How Do Craft Beer Brands Negotiate Authenticity Using Retro Branding?

Master's Degree Project in Marketing and Consumption

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A Consumer Culture Theory Study on Craft Beer Brands

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Abstract: Craft beer brands are booming. However, many craft beer brands employ exceedingly similar retro-evocative techniques to negotiate authenticity with consumers. This article explores how craft beer brands systematically use retro marketing as a tool to negotiate authenticity with customers, through a consumer culture theory (CCT) lens. Moreover, the article seeks to examine potential implications of this largely homogenous use of discursive retro branding and faux heritage practices among craft beer brands, in the context of consumer authenticity and enchantment. The article finds that the current largely homogenous discursive retro branding practices risk eroding authenticity and enchantment. As these branding practices entangle brand connotations in the minds of consumers, this article finds craft beer firms should employ further marketing activities beyond these retro branding initiatives to remain relevant. Furthermore, the findings also suggest that the forced point-of-sale for craft beers in a Swedish setting - *Systembolaget* - exerts a negative impact on craft brands' ability to negotiate brand authenticity.

1. Introduction

This article explores the concept of craft beer marketing and how craft beer brands employ retro branding to appeal to consumers. It examines the background to the recent boom in craft beer production, as a counter-reaction to generic mass-produced beer brands, in order to understand the context of current craft beer brands. Furthermore, the article also explores how many craft beer brands negotiate authenticity, legitimacy and enchantment with consumers using a similar "recipe for legitimacy". Choosing to explore retro branding in the craft beer industry is due partly to beer production being an age-old activity, and partly to previous research lacking a comprehensive examination of the craft beer retro branding angle.

Beer constitutes an integral part of Western society. This, however, is nothing new. Routine beer production and beer consumption in Europe has been taking place in largely the same way over the last roughly 3,000 years (Nelson, 2005). Nevertheless, this was all upended in 1765, with James Watts' substantial improvements to the steam engine (Miller, 2004). This leapfrog invention did not only kickstart the Industrial Revolution - it also enabled the industrialization of large-scale beer brewing (Deboek, 2007). The ensuing reign of industrialized, mass-production of beer would go on to be undisputed for more than 200 years. Nevertheless, the last few decades have seen a sudden and noticeable re-emergence of artisan beer brands (Reid et al., 2014).

Craft beer brands and microbreweries touting their originality and uniqueness are rapidly gaining ground all around the globe (Bastian et al., 1999; Murray & O'Neill, 2012), and especially in the Western world. In fact, Danson, Galloway, Cabras and Beatty (2015) find that craft beer brands and microbreweries in Europe are steadily gaining market share against the traditional beer behemoths such as Anheiser-Busch InBEV, Heineiken and Carlsberg. This "David and Goliath"-esque story of small-scale breweries successfully taking on corporate conglomerates (Danson, Galloway, Cabras & Beatty, 2015) illustrates that something about these craft beers brands are clearly resonating with consumers. Previous studies on craft beer brands suggest that their "uniqueness" (Bastian et al., 1999) is enough to successfully enshrine them with what is commonly referred to as "authenticity" (Ritzer, 1999; Leigh et al., 2006), which

consumers value. However, the substantial growth of craft beer brands' sales and market share (Murray & O'Neill, 2012) threatens to create a potential issue with craft beer brands' perceived authenticity.

We posit that the notion of authenticity (Ritzer, 1999; Leigh et al., 2006) is central to all craft brands, as they rely heavily on their "uniqueness" and seek to capture the minds of consumers (Bastian et al., 1999). Nevertheless, the rapid rise in similar craft beer companies during the past decades (Bastian et al., 1999; Murray & O'Neill, 2012; Danson, Galloway, Cabras & Beatty, 2015) threaten to erode the craft beer brands' uniqueness, authenticity and enchantment. Subscribing to the widely-accepted view of considering brands as assemblages of meaning (Lury, 2009) that are produced through social constructivism (Shankar, Elliott & Goulding, 2001) suggests that consumers continuously assist in the ongoing negotiation regarding the brand itself. As such, consumers construe craft beer brands not only through an official brand heritage but more so through its perceived legitimacy and authenticity. However, seeing as retaining and successfully negotiating authenticity is of particular importance to craft beer brands, an interesting marketing conundrum becomes clear. Many craft beer brands use similar discursive processes to enshrine their brands with seemingly "authentic" traits. These discursive processes often attempt to portray the craft beer brand as being age-old, well-established or otherwise reputable, and locally rooted, clearly relating to retro marketing techniques (Fort-Rioche and Ackermann, 2013).

Although this "retro branding formula" has clearly been a successful branding strategy in the past, it is worth examining whether craft beer brands are, in fact, still successfully negotiating authenticity with consumers using this approach. The relatively recent explosion in the number of craft beer brands (Bastian et al., 1999; Murray & O'Neill, 2012; Danson, Galloway, Cabras & Beatty, 2015) presents companies with a dilemma. This quandary becomes an interesting question to examine, not only from a theoretical perspective, but also for the countless craft companies looking to build sustainable brands that can successfully resonate with consumers both now and long-term.

A largely homogenous usage of imagery and perceived brand identity in craft beer brands, relying heavily on retro marketing-derived imagery, appears to fundamentally conflict

with the small-scale philosophy of craft production. A seemingly industrialized usage of brand identity runs the risk of purging the conveyed brand heritage (Brown et al., 2003) from any discernible meaning or sense of specialness. Consequently, it is clear that this could, by extension, act to erode authenticity. As such, examining how craft beer brands employ retro branding to negotiate authenticity deals with several interesting facets of craft brand marketing. Namely, how do craft beer brands reconcile their small-scale, "unique" artisanry identity (Bastian et al., 1999) with a largely standardized usage of "retro branding" without eroding authenticity?

1.1 Contextual Background

Although craft production predates mass-production by centuries, its recent upswing is interesting. The massive growing interest in the craft beer industry (Bastian et al., 1999; Murray & O'Neill, 2012; Danson, Galloway, Cabras & Beatty, 2015) is by no means an outlier or singularity. Rather, there is a building trend towards small-scale, often environmentally friendly, craft production across a number of industries. For example, burgeoning craft production of everything from clothes, cheeses or coffee to soaps and seeds (Murray & O'Neill, 2012) demonstrates that there is growing demand for craft production.

Craft beer companies are also seizing on the notion of brand heritage (Brown et al., 2003). However, many of the craft beer brands are essentially brand-new - no pun intended - and subsequently lack a real brand heritage to draw from. This is not an insurmountable issue in itself. Hudson and Balmer's (2013) thoughts on "mythical heritages" demonstrate that it is possible to successfully construct a fictional past. Moreover, "staged authenticity" indicates that this fabrication does not necessarily have to feature actual ties to reality - but it does have to approximate reality in a convincing way (Leigh et al., 2006). Weaving a convincing brand narrative to negotiate authenticity is something many craft beer brands have been exceptionally adept at.

For example, consider the example of the Gothenburg-based craft beer brewery "Poppels", Sweden's largest organic craft beer brewery ("Om Poppels", 2020). The company's name is taken from one of Gothenburg's most famous historical beer brewers, the 17th century

braumeister Johan Casparsson Poppelman, who started the legendary *Poppelmans Bryggeri,* Poppelman's Brewery (Wiberg, 1934). In fact, Poppels was actually founded back in 2012 as "Poppelmans Bryggeri", outright copying the name of the historic Gothenburg brewery. Poppels was eventually forced to shorten its name from Poppelmans Bryggeri to Poppels Bryggeri after being faced with a potential intellectual property infringement lawsuit from one of Poppelman's descendants (Förander, 2015). However, the historical connotations and the creation of a mythical heritage (Hudson & Balmer, 2013) of the Poppels brand are still clear to anyone with knowledge of historic beer brewing in Gothenburg.

Moreover, this is far from the only example. Sweden's most popular craft beer brewery, "Oppigårds Bryggeri" was founded in Sweden's *Dalarna* region as late as 2003, but takes its name from a local barton from the early 1700s (Falkeström, 2014). In fact, the founder of Oppigårds Bryggeri, Björn Falkeström, explicitly states that he wanted to conjure up imagery from a long-gone era when local craft beer brewers were abundant and necessary, due to the lack of mass-produced beer (Falkeström, 2014). The trend is clear. Sweden's fourth largest craft brewery, Nils Oscar, was founded in 1996 - but takes its name from Nils Oscar Sundberg, a man born in 1865, and the beer bottles' design is plain and strongly reminiscent of 19th century beer bottles ("Om Nils Oscar", 2016). Sweden's fifth largest craft beer brewery, Nynäshamns Ångbryggeri, was founded in 1997 - but takes its brand name verbatim from an prestigious local brewery that was active between 1912 and 1926 (Landin, 2010). According to the founding members of Nynäshamn Ångbryggeri, they felt it was important for their name to be locally and historically rooted, which is why they named their craft beer brewery after the early 1900s brewery ("Nynäshamns Ångbryggeri", 2013).

This demonstrates that numerous craft beer breweries rely heavily on a mythological heritage (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). Moreover, they understand the potency of retro branding and nostalgic discursive narratives that are rooted in the past. Moreover, their use of nostalgic discursive narratives extends far beyond just the craft breweries' naming conventions. Many of them are also using slightly archaic expressions or wording, clearly meant to evoke feelings of nostalgia, and most employ vintage bottle designs. This strategy has, at least until now, been wildly successful for craft beer brands to create authenticity, legitimacy and enchantment with

consumers. In fact, it would likely be possible to construct a "legitimacy formula" for Swedish craft beer brands over the past 25 years using factors such as giving the brand an historical local name, evoking a simpler time, and using simple and rustic bottle designs.

Nevertheless, the growing number of craft beer brands using similar discursive narratives for negotiating brand equity and authenticity means that using this same "legitimacy formula" becomes associated with more risk. Leigh et al. (2006) suggest that this type of staged authenticity is only successful when it convincingly approximates reality. As an increasing number of craft beer brands employ largely interchangeable discursive narratives, and appropriate analogous "mythical heritages" (Hudson & Balmer, 2013), they risk eroding their authenticity (Ritzer, 1999), legitimacy (Leigh et al., 2006), and ultimately breaking the staged authenticity, shattering consumers' enchantment.

Research Question: *How do craft beer brands negotiate authenticity using retro branding?*

2. Theoretical Framework

To understand how consumers perceive craft beer brands' retro-branding efforts and the brands' negotiation of authenticity, one needs to appreciate the underlying concepts. The notion of retro marketing and branding (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003) is central to this article, and is subsequently necessary to explore in this theoretical framework. Moreover, growing rationalization and disillusion with mass-production (Ritzer, 1999, 2000) is similarly vital to understanding the recent success of craft beer brands. Additionally, it is also necessary to explore the interplay of authenticity and brand heritage in creating favorable conditions for consumer enchantment (Ostergaard, Fitchett & Jantzen, 2013). The chosen theoretical framework explores all of these constructs and touches on the interplay between them, allowing us to examine how craft beer brands negotiate authenticity with consumers using retro branding.

2.1 Retro marketing

Retro marketing can be defined as the usage of old brands and products with a historical aspect to enhance the desire for a product or service (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003).

Moreover, understanding retro branding requires one to be familiar with retro marketing. According to Fort-Rioche and Ackermann (2013, p. 495), retro marketing is "a generic term used to describe marketing strategies capitalizing on the past to sell up-to-date products and services". The service or products are developed to install a nostalgic feeling for the consumer. Although a familiar term to marketers, retro marketing is not always well-understood by consumers. In today's society, a lot of marketing is focused around product innovation and creating new or modern products and services. Unlike this, however, retro marketing instead highlightings the retro aspect of a product or service. Retro marketing is instead about developing a product that refers to historical brands, products or designs hat create a feeling of nostalgia and authenticity (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003; Dyck, 2014). For example, the re-launch of the outdated Nokia 3310 sought to bring back consumers' memories of the Finnish brand and the iconic phone first released in early 2000 (Kalyani, 2017). Often, as in this case, retro marking is used by enhancing the historical aspect of the product but with updated features and design (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). The new Nokia 3310 was not designed as the old counterpart, but with new, modern software and hardware. This way the products became a valid option for the consumers whilst bringing forth the nostalgia that the overall, old, characteristics of the mobile phone possess. Moreover, retro marketing covers a wide variety of subcategories, such as retroization marketing, brand revitalization and retro branding (Hallegatte et al., 2018). By revamping old, previously successful, brands and products retro marketing aims to create a feeling of nostalgia among the consumers.

One of the key concepts of retro marketing is nostalgia. It can be defined as a longing for the past, often portrayed as a better, utopic, place and time (Brown, Kozinets & Sherry, 2003). There exists a reminisce of the past and how things were back then. To simply view nostalgia as demand for the past is although not enough to fully understand the concept of nostalgia within the field of retro marketing. Nostalgia can also be used as a marketing tool for adolescent people (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli, and Mueller, 2012). This contradicts the concept of personal nostalgia, where an individual longs for their past and a better time they have experienced. Young people that experience nostalgia within retro marketing could not be defined as personal nostalgia as they have not experienced or remembered the products/services from their own

memory. Instead, they experience nostalgia due to the narratives and stories surrounding the subject. Therefore individuals don't need to have experienced the product themself but nostalgia could be an extension of stories individuals have heard and a personal familiarity with the product. (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli, and Mueller, 2012)

Nostalgia could also be experienced at a larger scale. The concept of collective nostalgia refers to a societal longing for a past time where times were better and more stable. In times of turbulence and uncertainty in society, people can start to remember the more stable times of the past and have a nostalgic feeling towards the "good old days" (Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli, and Mueller, 2012). Hartmann and Brunk (2019) portraits how this type of nostalgia was present after the demolishing of the Berlin wall where many citizens of East Germany experienced nostalgia for the old, more stable, times when the wall existed. The key concept here being the view of the old times as stable and favoring them instead of contemporary civilization (Hartmann and Brunk, 2019).

Individuals can also experience nostalgia through the consumption of media - mediated nostalgia (Davis, 1979). The concept refers to when feeling nostalgia toward a historical period experienced through the consumption of media. Through TV-shows and movies, people create a nostalgic feeling towards a period of time while they were not even alive. Mediated nostalgia is also referred to as the current usage of relaunches of old tv-shows and movies where you either remake or relaunch a popular canceled show from the past.

2.2 Rationalization

To understand the recent success of craft beer brands, one needs to look at the push towards rationalization and the ensuing disillusion with mass-production that preceded the craft beer boom. Ritzer (1999, 2000) refers to what he calls the "McDonaldization" of our contemporary civilization - an ongoing homogenization, rationalization and industrialization process of society - as potentially giving rise to fleeting enchantment, but as ultimately eroding enchantment in the long-term. This push towards greater rationalization is nothing new. The sociological research of Weber (1922) began laying this increasing rationalization and its

associated loss of what is "special" bare, roughly a century ago. What *is* new, however, is the growing re-emergence of craft production.

Broadly speaking, craft production - although the re-emergence of an old occurrence - can be seen as a counter-reaction to the ongoing "McDonaldization" of society (Ritzer, 1996) - with craft production assigning its focal foci on artisanry, dedication to detail, requiring skilled workers, uniqueness and being comparatively time-consuming. As such, the contemporary surge in craft production appears a clear retroaction to growing disillusion in industrial mass-production and its generic and standardized products (Baudrillard & Turner, 2010).

2.3 Authenticity

The concept of authenticity is an integral one to understanding its role in consumers' culture. Authenticity can perhaps best be understood as an amalgam of different interconnected musings on the topic. For example, Baudrillard and Turner (2010) note how many contemporary consumption experiences can be devoid of any originality, are without depth, and consequently not truly rooted in reality. Ritzer expands on this by suggesting that in attempting to expand the potential reach of a product, i.e. making it more generic to suit a larger target audience, it is possible that the product in question loses its authenticity and, as a result, its consumer allure - enchantment - altogether (Ritzer, 1999).

Brown et al. (2003) directly relates authenticity to retro marketing, and notes that achieving an "aura of authenticity" is essential to successfully employing retro marketing (Brown et al., 2003). Leigh et al. (2006) argue that authenticity is highly subjective, as the consumers view authenticity through personal lenses - which are dictated by consumers' previous experiences and their individual perceptions. In examining a postmodern consumer society, Leigh et al. (2006) describes "staged authenticity" where an experience or its connotations is not necessarily entirely "real" - however, this is also not the point. As long as consumers perceive the experience or object and its representation of reality as "real enough", it is enshrined with authenticity. Relating to this, Leigh et al. (2006) also describes authenticity for a product as a way to achieve "legitimacy". Legitimacy and authenticity is sometimes suggested

to be an essential prerequisite for a brand-successful - i.e. positive - social constructivism process (Moulard et al., 2017) and eventual enchantment.

2.4 Brand heritage

Brand heritage is a vital part of retro marketing and retro branding, and can essentially be described as invoking a brand's past and historical connection (Brown et al., 2003) and leveraging this "historic capital" in their ongoing negotiation with consumers for authenticity. However, many new craft beer brands have little or no real historical connection. Instead, many resort to completely fabricating connections to the past in various ways, to imply that there is in fact a prestigious brand heritage supporting the craft beer brands. They are, in effect, inventing what Hudson and Balmer (2013) refer to as a "mythical heritage", or "faux heritage". Hudson and Balmer refer to this brand heritage dimension as consisting of "inventions that offer an 'aura of reality' through their contextual relevance" (Hudson & Balmer, 2013). If one juxtaposes this statement with the comments by Leigh et al. (2006) on "staged authenticity", one can clearly see a connection between the two. Moreover, the suggestion by Brown et al. that achieving an "aura of authenticity" is integral to successfully incorporating retro marketing (Brown et al., 2003) relates to Hudson and Balmer's notion of an "aura of reality". Staged authenticity (Leigh et al., 2006) proposes that an experience, object or other representation of reality, therefore indicating a convincing "aura of reality" (Hudson & Balmer, 2013) can be said to correspond with an "aura of authenticity" (Brown et al., 2003), from a socio-constructivist point of view (Shankar, Elliott & Goulding, 2001).

2.5 Enchantment

Enchantment is one of the central tenets in retro marketing, and refers to consumers' "enchantment". In this context, enchantment can be described as a sense of wonder or amazement (Ostergaard, Fitchett & Jantzen, 2013). Enchantment can, subsequently, be found when a consumer is spell-bound, riveted, or otherwise intrigued by a brand, product, or experience. This does not have to be by a physical feature, rather, enchantment - or "amazement" (Ostergaard, Fitchett & Jantzen, 2013) - can just as well stem from an alluring brand story,

discursive narrative, or design. Enchantment has a polar opposite in that of "disenchantment", or the contradictory disillusion of something. Ritzer (1999) suggests that the ongoing McDonaldization (Ritzer, 2000) of society, and associated rationalization, is leading to growing disenchantment. This brand disenchantment is not something that is directly created by the brands, rather, consumer culture theory suggests is a cultural by-product of apathetic consumer sentiment unconsciously created by consumers themselves (Shankar, Elliott & Goulding, 2001).

A common academic line of thought is brands are simultaneously both socially constructed and socially construed (Shankar, Elliott & Goulding, 2001). As such, latent consumption connotations become imbedded and eventually reflected in consumers' views of the pertinent brands. This connects to Arnould and Thompson's (2005) findings on how the relevant cultural context is intrinsically linked to understanding consumption, and Warde's (1994) thoughts on consumption as an integral part of self-expression and identity formulation. Recognizing consumption as a culturally and socially situated process is, therefore, critical to more fully understanding how craft beer brands and consumers jointly negotiate brand meaning, authenticity and enchantment. As such, one needs to examine the consumer-facing discursive contexts - e.g. brand narratives, imagery, prose - craft beer brands employ in their marketing.

2.6 Theoretical Framework Conclusion

The analysis of the article was conducted with support from the aforementioned theoretical frameworks. The theories applied relate to the notion of *retro marketing* and retro branding and are elements that are integral to understanding retro branding. Whilst they are independent theories on their own, interdependence exists between them. *Rationalization* is describes the standardization of production and the disillusion with mass-production and commercialization. *Authenticity* can be seen as an opposite to this disillusion, and relates to brands or products that are original and "true" to themselves, and often requires *legitimacy*. *Brand heritage* supports the development of authenticity by grounding it in history, giving the brand a narrative. If a brand is successful in achieving both legitimacy and authenticity, it has good chances to create *enchantment*, or a "magic" sense of wonder among consumers. The

article uses an interplay of these theories in supporting the understanding and examination of the craft beer brands' brand-building activities.

3. Methodology

We employ a qualitative methodology in examining consumers' sentiment regarding how craft beer brands negotiate authenticity using retro marketing. This decision is based on the conviction that brands are assemblages that are socially constructed and socially construed. As such, understanding how craft beer brands negotiate authenticity with consumers is implicitly understood through consumer-based questioning and interviews. This provides us with the empirical material needed to examine respondents' thoughts on craft beer brand contexts, and how consumers perceive these brands to negotiate their authenticity (Bryman & Bell, 2013).

Other methods of data collection were discussed and analyzed prior to the conduction of the study. For example, a focus group would provide the opportunity to include a higher amount of respondents in the study and still get in-depth data regarding the subject. However, we did not want the answers to be influenced by other people but to be the respondents' personal reflections of the concept. This is something that is more difficult to ensure in a focus group as one respondent's answers could influence others within the group (Patel & Davidson, 2011). Therefore, face to face interviews conducted with a single respondent at the time was superior for this type of study.

Additionally, a digital ethnography (netnography) allows us to observe the continuous societal renegotiation of different craft beer brands (Bryman & Bell, 2013). First and foremost, conducting a partial netnography allows us to substantially widen the geographic scope of collecting empirical material, which would be extremely resource-intensive or impossible solely through the use of interviews. Moreover, whereas interviews allow us to gain insight into contemporary consumer sentiment, interviews face constraints relating to only capturing a snapshot of consumers' *current* mentality. Due to the Internet's relative immutability, however, a netnography makes it possible to bridge this temporal divide. As such, a netnography can enable us to observe how consumer sentiment shifts over time.

3.1 Collection of Material

Firstly, we employed a rigorous study of ancillary material relating to the craft beer field, in order to better understand its nature, origin and craft beer communities and to understand the consumption and discursive habits of craft beer consumers (Bryman & Bell, 2013). This collection of material was predominantly conducted using the internet, and provides a contextual background to this specific field. Secondly, we explored relevant online community platforms, such as craft beer forums and applications, to better understand craft beer enthusiasts' discourse and interactions. Although this was not a full-fledged netnography, doing so did allow to examine how craft beer consumers and enthusiasts consume, communicate and view different craft beer brands. As such, we want to acknowledge our use of online forums and applications for data gathering purposes that helped us gain an understanding of consumptive processes. This provided us with a frame of reference for consumption habits when conducting our interviews (Patel and Davidson, 2011). Following this collection of material, we held semi-structured interviews with nine beer consumers to gauge their perception of craft beer brands on a personal level.

3.2 Interviews

The most important data for this article is derived from interviews conducted with nine beer consumers, relating to their views on beer and in particular craft beer. Interviews were chosen as it provides an opportunity to aim to understand the concept on a personal consumer level, something that other methods wouldn't provide. Moreover, it provided the possibility to ask follow-up questions which provides further understanding of their views regarding the subjects (Patel and Davidson, 2011). The interviews were of semi-structured characteristics and followed the guidelines set by Patel and Davidson (2011). A framework of thematic questions was created prior to the interviews as a tool to assist in asking the right questions and in a way that was dynamic from the respondents' perspective. This framework was used with caution as we aimed to create a dialog with the respondents, creating a conversation with the respondents

more than the sense of an interview. Therefore exceptions of the preset scheme could occur to ensure a conversational atmosphere.

The interviews were conducted at locations chosen by the respondent to ensure a secure atmosphere. Due to the ongoing COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic, most of the interviews were conducted through teleconferencing software. The purpose of the study was not revealed to the respondents prior to interviews but only that the subject was beer to not influence their answers in any direction. The respondents were of different ages and genders, as well as various levels of beer enthusiasts. We perceived the participants to be different kinds of beer consumers, which was of importance in the aim to broaden the study. The difference in age, education, and gender between the participants created a good diversity of respondents.

A test interview was conducted to test the questions and framework in use. Here it became evident that a soft approach to the questions was required and not to follow the chronicle order of the preset of questions but adjust the order as the interview progressed to create a natural atmosphere and give the respondent the opportunity to communicate freely. This can provide further depth and less influenced answers (Patel & Davidson, 2011). Consent to record the interviews was given prior to each interview. The interviews were transcribed and coded to identify underlying themes evoked during the interviews. Although transcription can disregard the underlying meaning and tones used during the interview, and provide different information than the recording (Patel & Davidson, 2011), transcription was required to properly code and identify the answers provided from the interviews.

3.3 Pandemic Considerations

This study was impacted by the outbreak of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic. As such, some of the interviews took place using teleconferencing software, whereas all would presumably have taken place in person if not for social distancing guidelines and practical issues that arose with arranging some of the face-to-face interviews. Moreover, the original vision for this article was to potentially include interviews with representatives from craft beer breweries, in order to gain additional insight from a production standpoint, to juxtapose these with consumer views. However, widespread uncertainty stemming from COVID-19 made it more

difficult to arrange such interviews, which ultimately led to their omission from this article. Although we judge these side effects to be minimally impacting our findings, we want to publicly acknowledge the contemporary context in which this article was written.

3.4 Analysis of Empirical Material

Within qualitative research, it is important to acknowledge how the author's assumptions and perceptions can influence the results of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2013). A prominent influence in an article of this nature is the choice of respondents as the data collected from interviews held an important and substantial part of the data collected. Therefore an appendix showing the respondents' area of expertise and personal information was produced to provide thorough information of the participants. Participants were also chosen with a broad demographic and variation in mind to ensure that different views of the subject were present in the article.

The interviews were conducted in the participants' native language (Swedish) and therefore translated answers were the basis for the analysis. The translations were made with caution to not derange the provided information as this otherwise could affect the outcome of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2013). The information and statements received in the interviews had to be assumed honest and correct. Most of the written sources used originate from scientific articles and reports. All sources used are also present both in the text and in the reference section of the article.

4. Analysis

This article found that craft beers' *uniqueness*, or their sense of special, is a central trait in consumers' view of craft beers, and how they understand craft beers' authenticity. Relating to authenticity, we found these three central themes; how the craft beer brands attempt to create authenticity using discursive retro-branding practices, a growing erosion of this authenticity along with associated consumer disillusion, and finally a substantial point of sale impact on brands' ability to negotiate authenticity.

4.1 Craft Beers' Uniqueness and Sense of Special

When conducting the interviews it became evident that all participants identified craft-beer differently from "normal beer". There was a difference in consuming a "Carlsberg in a regular can" to drinking a craft beer. During the interviews, the respondents were asked to rank different beers according to which one they preferred to consume. In all of the interviews, craft beers received more preferable rankings than the normal beer. More interesting, this occurred even if the respondent did not know the specific beer, or the brand, at all. The respondent Adam, 24, ranked all the craft beers on the list higher than the normal beer. When later asked about the different beers it became evident that the respondent had not tried all of the craft beers, but still ranked them higher than the normal ones - even sight unseen. This is effectively conveyed in the following quote;

Adam, 24: *"Normal beer is just normal, beer is beer. Even if I haven't tried this one [*Nynäshamn Apa*] I would still rank it higher than the others, it's a craft beer, the other ones are just beers.*"

Craft beer was by all respondents viewed differently than normal beer. The key differences between normal and craft beer were tied to the taste of the beer and the design of the bottles or cans. Craft beer was perceived as tastier and "less watery" than normal beer, therefore making it their preferred drink option. This opinion resonates with prior studies of craft beer where the consumer differentiates craft beer from normal beer (Marciel & Wallendorf, 2017). As Marciel and Wallendorf (2017) also describe and in relation to Arnould and Thompson (2005) this can be used to enhance the consumers' identity. Hence a preference for the products even when no prior relations, to the brand or product, exists. The designs of the beer cans or bottles were also brought up as something that added value to the beer, as this excerpt demonstrates;

Tomas, 34: *"You don't just get a regular can... as in Poppels [craft beer brand] where you can see that they actually care about their beer by looking at the bottle."*

Throughout the interviews, it became evident that different craft beer brands are perceived differently in their features of signifying craftsmanship. More widespread and popular craft beer brands were perceived as less of a craftsmanship. An example of this would be Poppels IPA that was viewed as a mainstream "commercial" beer by several of the respondents. But within the same brand, the seasonal Poppels beer offerings were viewed as "high-quality craft-beers". The focus was put on the numbers of beers produced and how "special" it felt in the hand of the consumer, which is seen in the following excerpt;

Tomas, 34: *"I feel like it's more craftsmanship in their special beers. Like when they release beers with weird ingredients. Or when they create a special Christmas beer for only that winter. That feels like actual craftsmanship and not like the normal beer they just mass-produce."*

This quote by Thomas illustrates his growing disillusion with mass-produced beers, i.e. "normal beers" (Baudrillard & Turner, 2010) and the importance of craft beers being unique. In fact, the perceived level of craftsmanship is higher in Poppels' more limited beer offerings, such as a particular year's Christmas beer, than Poppels regular beers - despite the fact that these are made by the same people using roughly the same equipment.

4.2 Authenticity Through Discursive Retro Branding Practices

It is evident that whilst the craft beer is perceived differently and is more sought-after by the consumer, it is the perceived level of craftsmanship and authenticity that actually creates its value. As Ritzer (1999) describes, the level of authenticity decreases the more common a product is, which also can be identified throughout the answers from the respondents. The unique artisanry identity a small scale supply can enact for a brand dissolves when the brand or product is perceived as normal (Bastian, et al., 1999; Ritzer, 1999). This is clearly shown in the case of the most popular craft beers, where their level of authenticity and craftsmanship is lost due to increased popularity.

Sara, 26: *"I really used to like craft beers like Stigbergets and Poppels a few years back when they felt a bit more exclusive, and [they] were harder to get. Back then you heard that one particular Systembolaget location had the new beer [type] and went there to buy it. The thing is, now you can get them anywhere, at almost any bar. They don't feel as exciting to me anymore."*

Sara's comments reveal that the success and commercialization of craft beer brands have, ironically, made them less desirable as they become more available. As such, it seems the discursive branding practices are ineffective once the spell has been broken and they no longer appear authentic artisan products. This is not due to a lack of trying. Through a predominant usage of distinctive cans and bottles, craft beer companies evoke nostalgic affection among respondents. All of the respondents stated that the design of the bottles or cans provoked a historic feel with a nostalgic presence. The nostalgic perception of the design did not derive from past knowledge or a historic reference. This correlates with how Hemetsberger, et al. (2012) describes that nostalgia can be experienced even without any prior connection or experience to the product, but from a mere idea of its past value. This resonates with the answers provided by the respondents as it was identified as more of an idea than an actual reminiscence of the past. No adoration of an experienced event or brand existed but an idea of that the design was something that belongs in the past and was, therefore, provoked a historic sentiment.

An interesting factor discussed by the respondents was a brand familiarity in connection to craft beer production. There was an understanding that the more popular of a brand, the less authenticity, uniqueness, and craftsmanship were assigned their products. This, again, ties into Sara's previous comment that "*[highly accessible craft beers] don't seem as exciting to me anymore*". At the same time, the mere mention of a beer as a craft beer had a positive impact on respondents. Brands that the respondents had no prior relations with and had not been in contact with before were perceived with a higher level of craftsmanship, even if the respondent had not tried any products from the brand or was aware of its existence. This can be seen in the following quote from Ludvig, who compliments a craft beer he hasn't even tasted.

Ludvig, 29: *"I haven't bought it myself, but a friend of mine talked about a brewery in his home town that made craft beers in really small quantities every year. That they were using old recipes from a hundred years ago and even making the beer in the same house that had made beer last century. It sounded like a really cool brand and I wish we had [the craft beer] it here."*

Interestingly, Ludvig was heaping praise over a craft beer he had no idea of the taste of, just due to it being a craft beer. One can speculate whether he would have been as warm to the product if it had been a mass-produced Heiniken or Carlsberg beer. Moreover, having the craft beer come from a relatively small and unknown brewery was preferred by the respondents when it came to creating a feeling of uniqueness and authentic beer. The more popular and widespread craft beer brands were compared to the big mass-producing beer companies. A few of the respondents questioned the breweries' motives, whether this was to "create a good craft-beer" or "just to make money".

4.3 Erosion of Authenticity and Growing Disenchantment

Although the aforementioned formula for a generic "craft beer brand origin story" has been demonstrably effective, this study finds that there is now an ongoing loss of authenticity and growing disenchantment with some aspects of craft beer production. One of the respondents recounts visiting Poppels' brewery and experiencing cognitive dissonance between his own expectations of the brewery and its actual operations. Moreover, the clash between the respondent's expectations and reality was enough to dampen the respondent's previous enthusiasm for Poppels. Consider the following excerpt;

Tim, 25: *"I always used to order Poppels when I was at a place that had it, and their APA was my "beer for the summer" a few years back [...] but after I visited Poppels' brewery in Jonsered [outside of Gothenburg municipality] some of my enthusiasm died. Inside it was similar to the Carlsberg brewery in Copenhagen except newer. I thought it would seem more genuine somehow, I've always assumed it was less like a factory and more like a family. I guess it's a bit like watching the sausage get made."*

This demonstrates a clear conflict between Poppels' discursive narrative, which heavily indicates a small-scale craft beer brewery located in Gothenburg with ties to the original *Poppelmans bryggeri*, and reality; in that Poppels is one of Sweden's ten largest breweries by revenue, was founded less than ten years ago and is not even located in the municipality of Gothenburg, unlike the legendary *Poppelmans bryggeri* (Johansson, 2019). As such, the visit to Poppels' brewery - which should be an experience that strengthens the consumer's relationship to the brand - instead appears to have damaged the authenticity of Poppels brand narrative, and subsequently led to the respondent's disenchantment with the company's offerings. Moreover, this story demonstrates an excellent real-world example of how Leigh et al. (2006) suggests staged authenticity is only effective when it approximates reality, which, in this case, Poppels' staged authenticity did not.

Fredrik, 23: *"There are too many [craft beer brands] to keep track of [...] I like to buy Melleruds because it's a craft beer brand from my home town. It feels nice to have a connection to home and support a local business."*

These comments from Fredrik regarding *Melleruds utmärkta pilsner*, or Melleruds for short, are particularly interesting seeing as they directly relate to the notion of how staged authenticity approximates reality (Leigh et al., 2006). The interviewee's quote reveals he views Melleruds as a genuine craft beer brand from his hometown of Mellerud. However, Melleruds is - in fact - *not* a craft beer brand, and has not been brewed in Mellerud for over half a century (Carlsson, 2015). Instead, it is since 2012 merely a mass-market beer brand used by Spendrups, the largest brewery in Sweden, and the beer is brewed in the towns of Grängesberg, Hällesberg and Visby - but not Mellerud. Consequently, one could classify Melleruds as a commercial "revived brand" that was brought back by Spendrups in 2012 (Carlsson, 2015). However, most interestingly, this quote by Fredrik suggests Melleruds has been so successful in negotiating authenticity with consumers that people who are themselves from Mellerud are unaware of the fact that the Melleruds beer is from the town of Mellerud in name only. Furthermore, Fredrik's

comment about how the brand successfully makes him feel a "connection to home", albeit merely a nominal one, touches on another interesting aspect of successfully negotiating authenticity with consumers. As such, the discursive narratives of craft beer brands only seem to be effective when the consumers relate to them, e.g. through a shared frame of cultural or geographical reference. Consequently, it becomes evident the discursive narratives chosen need to resonate with consumers.

The respondents also discussed the different characteristics of craft beers. One important factor was the differentiation from the normal "lager" beer. Craft beers were described as different, unique, types of beers such as Indian Pale Ale, American Pale Ale, or Sour beer. It was discussed how the increased popularity - i.e. commercial success - of Indian Pale Ale (IPA) has come to decrease its perceived authenticity as a "real" craft beer.

Richard, 28: *"It is not the same today compared to a few years ago. Today you can get it everywhere and everyone drinks it. It is not anything special anymore."*

How widespread the beer type is also affects the feeling of uniqueness. After first emerging as a popular craft-beer alternative, IPA is now regarded as something consumers can get everywhere, and the respondents argued that it is today as normal as a lager. A few of the respondents argued that the emergence of beers such as sour beer derives from the increased popularity of IPAs and it, therefore, existed a demand for a more unique beer. Even if none of the respondents preferred sour beer as their choice of beer, most of them argued that sour beer is the "new IPA" in offering something unique. The following excerpt demonstrates how Hanna suggests IPA has lost its sense of special:

Hanna, 27: "*[...] if you want to drink something unique and special you have to take a sour beer ... [drinking] IPA is normal nowadays.*"

As uniqueness and authenticity decrease the more generic a brand becomes (Ritzer, 1999; Leigh, et al., 2006) the change in opinion regarding certain beer types can be explained. The

normalization of IPA comes to decrease its value of uniqueness in the eyes of the consumer. More interesting, the link between limited production and authenticity becomes apparent as the sour beer receives higher levels of uniqueness by the respondents, even while none of them actually prefer to consume it..

4.4 Point of Sale Impact on Authenticity

Another key aspect of generating a feeling of craftsmanship and authenticity for craft beers in the minds of consumers comes down to the availability of the beers. Smaller batches of beer with limited availability were identified as unique and authentic, regardless of producer and whether it was a craft-beer or not. Within the Swedish context in which the study was conducted, the monopoly of *Systembolaget* came to play a part in how the different brands were viewed by consumers. With Systembolaget being the only store allowed to sell alcoholic beverages in Sweden, their in-store presentation of the brands came to affect the value and perception of the brands. Brands found in smaller quantities and in Systembolaget's "temporary supply" section were given a higher level of uniqueness and authenticity by the respondents. To not be a regularly supplied beer was positive when it came to generating value for the brand and the beer. Respondents note that beers which are a part of Systembolagets everyday supply of beer - both mass-produced beers and craft beers - lose some of their allure and uniqueness by always being readily available. This connects to what Ostergaard, Fitchett, and Jantzen (2013) describe about enchantment, or in this case - disenchantment. The fact that craft beer is sold at every store and presented in a generic way decreases the level of enchantment a customer can achieve. But even if the store is a subject of neglecting the enchantment of the craft beer the brands themselves - the narrative, story, and value invoked in the brand (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Hemetsberger, Kittinger-Rosanelli, & Mueller, 2012) - are still able to invoke enchantment in their products. More so, by being sold it the limited section of the store even enriches the authenticity and enchantment of the brand, providing further invoked value to the product.

The monopoly of Systembolaget and the lack of direct farm sales in Sweden were also explained to affect the feeling of the craftsmanship of the beer. This reasoning was two-fold. First, the respondent expressed a desire for direct-farm sales to create a feeling of authenticity for

the beer. A few of the "beer-enthusiasts" in the study gave examples of when they had bought beers on travels abroad. To buy the beers at the producer and in connection to the brewery provided additional value to the beer. This was the case even if the beer itself did not have the characteristics of a craft-beer but was a mass-produced brand. Beers bought at the source of production gave a sense of craftsmanship as the consumer could view the creation of the beer and the effort put in to develop it. Secondly, respondents suggested that Systembolagets regulations are creating a barrier to entry for "real" craft beers. The following excerpt illustrates a respondent's consciousness of this issue;

Hanna, 27: *"I think the fact that you have to go through Systembolaget [to sell beer] and to follow all their rules affect how the producers create more unique beers. You can't just put the beers up for sale but have to go through them [Systembolaget]. It becomes more difficult to sell it [the beer]."*

Many of the respondents thought that producers had to adapt to the regulations and felt that in their efforts to create a financially sustainable beer the craftsmanship decreased. One of the respondents used a brewery visit as an example, where the respondent had visited a micro-brewery but could only try the beer in the restaurant connected to the brewery, as the brewery couldn't sell it themselves and produced too small of a quantity to sell the beer through Systembolaget.

5. Discussion

This study finds that a central trait of craft beers are their "uniqueness", as opposed to normal beers. One can surmise that the relatively recent rise of craft beers stems from a growing disillusion with mass-produced, generic beer brands - in line with Ritzer's thoughts on the "McDonaldization" of society (Ritzer, 2000). Moreover, it becomes clear that craft beer brands overwhelmingly employ retro branding, through various discursive practices, in negotiating legitimacy (Leigh et al., 2006), authenticity (Brown, 2003) and enchantment (Ritzer, 1999) with consumers. So far, it appears that this strategy has been immensely successful. Craft beer sales

have skyrocketed over the past decade, and numerous new craft beer breweries have been established during this craft beer boom. However, this growing popularity of craft beer brands appears to be, in many ways, a double-edged sword.

Specifically, craft beer brands' surge in popularity are arguably responsible for the very marketing conundrum now facing the industry. Various craft beer brands are using exceedingly similar "cookie-cutter" retro branding narratives in order to negotiate authenticity with consumers (Ritzer 1999; Brown, 2003). It is unclear whether these homogenous practices are due to the proven success of other craft beer brands using retro branding strategies - potentially perpetuating the practices which could inadvertently erode authenticity - or if it is due to the surge of new craft beer brands during a short period of time, which has led to this standardization of a brand narrative.

What's more, the issue of similar retro branding techniques among various craft beer brands appears to be affecting consumers' perception of craft beer. Specifically, this is seen through respondents' quotes regarding not being able to clearly differentiate between different craft beer brands. The uniqueness and authenticity have come to decrease in connection to the increased popularity and production of craft beer. The unlimited availability dissipates the perception of uniqueness for the consumers. Granted, craft beer is regarded as different from "normal" beer, but not enough to make it unique - with the exception of a few special beer types, like sour beer. Interlinked with the uniqueness, authenticity also declines with a more widespread acceptance of craft beer. It would appear the respondents' declining passion for craft beer could stem from the success and ensuing mass-production and commercialization of the beer type. It would seem this has come to make consumers question the authenticity of craft beer products and brands. Additionally, different brands of craft beer become collectively entangled in the minds of consumers, and "craft beer" is increasingly coming to signify just another type of beer - losing some of its uniqueness and artisanry.

Moreover, the study finds that craft beer was referred to as special and unique a few years ago, but is today seen as being more normal. The normalization of craft beer - which one could view as the craft beer industry's own rationalization (Ritzer, 1999) - has come to decrease the level of nostalgia, uniqueness, and authenticity of craft beer brands. The nostalgia that derives

from the craftsmanship and the designs' nods to the past is influenced by the widespread use of the same bottle designs. The "craft" is also perceived as neglected by the mass-production and unlimited supply of the craft beers. Comments from the respondents also lay clear that the sense of artisanry and craftmanship is waning from craft beer sentiment in the wake of the craft beer boom. One could surmise that this is related to the largely homogenous usage of retro branding discourse, which appears to be standardizing craft beer brand connotations.

A synonymous usage of retro branding discourse would not be too glaring if only a few companies were doing it. As Leigh et al. (2006) point out, staged authenticity can successfully approximate reality. The interviews provide real-world demonstrations of successful discursive retro branding efforts that approximate reality. Consider the comments by Fredrik regarding *Melleruds utmärkta pilsner*. He assumed that Melleruds was a craft beer brand from his hometown of Mellerud, and explicitly said he was a fan of the beer in part to "support a local business". However, the brewery in Mellerud shut down in 1959 (Carlsson, 2015) and the contemporary Melleruds is merely a mass-market brand name used by Spendrups. Nevertheless, through discursive brand management strategies that rely heavily on retro marketing and suggest a connection - brand heritage (Brown et al., 2003) - to the original Melleruds brewery, Spendrups has clearly been able to negotiate legitimacy (Leigh et al., 2003), authenticity (Brown et al., 2003), and create eventual enchantment (Ritzer, 1999) among customers such as Fredrik. If a highly commercialized, mass-market brand such as Melleruds is successfully able to employ generic discursive retro branding processes that persuade even people from the town of Mellerud - arguably the most difficult ones to successfully convince of the revived brand's faux heritage (Hudson & Balmer, 2013) - of Melleruds' legitimacy (Leigh et al., 2003) and authenticity (Brown et al., 2003), it is highly conceivable that the same strategy works equally well for the average consumer.

On the matter of point of sale impacts on authenticity, Systembolaget's regulations and significant barriers to entry for smaller batches of beer arguably decrease the level of authenticity and narrative denoted by the products. Specifically, this forces suppliers to produce a certain amount of the beers, increasing availability, and creates a barrier for narrative by obliging generic sales of the products. But on the other hand, it provides additional value for beers

consumed who are not part of Systembolagets regular supply. Beers bought or consumed that were not a part of Systembolaget's regular inventory provided additional authenticity for the consumer. It became an object of conversation, where and why you bought a certain beer was something respondents told their friends afterward. By being perceived as authentic - bought, consumed, or encountered in the "real way" (Leight, et al.,2006) - the beer also became an instrument of identity enhancement (Arnould & Thompson, 2005). The notion that the forced point of sale in Sweden negatively impacts the craft beer brands' opportunities to build authenticity is also an interesting one. It is hard to predict exactly what effects removing this forced point of sale, for example through allowing farm sales, would have. For example, it is conceivable that farm sales would lead to a greater focus on *in situ* experience branding, which could arguably increase the authenticity of the brand. This could also provide new opportunities for e.g. contemporary place branding, instead of merely using existing retro branding practices. Although it is hard to say with any certainty how craft beer producers would take advantage of farm sales, a possible source of inspiration could be that of vineyard and winemaking tours. It is important to recognize that the negative impact of a forced point of sale on authenticity likely does not refer solely to craft beers, but to all different kinds of beer. However, the implications are greater for craft beers, as these arguably rely more on authenticity than generic, mass-produced beer brands.

6. Conclusion

This study finds that craft beer brands routinely use discursive retro branding practices in order to negotiate legitimacy, authenticity and enchantment. These discursive practices attempt to ground the craft beer brands in the past through faux brand heritage narratives (Hudson & Balmer, 2013), or through creating convincing nostalgic approximations of reality (Leigh et al., 2006). Moreover, these homogenous retro branding influences are consistently seen through various discursive practices: from brand narratives, to the semantics used in product descriptions and marketing material, to the very bottle design of various craft beers. This article examines and concludes key insights of retro marketing practices in craft beer production. Firstly, a generic retro marketing approach in craft beer marketing is not enough to distinguish brands and

products from each other. There is a requirement for further development and improved marketing practices to enhance authenticity. Secondly, the point of sale seems to affect how retro marketing practices are perceived by consumers. How and when a product is marketed and sold affect the level of success of retro marketing practices within craft beer and the perceived level of authenticity.

6.1 Managerial Implications

The study finds that the deceptively similar discursive retro branding processes employed by various craft beer brands to negotiate authenticity (Brown et al., 2003) are blurring the lines between different craft beer brands. As such, craft beer brands become entangled in the minds of consumers. This suggests that there will arise an acute need for further marketing activities beyond these generic retro branding practices, to distinguish products from each other as craft beer brands grow increasingly commonplace and the market becomes more saturated. As such, marketing strategies in the craft beer sector must ripen into more complex and diversified practices. If not, current retro branding practices risk not being progressive enough to successfully negotiate authenticity with consumers. Just as the rationalization and commercialization of the traditional beer market led to an erosion of authenticity and growing disenchantment, so could this generic faux craft beer heritage narrative give rise to widespread disenchantment once it becomes glaring enough to cease resonating with consumers. Assuming that brands are assemblages of meaning that are both socially constructed and construed, loss of authenticity and disenchantment could remove the societal and cultural meanings that allow brands to resonate with consumers. As such, a potential loss of legitimacy, authenticity, and growing disenchantment threaten to break apart the cultural assemblages of meaning that underpin the very brands themselves.

In order to avoid this, craft beer brands - especially new ones - should strive to negotiate authenticity without solely relying on discursive retro branding processes. Although retro branding strategies have proven historically successful for craft beer brands, there is an acute risk of superfluous retro branding discourse that could render it inauthentic. As such, craft beer brands should strive to create a more dynamic craft beer industry with diverse brand identities,

and could negotiate authenticity and legitimacy e.g. through being modern, unique, quirky, sustainable, artsy, innovative or any number of other traits despite merely nostalgic ones. Moreover, there are also opportunities to enhance the products themselves by adding different flavors, more extrovert designs, or adopt novel production techniques that resonate more with consumers' notions of unique craft production. Furthermore, to change the point of sale could arguably provide additional value to the authenticity of the product.

6.2 Societal implications

Throughout the study, it became evident that the forced point of sale in a Swedish context - i.e. *Systembolaget* - exerts a negative impact on the ability to negotiate brand authenticity. Brewery-based sales, or "farm sales" would enable additional narratives and new venues for negotiating authenticity for craft beer brands. Although this would require a decision on a macro-level, which is not in the hands of craft beer producers, the ongoing discussion regarding potentially allowing farm sales in Sweden means it could be a potential future development to take into consideration. However, this is an interesting finding as prior to this article the notion of how the point of sales affects retro branding practices has not been examined. How and where the products are displayed and marketed seem to affect how retro branding practices are perceived and interpreted by the consumer. In this article, it is shown that the retro marketing aspects of the products and brands are undermined by the *forced* point of sale, and this sole point of sale also hampers the possibilities for craft beer producers to negotiate authenticity through *in situ* experience-based activities. Systembolagets generic approach to display and market beers within their store is found to reduce the authenticity and enchantment of the brands and products. The finding that the point of sale affects the level of retro branding practice success is an interesting takeaway worthy of future exploration. Although this article indicates that the point of sale does affect the success of retro branding practices, further research covering more aspects and areas of retro branding is nonetheless required to fully understand the concept. A potential societal implication of this finding is that craft beer brands could more aggressively argue for the legalization of farm sales in Sweden, as this appears to present an important branding channel. Assuming that more articles reach this conclusion and the full branding advantages of farm sales

become evident for craft beer brands, it is conceivable that they will push for allowing farm sales of craft beer in Sweden.

6.3 Future Research and Limitations

A few areas of interest for future research, of both theoretical and societal aspects, emerged during the conduction of this article. Firstly, there are signs that a counter-reaction to retro-branded craft beer discourse could be emerging. Some craft beer brands are realizing this growing disillusion with a generic craft beer brand origin story and the drawbacks of solely relying on retro-branding discourse. A few years ago, practically all Swedish craft beer brands were following the same retro-branding formula in its discourse - from choosing a name that suggests a rich brand heritage, to the style of contextual communications - semantics - and their usage of legacy designs for bottles, stickers and logos.

Now, however, some craft beer breweries are breaking the mold. For example, the craft beer firm Stigbergets appears to relish in using modern, striking designs for its bottles, and is open about the fact that it was just established in 2013. Moreover, Brewski is another craft beer company which sets itself apart with colorful, purposefully naive bottle designs - and does not attempt to convey any faux-heritage. Instead, Brewski attempts to appeal to a "modern lifestyle" (Brewski, 2020) and openly states that its beers are "not like other beers". Although it is too early to suggest whether this is the beginning of a burgeoning branding trend in the craft beer space or if these examples are merely anomalies, it is nonetheless an interesting development to acknowledge and worthy of future examination.

Secondly, as mentioned before the Swedish context and the impact of Systembolaget in craft beer marketing also denote an interesting aspect for future studies. Both with the aspects of how point of sale affects authenticity of brand and products, but also as a similar study conducted in a different context would arguably reach a different conclusion if no regulation to point of sales exists. Furthermore, the limitations imposed by the presence of the COVID-19 coronavirus pandemic give rise to a research gap, as only consumers of craft beers were interviewed. It could prove interesting to study the subject in the future and include producers' perspectives on the topic.

7. References

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