost like having to tailor make your web page to create an American version of your own web page so that's quite an interesting one.

It is interesting isn't it, yeah. Errm, what I'm going to do, err when I've written this thing up, which is what I'm going to try and do some time next year, I'll send you a copy of it. I'll anonymise all the different brewers – I'm hoping to talk to about 20, and they vary in size as I've said, I'm not going to any of the really large ones, but they vary in size right down to micro brewers.



Have you got all the contacts of the brewers that you want to talk to...

Errm, I think so yes...

Because I was going to say if you have any that haven't responded, or that you want to talk to, then we've probably got the contacts to give them a nudge and say...

There are a couple in XXX who have not got back to me yet, but I know who I need to talk to, so at the moment I've got quite a lot of people. I'm getting quite geographical because, I was in XXX the week before last, so I did a brewer up there, and my brother lives in Dorset, so I'm hoping to get down there – XXX is an interesting one. And you mentioned XXX – I've got relatives in Cornwall, so I'd like to get into XXX. But it's all time and when term time starts again, I'm going to have to start teaching students again, so...

Yeah, that's starting in a couple of weeks...

Yes, so I'm running out of time for all these things. It's very fortuitous that I won this competition, because otherwise I wouldn't have... it's pure coincidence that, but no, I really appreciate your time. Errm, no

it's been brilliant that, thanks so much XXX.

I hope that helps. It wasn't too scientific!

## Appendix 6 - Ethics Approval



### RESEARCH ETHICS CHECKLIST (SHUREC1)

This form is designed to help staff and postgraduate research students to complete an ethical scrutiny of proposed research. The SHU [Research Ethics Policy](#) should be consulted before completing the form.

Answering the questions below will help you decide whether your proposed research requires ethical review by a Faculty Research Ethics Committee (FREC). In cases of uncertainty, members of the FREC can be approached for advice.

**Please note:** staff based in University central departments should submit to the University Ethics Committee (SHUREC) for review and advice.

The final responsibility for ensuring that ethical research practices are followed rests with the supervisor for student research and with the principal investigator for staff research projects.

Note that students and staff are responsible for making suitable arrangements for keeping data secure and, if relevant, for keeping the identity of participants anonymous. They are also responsible for following SHU guidelines about data encryption and research data management.

The form also enables the University and Faculty to keep a record confirming that research conducted has been subjected to ethical scrutiny.

- For postgraduate research student projects, the form should be completed by the student and counter-signed by the supervisor, and kept as a record showing that ethical scrutiny has occurred. Students should retain a copy for inclusion in their thesis, and staff should keep a copy in the student file.
- For staff research, the form should be completed and kept by the principal investigator.

Please note if it may be necessary to conduct a health and safety risk assessment for the proposed research. Further information can be obtained from the Faculty Safety Co-ordinator.

## General Details

Name of principal investigator or postgraduate research student	Mark Godson
SHU email address	m.godson@shu.ac.uk
Name of supervisor (if applicable)	Dr. John Nicholson & Dr. Alisha Ali
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Title of proposed research	Online social media: a study of marketing application and opportunity in microbreweries
Proposed start date	September 2011
Proposed end date	September 2017
Brief outline of research to include, rationale & aims (500 - 750 words).	<p><b>Research area</b></p> <p>My area of interest is how Internet based social networking applications have challenged existing marketing theory and practice by creating a 'new landscape' in which customers not only interact with organizations and their brands, but also with each other (Godson, 2011). A key feature of this new landscape is the contention that control of the way in which marketing messages are disseminated and interpreted has shifted away from the organization to the consumer (Fournier &amp; Avery, 2011; Mangold &amp; Faulds, 2009), thus opening up questions around the role that online social media might play in the marketing of organizations and the way in which it is interpreted by consumers. Of particular note here are the increasing claims from some quarters that marketing as a subject area has yet to come to grips with this new landscape (Schultz, 2009; Broderick &amp; Kipnis, 2010).</p> <p>It is my contention that relationship marketing, anchored through the co-creation of value principle of social-dominant logic theory (Vargo &amp; Lusch, 2004) can provide a platform from which to explore these issues.</p> <p><b>Broad research question</b></p> <p>The purpose of my research is therefore to explore how consumers experience microbrewery beer brands in an online context in order to develop an understanding that will be of significance not only to scholars but also to the microbrewers themselves. The broad aim is to present an analysis of consumers' interpretations as shaped by social interactions online in order to inform microbreweries' use of social media as</p>

a marketing tool.

### **Specific research questions**

- How are microbreweries currently using social media to engage with their customers?
- What is the nature of the relationship between online social media networks and microbrewery beer brands?
- How and why does the use of online social media by microbreweries as a marketing tool affect consumer behaviour?
- How might microbreweries leverage social media to enhance competitiveness?

### **My background / interest**

At a broad level my research is all about how technology is changing the world at a seemingly ever-increasing rate and how this represents a challenge for businesses to stay ahead of the game. Organizations will need to understand how technology will affect their business, and perhaps more importantly their customers. In particular I am interested in how online social media (Facebook, YouTube, Twitter etc.) is affecting the way in which consumers relate to brands. Sitting in a pub one evening, I noticed a beer mat for Abbeydale Brewery which said "follow us on Twitter" and I just thought why?

My purpose therefore is to examine brand engagement by consumers of small microbrewery beer brands - not only through brewery supported social networking but also on sites set up by the consumers themselves. From here I hope to suggest a framework through which microbreweries and their customers might engage in a way that is beneficial to both. In doing so, the research is intended to produce outcomes that are not only of use to management practitioners, but are also able to add to academic theory in this area.

### **Topicality of online social media in marketing**

I believe that this is interesting because it combines a young and vibrant industry with a new and exciting potential marketing platform. Facebook.com has over 600m users and is predicted to top 1 billion within the next 3 years. The population of

	<p>Facebook would make it the world's third largest country. The average user has 130 friends and over 700 billion minutes per month are spent on Facebook. Many commentators (Schultz, De Kare Silver etc.) claim that this is heralding a revolution in consumer relationships and yet most articles in this field look at big organizations in predominantly service sectors: banking, retailing, entertainment, communications etc. Looking at these issues in the microbrewery sector lends topicality and originality to the research.</p> <p><b>Methodology</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Qualitative, face to face depth interviews with a selection of microbrewery owners or managers.</li> <li>• Downloading data from social media sites set up by the brewers and also those set up by consumers of beer for the purpose of discussing beer.</li> </ul>
<p>Where data is collected from human participants, outline the nature of the data, details of anonymisation, storage and disposal procedures if these are required (300 -750 words).</p>	<p>Data from the face to face depth interviews with the brewers will be recorded for analysis purposes later. The purpose if the interviews is to find out what attitudes microbrewers have towards social media as a means to engage with their customers and how they are currently using this. It is not anticipated that the data will be particularly sensitive but all the respondents will be anonymized in terms of their name, the name of their company, their location and the names of their brands of beer. Each company will be offered a copy of the thesis upon completion.</p> <p>In terms of my research on the social media platforms themselves, this falls under what has been called 'netnography'. Given that my research concerns consumers' online relationships with brands, there is scope for me to use a form of ethnography by going online myself and interacting with the breweries, with other customers and joining forums and chat rooms in order to conduct my research and gather the thick descriptions described above. This form of ethnography is generally known as netnography, a term coined by Robert Kozinets (1998) who has gone on to develop the concept into a distinct research method with its own processes and protocols (O'Donohue, 2010).</p> <p>In undertaking any kind of ethnographic study a decision must be</p>

taken whether to undertake the research overtly or covertly. Whilst Bryman & Bell (2011) concede that most ethnographic research in management studies is conducted overtly, the anonymity afforded by the Internet makes the potential use of covert research using netnography much easier (Langer & Beckman, 2005). Although covert research has some benefits (in terms of reducing respondents' reactivity to the presence of a researcher) it raises ethical questions as it does not allow for respondents to give 'informed consent', and could potentially invade their privacy. Langer & Beckman (2005) justified their use of covert netnographic research by distinguishing between what is (semi) private and what is public information on the Internet. Anything requiring pass-word access could be construed as semi-private, whereas anything where access is not restricted (e.g. blogs, forums etc.) can be defined as public communication. This raises another key difference between ethnography, which generally involves physical access to groups and netnography, which accesses groups via communications media. Nevertheless, Kozinets (2002) is clear that the researcher should fully disclose his or her presence, ensure confidentiality and anonymity of respondents, and obtain informed consent to use any specific postings that online members might make. It is not clear at this stage if I will actively take part in online discussions relating to beer brands, but if I do so, it is my intention to make myself known on the social media site as a researcher (as well as an interested participant) as described by Kozinets above.

In terms of my own research I could use netnography simply to observe and to gather data from public online forums, tweets and blogs and need not necessarily reveal my identity. It is not my intention to use social media or the Internet for interviewing purposes. It is not anticipated that anything of a sensitive nature would crop up, but any data downloaded from any such sites would be aggregated and analyzed through a software application such as NCapture and anonymized in terms of individual's name (including any nickname or avatar). The names of any for a or chat rooms used would be anonymized, and if the social media site from which data was downloaded belonged to a brewery, this too would be anonymized.

Finally, I can confirm that I have read the guidelines produced by Association of Internet Researchers and will be using the checklist suggested in their article Ethical Decision Making and Internet

	Research (Markham et al, 2012).
Will the research be conducted with partners & subcontractors?	<b>No</b> (If <b>YES</b> , outline how you will ensure that their ethical policies are consistent with university policy.)

**1. Health Related Research involving the NHS or Social Care / Community Care or the Criminal Justice System or with research participants unable to provide informed consent**

Question	Yes/No
1. Does the research involve?	
• Patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care	No
• Relatives/carers of patients recruited because of their past or present use of the NHS or Social Care	No
• Access to data, organs or other bodily material of past or present NHS patients	No
• Foetal material and IVF involving NHS patients	No
• The recently dead in NHS premises	No
• Prisoners or others within the criminal justice system recruited for health-related research*	No
• Police, court officials, prisoners or others within the criminal justice system*	No
• <del>Participants who are unable to provide informed consent due to their</del>	
2. Is this a research project as opposed to service evaluation or audit? <i>For NHS definitions please see the following website</i> <a href="http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/is-your-project-research/">http://www.nres.nhs.uk/applications/is-your-project-research/</a>	N/A

If you have answered **YES** to questions **1 & 2** then you **must** seek the appropriate external approvals from the NHS, Social Care or the National Offender Management Service (NOMS) under their independent Research Governance schemes. Further information is provided below.

NHS <https://www.myresearchproject.org.uk/Signin.aspx>

\* Prison projects may also need National Offender Management Service (NOMS) Approval and Governor's Approval and may need Ministry of Justice approval. Further guidance at:  
<http://www.hra.nhs.uk/research-community/applying-for-approvals/national-offender-management-service-noms/>

**NB** FRECs provide Independent Scientific Review for NHS or SC research and initial scrutiny for ethics applications as required for university sponsorship of the research.



Applicants can use the NHS proforma and submit this initially to their FREC.

## 2. Research with Human Participants

Question	Yes/No
1. Does the research involve human participants? This includes surveys, questionnaires, observing behaviour etc. <i>Note If YES, then please answer questions 2 to 10 If NO, please go to Section 3</i>	Yes
2. Will any of the participants be vulnerable? <i>Note 'Vulnerable' people include children and young people, people with learning disabilities, people who may be limited by age or sickness or disability, etc. See definition</i>	No
3. Are drugs, placebos or other substances (e.g. food substances, vitamins) to be administered to the study participants or will the study involve invasive, intrusive or potentially harmful procedures of any kind?	No
4. Will tissue samples (including blood) be obtained from participants?	No
5. Is pain or more than mild discomfort likely to result from the study?	No
6. Will the study involve prolonged or repetitive testing?	No
7. Is there any reasonable and foreseeable risk of physical or emotional harm to any of the participants? <i>Note Harm may be caused by distressing or intrusive interview questions, uncomfortable procedures involving the participant, invasion of privacy, topics relating to highly personal information, topics relating to illegal activity, etc.</i>	No
8. Will anyone be taking part without giving their informed consent?	No
9. Is it covert research? <i>Note 'Covert research' refers to research that is conducted without the knowledge of participants.</i>	No
10. Will the research output allow identification of any individual who has not given their express consent to be identified?	No

If you answered **YES only** to question 1, you must complete the box below and submit the signed form to the FREC for registration and scrutiny.

<p><b>Data Handling</b></p> <p>Where data is collected from human participants, outline the nature of the data, details of anonymisation, storage and disposal procedures if these are required (300 -750 words).</p> <p>See details above regarding the collection of data from face to face interviewees. This data will be stored on my own electronic device and used for analysis purposes through a software package NVivo. The data will be anonymized as described above. For these reasons it is not envisaged that disposal of the data will be an</p>
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issue.

See also details above regarding the observation (and possible participation) of online social networking sites relevant to my research area. Again, data will be downloaded and stored on a personal electronic device, prior to analysis through a data aggregating package NCapture. Again, all data will be anonymized, including anything which might identify an individual and also the name of the site where data was sourced. For these reasons it is not envisaged that disposal of the data will be an issue.

If you have answered **YES** to any of the other questions you are **required** to submit a SHUREC2A (or 2B) to the FREC. If you answered **YES** to question **8** and participants cannot provide informed consent due to their incapacity you must obtain the appropriate approvals from the NHS research governance system.

### 3. Research in Organisations

Question	Yes/No
1 Will the research involve working with/within an organisation (e.g. school, business, charity, museum, government department, international agency, etc.)?	Yes
2 If you answered YES to question 1, do you have granted access to conduct the research? <i>If YES, students please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain safely.</i>	No
3 If you answered NO to question 2, is it because: A. you have not yet asked B. you have asked and not yet received an answer C. you have asked and been refused access.  <i>Note You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted access.</i>	I have not yet asked

### 4. Research with Products and Artefacts

Question	Yes/No
1. Will the research involve working with copyrighted documents, films, broadcasts, photographs, artworks, designs, products, programmes, databases, networks, processes, existing datasets or secure data?	Yes

<p>2. If you answered YES to question 1, are the materials you intend to use in the public domain?</p> <p><i>Notes 'In the public domain' does not mean the same thing as 'publicly accessible'.</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Information which is 'in the public domain' is no longer protected by copyright (i.e. copyright has either expired or been waived) and can be used without permission.</li> <li>– Information which is 'publicly accessible' (e.g. TV broadcasts, websites, artworks, newspapers) is available for anyone to consult/view. It is still protected by copyright even if there is no copyright notice. In UK law, copyright protection is automatic and does not require a copyright statement, although it is always good practice to provide one. It is necessary to check the terms and conditions of use to find out exactly how the material may be reused etc.</li> </ul> <p><i>If you answered YES to question 1, be aware that you may need to consider other ethics codes. For example, when conducting Internet research, consult the code of the Association of Internet Researchers; for educational research, consult the Code of Ethics of the British Educational Research Association.</i></p>	Yes
<p>3. If you answered NO to question 2, do you have explicit permission to use these materials as data?</p> <p><i>If YES, please show evidence to your supervisor. PI should retain permission.</i></p>	
<p>4. If you answered NO to question 3, is it because:</p> <p>A. you have not yet asked permission</p> <p>B. you have asked and not yet received and answer</p> <p>C. you have asked and been refused access.</p> <p><i>Note You will only be able to start the research when you have been granted permission to use the specified material.</i></p>	<b>A/B/C</b>

**Adherence to SHU policy and procedures**

<b>Personal statement</b>	
<p>I can confirm that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– I have read the Sheffield Hallam University Research Ethics Policy and Procedures</li> <li>– I agree to abide by its principles.</li> </ul>	
<b>Student / Researcher/ Principal Investigator (as applicable)</b>	
Name: Mark Godson	Date: 28 June 2016
Signature:	
<b>Supervisor or other person giving ethical sign-off</b>	

I can confirm that completion of this form has not identified the need for ethical approval by the FREC or an NHS, Social Care or other external REC. The research will not commence until any approvals required under Sections 3 & 4 have been received.	
Name: John Nicholson	Date: 28 June 2016
Signature:	
Additional Signature if required:	
Name:	Date:
Signature:	

**Please ensure the following are included with this form if applicable, tick box to indicate:**

	Yes	No	N/A
Research proposal if prepared previously	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Any recruitment materials (e.g. posters, letters, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant information sheet	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Participant consent form	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Details of measures to be used (e.g. questionnaires, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outline interview schedule / focus group schedule	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Debriefing materials	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Health and Safety Project Safety Plan for Procedures	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Data Management Plan*	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

If you have not already done so, please send a copy of your Data management Plan to [rdm@shu.ac.uk](mailto:rdm@shu.ac.uk)

It will be used to tailor support and make sure enough data storage will be available for your data.

**Completed form to be sent to Relevant FREC. Contact details on the website.**