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## 1. Introduction

Consumption in the 21<sup>st</sup> century has proven to be much more than simply buying a product, postmodern consumers take on different (consumer) identities and use consumption as a way differentiating from others (Maffesoli 1996; Firat & Schulz 1997; Featherstone 2007). Identity is one of these modern buzzwords that has developed from a philosophical notion into a concept that has made its way into everything from corporate and marketing theory as well as consumer research. Identity nevertheless, has shown to be a complex concept, which people often do not quite grasp what really is, and something, which scholars not always agree upon. Giddens (1996) and Jenkin (2006) for instance are two known scholars who have two very different perceptions on identity and how it is constructed.



Today, society is much more focused on individualism (Cova 1997; Bekin, Carrigan & Szmigin 2007; Øe 2008) but at the same time people tend to cluster together with likeminded people in communities, tribes and clubs in search of a sense of belonging (Kozinets 1997, 1999; Cova & Cova 2001, 2002; Schouten & McAlexander 1995; Belk & Tumbat). The same issue goes for consumer goods which are used to outline social differences, but at the same time consumer goods are becoming more standardised and looking more alike. According to the Hedgehog Review (1999) people are challenged more than ever to locate themselves among opposing life spheres because social conditions have made it increasingly difficult for people to establish who they are, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others.

Lately, consumer research has turned its focus on communities that support a specific product, interests or hobby's and research on communities and consumer tribes have produced detailed knowledge on everything from coffee enthusiasts to roller bladers and record collectors.

One area which has begun to attract the attention of researchers are extreme sports such as surfing (Moutinho et al 2007) and snowboarding (Anderson 1999). Extreme sports have become a source of entertainment for the broad masses, and social video sharing services like YouTube are full of videos with sky-divers jumping out of aeroplanes, base jumpers jumping from cliff edges or the roofs of buildings and Ski'ers & Snow Boarders taking to off piste. Recently, eight million people



tuned in to watch Austrian "daredevil" Felix Baumgartner, jump from nearly 40.000 meters, breaking the existing record. Also Danish broadcaster has aired a show on extreme sports called 'Adrenalin'. The series mainly showcased extreme athletes pursuing their ultimate adrenalin rush, resulting in the death of 20 base jumpers per year in Switzerland alone.

An extreme sport, which has developed quite a lot in recent years in terms of the number of "athletes" as well as technological, is 're-breather' diving. Re-breather diving which is a technical and silent way of diving that allows the diver to go very deep for a long period of time. Re-breather diving is still a narrow niche within technical diving, and it is restrained to a limited number of people as it is both very expensive and requires a certain level of skill and experience because it can have fatal consequences if the diver is not careful.

My first contact with re-breather diving was through a friend, Christian; whom is a re-breather diver and spends most of his money and free time on this dangerous hobby. Throughout the years that I have known Christian, he has prioritized diving higher than most other things and at times it seemed as if there were no limits to his willingness to invest time and money in it. Christian is the owner and moderator of Denmark's largest online community for re-breather divers called 'Ninjadivers', where re-breathers meet and talk re-breather diving.

Knowing Christians' passion for re-breather diving and having experienced Christian amongst other divers partly through listening into their conversations - I started to wonder what it was that gave them this obsession and why they were willing to put their lives at risk in pursuit of an underwater experience. . What was it that made them prioritise such an extreme sport?. As a consequence, this has led me to the following research question:

**How do re-breather divers construct their identity through their sport?** This research question at hand made me wonder why re-breather divers choose to risk their lives when pursuing their hobby and why they choose to spend large amounts of money on it. **What role does consumption play in their identity construction?** My knowledge of Ninjadivers.dk as a meeting place for Danish re-breather divers has in continuation with the above mentioned, made me wonder: **What role online forums play in the in their identity construction and if there are indications of tribalism?**

The primary objective of this study is to produce knowledge on the identity construction of re-breather divers. It is beyond its scope to give final conclusions concerning the research questions, but by examining the influences of consumption and attachment to communities, whether online or offline, on the daily lives of re-breather divers - the objective aims to provide a conclusion on how they construct their identity through their sport.

The secondary objective of this study is to add to the existing knowledge of consumer tribes, and to the methodological approach of netnography which mutually are rather new fields within the field of qualitative research.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

The theoretical framework of this Master's thesis is based on theory of identity including the notions of identity construction, whether identity is a personal construction or socially constructed, group affiliation's influence on identity construction as well as group identity and last but not least, the notion of Consumer Culture including: postmodern consumption and consumer identities. The reason for identity being part of the theoretical framework has been laid down already in the research question: "how divers construct their identity through their sport". The other major theoretical area contributing to this framework is theory on consumer tribes or neo tribes, one of the outcomes of identity construction, group affiliation and consumer culture. The contribution of consumer tribes to the theoretical framework includes notions of linking values, cultural capital and tribal roles, derived from other research on these neo or consumer tribes. The concept of neo tribes has been chosen on behalf of its close relation to communities, which is one of the focus areas of this study, mainly their influence on identity construction. Consumer tribes have also been chosen because of its relation to the methodological approach of "netnography" which have been chosen for this study. The framework chosen for this master thesis is chosen to answer the research questions, how identity is constructed within a group of rebreather divers and the influences of communities and consumption. The best way to discover this identity construction is to investigate if the same issues apply for rebreather divers as for roller bladers (Cova & Cova 2001; 2002), surfers (Moutinho et al. 2007) Coffee enthusiasts (Kozinetz 1999) and vinyl record collectors (Mitchel & Imrie 2011), making other similar studies, points of reference for throughout this study.

## 2.1 Identity

Identity is a rather complex concept, which may consist of several different identities such as, for example, national and cultural identities, sexual and gender identities, consumer and group identities (Giddens 1996; Brown 1996; Alcoff et al 2003; Kaspersen ; YEAR, Jenkins 2006; Burkitt 2008). Jenkins (2006:29) argues that; “*Identity is our understanding of who we are, and who other people are, and at the same time it refers to other peoples understanding of, who they are and who the other are (including us)*” (For translation see appendix C1). This shows that the notion of identity is complex and that it consists not only of several different identities, both self-perceptions, perceptions of others and others perceptions of the individual in question. In regard to the study of the identity (or more correctly identities) of extreme divers, it is thus not only to seek to understand how extreme drivers see their own identity, but also how they see themselves as different from others (predominantly other types of divers). Furthermore, although not a key element of the present study, further knowledge on how other divers ‘see’ extreme divers might add to the understanding of them.

The concept of identity is derived both from sociology and psychology. Psychology, as exemplified by Jenkins 2006; Brinkmann 2008, relates identity to an individual’s self-image and self-representation. Sociology (e.g. Kaspersen 1995; Jenkins 2006; Brown 1996; Morgan & Thomas 1996) elaborates on this and argues that identity relates to a person's conception and expression of who they are as individuals as well as their group affiliations. Sociology seeks to understand to how this self-image or identity is constructed, as identity, according to sociologists (Brown 1996; Alcoff et al 2003 Kaspersen, Jenkins 2006; Burkitt 2008), isn’t a static entity, but a process under constant development. If a person’s identity is the concept of who he or she is and his or her attachment to certain groups influence the construction of identity, how does belonging to a group, whether online or offline, of likeminded divers influence the sense of identity in the individual diver. This makes the sociological approach to identity very relevant in terms of understanding how divers construct their identity through diving as well as the role of online communities.

According to Giddens (1996), Kaspersen (1995) and Burkitt (2008), identity used to be referred as something a person was born into, such as kinship, gender and social status etc., and although things have changed, some the “old” concepts of identity like gender, nationality and kinship still persist today. However Jenkins (2006), Giddens (1996), Brown (1996) and Alcoff et al (2003) argue that the notion of identity has developed into something, which is being constructed and

reconstructed all the time as mentioned above. The Hedgehog Review (1996:6) put it very elegantly in the following argument

*“In our time, the assumption that we each possess a “true self” is giving way to a sensibility that selves are constructed rather than discovered; identity is nothing more (and nothing less) than a fabrication of images created and sustained within the various circles of social discourse of which we are a part.”*

If identity is truly fabrication of images which are created and sustained the social discourse which we are part of, a person can be born into working class family of Muslims, and end up as an upper middle class Christian. In the same way, a diver could start out as having fear of water, who becomes an accomplished swimmer and ends up diving caves in Mexico, or a former diver could have lost interest and moved on to something new. It makes it interesting to address the question how extreme diving, of which rebreathing is a key element, influence this fabrication of Ninjadivers members’ (self) images.



Burkitt (2008) disagrees, with Giddens (1996), Kaspersen (1995) and Burkitt (2008), and argues that we all, in spite of being born into a social class, role, culture, religion, gender or ethnicity etc., can strive to get out of this classification or strive to exceed its limitations, but that we all do so *“within a social framework that sets these limitations”* (Burkitt 2008:16). It is therefore relevant to investigate whether extreme diving might relate to these individuals using this extreme sports/hobbies (which actually includes risking one’s life) to ‘strive to get out of’ the classifications or a role they feel they are subjected to? The same issue goes for the former diver who will always have the experience of being a former diver despite him having moved on.

### **2.1.1 Personal vs. Social Identity**

Identity can be separated into many different categories, like national and cultural identity, sexual and gender identity etc. One could argue that these categories are sub categories two main categories, the personal and the social identity. Many different identities, like being Danish or how a man or a woman should/shouldn't be, is very much anchored in the cultural setting and are therefore part of their social identity. Gender, on the other hand, can be categorized as personal identity, for instance a woman not feeling feminine because she is flat-chested. Through mass media, society has clearly defined what is feminine and what is not, washing the border between personal and social identity away. Here the conflict between personal and social identity scholars (Giddens, 1996, Jenkins 2006) clearly shows.

Scholars (Kaspersen 1995; Brown 1996; Jenkins 2006; Burkitt 2008; Brinkmann 2008) more or less agree that identity consist of the two main entities that of personal identity and that of social identity. The two main scholars on identity construction drawn upon in this master thesis is build, are Anthony Giddens (1996) and Richard Jenkins (2006), two scholars who are well known for their work on identity construction and for their opposing views on personal and social identity. It is for this reason that it is very interesting to draw upon these scholars' work when investigating whether divers construct their identity through internal reflections or under the social influence of other divers.

Similarity, diversity and categorisation are related to the personal identity in which self-categorization reflects interpersonal differentiation in its categorization of 'me' versus 'not me' (Giddens 1996; Brown 1996; Onorato & Turner 2004; Jenkins 2006). If this is true, the personal identity is constructed by categorizing oneself in relation to others and by identifying with, or differentiating from them. This means that rebreather divers' differentiation from non-divers and open system divers as well as their identification with other rebreather divers may influence their personal identity. The question makes addressing the question whether rebreather divers identify themselves with other rebreather divers, or extreme divers for that sake, as is the question if they feel different from regular divers and people who don't dive.

Anthony Giddens (1996) has worked with the different modernities and their influence on especially personal- or, as he refers to it, self-identity. Giddens (1996) argues that people are reflective beings whose personal identity is constructed and reconstructed as a process based on their reflections on their own behaviour and choices; Giddens uses therapy sessions and the notion

of self-therapy as an example of reflectiveness in identity construction and he argues the personal or self identity is found not in actions and behaviours, but in reflections on these, and in the ability to keep an ongoing storytelling. This might mean that it isn't in the actual diving or the consumption, which comes with it, where the diver's identity is found, but in the reflections he or she might have about equipment purchase or safety when he sets out to do a 100 meter deep dive.

According to Kaspersen (1996), Giddens distinguishes between personal/self identity and social identity. Brown (1996) agrees with this and elaborates that the personal identity gives way to the social identity when an individual immerses him- or herself. This would mean that once a person or a diver enters into a social engagement his identity of maybe being insecure and lacking confidence in his everyday life gives way to a knowledgeable and outgoing member of a diving community, because this is where his field of interest lies and where he feels at home. This makes it interesting to investigate whether there is cohesion between the rebreather divers social identity when he is among his peers and his everyday "personal" identity which influences the rest of his daily life.

The views of Giddens (1996) and Brown (1996) are somewhat similar to that of Henri Tajfel (1974), one of the founders of the concept of social identity. Tajfel (1974) agrees with Giddens' (1996) and Browns' (1996) notions of reflectiveness, but he understands social identity as the part of person's self-concept or personal identity that derives from his or her attachment to a social group, a view shared by Jenkins (2006). Where Giddens (1996) and Brown (1996) distinguishes between personal/self identity and social identity and argues that they are different identities and that one gives way to the other, Jenkins (2006) and Tajfel (1974) argue that a person can adopt multiple identities at the same time, and that all identities are social identities which are created through interaction with other people. This is a view shared by Helen Morgan & Kerry Thomas (1996), Sven Brinkmann (2008) and Ian Burkitt (2008). This notion on identity construction and multiple identities would mean that the identity of an extreme diver is influenced by his everyday life being a husband and/or father, making him a bit more careful, as would his identity as an extreme diver, living with the risks, influence his everyday life by living in the moment and being carefree.

Identity might be the product of internal negotiations that are confirmed in social contexts. According to Jenkins (2006), identity is constructed by social influences and exchanges through classification of people and objects and through connections to social groups, making it socially rooted. Other scholars argue that identity is a prerequisite for the existence of a social world and positively related to we intentions, where individuals to re-categorize themselves and adopt what they see as a relevant social identity (Morgan & Thomas, 1996; Moutinho et al 2007; Brinkmann

2008; Burkitt 2008; de Valck et al 2009). Belk & Tumbats (2005) and Schoutens & McAlexander's (1995) exemplify this in their research on Apple Enthusiast, and on Harley Davidson bikers, where the Apple- and Harley Davidson enthusiast adopt a quasi-religious relationship with their Macintosh computer or Harley Davidson. This infatuation has become a lifestyle where they congregate in different social settings, whether online (the Mac enthusiasts), in outlawed motorcycle gangs or Christian motorcycle clubs. It would be interesting to look into whether the same devotion or religiosity exists among rebreather divers and whether or not extreme diving is a lifestyle, much in the same way as riding a motorcycle.

### 2.1.2 Identification

According to the Hedgehog Review (1999), social conditions have made it increasingly difficult for people to establish who they are, both in their own eyes and in the eyes of others. People are challenged more than ever to locate themselves among opposing life spheres, which could be why people cluster together in groups of shared interest like surfing, rollerblading, vinyl record collecting and diving, which help them define themselves, this makes it interesting to consider if rebreather divers do the same, and, if so, why.



According to Richard Jenkins (2006) the notion of identity also includes the notion of “identifying, or identifying oneself with...” Jenkins (2006) argues that the concept of identity consists of two notions, that of similarity and that of diversity. This difference from others is something which everyone has in common; identity revolves around who is who and what is what. If our difference from others is something which we all have in common, how do members of a group differ from

non-members and how do the members differ from each other, how does this comply with rebreather divers, what do they have in common? and what differentiates them from other divers, besides the equipment? The classification of people and objects is important when associating; attaching and identifying oneself with them and is about mutual recognition (?) (Jenkins 2006; Moutinho et al 2007). Moutinho et al (2007) exemplify this in their study of surfers, followers and the fan culture. This classification or distinguishing between in-groups and out-groups might relate to diving in the sense that distinguishing between open system divers and rebreather divers may have an influence on association, mutual recognition and attachment, and, in the end, their identity.

“Identifying, or identifying one-self with....” is the ever-present companion of identity (Jenkins 2006) and before an individual can identify him- or herself with something or someone, there has to be something to identify, or identify oneself with (Jenkins 2006). In Schoutens & McAlexander’s (1995) research on Harley Davidson enthusiasts, Kozinets’ (2002) coffee enthusiast and Mitchell & Imrie’s (2009) vinyl record collectors, the unifying notions which people have identified with have been either the brand or quality. Related to rebreather divers, this unifying concept could be the danger of this extreme form of diving, the technical aspect that brings “tech freaks” with a passion for diving together or something completely different which no-one has thought of before.

According to Rosch, (1998) identification revolves around classification or categorization, this is coherent with Jenkins’ (2006) notion of understanding of who we are, and who other people are, as well as other people’s understanding of who they themselves are etc. Categorisation or classification could be the distinguishing between living people and inanimate objects, men and women or different nationalities, or rebreather divers and ordinary divers etc. Placing objects and people into categories helps us with identification and it gives us an idea of what to expect, either from other people or from objects. It is a way of making sense of the world, a way of dividing people and things that might not have anything else in common besides fitting into this category (Potter 1996: Rosch 1998; Jenkins 2008). In a rebreather diving context, the category of the rebreather being a very technical diving device compared to ordinary diving equipment, or the aspect of risk and danger, could be what lures divers into this world or scares them away.

A group is a complex way of “categorising” people or objects. Where categorisation, revolves around the division of people or objects for practical reasons, a group revolves around relationships, and it includes some sort of cohesion and mutual recognition between group members, in acknowledgement of their affiliation (Morgan & Thomas, 1996; Brown 2000; Jenkins 2006; Moutinho et al 2007). An example of this is Mitchell & Imrie’s (2009) vinyl record collectors and



Kozinetz (2002) coffee enthusiasts who are drawn together by the quality and the “snob effect” which comes with high quality products, or Moutinho et al’s (2007) Surfers who are linked by sacred surf places and social recognition. The group of rebreather divers share their way of diving and it is interesting to investigate the relationship between them and to look into what kind of cohesion and mutual recognition they might share.

Group membership asserts a sense of “we” feeling and individuals might be influenced to re-categorize themselves and adopt what they see as a relevant social identity (Morgan & Thomas, 1996; Brown 2000; de Valck et al 2009). This combination of self-recognition and social recognition may have a direct impact on an individual’s self-perception, self-esteem and self worth.



According to Moutinho et al (2007:671), “[socialization is in essence a learning process, a deliberate act of identity construction”. As mentioned earlier, the way people construct their identity is through recognition of them and us, and of our similarities and differences when looking upon others. This makes it interesting to see if the same idea applies to rebreather divers, if they adopt this “we” feeling where they share social recognition and express the same sense of

snobbish attitude towards ordinary divers. It would also be interesting to see if divers share the same kind of “sacred” or reserved diving places as the surfers.

In order for people to become group or a tribe, they have to have something in common and a way of identifying this cohesion. Jenkins (2006) argues that where there is inclusion, there has to be exclusion, and a set of rules that defines this notion. Therefore the question of whether rebreather divers practice in- and exclusion is to be addressed. Henri Tajfel (1974) and Rupert Brown (2008) refer to this inclusion and exclusion as in-groups and out-groups and attach social identity to the affiliation. When it comes to tribes, members have that in common that they share consumption habits, group affiliation, values and passions and they identify the signs and behaviour conveyed by the tribe members.

According to Cova & Cova (2001; 2002), Moutinho et al (2007), Veloutsou & Moutinho 2008) this identification and recognition of similarities and differences, both within the group as well as outside the group, through signs and behaviours are what sets different tribes and tribe members apart. This corresponds very well with Jenkins’ (2006) notion of inclusion and exclusion and

Tajfel's (1974) and Brown's (2000) notion of in-groups and out-groups making it interesting to investigate whether this applies to rebreather divers.

### **2.1.3 Consumer Culture (consumer identities)**

Consumer identities or consumer culture, the concept chosen for this study, covers more than identity. It also includes the notions of emotional attachment and linking value (Firat et al 1994; Firat & Schulz 1997; Maffesoli 1996; Kozinets 1997; Elliot 1999; Cova & Cova 2002; Mike Featherstone 2007; Mitchell & Imrie 2009).

Consumer culture is preoccupied with the different ways in which people might create social bonds or distinctions between themselves and others through the consumption of goods. Featherstone (2007) argues the consumption of goods is used to outline social differences, act as communicators and it draws the lines of social relationships. Before entering into the how or whether this applies to rebreather divers, it is important to address the question of what consumption in the context of diving includes: is it only the consumption of gear and equipment or does the consumption in diving also include the act of diving in itself? In this study I argue that diving also includes the dive in itself. Diving is not like going for a run where you put on your shoes and start running once you are out the door. Diving includes costs of air or gas, chalk and transport to the dive site. Also, the high price of the equipment and the courses "influences" the economic aspect, making diving an act of consumption in itself. If Firat et al? (1994), Firat & Schulz (1997), Maffesoli (1996), Kozinets (1997), Elliot (1999), Cova & Cova (2002), Featherstone (2007) and Mitchell & Imrie (2009) notion, with the adaptation that the act of diving as an act of consumption is true, this would mean that that rebreather divers bond through their "consumption" of dives and equipment and that this consumption has an impact on their roles/identity in relation to each other, making this issue interesting to address.

According to Maffesoli (1996), Firat & Schulz (1997) and Featherstone (2007), postmodern consumers tend to take on different (consumer) identities and consumption habits shift in accordance with changes in their lifestyle. It is therefore interesting to investigate whether rebreather divers adopt a certain identity when they are among other rebreather divers, another when they are among ordinary divers and a third when they are at home with their family. If Maffesoli's (1996) Firat & Schulz's (1997) and Featherstone's (2007) notions are correct, an "inexperienced" rebreather diver can adopt the identity of a daring extreme diver when among open system divers or the careful husband who never exceeds the speed limits when driving.

Modern culture might have influenced the way people behave by promoting the attainment or construction of identity. According to Firat et al (1994), Kozinets (1997), Elliot (1999) and Featherstone (2007) postmodern consumers seek to create, maintain and communicate his or her personal identity through the symbolic function of goods and services. Elliot (1999) argues that consumers no longer consume product for their material functionality but for their symbolic meaning, and that products have become commodity signs; people consume dreams and images. , is this also true for rebreather divers? Kozinets (1997) findings in his research on X-files enthusiasts, this notion put forth by Elliot (1999), the so-called X-Philers, shared the drive to consume the symbols, which were related to The X-Files series. Featherstone (2007) agrees with both Kozinets (1997) and Elliot (1999) and argues that the symbolic associations of goods may be utilized and renegotiated to underline differences in lifestyle, which define social relationships. Making it relevant to address the question whether divers attach any symbolic meaning to their equipment, some of which is homemade, or if it is based solely on the material functionality; a means to an end - to stay alive while pursuing ones underwater hobby?



According to Elliot (1999), postmodern consumers have become consumers of illusions, as it is the image rather than the product they buy. Mitchell & Imrie (2009) and Cova & Cova (2002) argue postmodern consumers, manifested in groups or tribes, are more than just simple consumers; they are also advocates who tend to act loyal as a group towards specific brands, products or companies. Mitchel & Imrie (2009) refer to this notion as “bonded loyalty”. This is closely related to the question whether there is any symbolism attached to diving equipment or if it is purely functional materialism.

One the outcomes of postmodern consumption culture is, according Moutinho et al (2007), the consumer tribes in which the linking value is the most important aspect, with adaptation of rituals, values, symbols and myths that make out the group or tribe and the area of interest. How divers construct their identity through their sport as well as the influence of consumption and communities on this identity construction makes it relevant to investigate whether rebreather divers convey these signs, rituals and values related to their consumption habits that in the end would enable this Master’s thesis to “classify” them as a tribe or not.

## 2.2 Consumer tribes

The notion of tribe derives from archaic tribes like the native peoples of North America and Canada for instance (Maffesoli 1996; Cova & Cova 2002;). A tribe or neo-tribe can be defined as a group of heterogenic people, in terms of sex, age and income etc., who are linked by shared passion, emotions or enthusiasm, and who share beliefs, experiences, values and consumption habits (Maffesoli 1996; Kozinets 1998; 1999; 2006; Cova & Cova 2001; Moutinho et al, 2007). This means that consumer tribes are complex as they may consist of many different people with different backgrounds, age and gender who have different motives and priorities. On the other hand, tribes are quite simple as they revolve around a single area of interest or passion, this two sided issue addresses the question of the background of the divers, whether gender, profession or age have any influence on what the divers are searching for when pursuing their passion of diving. Although the notion of neo tribes is “rather new” this kind of neo-tribe has, existed for several decades under different names, Cova & Cova highlight the Skinheads, and the Teddy Boys in the 1960’s and 70’s as being comparable to modern day tribes although newer tribe notions have found new way of associating through online media for instance. Examples of modern day tribes range from Star Trek and X-



files fans, the so-called “Trekkers” and X-philers (Kozinets 1997; 2001) over Roller skaters (Cova & Cova 2001; 2002) and surfers (Moutinho et al. 2007) to coffee enthusiasts (Kozinets 1999) and vinyl record collectors (Mitchel & Imrie 2011). The question to be addressed in the present study is therefore whether rebreather divers fit into these notions of neo- or consumer tribes.

According to Kozinets (2006), consumer tribes manifest share and build their culture online. Cova & Cova (2002) elaborate on this and argue a tribe constitutes a sort of identification, religiosity, syncretism and group narcissism. The notion of consumer tribes forming identification, religiosity, syncretism and group narcissism is in keeping with Henri Tajfel's (1974) and Rupert Brown's (2008) notions of in-groups and out-groups and it is evident among Apple- and Harley Davidson enthusiasts (Belk & Tumbat 2005; Schoutens & McAlexander 1995), who have a quasi-religious relationship with their Macintosh computers and Harley Davidson motorcycles. This makes it relevant to turn our attention towards the question whether the same sort of religiosity influences the identity construction among rebreather divers and if there is the same sort of brand infatuation.

The difference between the notion of archaic tribes and that of neo tribes as we know them today might be related to the notion of identity being constructed and not something one is born into. According to Maffesoli (1996), Cova & Cova (2002), Moutinho et al (2007), Veloutsou & Moutinho (2008) and Mitchell & Imrie (2009), members relate to the tribe through shared feelings and habits, rather than kinship and language, and they can be members of several different tribes at the same time, one does not exclude the other. Does this mean that tribe members are members, based in a choice whether conscious or unconscious? And that they can choose to leave the again without severe consequences if his or her feelings and habits do not conform to those of the tribe? This makes it interesting to address the question of why rebreathers join a community or tribe, if it can be classified as such, if they are members of other tribes or communities and what the consequences are if they decide to leave.

Maffesoli (1996), the man from whom the first notion of tribes in postmodernism originates, argues that postmodern tribes are small-scale, unstable and based on emotional attachments and he cites sport club members, the crowd of fans at a sporting event, friends and colleagues as well as local politicians as examples of neo-tribes. Research into coffee enthusiasts (Kozinets 2001), surfers (Moutinho et al 2007) and vinyl enthusiasts (Mitchell & Imrie 2009) also show that most tribes are small-scale, as noted by Maffesoli. Although Cova & Cova (2001) agree with Maffesoli's notion of tribes being small scaled and unstable, he (2002) and Kozinets (1997; 2001) however disprove this notion, in their studies of the French Rollerblade tribe (2002) or X-filers (1997) and Star Trekkers (2001), which had thousands of participants and millions of affiliates. Assuming that rebreather divers can be "classified" as a tribe, how does this fit into these discrepancies between the sizes of the tribes and the theoretical argumentation of Maffesoli (1996) and Cova & Cova (2002)?



According to Cova & Cova (2001), tribes are difficult to measure; they refer to tribes as elementary particles that are hard to measure as they both exist and simultaneously do not exist, that they are fuzzy and more a societal sparkle than a socio-economic certainty. Cova & Cova (2001) have developed a model for telltale signs of tribal formation, which also positions the tribe members in coherence, it consists of four elements in which tribal “formation” can be seen. The first sign is the trends within an area. Cova & Cova (2001) refer to the millions of recreational rollerbladers in their study, related to diving, and one could look at the trends within rebreather diving: how rebreather diving has developed over time and the state of things right now and for the future. The second sign is institutions or organizations. Here Cova & Cova (2001) refer to the rollerblade organization FFRS, related to diving this could be PADI for regular divers, and it would be relevant to see if there also exist umbrella organisations within rebreather diving. The two last elements, the everyday life and the occasions are most important elements in this study, in terms of looking at identity construction and consumption habits among rebreather divers, as it is in the everyday life and in the gatherings of the divers where the signs are most evident. How does rebreather diving interfere with the diver’s everyday life and what are the occasions where they meet?

One critique of Cova & Cova's (2001) approach is that it doesn't take into account that the small scale of most tribes makes it difficult for outsiders to even realize that the tribe exists. You have to immerse yourself and be where the tribe members congregate, whether online or in the physical world in order to get the entire picture. If the Ninjadivers are a tribe, what signs do they convey and where do they convey them?

According to Kozinets (1999), Cova & Cova (2002), and de Valck et al. (2009), once a consumer starts to connect and interact with other consumers on a topic of shared interest whether online or offline, he is likely to turn to these communities for information and social interaction. Kozinets (1999) argues community members co-create their tastes within the community both online and offline and Mitchell & Imrie's (2009) vinyl record collectors for instance are a good example; they associated fine food and beer as complementary with the quality and socialization that they enjoyed with their collection of vinyl records. This is very interesting in relation to rebreather divers, to figure out what made them turn to Ninjadivers, and how has the Ninjadivers community or rebreather diving influenced this person's perception of diving and diving-related consumption, are the members of Ninjadivers diving to get an experience or is the diving part the experience in itself, diving for the sake of diving?

According to Kozinets (1999), Cova & Pace (2006) and de Valck et al (2009), communities of consumption or interest can be referred to as the first loose affiliation consumers with a shared consumption related interests can have with each other. If this is to be understood in that way; a search for information leads to bonding and understanding, a community of shared interest or consumption, and as relations gets closer and the interest gets deeper the members the community turns into a tribe. Is this coherent with the transition from being an ordinary diver to becoming a rebreather diver?

Moutinho et al (2007:674) argues that both neo tribes and communities are “*symbolically constructed and based on a system of values, norms and codes. According to*” Cova & Dalli (2009) sum it up in their notion of the development of we-intentions within consumer tribes and refer Bagozzi and Dholakia’s (2006:1101) notion of we-intentions as: “(1) *mutual responsiveness among participants to the intentions and actions of others; (2) collective commitment to the joint activity; and (3) commitment to support others involved in the activity*” Do the rebreather divers express the sense of “we” intentions? Do they have joint reaction towards ordinary divers or new rebreather divers? Do they feel a collective commitment to the community and towards diving? And do they support each other by sharing their experiences and stories?

### **2.2.1 Linking value**

As mentioned above a consumer tribe is a group of people tied together by emotional connection as well as consumption habits and value. Throughout theory on consumer tribes, scholars (Cova & Cova 2001; 2002; Kozinets 2006; Cova & Pace 2006; Moutinho et al 2007; Veloutsou & Moutinho 2008; Mitchell & Imrie 2009; de Valck et al. 2009) argue that the linking value is the most important aspect of consumption related to consumer tribes. Cova & Cova 2002 argue that tribe members are believed to value goods and services that allows for and maintains communal social and emotional interactions, and Moutinho et al. 2007 elaborates and argue that a consumer tribe is a “community” where people share emotional links, subculture, a collective behaviour and a vision of life. Mitchell & Imrie’s (2009) vinyl record collectors and Kozinets (2001) coffee enthusiast, Moutinho et al’s (2007) surfers are good examples of people who are linked but their consumption habits? and who have developed a sense of subculture, based on for instance a snobbish relation to quality (vinyl record collectors and coffee enthusiasts) or the way to spend ones free time as well as the quasi religious relation to a certain “sacred” surf spot surfers. Mitchell and Imrie (2009:49) exemplify the linking value by stating: that “*Tribal membership in this case was found to influence the consumption of music, vinyl records in particular. Records held a linking*

*value (Cova, 1997), or social use, for creating and maintaining relationships with others in the tribe.*” Also the vinyl record collectors association of fine food and beer as complementary with the quality and socialization that they enjoyed with their collection of vinyl records is a good example of linking value. These notions motivate the investigation whether they also fit the rebreather divers? Do they value goods and services or practices that allow for them to maintain their communal, social and emotional relations? Have they formed a kind of subculture of collective behaviour and a vision of life? Are they linked by their consumption habits?



The linking value might be a way to relate to others and to oneself. Moutinho et al (2007) and Mitchell & Imrie (2009) argue that people construct their identity through social engagements for instance by being among like-minded people and feeling a connection to social groups as this gives tribe members experience a sense “we”-ness, and many social benefits, like the feeling of camaraderie, community and solidarity. It is precisely for this reason that it is interesting to investigate how rebreather divers benefit from their membership



Both Moutinho et al (2007) and Mitchell & Imrie (2009) have exemplified this in their research, Moutinho et al (2007:683) by noting in their main findings that: *“surfers begin surfing as teenagers and quickly develop set beliefs and values related to nature, sea and congenial relationships”* Mitchell & Imrie (2009) exemplify this by quoting a couple of the tribe members:

*“I mean there’s no point in grabbing this cool record and going “Wahoo I’ve got this”, well there’s not much point unless you can show someone else (Mike).”* (Mitchell & Imrie 2009:46 )

*“It’s almost uniting people that still maintain vinyl and think that way [. . .] (Matt).”* (Mitchell & Imrie 2009: 47)

This makes it interesting to address whether rebreather divers relate to each other through their consumption and what it means for them being among likeminded people and if it gives them a feeling of belonging and this sense of “we-ness” that Moutinho et al (2007) and Mitchell & Imrie (2009) refer to.

### **2.2.2 Cultural Capital**

According to Cova & Pace (2006), Moutinho et al (2007), Cova et al (2007) and Mitchell & Imrie (2009) a tribe has its own set of values, its own mysteries, rituals, vocabulary and hierarchy, and Mitchell & Imrie (2009) argue that a member’s position in this hierarchy is based on his or her cultural capital.

Cultural capital, according to Bourdieu (1989), is based on the concepts of fields and habitus, and it refers to the knowledge, skills, education, and other advantages that give an individual a higher status than others in a “society”. Cova et al (2007) embraces Holt’s (1998) adaptation of Bourdieu’s (1989) concept of cultural capital to describe the knowledge, rules and hierarchy within a tribe, and refer to cultural capital as *“a set of socially rare and distinctive tastes, skills, knowledge and practices.”* Cova et al. (2007: 136) & (Holt 1998:3). Mitchell & Imrie (2009) acknowledge Bourdieu’s (1989), Holt’s (1998) and Cova et al’s (2007) notion of cultural capital and elaborates on it by referring to it as tribal values which dictates the social order in which status is achieved. Moutinho et al (2007) also recognise this and exemplify that cultural capital sets surfers and surf fans apart both in regards of tastes, skills and practices, making cultural capital important in terms of finding ones place within a group or tribe.

It is therefore interesting to examine the cultural capital of the community of rebreather divers, if it exists at all. If cultural capital is found to exist among the rebreather divers it would be also be interesting to explore what influence it has on a member's role within the tribe or community.

### **2.2.3 Roles**

As elaborated upon earlier in this chapter, people can adopt different identities in accordance with the roles they have in their relations with others. On a football team there is a captain, a goal keeper, defenders, midfielders and strikers, and in a corporation there are a CEO, middle managers, secretaries and workers, all defined by their abilities on the playing fields, knowledge and experience within a certain area, and sometimes by money. According to Cova & Cova (2001; 2002), Mitchell & Imrie (2009) and Moutinho et al (2007) the concept of roles is also present within a tribe, however the role within a tribe is defined by a member's cultural capital.

Kozinets (1999; 2002), Cova & Cova (2001, 2002) Langer & Beckman (2005) and Bowler (2010) recognize 4 different roles which one can attain within a tribe, based on ones involvement, cultural capital and devotion however Mitchell & Imrie (2009) elaborates on the notion of four roles and also recognize a fifth role, whereas Moutinho et al (2007) only recognize two role in their study of surfers.



The reasons for these deviations could be based on the different compositions of the tribes, their size, their area of interest or the focus of the research. Moutinho et al (2007) for instance don't go into the depth with the roles within their tribe of surfers and they only recognize two roles, surfers and surf fans (wannabes) although they acknowledge that there might be additional roles as well.

Five roles have been adopted for this master thesis on the basis of Kozinets (1999), Cova & Cova (2001; 2002) sympathisers, members, devotees and insiders/practitioner. A fifth role derived from Mitchell & Imrie's (2009) study of record collector, the role of the tribal chief have also been adapted.

Sympathisers have loose affiliations with the tribe, their knowledge is quite limited and they don't really play an active in the tribe community. Even though sympathisers have an interest, it doesn't run that deep, their membership and interest is superficial and/or momentary (Kozinets 1999; Cova & Cova's 2001, 2002; Mitchell & Imrie 2009). Kozinets (1999) refers to sympathisers as "tourist [s]" who lack strong social ties with the tribe. These sympathisers could be ordinary divers considering buying a rebreather and who haven't for many different reasons, I choose not to include people who are totally new to diving as, rebreather diving is hazardous to some extent, and because the price of a rebreather unit and the course quickly amount to over 100.000 DKK.

Members play an active and more significant role than sympathisers and they have strong social links both online and offline and they are very active when it comes to the consumption aspect (Cova & Cova's 2001, 2002; Mitchell & Imrie 2009). However, Kozinets (1999) refers to them as "minglers" who have more interest in the social engagements rather than in consumption activity, which according to Kozinets is minimal. Cova & Cova (2001; 2002) call the Members for participants in their study for French roller skaters and refer to them participating in roller-skating events. I would argue that members is more suitable a term than both "mingler" and "participant" as the characteristics of the tribe, and of rebreather diving, based economy and size, doesn't correlate with the sheer numbers it takes to participate in an event on the scale that Cova & Cova (2001; 2002) base their notion of participants on. The "member" of a rebreather tribe would be a person who dives with a rebreather on a regular basis and who takes an active part in the community but who isn't the one who takes the baton in the consumption race when it comes to equipment.

Devotees have a longstanding relationship and they have achieved cultural capital through their knowledge passion and involvement with the tribe. According to Kozinets (1999; 2002) and Mitchell and Imrie (2009) the devotee may not be as active as the members and practitioners but

they have strong consumption interests and still consider their membership an important part of their identity. This could be a diver who has done his share of dives and who has a substantial experience both when it comes to diving in general, good sites to dive and gear. He could be one of those rebreather divers who has built his own rebreather and one of those members who other members turn to when they have question about gear, safety and technical stuff.

Insiders/practitioners are the members with the highest cultural capital through longstanding relationships and considerable knowledge (Kozinets (1999, 2002; Cova & Cova 2001, 2002; Mitchell & Imrie 2009). According to Robert Kozinets (2002), nsiders/ractitioners are the most referenced tribe members. Cova & Cova (2001; 2002) and Mitchell & Imrie (2009) refer to this role as practitioners, such as DJs and retailers) or people who have a quasi-daily involvement with tribal activities (Cova & Cova). Kozinets (1999; 2002) refers to the insider, as the one with the strongest social bonds and consumption activities .a notion that resembles that of Cova & Cova (2001; 2002). This could be a commercial diver, a diving instructor or a retailer who does some sort of business related to diving.

Kozinets (1999; 2002) posits that the devotees and the insiders are the most important members as they are devoted, enthusiastic and actively involved members in the tribe community and although they only represent 20 per cent of the tribe members, they constitute 80percent of the consumption of the tribe. Whether this is true is difficult to measure in a scope of this Master's thesis, as this would include contacting retailers and manufacturers on both rebreathers and other diving gear, but the investigation whether 20 of the members of Ninjadivers constitute 80 per cent of the communication in the forum would be interesting.

The tribe chief or tribe leader is a notion introduced by Mitchell & Imrie (2009) is one of the insiders or practitioners with the highest level of cultural capital. The tribe leader is a very influential, if not the most influential, member of the tribe, a kind of opinion leader. The tribe leader is often recognized at some sort of facilitator or organiser within the tribe (Mitchell & Imrie 2009). Amongst rebreather divers, the tribe leader could be the one who organises trips to good dive spot or the one who facilitates contact between new rebreather divers and instructor and retailers.

### 3. Methodology

#### 3.1 Philosophy of Science

Ponterotto (2005:127) refers to philosophy of science as the “*conceptual roots undergirding the quest for knowledge*”. When producing scientific knowledge it is necessary to establish how reality is perceived. Guba (1990), Ponterotto, (2005) and Denzin & Lincoln (2000a) refer to this classification of perception as paradigms and define these as a basic set beliefs and values which influence how reality is perceived and which constitute a conceptual framework which guides methodological approaches. The classic paradigms are often referred to as positivism, neo-positivism and constructivism (Guba, 1990) which one adopts depending on his/her *ontology* (i.e. the nature of the “knowable” or the nature of reality), *epistemology* (i.e. the relationship between the knower (the enquirer) and the known (or knowable)) and *methodology* (i.e. the way the inquirer go about finding and analysing knowledge)(Guba, 1990; Schwandt, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b; Guba & Lincoln 2000; Ponterotto, 2005; Jacobsen et al, 2010). Whereas epistemology and ontology relate to how the researcher *sees* the world, methodology relates to how the researcher actually studies this world. As I could most accurately be defined as a constructivist moving towards social constructionism, I adopt, and subsequently discuss relativist ontology, transactional/subjectivist epistemology and hermeneutical methodology.

Constructivists claim that individuals (e.g. researchers) *construct* reality through interaction between the researcher and the “object” of investigation (Guba 1990; Ponterotto: 2005; Bryman, 2008 Guba & Lincoln 2000; Jacobsen et al, 2010) and that findings are the results of constructions within each person, based on his or her perception and the context. Social constructionism, on the other hand, claims that realities are constructed by *groups* of people (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Hansen, 2004, Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006).

*Ontology* addresses the question on “*what is the form and nature of reality, and what can be known about that reality?*”(Ponterotto, 2005:130) and refers to the nature of the “knowable”. According to both Guba (1990) and Ponterotto (2005) constructivists adopt a relativist ontology and believe in the existence of multiple, constructed realities and thus adhere to the following point made by Kettley (2010:68):

*“Ideas construct reality and society is not knowable though the scientific method but through understanding human motivation and action.”* (Kettley 2010:68).

Berger & Luckmann (1967) exemplifies this and show that people normally do not trouble themselves with what is real to them and what they know unless they stumble upon a problem. This means that no ultimate truth can be found, nor should it be sought, as realities are subjective and constructed in the minds of the individuals, through co-constructed between the individual and the researcher under the influence of context and the experiences and perceptions of the individual (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Guba, 1990; Ponterotto, 2005; Kettley, 2010; Jacobsen et al, 2010). In regard to the present piece of research, this means that not only do members of diving communities construct their identity through ‘doing’ their sport, but also that I and the divers I study co-construct the outcome of my research – both through communication between me as an interviewer and the divers as interviewees *and* through the communication between members of online diving communities that I analyse.

As mentioned above *epistemology* is concerned with the relationship between the knower (the enquirer/researcher) and the known (or knowable) (Guba, 1990; Schwandt, 1997; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b; Guba & Lincoln 2000; Ponterotto, 2005; Jacobsen et al, 2010; Martin 2010) and may be defined as “*the study of the nature of knowledge and justification*” (Schwandt, 1997:39). The constructivist paradigm adopts a subjectivist epistemology meaning that understanding is generated through interaction and that I as a researcher am ‘allowed to’ be subjective when interpreting the findings in the research. My influence by social constructionism comes to show as I besides believing that reality and meaning are created within an individual, also believe, in coherence with Hansen (2004) that social groups create reality, and that reality also is social interpretation. The existence of socially accepted conventions on how to behave in certain situations is illustrated by Hansen’s (2004:134) example of a red traffic light at an junction:

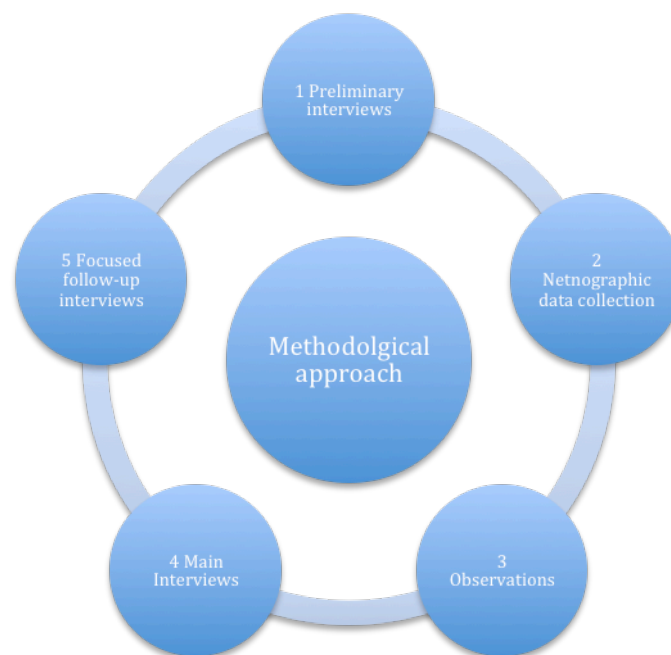
*“in U.S. society the socially constructed meaning of a red light at an intersection is a directive to stop. This is obviously a socially constructed truth, because a red light does not have any inherent meaning beyond the ways in which a particular culture defines it. However, it is also reasonable to assume that, in addition to the socially constructed meaning of “stop,” a red light has personal meanings to individuals, such as an invitation to challenge authority, a memory of an auto accident, or an object to be admired artistically.”*

in this example, Hansen (2004) points to the possible co-existence of both a social constructionist (i.e. red light meaning stop being rooted in a particular cultural context) and a constructivist approach (i.e. red light also having more personal meaning).

### 3.2 Methodology

According to Guba (1990) and Ponterotto (2005) methodology refers to the processes and procedures that guide researchers in their quest for knowledge. Both my paradigmatic stance as a constructivist and my being influenced by social constructionism make me favour more qualitative methods (Guba, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000b; Guba & Lincoln, 2000; Hansen, 2004; Ponterotto 2005; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006), this thesis therefore adopts a qualitative approach in order to produce scientific knowledge about *how* and *why* belonging to subculture and/or a consumer tribe influence the consumption habits and the identity in the context of a community of divers.

As a constructivist, I recognize the existence of multiple realities which depend on context (Berger & Luckmann, 1967; Guba, 1990; Ponterotto, 2005; Kettley, 2010; Jacobsen et al, 2010) and I also believe that there is no ultimate truth and consequently, no single method or theory that is superior to others which is why I apply *multiple* theories and methods in order to understand diving communities and members hereof. The methods used are netnography (i.e. analysing communication between divers in on-line communities), observations (of divers ‘in action’ when they go on tours together) and in-depth interviews with different divers. The relations between these different methods are visualized in the figure below.



The illustration of the methodological approach helps the reader understand the different phases this study has gone through to produce knowledge of how rebreather divers construct their identity through their sport. Through out some of the main interviews some new knowledge came to me and I chose to do some follow up interviews with a single focus to either confirm or rebut the findings. As indicated by figure xx, in accordance with the constructivist paradigm, the analytical approach applied is a hermeneutical analytical methodology (Guba: 1990; Guba & Lincoln, 2000; Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006; Ponterotto 2005), which is concerned with interpretation actions and meanings. In addition to the hermeneutic approach, a supporting approach in which summaries of the findings in the interviews are structured into meta-matrices (Miles and Huberman, 1994) is also applied in order to supply the researcher with an overview of the different themes emerging during simultaneous data collection and analysis.

### 3.2.1 Observations

In order to gain a personal impression of what goes on when rebreather divers go away on a trip, and how they socialize as well as general understanding of who these people were, I went with the group to Düsseldorf to a trade fair, which included diving equipment etc.

Incorporated in this trip to Düsseldorf was a stay near a popular dive site and a dive in a flooded chalk quarry.



### 3.2.2 Netnography

With 3.146 billion email accounts, 555 million websites a n d billions of users (<http://royal.pingdom.com/2012/01/17/internet-2011-in-numbers/>) in 2011, the internet “offers increased opportunities for social group participation where consumers form virtual communities” (Langer & Beckman, 2005:192) and these communities have vast research potential (Kozinets 1998; 1999; 2002; Sandlin 2006). Kozinets (1998; 1999; 2002; 2006; 2010a; 2010b) is often referred to as one of the pioneers in online community research, when he adapted traditional ethnographic research methodology to internet based media and called it “online ethnography” or simply “netnography” and he is still one of the most influential and productive netnographical scholars to this day (Langer & Beckman 2005; Sandlin 2006; De Valck et al. 2009; Xun & Reynolds 2010; Bowler 2010; Marabese & Blichfeldt 2013). However, in order to understand what netnography ‘is’, it is important also to understand what ethnography is. However,



to properly define ethnography would be a major task in itself and therefore, in the present context ethnography is simply seen as a qualitative anthropological research methodology, which is applied to gather empirical data on human societies and cultures in natural occurring settings through multiple methods including participant observation, field notes, interviews, and surveys (Kozinets 1998; 2002; 2006; De Valck et al. 2009). Drawing on the characteristics of ethnography, netnography is defined as a methodology/research tool to study online culture, communities and consumer behaviour by looking at community members' needs, desires, values, opinions, experiences and the ways in which they interact through computer mediated communications (Langer & Beckman 2005; Sandlin 2006, Kozinets 2006; Jupp 2006 Xun & Reynolds 2010). According to netnographers (e.g. Kozinets 2002; 2006 Sandlin; 2006; Xun & Reynolds 2010; Marabese & Blichfeldt 2013), netnography has many advantages; e.g. that it is faster simpler, less obtrusive, more naturalistic, provides greater accessibility and is far cheaper compared to traditional qualitative. According to Xun & Reynolds (2010) and Kozinets (2002), the Internet has a substantial capacity to carry information and the Internet also provides the basis for naturally occurring interaction through these online communities and therefore netnography supposedly provides a window for researchers to get an insight into these naturally occurring behaviours, interactions and cultural realities of the members of online communities and it gives researchers access to the members' unobtrusive discussions through observation and/or participation (Kozinets 2002; 2006; 2010; Langer & Beckman 2005 Sandlin 2006; Jupp 2006; de Valck et al. 2009; Xun & Reynolds 2010). Apart from unobtrusive observations (as advocated by Kozinets, 1998), netnographers may also engage themselves more actively in the online communities, for example through online interviews or enquiries (Kozinets 2002; 2006; Sandlin 2006; Jupp 2006; Kozinets year Xun & Reynolds 2010; Marabese & Blichfeldt 2013).

Marabese & Blichfeldt (2012) disagree somewhat with the views of Kozinets (2002; 2006; 2010), Sandlin (2006), Xun & Reynolds (2010) and de Valck et al. (2009) on the 'naturalistic occurring behaviors' and 'unobtrusive access' as inherent virtues of netnography and argue that the unobtrusive access to "data", that the other scholars claimthat is only possible if the netnography is done on the basis of data posted by community members and not questions posted by the researcher. Furthermore, Marabese & Blichfeldt (2013) argue that netnography does not necessarily give access to naturally occurring behaviours, but to a rather carefully managed identity posted by the community member and that the life posted might have little in common with the actual life of the poster:

*“Netnography offers the researcher access to how the tourist presents and posts him/herself in a conversation with a, for the sender of this information, more or less ‘known’ audience. As a result, netnography may not tell us much about who the tourist ‘is’, but instead, it will tell much about the presented (or perhaps even carefully managed) identity presented and posted by tourists, (Marabese & Blichfeldt 2013:3)*

This is a view shared by Willig & Stainton-Rogers (2008), who argue that researchers can’t trust participants in online qualitative research to present themselves truthfully, as some people have a tendency to create an online persona, which they can’t maintain in praxis.

In the netnography of this Master’s thesis, I have chosen to disregard the notion of un-obstructive nature of netnography, I have chosen to be obstructive and engage myself actively in Ninjadivers’ online community, as suggested by Kozinets (2002; 2006), Sandlin (2006) Jupp (2006) Xun & Reynolds (2010) and Marabese & Blichfeldt (2013). I have engaged members in conversations and asked them questions, I have also chosen include qualitative face to face interviews in my approach to collect data, where I have singled out members of Ninjadivers and invited them to participate in face to face interviews. This approach has been chosen to get the members to elaborate on some of the findings I have already made during my netnography and in order to get a better cultural understanding of the diver community and its members both online and offline.

As with all other methods, netnography also has serious limitations. Xun & Reynolds (2010), Kozinets (2002, 2006), Sandlin (2006) and Marabese & Blichfeldt (2013) point out some major weaknesses among which ‘respondent authenticity’ and ‘potentially poor quality of textual discourse’ are the most relevant in the present context. I do acknowledge that other researchers point to ethical sensitivity as a key problem. However, as this is a Master’s thesis, which in its present form is intended for the author’s, the supervisor’s and the assessor’s reading only, I have chosen not to go into the heated ethical debate on netnography.

As for ‘respondent authenticity’, Xun & Reynolds (2010:19) emphasize the use of pseudonyms and avatars as problematic as it makes it difficult *“for both researcher and practitioner to determine the identity of a member of an online feedback mechanism”*. Xun & Reynolds also argue that the feedback could in fact be provided by a non-human respondent, a so-called chat robot, and that it can be difficult to distinguish between that and a real human being. Kozinets (2006:282) points to the problem of anonymity when using netnography and states that:

*“Within a textual reality, the anonymity that is sometimes advantageous at obtaining disclosure prevents us from having confidence that we understand our discloser. What age, sex, ethnicity is the person who is “speaking” to us and seeking to inform our research? We currently have no reliable means of telling.” (Kozinets, 2006:282)*

This point raised by Kozinets is indeed problematic for the constructivist research, who acknowledges the criticality of context. Sandlin (2006) and Marabese & Blichfeldt (2013) also discuss the problems of anonymity, but in another way, as they discuss the matter of community members being prone to present a self-image on-line that is considerably different from their ‘real’ selves. Marabese & Blichfeldt (2013) are also concerned with the issue whether community members present “a life lived” or “a life told” as in a carefully managed identity posted by the community member, which have little in common with the actual life of the one posting it as mentioned earlier. These weaknesses inherent to netnography are the primary reason why netnography in this thesis is supplemented by qualitative interviews.



The following steps have been laid out from Kozinets (1998) when he introduced netnography and it is still the approach taken by researchers today (Kozinets 2002; 2006; 2010; Langer & Beckman 2005; Sandlin 2006; Jupp 2006; Bowler 2010; Kozinets 2010): (1) *Entrée*; (2) Collecting and analysing Data; (3) Ensuring trustworthy interpretation; (4) Conducting research lives up to ethical standards and (5) Providing opportunities for culture member feedback.

The *entrée* consists of the formulation of research questions and identifying appropriate online communities which are relevant for the topic of research by lurking and learning about the community and its members (Kozinets 1998; 2002; Sandlin 2006; Bowler 2010). A relevant community can take on many shapes (e.g. electronic bulletin boards, web rings, list servers (mailing lists) and chat rooms) (Kozinets 1998; 2002, Sandlin 2006; Hooley et al 2012). When assessing the relevance of online forums Kozinets (2002; 2010) Sanlin (2006) and Hooley et al (2012) recommend following these criteria: (1) Relevance of the community in relation to the topic of the research and research questions; (2) Traffic of postings including both number of posts, recent traffic and interactivity i.e. the flow of the discussions; and (3) richness and diversity of data. I have

researched the different online communities on divers both Danish and international and have singled out one community called Ninjadivers.dk, which is a Danish diving forum, with 271 members, 1.068 topics and 5.684 posts, with a focus on a specialized way of diving, called “rebreather diving”. Ninjadivers is not the largest online diver community, but the proportion of its size and number of post posts taken into account it is has the same amount of traffic and interactivity as the largest community dykkerforum.dk which has 2951 members, 8372 topics and 58281 posts as of December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012. The smaller amount of members, topics and posts make Ninjadivers much more managable, and able to access community members on a more “personal” level.

The aim of netnography is to understand the discourse and interaction of members of online communities through interpretation and although Kozinets (2002) argue that all aspects of interpretation can be trustworthy . Kozinets (2006) and Sandlin (2006) Hooley et al (2012) and de Valck et al (2009) suggest that the researcher immerse him- or herself in the in the culture of the online community “*whether [he or she] must become a wine connoisseur, a videogame expert, or a food aficionado*” (Kozinets 2006) by engaging him-/herself on a long-term basis. Long-term engagement is of course difficult to do in a Master’s thesis as it is constrained by a lack of time, which is also one of the reasons why I chose the smaller of the two diving communities mentioned above. The scope of the community made it possible for me to go back longer than I would have been able to in a larger community. Prior to this thesis, I had obtained some basic knowledge about diving and divers from years of floating around in the vicinity of a group of divers, in spite of me not being a diver myself, who have evolved from being ordinary divers to being rebreather divers. This means that I have contacts within this community who assisted me in getting acquainted with and understanding the discourse and interaction of the online community members.

Before actually ‘performing’ netnography and engaging the members of an online community it is important to understand what an online community consists of, Kozinets (1999; 2002) outlines four different categories of online community members to distinguish between, categories which Langer & Beckman (2005), de Valck et al. (2009) and Bowler (2010) adopt. The categories to which Kozinets refers are: newbies, minglers, devotees and insiders.

‘Newbies’ or ‘tourists’ are community members who lack strong social ties to the community and who maintain a superficial or passing interest in the community. Minglers are members who maintain strong social ties, but are only partially interested in community/activity. Devotees uphold a strong interest in the consumption activity, but they do not have many social attachments to the

group. Insiders are members who have strong social ties to the community and who maintain a strong interest in the consumption activity (Kozinets 1999; 2002 2010; Langer & Beckman 2005; Sandlin 2006;Valck et al. 2009). According to Kozinets (1999; 2002), devotées and insiders are the most important data sources as they are the most devoted, enthusiastic, actively involved, and sophisticated community members and they are also the most important target group as they according to Kozinets (1999) are those who consume the most.



Minglers and insiders have special importance, especially due to this study not only being of a marketing oriented nature, but an attempt to understand the members of these online communities, as they are the most social and relation seeking members in their way of communicating in the online community, their focus is on long-term personal achievement through cooperation with other community members or through the outlining and enforcement of common standards (Kozinets 1999).

Kozinets (1999) categorization of online community members is compatible with Cova & Cova's (2002) notion of tribal roles, referred to in the chapter of consumer tribes and communities. Both Kozinets and Cova & Cova have identified four different roles set in "hierarchic" spirals. Kozinets' "Newbies and tourist" can be referred to Cova & Cova's "sympathisers", Kozinets "mingler" and Cova & Cova's "Member". The devotée emerges both in Kozinets netnography category and Cova & Cova's tribe roles as the second highest "position", only surpassed by the insider (Kozinets 1999) and the practitioner (Cova & Cova, 2001; 2002) as the most influential member. Cova & Cova also identified a 5<sup>th</sup> role, a person who they referred to as the tribal chief, a person, who, in an online community, could be referred to as the moderator or administrator.

Ninjadivers have mainly been chosen based on its narrow focus on "rebreather diving" which is considered a bit more hazardous and expensive than ordinary diving. The risks and price level of rebreather diving mean that all the members are experienced "normal" divers prior to engaging in this specialized way of diving. They would all have been considered either devotees or insiders in a community of "normal" divers.

Netnography is based on posts copied from Ninjadivers where the members discuss topics relevant to this master's thesis' research questions and on questions posted by me in the hope of the

community members being willing to engage in discussions with me as and most important amongst themselves. Eight community members agreed to participate in face-to-face interviews. The qualitative interview helped with securing the authenticity of the community members as well as it gave the community members the opportunity to provide feedback on what I had found during my data collection.

Ethical standards were kept by first announcing in the forum that I was conducting research and that I would do my outmost to not expose anyone. I also informed the community members that if someone for some reason had issues with me quoting them, then I would, of course, respect that, by either not making the thesis publicly available or by rephrasing their posts.

### **3.2.3 Semi-structured interview**

*“Interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow humans”* (Fontana & Prokos 2007:8) and it has become a way of modern storytelling where a person divulges his life stories in response to interview inquiries (Fontana & Frey 2000). The interview is not a neutral tool for data collection or the neutral exchange of asking questions and getting answers it is more that. An interview is a process between two or more people where the participants actively construct knowledge through questions and replies (Denzin & Lincoln 2008; Fontana & Frey 2000; Silverman 2006; Holstein & Gubrium 1995 Kvale & Brinkman 2009). According to Kvale & Brinkmann (2009:1)

*“The qualitative research interview attempts to understand the world from the subject’s point of view, to unfold the meaning of their experiences to uncover their lived world prior to scientific explanations.”*

This means that the interview conducted for this master thesis generates knowledge on identity construction through sport and consumption and on how online communities influences the identity construction, through me as a researcher asking questions, on diving, identity, consumption and online presence, and the interviewees giving me answers and elaborate on my considerations and assumptions.

There are three overall approaches to doing interviews: un-structured, semi-structured or structured (Fontana & Frey 2000; Bryman 2008; Denzin & Lincoln 2008). In qualitative research the most used approaches are the un-structured and semi-structured approaches. The semi-structured in-depth

Interview has been chosen for this master thesis but in order to fully appreciate this choice it is important to have an understanding the different approaches.

The structured interview is, as the name suggests, an interview structured in a manner, which follows a stringent guide, where the researcher asks all respondents the same series of pre-established questions and it doesn't allow the researcher any form of improvisation or interpretation which could potentially influence the interviewee, (for a thorough guide see Denzin & Lincoln 2008:124) it is more or less a face-to-face survey (Fontana & Frey 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009).

Unstructured interviews are, contrary to the structured interview, very loosely organised (if organised at all). Unstructured interviews keep to some general topics and open ended questions and allow for interviewer improvisation and interpretation (Fontana & Frey 2000; Denzin & Lincoln 2008). Unstructured interviews could be regarded as recording of casual conversation on a specific topic of interest although Fontana & Frey (2000) still argue that it has some sort of structure with settings and identified distinct respondents (Fontana & Frey 2000)

The semi-structured in-depth interview has been chosen for this master's thesis on the basis of its flexibility compared to the structured interview, and its structure and direction compared to the unstructured approach. The semi-structured interview takes the best from the structured interview and the unstructured interview and combines them taking the structure and the progression from the structured interview and combines it with the open ended questions and the flexibility of the unstructured interview (Fontana & Frey 2000; Silverman 2006; Denzin & Lincoln 2008; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009; Seale et al. 2010). This means that the semi-structured interview follows an interview guide, based upon the on research question and theoretical approaches in order to secure that certain topics get covered. The semi-structured approach allows the interviewer the flexibility to deviate from the interview guide by jumping forward and backwards as well as allowing him to actively engage himself in the meaning construction and to come up with additional questions that arise during the interview, for instance clarifying questions or question arising based on answers given by the interviewee (Silverman 2006; Kvale & Brinkmann 2009, Rapley; 2010).

## **Thirteen Interviews**

A total of 13 qualitative interviews have been conducted for this study, out of them 8 members of the Ninjadivers forum, who can be characterized as members, devotees and insiders/practitioners, according to Kozinets (1999) and Cova & Cova (2002), when it comes to rebreather diving. Preliminary interviews with five normal or open system divers have also been conducted in order to gain an outside perspective on the rebreather divers, give this study a point of reference. Due to some questions that arose during the main interviews 4 focused follow-up interviews were conducted in order to shed more light on this issue. The interviews were conducted on the basis of 3 interview guides (see appendix A) in accordance with Kvale & Brinkmann (2009). The interview was structured with overall themes of open ended questions based mainly on questions from three different phases of the this master thesis: Questions that existed prior to the thesis, questions that arose during reading of theory on identity and consumer tribe as well as question that arose from the netnography. Improvised question that arose during the interview, based on the interviewees' answers was also asked.

## **3.3 Interpretation and Analysis**

Hermeneutics is a practical philosophy about understanding through interpretation (Schwandt, 1997; Kjørup, 1999; Føllesdal et al. 2005; Andersen 2006; Pahus 2006) and although it, at the outset, is related to analysis of written material, it has also proven useful when seeking to understand human action and human behaviour in a given context (Schwandt, 1997; Schwandt, 2000; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000: Rod, 2006). Kincheloe & McLaren, (2000) argue that understanding also includes interpretation and Rod (2006) argues that hermeneutics intuitively interprets data in the context of theoretical frameworks. In the light of constructivism's subjectivist epistemology and the acknowledgment of the existence of multiple realities, hermeneutics allows the researcher to be subjective (Kjørup, 1999; Schwandt, 2000:195) and even "requires the engagement of one's biases. The hermeneutic learning process consists of a spiral of pre-understanding, interpretation and new understanding (Kjørup, 1997; Kjørup, 1999; Schwandt 1997; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Schwandt 2000; Collin & Køppe, 2006; Thuren 2008; Jacobsen et al, 2010).

Scholars also argue that the hermeneutical spiral is the relationship between the holistic and the fragmented understanding, about the importance of understanding parts of a phenomenon and the phenomenon as a whole and that in order to understand each individual fragment in its own right,



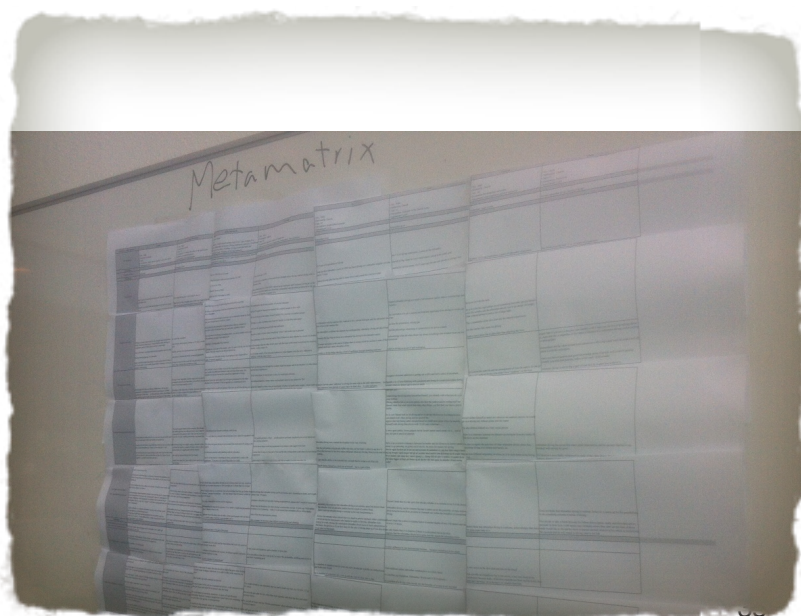
you have to understand the context of the whole as an entity and in order to understand the whole you need understand the basis of the fragments (Kjørup, 1997; Kjørup; 1999; Schwandt 1997; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2000; Schwandt 2000; Pahuus, 2006; Collin & Kjøppe, 2006; Thuren 2008; Jacobsen et al, 2010). Pahuus (2006:145) argues that:

*“As long as people have been dealing with interpretation of texts we have been aware that understanding and interpretation of a text includes a characteristic circular movement: moving back and forth between an understanding of the individual parts (sentences and paragraphs) and an understanding of the entire text as an entirety.”* (for translation see appendix C2)

This allows me to incorporate theories on identity construction and consumer tribes when exploring how diving and online communities influences these aspects.

Before initiating this master’s thesis I had some knowledge and preconceptions of what consumer tribes/communities were, and how divers would fit into this notion. The hermeneutic approach allows me to interpret the findings of the netnography and reinterpret them when new posts, or the interviews, shed new light on the initial findings/interpretations. The same goes for the semi-structured approach to interviewing, it also allows me to move back and forth in the interview process when an answer sheds new light on question posted earlier in the interview.

A key part of the research accounted for in this thesis has been the attempt to continuously move back and forth between generation of more holistic themes and individual pieces of data (text bits from the on-line community, interview fragments, observations etc.). However, as the amount of data could lead to ‘death of data’ (especially for a rather inexperienced researcher), in order to get an overview of emerging themes and relations hereof to individual pieces of data, during data collection and analysis, I developed a meta-matrix (Appendix D) (Miles & Huberman, 1994), in which interviewees (or other sources of data) are listed on the horizontal axis and emerging themes on the vertical axis. Hereby, the matrix both provides in-depth



understanding of each interview (or source) when read vertically *and* accumulated knowledge on each theme when read horizontally. In accordance with my hermeneutical approach, themes of the matrix emerged during the research process and are not definite but they constitute a good basis for further analysis (Miles & Huberman 1994).

#### 4. Analysis

As accounted for in the methodology chapter, this analysis is mainly based on empirical data collected from a Danish community of rebreather divers called ‘Ninjadivers’ using a combination of netnography, real-life observations and qualitative interviews with members of the community. Ninjadivers is an online forum for rebreather divers and people who are interested in getting to know this different and extreme way of diving. The purpose of the forum is to enable Danish rebreathers, whether new or experienced, to share knowledge and experience, to sell and trade equipment and to arrange getaways for rebreathers, during which they join up and dive together. Ninjadivers is owned and operated by Christian Rasmussen, with help from his webmaster Karsten, and the forum has 281 members, who have made 5,905 posts about 1,112 topics (as of March 15th, 2013, <http://www.ninjadivers.dk/>)

As the reader will notice in the following analysis, most of the empirical data emphasized in the analysis derives not from the netnographic data collection from the online forum but from the qualitative interviews. This relates to the fact that the members of Ninjadivers were not prone to communicate much online about themselves and their relation to diving and/or other divers. In fact, most of what is posted on Ninjadivers is of a technical nature, as illustrated in the several examples of such technical communication below. As all other online material, and interviews in Danish, these examples have been translated from Danish to English. Please see appendix B for original data.

Post from The Diver:

*Hello*

*“I have written a tool for the Poseidon Discovery MKVI rebreather.*

*With this tool, it is easy to analyse log files from the device, and get diagrams of the values, depth, PO2 set point, PO2 values from the cells, etc.*

*Check out my blog and see screenshot's and download the program.”*

(For translation see appendix C3, for the original thread see appendix B1 )

Post from Christian:

*“Hi Megalodon divers*

*According to rumours on rebreatherworld it is now possible to buy a new T-piece for Meg including a nozzle that converts your Meg into a hybrid version.*

*Apparently it looks as if it requires a course to be able to buy the pieces, but this has not been verified.*

*You can read more in the thread here (read post from "diverrob":*

*<http://www.rebreatherworld.com/megalodon-rebreather/22154-meg-hybrid-m-and-eccr.html>*

*Can you confirm this Rasmus? (Price, course requirements, etc.)”*

(For translation see appendix C4, for the original thread see appendix B2)

Post from Bosch:

*“I tend to agree with Christian.”*

*Just with the addition that the Golem Gear scrubber lasts 140 minutes before the is CO2 breakthrough. That's as far as I can see below CE criteria: 40 feet of water, 1.6 liters of CO2 per minute and a water temperature of 5 degrees Celsius. It is not very long for 3.4 kg of lime.*

*So maybe it was worth it to find out how long ISC scrubber lasts.*

*Regards*

*Bo”*

(For translation see appendix C5, for the original thread see appendix B2)

Post from Dool:

*”I'm looking for the optimal gas to put in my stages.*

*The deepest dive I have to do is probably about 65ish meters but preferably as long as possible. I have 1x11 litre and 2x7 litre tanks to fill up on. The plan is to run the diluent as off board, where it will also act as a bailout.”*

*Which gases would you choose to get the most effective decompression profile in order to make as long dives as possible? For all non decompression dives, I have one seven-litre of air that I use as both diluent and bailout.”*

(For translation see appendix C6, for the original thread see appendix B3)

As exemplified by the posts reproduced above, most posts relate to issues such as such as gas and decompression, functionality of equipment, configuration and modification as well as more general news from within the world of rebreathers. Although there were other topics discussed in the forum besides those of a technical nature (e.g. information for beginners; stories about accidents, almost accidents or deaths; information and communication about joint dives and trips; and from time to time, Ninjadivers members share their experiences and post pictures from diving trips/holidays), in general, the data retrieved from the on-line forum is very different from the rich and thick community data, other researchers (e.g. Kozinets 1997, 2002, 2006; Langer & Beckman 2005; Sandlin 2006; Jupp 2006; Xun & Reynolds 2010) have based netnography on. Even when my piece of netnography turned more active (i.e. when the researcher started to actively participate in the online communication) and I posted questions about why they dive rebreather-style, I mainly received short and precise answers such as:

*“The Logistics are easier”*

*“More economic use of gas, longer bottom time, shorter decompression time”*

*”It is very compact, highly reliable and robust.”*

*”Cheap gas consumption by deep dives, no bubbles / noise, multiple dives without having to refill tanks*

Obviously, such short and very technical answers were not the kind of data I had hoped for given the theoretical framework upon which this thesis draws. Therefore, I asked the few rebreathers, who replied to elaborate on their answers. However, they answered with a request to elaborate on my background and knowledge of diving and when I answered and told that I was not a diver and informed them of the nature of my thesis, I got no more replies (the complete thread can be seen in appendix B4). Subsequently, I tried to open a new thread and asked another question related to the motivation for rebreather diving on as well as a question derived from one of the useful answers of my first question, I received one reply (see appendix B5 for the complete thread). I therefore concluded that me posting questions on-line was not going to give me the answers I required and consequently, the focus of research was, at this point in time, turned towards face-to-face interviewing. This tells me that the rebreather divers are quite different from other people, who take part in online communities that have been subject to netnographical studies which have produced rich and thick community data. My research has only produced a limited amount of

netnographic data, which must mean that the community of rebreather divers is formed elsewhere, something which will be scrutinized upon throughout this analysis.

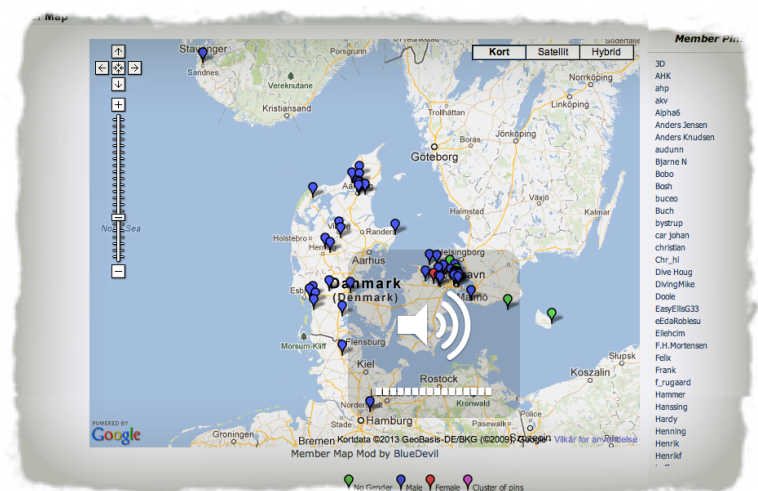
In opposition to the few, short and very technical/functional answers that were generated by means of netnography, in the face-to-face interviews the members of Ninjadivers were much more willing to take a stance in relation to diving and share their feelings about being rebreather divers and what it means to them.

## 4.1 Consumer Tribes?

The forthcoming chapter on tribes will be covering the indications of tribal aspects of the members of Ninjadivers tribal signs, “Consumption & Linking Value in diving”, rebreather culture, cultural capital and tribal roles.

### 4.1.1 Members

Ninjadivers consists almost exclusively of males. In fact, in the overview of members of the community, only one of the members is registered as female. The map also shows that the members are scattered all over Denmark, but that they tend to cluster together in groups of two or more. The average age of the members/interviewees is around 37, and the educational and professional backgrounds of the interviewees are on one hand quite different, they are both academics and artisans, but there are also some similarities in that their education or professional lives include some sort of technical aspect, like engineers and plumbers etc. This is also coherent with the data I got from the netnography, (see appendix B5), corresponding on one hand very well with the theory about consumer tribes being a group of heterogenic people in terms of, income and background, which at the same time is quite homogeneous in terms of diving experience, sex, the technical aspect of their daily occupation and to some extent their ages. This tells us that a community based on such a narrow niche, which set high standards for experience and investment, the composition of the group becomes much more homogeneous.



Maffesoli (1996) and Cova & Cova (2001) argue that tribes are unstable and small scaled. If we look at Ninjadivers, the forum has got 281 members, which is small scaled compared Cova and Cova's Rollerbladers (2001; 2002) and Kozinets X-philers (1997) and Star Trekkers (2001). However, compared to some of the smaller/more niche-oriented communities that have been studied previously (e.g. record collectors (Mitchel & Imrie 2009) and Surfers (Moutinho et al 2007)) one could argue that 281 members is not that 'small scaled' after all. When interviewees were asked to comment on the number of active members on Ninjadivers, they reckoned that the core of active members was somewhere between 10 and 20. For example, Peter S stated that the maximum number of participants on any Ninjadivers trip was 13 and that out of the 20, who actively participate there are 10 regulars and 10 'comers and goers'. That the core on Ninjadivers only consists of around 10-20 member is in accordance with Maffesoli's (1996) and Cova & Cova's (2001) argument that tribes are small scaled when compared with the record collectors and the surfers. The technical niche aspect that makes Ninjadivers very homogeneous, compared to normal tribes, also influences the size of the community as well as the other way around. The technical aspects, that shows in the communication, and the massive economic investment necessary to "be" a rebreather diver automatically bars some people from joining the community.

Maffesoli's (1996) notion that tribes are unstable is also, at least somewhat, coherent with the findings in the netnography and the interviews. The netnography shows that Christian, who 'owns' the forum is by far the most active member with between one quarter and one third of all the posts and all the interviewees agree that Christian's role in Ninjadivers is crucial to its existence, Peters S defines Christian as the driving figure on Ninjadivers:

Peter: *"Christian is usually the engine who takes the initiative to trips, and if he doesn't nothing happens."* (For translation see appendix C7)

Christian also acknowledges his central position in the community and comments on his position as the 'key driver' of the online community as follows:

Christian: *"There was some months last year where I didn't really have time, and I could see that the number of visitors fell. That was because I didn't post anything new about equipment and things like that."*<sup>1</sup> (For translation see appendix C8)

There is a direct correlation between Christian's activity and the general activity within the community and indicates that Christian has a special position in the community. Christian's role as owner and moderator of Ninjadivers can be compared with that of "tribal chief" or tribal leader, which Mitchell & Imrie (2009) have identified in their study of a group of record collectors. This is also coherent with Maffesoli's (1996) notion that tribes are unstable, because these statements also show that if Christian were not there to keep the community running, it would probably collapse and cease to exist.

It is not only online where Christian holds this special position, on dives he often becomes the one who everybody turns to, who navigates in the water and who calls the shots, even though the trio might be organized by someone else, somewhat to his own regret because he can't just be a participant. This indicates that Christian from time to time struggles to get out of his role as leader or chief, just wanting to be a normal participant. This is coherent with Burkitt's notion that an individual can strive to get out of a certain role or classification as he puts it, but that we all, including Christian does so within the limitations of a social framework in this case that Christian is usually the natural leader. This social framework could be influenced by Christian's approach to arranging Ninjadivers' trips, where he is the driving force. Christian told that he finds it difficult to delegate and therefore organizes everything on the diving trips himself and he explains the reasons for this as follows as follows:

Christian: *"When it comes to diving trips I am a bit of a control freak but I want to be that, because I have experienced that if there were others who were responsible for some of the things, and if they fuck up something up in the planning and I miss 3 dives it really annoys me because I only have time for on two dive trips per year. So I therefore take control and do all of it myself."* (For translation see appendix C9)

These findings show that the tribal chief on one hand is a role taken as the result of a conscious choice motivated by a certain goal. The role as tribal chief on the other hand can also be "given" to a person who in others eyes is "worthy" or respected because of his/her experience, knowledge and personality, or in other terms cultural capital. This adds another dimension to Mitchel and Imrie's (2009) notion that only mention cultural capital as the defining character of the role as tribal chief. Besides the role of the tribal chief, the other members of a tribe also have roles, according to both Michel & Imrie (2009) and Cova & Cova (2001, 2002). These roles will be examined later in this analysis.

In order to establish whether the rebreather divers or Ninjadivers are a tribe or not, it is important to explore if they convey signs of tribalism.

#### 4.1.2 Tribal Signs

Cova & Cova (2001) argue that tribes are difficult to measure. They have constructed a model to tell tale signs of tribalism which consists of four elements: the trends, the “institutions and organisations”, everyday life and occasions. According to the interviewees, one of the trends in rebreather diving indicates that the number of divers has increased significantly over the last 5 years or so. The interviews show that there is a much greater tendency among the interviewed rebreather divers to join communities with likeminded people than amongst ordinary divers. This indicates that rebreather divers are drawn to each other by their shared interests and by the fact that they are so few in number compared with open system divers. This is consistent with what Maffesoli (1996) Kozinetz (1998; 1999; 2006) Cova & Cova (2001) and Moutinho et al (2007) argue in their theory on tribal formation and it suggests that there is some sort of tribal formation happening among rebreather divers. The second element (institutions and organizations) is not apparent among the rebreather divers. In fact, when directly asked, none of the re-breathers were members of any organization and they all denied the existence of an umbrella organization for rebreather divers.

Although the interviewed re-breathers did not point to any umbrella organizations, they referred to each

manufacturer of rebreather units having its own educational organisation. This is an indication that rebreather diving is so specialized and still on a level in its development compared to ordinary diving which is organized in organizations like PADI (Professional Association of Diving Instructors) and GUE (Global Underwater Explorers) that it hasn't been formalised.





In regards to everyday situations, the members of Ninjadivers all visit the forum on a regular basis, some of them several times a day. The interviewees also reckoned that around half or more of their social circle, not including family and colleagues were divers and that they tend to bond with the people with whom they dive. This indicates social identity in accordance with Giddens (1996) and Jenkins (2006), being present and very influential when it comes to rebreather diving. Peter W and Christian especially elaborated on the influence of being a rebreather diver on their regular lives. Peter W has one night a week, which is 'reserved' for the diving club and this particular weeknight, diving 'overshadows' everything to such an extent that he argues that on this weeknight, both his wife and his family 'know' not to arrange anything they wish him to partake in. Christian told that diving had a direct influence on his mood, and that he is a better father and husband when he 'gets' to go out diving. The influence of diving on Christian's mood is also apparent in the netnography, as Christian posted the following in the forum at a point in time, at which he was unable to dive because of he recently had surgery:

Post from Christian:

*"Well, my mood does is not up in the clouds at the moment. Soon it has been over a month since I've been in the water and the prognosis says that the rest of the season might be gone for me :(*

*I had surgery at Aalborg Hospital almost 4 weeks ago and the doctor has given me diving ban for the remainder of this month minimum, with a risk of further extensions.*

*This means that I have not arranged any in autumn trips here in 2012 (if there is anyone who wonders).*

*I'm surprised how much I actually depend on getting in the water. I have even dreamed of it some nights, and I often go out into the garage and fiddle with the equipment to keep withdrawal symptoms away. I can also feel that it is effect of my mood quite bad. I'm glad that my wife is a bit sympathetic...<sup>2</sup> (For the Translation see appendix C10, and for the full thread see appendix B6)*

This post shows how much diving means to Christian and how big a part of his identity diving is, that it influences his personal wellbeing in a negative way when he is cut off from it. During the interview, Christian also said that the prognosis that his entire diving season was in jeopardy was a personal crisis which pushed him to the verge of tears. This indicates consistency with

Giddens' (1996) and Brown's (1996) notion of individual and social identity, as well as Jenkins' (2006) and Tajfel's (1974) notions of multiple identities; Where Christians struggle indicates individual identity in relation to Giddens and Brown, his choice to share his illness with the community and get support indicates fusion of the individual and the social identity into one "social identity" as put forward by Jenkins (2006). Christians acknowledge that diving is a large part of his identity and he emphasises that his Wife's understanding that diving is so vital to his identity is also very important, something Christian elaborated on by stating that:

Christian *"That what it am very interested in, is what I do best. I am really good when it comes to my kids and diving. In regards to my wife and my work, these are area in which I need to get better."*

(For translation see appendix C11)

*And*

Christian: *"I had a long standing discussion, with my wife when our children were small and it was incredibly difficult to find time for diving because the children they sucked all the energy out of us and when I went diving, she was home alone with them, but I just felt that if I stayed home and looked after the children and taking care of my wife, I became intolerable to be around. I was grumpy and angry and they were tired of being around me, but if I could be allowed to go on tour and then come home, okay, I was tired but I could play around with the kids. It was like I had just got my fix, or I will not say fix, but I had gotten that Amah it was just fucking great to be in the water and out socializing with my friends, just for a couple of 2 hours or something. It means so much to me."* (For translation see appendix C12)

Christian ended up saying that if his wife were to forbid him to go dive and demand that he stayed home with the family, he would get a divorce right away. This indicates that diving has become such a big part of Christian's identity, that he puts diving before his wife and in some way his children by arguing that he is a better father and husband when he gets his "fix" of underwater experience.

Peter W. agreed with Christian in this matter, Peter told that on occasions prioritised going diving over family gatherings:

Peter W.: *"If we need something together (in the family) and the some diving with high priority comes up and I have a choice, may well be that I prioritize the diving over the family."* (For translation see appendix C13)

Peter also told that he went on (diving) vacations without his family, something, which he had always done and something, which his wife and family accept.

Peter W.: *"They [the family] also know that I go on holiday by myself, I need to go on a dive vacation a couple of times a year and it has always been like that and they fully accept it."* (For translation see appendix C14)

This indicates a lot of individualism in connection to the importance of going diving and getting away from the family and the identity of being a husband and father. It also indicates a high degree of individual identity in coherence with both Giddens' (1996) and Brown's (1996) notions of separate individual and social identity and one identity that of being a father and a husband gives way for another identity as a diver and a friend. However one of the motivations for getting away, to go and experience new things and bond with friends or other divers is more coherent with Jenkins' (2006) notion that individual and social identity is the same and that people adopt multiple identities because they are still parents and husbands when they go away and dive and they are still divers when they are at home with the family.

The last element in Cova & Cova's (2001) model is the occasions, during which the rebreather divers meet. The interviewees, all agree that one of the gains from being a member of Ninjadivers is a broad network of likeminded people with the same interest scattered all over the country. One of the uses of the Ninjadivers forum is to meet up and dive together on trips, and I was fortunate enough to be invited to join members of Ninjadivers on a trip to a trade show in Düsseldorf which included a dive in freezing temperatures and where I experienced how the rebreathers bonding through their shared interest.

That interviewees convey four out of three signs that they are a tribe according to Cova & Cova's (2001) model indicates that there is some tribal activity going on, both online in the Ninjadivers forum as well as offline and it seems that most of the tribal activity such as the bonding, the sharing of experiences and the construction of identity take place in an offline setting and that the Ninjadivers forum is where they keep in contact and where they keep updated on what happens in the world of rebreather diving. However, in order to establish whether or not they can be called a

tribe some of the not so clear elements of communities such as culture, linking value, cultural capital and the roles have to be discussed as well, which they will be in the forthcoming chapters.

#### **4.1.3 Consumption and linking value in diving**

The consumption aspect of diving is just as big a part, as in every sport or hobby with focus on gear and development, whether it is motorcycles, photography or golf etc. when asked what constitutes consumption in relation to diving and if it was more than just buying the unit, the interviewees found it difficult to give an exact answer but acknowledged that it wasn't enough just to own the unit the consumption was also diving the on the unit. Besides Christian and Peter S, the interviewees were not prone to buy a new rebreather unit on a regular basis, contradicting the statement given to me by a rebreather manufacturer, that rebreather divers were ready to sell their new unit once they got it in the door, in order to get the next new thing. This might be due to the sheer price tag of the units, which amounts to several tens of thousands to 100,000 Kroner (DKK). Rebreather diving takes the consumption aspect of diving further, as the diver not only needs much of the same equipment as the regular divers but additional gear suited for their way of diving.



Some of the interviewees showed consumption habits where rebreather diving had direct influence on their economy and money spending in other contexts. Peter W stated that when it came to diving, he had no limits to how much he would spend, it was only his wife. The other interviewees also related to Peter having a separate economy for diving equipment that his wife was unaware of. Christian and Rune were not unfamiliar with this way of prioritising, they stated that:

Christian: *“I buy my clothes second hand and things like that, so I can save 500 DKK for the new dive computer I want.”* (For translation see appendix 15)

Rune: *“I do not prioritize clothes, city [life], going out to eat and stuff like that very high, I would rather spend the money on diving because I think I get good value for my money when go diving ...”*(for translation see appendix 16)

This shows the level of devotion by the rebreathers is coherent with Cova & Cova (2002) notion that tribe members are believed to value goods and services that allows for and maintains communal social and emotional interactions. Christian’s and Rune’s reflections are coherent with Giddens' (1996) and Brown’s (1996) notions that identity is constructed through reflectiveness and that the personal identity, being smart and trendy in new clothes, giving way for the social identity where the purchase of diving equipment that allows for and maintenance of Christian’s and Runes communal social and emotional attachments. Many rebreather divers even go as far as to customise and rebuild their units and some even build their own in ways that suit their specific needs.

Peter W. and Teddy and Bo have all build their own units and Teddy has a new unit which he is rebuilding at the moment, Christian was also involved in building his own rebreather but decided to buy a unit instead. This tendency to build, rebuild or modify their equipment automatic motivates rebreather divers to engage with other rebreather divers to see how they might have modified their unit and solved different problems. Teddy brought this to my attention by stating that:

Teddy: *If you as a normal diver go to “Lillebælt” and you see some other ordinary divers further down the beach, it was not a certainty that you go over and talked to them, but if you are there as a rebreather diver and there is another rebreather diver, he will either comes to you or you will go over and talk to him, it is 100% sure... It's like motorcyclists; all motorcyclists greet each other when they meet.”* (For translation see appendix C17)

All the other rebreather divers interviewed were able relate to Teddy's statement. Christian told me that this was how he met Teddy and Christian and Peter S both elaborated on the motivation for going over and talking to other rebreather divers Christian argued that the ease of talking to like-minded people as the motivation:

Christian: *"It is also like what you said [what Peter W said], that some do not bother to talk about it [rebreather diving] but if it's someone like-minded that you meet, then you don't need to explain how a scrubber works and the electronics because they know that, So it becomes the more the special things like oh you have built it there, it's just easier."* (For translation see appendix C18)

Whereas Peter S argued that the technological interest was the main motivator:

Peter S: *"you get a bit curious, but that is perhaps also because most rebreather divers have this idea of buying a rebreather and then the first thing they do is to take it apart and then change it, because they think that it may be that the manufacturer spent millions on developing it, but I can do it better, so it must be disassembled and reassembled in another way. So in that way, you just always have to go over and see how people have pimped their machine. It is perhaps a bit like those people who have a car where they style them with and skirts and build everything possible into it and when they meet they go around and look at each other's engines. It is probably a bit the same with us where we just have to see the machine and ask "what have you done with the hoses running are the running that way or the other way or how have you done that and what went through your mind when you did it." Because it [Rebreather diving] is still a bit experimenting."* (For translation see appendix C19)

Christian also acknowledged what Peter S said in terms of the technical curiosity towards how other rebreather divers have customized their unit and he told that this almost no rebreather divers dive in? an unaltered unit. This indicates that this indicates that the rebreather unit has some sort of linking value and instantly gives rebreather divers something to talk about.

When asked if this special "bond" between rebreather divers was due to them being small in numbers, compared to other divers, something most of the interviewees were able to relate to, Christian said that he and Teddy got to know each other from having met in a random place checking each other's rebreather unit out. This is very coherent with what scholars (Cova & Cova 2001; 2002; Kozinets 2006; Cova & Pace 2006; Moutinho et al 2007; Veloutsou & Moutinho

2008; Mitchell & Imrie 2009; de Valck et al. 2009) on consumer tribes argue: that the linking value is the most important aspect of consumption related to consumer tribes.

The linking value in terms of rebreather diving does relate to consumption as in buying and “bonding” through consumption, but the purchase of a rebreather has given the rebreather divers access to a community, as mentioned above, where people bond with those with whom they dive. I therefore argue that consumption in relation to rebreather diving has indirect linking value and that the linking value or bonding value comes from actually using the rebreather and not just by owning it, something which all the interviewees were able to relate to and something that is evident in Teddy’s argument:

Teddy: *“My regular diving buddy and I, we talk about everything and I mean everything, it may be problems the wife, economy, or it can be illness in the family, you always have someone you can talk to.”* (For translation see appendix C20)

The interview indicates that the linking value of diving using a rebreather lies in the fact that it instantly gives rebreather divers something to talk about and a sense of community and camaraderie. As Teddy puts it: *“It is the interest that binds us together, that's the way we have come together.”* (For translation see appendix C21). This is consistent the notion of a unifying factor, for instance a culture, which people according to Jenkins’ (2006) identify with.

#### **4.1.4 A semi closed group of people**

The culture on Ninjadivers is based on a technical interest apparent throughout the netnography as well the interviews, both in the preliminary interviews with regular divers as well as with the rebreather divers. The intensity and the devotion were more evident among the rebreather divers than among the ordinary divers, both when it comes to fiddling around with equipment and socialising with other divers.

This corresponds very well with the Cova & Cova’s (2001; 2002) theory about members relating to a tribe through shared feelings and habits. It is also evident in the way rebreather divers and outsiders, i.e. the open system divers, approach divers; the open system divers, with the exception of one, do not greatly exceed their diving certificate, it might be with a couple or of meters or four?.

All the rebreathers interviewed for this study, on the other hand, and one ordinary diver who has been specially trained (DIR), exceed their certificates, and Peter S argued that all rebreather divers do it. The netnography also indicates that it is common to exceed one's certificate, and that it is commonly accepted (see appendix B7). None of the interviewees were really concerned with risk once in the water, although they were aware that there are risks to diving on a rebreather, however none of them would call themselves extreme.

The interviewees argued that safety and risk issues are a matter of preparation, but Christian also argued that he was more than willing to spend an extra 15000 kr. more to get a new unit with better safety features. Christian has also chosen to buy a new unit because he didn't feel safe on his old one (see appendix B8) and Peter S argued that his focus on the risk elements and his preparation increased in intensity with the depth of the dive he was about to do.

According to Kozinets (2006) consumer tribes build their culture online and this is partly true. However, Ninjadivers tend to build their culture just as much or more in offline settings. The importance of the social aspect in diving is proof of this, as most of the interviewees were much more active in offline settings such as actual dives, dive club memberships, and common diving trips, although most of them visit Ninjadivers daily. The indication of the netnography that exceeding one's certificate is commonly accepted and a common understanding where they confirm each other's opinions of how rebreather divers practise a safe and controlled dive by not jeopardizing other divers. This is coherent with Jenkins (2006) notion of social influence and a clear suggestion that Kozinets' (2006) isn't entirely wrong by stating that tribes build their culture online.

One such culture, a culture of closedness towards outsiders was evident to me when I tried to get some information from the community, and a sense of reluctance to participate is something I also experienced in one of the interviews.

The distance to outsiders, the territorial defending or "rejection" I expressed above when I started to ask questions is also an indication that the members of Ninjadivers to some extent build their or a culture online, because when I interviewed some of the members they were quite open and welcoming. The rejection I mention is not the only example I have stumbled upon in the netnography, it was also clear when an interested potential diver (Ash) asked questions about his interest in rebreather diving, although he didn't have a diver's certificate yet. He was kindly rejected by the members of Ninjadivers who suggested that he start looking elsewhere.



Post from Mansgaard:

*“If you can’t find 4500 kr. for the course, you’ll probably never be a rebreather. You can start by adding another zero to what you have to pay for your course, just for the unit”*<sup>3</sup> (see appendix C22 for translation and appendix B9 for the entire thread.)

And

Post from Sune:

*“I think that you would gain more by asking on the dykker-forum.”*<sup>4</sup> (See appendix C23 for translation and appendix B9 for the entire thread.)

This existence of this attitude towards non rebreather divers were also confirmed by the interviewees, and something Christian could understand but which he thought was unfortunate since Ninjadivers should be for everyone. Christian stated that some members have an economic interest in people buying their courses and there for reject some questions with the answer *“you can learn it on your course.”* This us and them issue corresponds well with Cova & Cova’s (2002) notion of group narcissism as well as Tajfel’s (1974) and Brown’s (2008) notions of in-groups and out-groups.

The ‘us and them’ division was also evident among the interviewees who elaborated on their acknowledgement of group narcissism among rebreather divers. They prefer to dive with other rebreather divers over open system divers because the noise they make and the logistical puzzle ruins the experience for the rebreather divers. One of the interviewees elaborate upon this by stating that he would rather stay home if there are too many open system divers participating in diving trip.

Many of the rebreather divers interviewed are also not interested in talking about rebreather diving to ordinary divers, because it is very technical and they would need to explain concepts that are common knowledge among rebreather divers.

Peter W: *“The way I see it is that when you are a rebreather diver, it is very complex and I do not want talk to someone about it, because I do not want not to explain it in detail because they do not get it anyways. It may sound a little harsh but I’m not willing to use my energy on it. I often hear*

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*anyone talk about diving and stuff like that, and if I hear that they are not diving on a rebreather or a little more technical diver, I just keep my mouth shut.”* (For translation see appendix C24)

The ‘us and them’ feeling is an extension of Morgan & Thomas (1996) Brown (2000) Jenkins (2006) and Moutinho et al’s (2007) notion cohesion and mutual recognition. It indicates that the interviewees assert some signs of tribalism consistent with the existing knowledge of consumer tribes emphasized in Tajfel’s (1974) and Brown’s (2008) notions of in-groups and out-groups as well as Cova & Cova’s (2002) notion of group narcissism in consumer tribes. Bo argued that the reason for this group narcissism was related to the level required to be part of the group: *“I think that much of it [group narcissism] comes from the fact that you just have to be at a certain level for you to be able to participate.”* (For translation see appendix XT). Peter W however uttered a statement that made me think that the rebreather unit is what makes the difference whether you are in the in-group or the out-group:

Peter W.: *“If there had been other rebreather divers, I would have been much more interested in them, and also in their equipment and the way they dived, but because that they do not dive with that [rebreather] equipment, they are air to me, and I do not see them. I do not see how they are in the water, I am completely indifferent to it because it has no interest to me”* (for translation see appendix C25)



This indicates that it very much the rebreather unit that decides whether a person is part of the in-group or not, and in order to be fully accepted as a member of the group/tribe, new members have to be worthy and show their dedication by buying the “entry ticket” symbolised in the rebreather unit. Both Rune and Bo were able to relate to this notion and Bo stated that:

Bo: *“I generally disregard people who do not bother to put in the minimum effort, but who just post questions on the first and best Internet forum and asking different questions without having done some research themselves.”* (for translation see appendix C26)

This has made me go back and do some short focused follow-up interviews with the other divers to figure out if it is a general opinion that the purchase of the rebreather unit grants you “access to” and “acceptance into” the community. Christian said that having a rebreather unit was necessary to be able to take part in the activities, the trips and dives arranged through Ninjadivers, as they were rebreather divers only. In terms of community all the interviewees in the follow-up interviews,

Christian, Teddy, Peter W and Peter S. all acknowledge the fact that rebreather unit was a kind of access to them opening up to people, with help and advice, showing that they were serious and “worthy”. Teddy also acknowledged that if it had not been for Christian he would probably not been as willing to spend a lot of time helping me out.

Teddy: *“I like to help people but, I don not want to, I do not know if you could say it, waste my time. I do not quite know what is in it. I find it difficult to say whether it has to do with the time or that you are just not bothered with answering silly questions.”* (For translation see appendix C27)

Peter W.: *“that is that about wasting ones time and effort on someone who do not mean it seriously, and when someone then expresses he is about to buy one [a rebreather] or have purchased it, well then he has like you like you said it bought a ticket, I totally agree.”* (For translation see appendix C28)

Christian and Peter S. Who are both instructors and diving practitioners seemed more open to helping and explaining rebreather diving to laymen without knowledge of rebreather diving, something which Christian acknowledged this with the reasoning that people who decide to become instructors, are people who like to share their experiences with others.

Christian: *“What I have experienced it is that if there are some who have written and asked a basic question, for example why there are two bottles on it and how is it are you able to take pure oxygen down on the dive or something... As the owner of the forum so I am of course interested in that people get answers to these things, but I am also interested in that the members also occasionally contribute and say “all right I will just answer this”. So I can sometimes wait a day or two and see if there is some who answers and if not then I think, alright, I will reply then.”* (For translation see appendix C29)

The indication that members have to “earn their membership” through purchase of a rebreather unit is something new which present theory on tribes has not yet covered. That the rebreather unit distinguishes between those who are members of the in-group and the out-group is coherent with Featherstone’s (2007) argument that the consumption of goods are used to outline social differences, in-groups and out-groups, and act as communicators that draw the lines of social relationships, “if Peter W. sees the other divers or not.

#### 4.1.5 The social dimension of rebreather diving

This ‘us and them’ feeling makes the social aspect of rebreather divers increasingly important, something which the rebreather divers acknowledge by reckoning that over half of their social circle, not including family and co-workers, consist of divers, and being a member of Ninjadivers and other communities whether online or offline, in terms of diving clubs, has added to this number. All of the interviewees, with the exception of one, argued that being a member of Ninjadivers gave them access to a much broader network of likeminded people, with whom they can share their interests and passion and with whom they could meet up for a dive. Teddy elaborated on the social influence by stating that his network of rebreather divers had exceeded Denmark’s borders through other online communities.

The interviewees argued that it was important for them to dive with someone they know and someone they get along with, both from a safety point of view as well as for them to be able to enjoy the dive. This is very coherent with Maffesoli (1996), Cova & Cova (2002), Moutinho et al (2007), Veloutsou & Moutinho (2008) and Mitchell & Imrie’s (2009) notions that tribe members relate to Ninjadivers and other rebreather divers through shared feelings and habits. This indicates a close connection between social identity and rebreather diving. However, both Christian and Rune told me that they frequently went out diving alone, which indicates that their social and individual identity is one and the same, being in line with Jenkins’ (2006) position that all identity is social.

The interviews show that the members of Ninjadivers are very much conscious about their membership of different communities including Ninjadivers. All the interviewees were members of Ninjadivers, a dive club and other online communities with a focus on rebreather diving, something which is consistent with Maffesoli’s (1996), Cova & Cova’s (2002),

Moutinho et al’s (2007), Veloutsou & Moutinho’s (2008) and Mitchell & Imrie’s (2009) notion that a person can be a member of several tribes or communities at the same time. The interviewees are very much aware of what they gain from the different communities; Ninjadivers and other online communities gives them a network of likeminded people to communicate with and dive with.



The interviewees were all members of a dive club but they use them very differently, Peter W. for instance is very active in his dive club being a member of the board and reserving every Monday night for the dive club.

Peter W: *“Monday is important to me, that’s for sure. I have been coming to the clubs since I was 15 and it takes a lot for me not to go to the club on Mondays and my family knows that they shouldn’t plan anything... [On Mondays]”* (for translation see appendix C30)

Christian, the owner of Ninjadivers, has a different approach to his membership of his dive club as he only uses it for purposes like access to air, gas and a boat.

The interviews show that membership of Ninjadivers seems to be a conscious choice, something the members put thought and importance into.

The possible choice to leave Ninjadivers must therefore also be a conscious a choice, and a choice with consequences. All the interviewees have experienced losing contact with “friends” who lost interest in diving and went on to something else.

Peter S: *“If the thing that binds you together disappears, you lose the contact”* (for translation see appendix C31)

Bo: *“I have moved around a lot, and then I moved from one club, the club where I started in Odense. I lost a lot of friends and acquaintances.”*

(For translation see appendix C32)

Teddy responded with the following when asked if he had lost contact with someone who have stopped diving:

Teddy: *“Yes, you do in the long run, yes. It does not happen during the first couple of months, or perhaps not even the first six months, but it now over two and a half years ago, he [a former rebreather diver] stopped and from then until I contacted him wanting to buy his diving equipment he had actually gotten a new phone number and we live only 25- 30 km. apart. It is simply because the interests change.”* (For translation see appendix C33)

When asked why Peter W replied that he had his “real” friends from his childhood and that the “friendship” with most of the divers was based on their common experiences and when that common interest disappears, so does the basis for the friendship. Peter S elaborated on this and replied: *“because someone new joins [replacing the one who has left]”* (for translation see appendix C34). Teddy was asked if the same situation arose when he evolved from being an open system diver to becoming a rebreather diver he agreed and said: *“You get a new social circle and you join a new community.”* (For translation see appendix C35)

Mads, a former rebreather diver and member of Ninjadivers who lost his interest in diving and is therefore taking a break from diving, has gone on to become a motorcycle enthusiast. Mads reckons that he has lost contact to some of his diving friends, especially those who live far away like Peter W. and Teddy, but have kept in contact with the closest of his fellow divers, for example he still follows some people on the Ninjadivers forum.

Mads: *"Christian is my a very good friend of mine. We still talk and we still talk a lot about diving and I still have just as much interest in hearing about his new gear and the dives he plans and their tours and things like that. There are some of the people we have come to know, including those from South Jutland, I do not know if you have had something to with them, Peter Warming and Teddy etc. who I do not have so much contact with anymore. I follow, I know Teddy, both Teddy and Peter are working on a self-build project on Ninjadivers and I follow that of course and I am interested in it, but picking up the phone and talking to them?No, I have not done that. "* (For translation see appendix C36)

The existing literature does not really cover what happens when a person loses interest or finds a new interest. The findings of this study indicate that rebreather divers relate to each other through the shared passion of diving, which corresponds well with the notions of Maffesoli' (1996), Cova & Cova (2002), Moutinho et al (2007), Veloutsou & Moutinho (2008) and Mitchell & Imrie (2009) that people relate to a tribe through shared passion and emotional bonds but if someone loses interest, he gradually loses contact with the community.

#### 4.1.6 Cultural Capital

Cultural capital is referred to by Cova & Cova (2001; 2002) Mitchell & Imrie (2009) and Moutinho et al (2007) as the most influential factor on the roles within a tribe and Cova et al. (2007) refers to the cultural capital as the set(?) of socially rare and distinctive tastes, skills, knowledge and practice that set members apart.

As indicated above, members need to buy their way into the group symbolised by their purchase of the rebreather unit and from then on, start to find their place in the community:

Bo: *“It's a matter of the level of experience, I dive on an old converted "Dolphin" which was the first [unit], which Peter W. Teddy and Christian started to dive on and so did Peter S., and I can see that I am starting to become the one who responds when there are questions [regarding the Dolphin]. ”* (For translation see appendix C37)

Peter S: *“I always listen to what people have to say, then I have to benchmark it with what else I know and then quietly inside myself determine whether they are complete idiots or if they have a good point [...] it is often those who make the most noise are those who know the least.”* (For translation see appendix 38)

All the rebreathers interviewed, with the exception of one, were very experienced, with 10-15 years of diving experience on average. The only “inexperienced” (in comparison) rebreather, Rune argued that rebreather divers evolve and learn through the sharing of experiences with other rebreather divers and by listening to those who have more experience than them, both when it comes to ways of diving as well as when it comes to equipment:



Rune: *“It means a lot to me to talk with others who dive rebreather, because I have not done it longer than I have [2 years], so I still have many things to learn and, I like to go over some of the things that I read online with? other rebreather divers, because you can be dazzled by something and say that it seems smart. It is nice just to throw it out there and hear if others think that it’s or if I have overlooked something.”* (For translation see appendix 39)

Frederik, a non-active member of Ninjadivers but very active member of Aalborg Sportsdykkerklub, also referred to the experience as something that gave cultural capital when it comes to diving. Frederik also implied that cultural capital is obtained in the diving club by being active in the club, in taking part in what happens in the club. The same thing goes for the Ninjadivers community, where Peter S acknowledged that there are undefined roles based on the activity of a Ninjadivers member. Christian’s role was also brought up and Peter W argued that it is more Christian’s personality rather than Christian’s role as owner and moderator that makes him like Christian, however Peter W. acknowledged the piece of work Christian did and that it makes him an important figure on Ninjadivers:

Peter W.: *“It is quite clear that Christian has done a lot [for the community], also just sharing links once in a while when nothing has happened, he links to some movie or something. This means a lot, of course and I think more people should do so. If someone else were to do it then I would think it's cool as well, it is not because it is Christian who does it.”* (For translation see appendix C40)

This indicates that one way of earning cultural capital is through experience and knowledge (quality of knowledge), which is coherent with Cova et al’s (2007) notion of knowledge and experience setting members of a community apart, however the willingness to share this experience with others and participate actively in the community goes further than what Cova et al’s (2007) notion declared.

The netnography indicates that a Ninjadivers member can have a high level of cultural capital within a certain area. In the following piece of a thread from Ninjadivers, Christian directed a new rebreather towards a fellow Ninjadivers member who he thought could help him:

Christian: *“I have been a PADI instructor on the Dolphin unit many years ago, but I am not active anymore. You may want to try to make contact with "Særmærk" here on Ninjadivers, I think he was also an instructor on the unit, but I do not know if he still is or if he has time...”*



Særmark (Peter S): *“I am an instructor on the Dolphin and have dived a lot on it. I have run some courses on it and have some tips and tricks”*

Seerup: *“Then it is you who I need to get in contact with. And you almost live in my backyard. But now I just have get “the Animal” [the unit], which will happen on Friday: D and then take it from there. Have also just talked with the seller, and you (Særmark) trained him back in the day.”*

(For translation see appendix C41 and appendix B10 for the entire thread)

Peter, Teddy and another Ninjadivers member named Kim have all built their own rebreather units and have been highlighted as having built up experienced cultural capital within the field of constructing their own rebreather. This is coherent with Cova et al’s (notion) of rare and distinctive skills earning cultural capital, which is also evident in Frederik’s claim that his being able to work with stainless steel gives him cultural capital in areas where such skills are needed.

The cultural capital is a parameter which divides tribe members into different roles and Christian’s role as tribal chief has already been addressed in an earlier chapter and Peter W. acknowledged that Christian’s efforts earn him a lot of cultural capital. Rune also elaborated on Christian’s cultural capital as “tribal chief” by arguing that:

*“You can see the forum activity if he writes something, then there are maybe 3 who respond something, where if another one post something then here might be no answer, although it might actually be exactly the same questions. There is a bit of a suck up tendency. You can see 2 posts on within a few days; Christian writes that someone died in Finland and 3-4 answer quite quickly, I post two days after that now there has been another casualty in Austria and no one has written anything....”* (For translation see appendix C42)

The rest of the roles and how the other interviewees fit into these roles will be discussed in the upcoming chapter.

#### **4.1.7 Roles**

The roles emphasised in the chapter regarding theory when related to rebreather divers or more specific Ninjadivers members doesn’t seem to be so much as roles as categories for me as a researcher to grasp the complexity of the community or tribe. None of the interviewees were able to relate to roles within the community except Christian’s role. I would argue that this is due to the age

and the experience of the interviewees who were all over 30 years of age (average age 37.5) and most having over 10 years of experience (average experience was 17 years) The only one who was able to relate to someone experienced in terms of roles was Rune, who only has 6 years of diving experience (See Appendix D for details). The same was evident in the netnography where I asked in the forum about the members of Ninjadivers' age and experience which was 39 years of age on average with an average experience of 12 years (appendix B4 and B5).

However, there were indications of categorization or roles that fit into Cova & Cova's (2001; 2002) Mitchel & Imrie's (2009) Langer & Beckman's (2002) and Bowler's (2010) concept or roles in a tribe.

### **Sympathizer / Tourist**

Peter S. who is an experienced diver identified the tourists as 'zappers' who quickly move on to something else: *"There are a number of zappers, who want to try diving out, and they do it for about a year or a year and a half, and then they move on to kite flying or something, else.* (For translation see appendix C43)

The roles of sympathizer identified in this study were mainly among those normal or open system divers who were infatuated with rebreather diving and who had a desire to go to this "next" level but hadn't yet taken the plunge. These sympathisers were characterised by the search for "action" and adrenaline rush. Andreas, an open system technical diver, elaborated on this when I asked if he was attracted to the risk element of diving or the rebreather:

Andreas: *"Are you crazy, I am wildly drawn to things that can kill me, I don't think that something is exciting unless it can kill me. I'm certainly one of those where it makes me feel that I'm alive."* (For translation see appendix C44)

Recreational diver René also acknowledges that he is a sucker for adrenaline rushes and technical diver Michael argued that if he were to die diving, he would die happy. Rebreather diver Frederik brought another type of sympathiser or tourist, as Kozinets refers to them, (the term tourist actually fits this type of tribe member better than sympathiser to my attention which is the experienced diver who don't feel as though they dive enough and do not get enough out of his investment in his equipment. This type of divers take the plunge and invest in a rebreather as a last bastion with the expectation that he will start diving more, which doesn't happen and then they sell their equipment

and stop diving. Christian also referred to people buying a rebreather with the intent or expectation that it automatically would result in more dives.

Christian: *“some people do it because it's like you know when people say, “I have to lose some weight, so now I will buy a pair of running shoes and join a gym and I'll buy some bench-press equipment at home” and things like that, but they never use it because it is not enough to have the equipment. You'll notice there are many people whom I have helped to sell their equipment afterwards because it is just sitting around, not being used.”* (For translation see appendix C45)

The sympathisers correspond very well with what theory says about them having an interest in rebreather diving but where the interest doesn't run deep enough for them to invest the around 100.000 kr. in the units and training. This is very in line with the notions of Kozinets (1999) Cova & Cova (2001; 2002) and Mitchell and Imrie (2009). But sympathisers found in this study deviate from what I understand of sympathisers in other communities and tribe in that almost all of them are divers with some extent of experience, something I have also accounted for in the chapter on theory.

Another deviation which has shed light on an issue of members with this loose affiliation with Ninjadivers, is that some of them who join Ninjadivers and buy a rebreather do it as a last resort to keep attachment to their former life or Identity as a diver. It is a bit like a dysfunctional marriage, where the couple gets another child in the hope that it will save their broken marriage and when it does not, they get a divorce.

## **Member**

Both Rune and Frederik and former rebreather diver Mads could be characterized as being members, but members with three different characteristics. Rune is the “new” diver with just two years of experience and is active on many fronts, maybe not the most active on the Ninjadivers forum, he is more active on the international forums, which he argues benefits him more. However, he still uses it mainly for parts and the social element in terms of dives.

Rune: *“If you visit Rebreather World you can find, I would not call it teaching because it is not, but you can go in and read and then evaluate different people's attitudes and say this sound good to me, or it does not sound that good. In Denmark, there are not enough people who know enough about it [rebreather diving] and nor are there enough people who are willing to spend the time writing*

*about it. For that you have to look elsewhere around the world, so what Ninj divers exactly gives me I do not know.”*

Me: *“Community and trips?”*

Rune: *“Yes and trips”*

Me: *“and companionship?”*

Rune: *“Yes, and I need some special part, like, for example those Swageloks I picked up there the other day in the city. I did not want to ask at “Dykkerforum” because I just knew I would never get it there and someone would probably try to sell me another. But when I write [on Ninj divers] that I need a “Swagelok 6” people know that it is the one I need”*

(For translation see appendix C46)

Rune uses the both the online forums and the offline community of Ninj divers to exchange knowledge and to learn from more experienced divers, as mentioned earlier under cultural capital. Frederik's approach to Ninj divers is somewhat different. He is not very active and he takes on a bit more critical stance towards Ninj divers and its members.

Frederik *“It happens often the on this this “prized” forum [Ninj divers], now I have taught for many years as an instructor, and there are often people who sit and write page up and page down on these “prized” forums and sometimes I find one of my students who are writing page up and page down on the forum sounding “INCREDIBLY” wise and I find it difficult for me to [take it seriously], and spend a lot of time when those who write have between zero and absolutely no experience.”* (For translation see appendix C47)

Frederik has sought another kind of community, which is that of a dive club where he is active, something to which he claims that many of Ninj divers “ghost” members, who read but don't write, claim allegiance. This is coherent with Maffesoli's (1996), Cova & Cova's (2002), Moutinho et al's (2007), Veloutsou & Moutinho's (2008) and Mitchell & Imrie's (2009) notion that people can be members of and have different roles in different communities.

The third and “former” member Mads has sold his rebreather and has put his diving on standby for a non-defined period of time to pursue his interest in motorcycles. His reason for putting rebreather

diving on hold has been that the lack of development in his diving due to periods of fellow Ninjadivers, Peter W, Teddy and Christian lives where they don't have the time nor the money to evolve with him:

*"I've had some amazing experiences, so I'm not done with diving. I have decided to take a break from diving, because those who I dive with, including Christian and Peter and Michael, all of them are in places in their lives where they do not have the means of doing, what can I say, to do the things that I wanted. I would like to travel. I would like to go to the United States and dive in caves and I would like to go to Mexico and dive caves and I would like to do all these things because it's like the next natural step for us, I think. We have had some really, really great dives together and we have also been on some very demanding dives over the years and I have so many good experiences, but because of their personal status right now and where they are in their lives with kids and families and stuff like that, there is no possibility of doing what I want to do, so I decided to try something else for a bit, I can always return to rebreather diving."* (For translation see appendix C48)

Mads' devotion to rebreather diving was not strong enough for him to stay satisfied with his lack of development and the prospect staying like this for some years to come in the end keep him in the tribe Only time will tell if he returns or not. This is coherent with Browns (1996) Alcott et al (2003) Jenkins' (2006) and Burkitt's (2008) notion that identity is under constant development. Mads found out that his development could continue at the present time and he sought a new identity, that of a motorcyclist.

The roles of Mads, Frederik and Rune correspond well with some of the theoretical notions (Cova & Cova 2001; 2002; Kozinets 1999) upon which this study is based, in terms of the role of the members. Rune deviates from what? in that he is not as active in writing as Kozinets (1999) claims but he is an active reader and he participates in the diving tours arranged by Ninjadivers. Frederik deviates in that he is a member but seeks his community in other places than the online forum. In the dive club, Frederik could be maybe placed into the role of tourist. Mads' deviation come from the fact that he has left the community to try other things and is actually no longer active on the forum. One point where all of the "members" deviate is in taking the baton when it comes to consumption, none of them have a very large consumption habit when it comes to equipment. This, however, goes for almost all of the interviewees with the exception of Christian and Peter S. The indication is that the investment needed to buy a new rebreather on a regular basis is outside the reach of most ordinary people.

## Devotee

The theory on tribe members states that devotees have a longstanding relationship with the tribe, busting? as Ninjadivers is not that old a community, it is difficult to distinguish in that way. Most of the interviewees also have several years (over ten years on average) of experience as regular divers and many years as rebreather divers as well. I have therefore chosen to place the interviewees who have a lot of experience and who are active in some way into this category. One of the interviewees, Bo, is somewhere between being a member and a devotee. He has several years of experience but is actually not very active in the community, but he joins the trips and recently he has become the one who give advice on his specific type on unit with which he has a lot of experience.

Bo: *"Now I dive on such an old converted "Dolphin" which was the first, well both PIW [Peter W.] And Teddy and Christian started to dive on it and Særmak [Peter S] as well. sometimes there are some questions where I can see sometimes that is me who has become the one who answers them."* (For translation see appendix C49)

Bo also said that as a rebreather diver, he becomes a kind of teacher when amongst open system divers, and when he is among other rebreather divers, he is just 'one of the guys', talking about rebreather diving. This corresponds very well with Cova & Cova's (2002) notion that a person can be members of different tribes and communities and have different roles in these different communities and it is also coherent with Jenkins' (2006) notion about adopting different identities dependent on the situation and the people a person congregates with.

The two other devotees identified through the interviews in this study are Peter W and Teddy both of them having over a decade experience both as ordinary divers as well as rebreather divers. Peter and Teddy have earned a lot of cultural capital as "homebuilders" who build their own rebreathers, a project which they share on Ninjadivers. See appendix XX)

Mads: *" I know that Teddy, that both Teddy and Peter [W] both are doing a self-build project on Ninjadivers and that is something I follow and am interested in...."* (For translation see appendix C50)

## **The insider/practitioner**

The last two interviewees Christian and Peter S can both be characterized as practitioners, both of them having worked with or work with diving professionally, they have also worked together in a former dive store in Aalborg called “Dykkersport”. Christian used to be part-owner of the store and has also been self-employed as an importer of diving gear. Today, Christian is the owner and moderator of the Ninjadivers community, something that combined with his experience and insider knowledge makes him important to the community.

Rune: *“A person like Christian is someone who I listen to a lot, because he has had the importer rights on some things, and I know that he has some insider knowledge about different things.”* (For translation see appendix C51)

Peter S. is also working professionally with diving, and he is actually the only “real” practitioner among the interviewees, as a commercial diver and as a rebreather instructor. Peter is not nearly as active in the forum as Christian but still holds high cultural capital as former rebreather diver Mads elaborated on Peter and Christian’s roles on Ninjadivers:

Mads: *“Peter Særmark for example, who is slightly underestimated because he is, what can I say, he looks a bit like a bum, he is really a funny man, but Peter, his technique and things like that are just so rock solid, and when you ask him about something as he just delivers every time, he knows everything. Take someone like Christian who is a qualified engineer and has made a whole lot of work, in which he has made some items for people, and bent something for me and, he knows a lot about [diving] Computers because he sold them and things like that. He [Christian] has some other competencies, so sometimes Peter asks Christian about something and sometimes Christian asks Peter about something, but for both of them the same thing applies, which is that you have to show your worth before you can be awarded this role as a specialist.”* (For translation see appendix C52)

The practitioners of Ninjadivers do not reveal anything new in relation to Kozinets (1999) Cova & Cova’s (2001; 2002) and Mitchell & Imrie’s (2009) theory on the role of practitioner. The identification of the four roles of Sympathiser/tourist, member, devotee and Insider/practitioner corresponds very well with the existing theory as do the fifth role of tribal leader. The combination of the tribal leader with the role of community moderator indicates a narrow relation between the online community and tribalism, something which has not been identified during the theoretical assessment. The special, technical and economic circumstances related to the rebreather have

influenced some deviations in terms of tourists being mainly wannabes who never get as far as buying the rebreather or “desperate” open system divers, who try, as a last resort, to revive their passion for diving by buying a rebreather. The same issue with technical and especially economic circumstances is present among the members who take the lead when it comes to consumption.

According to Kozinets (1999; 2002) 20 percent of tribe members, the devotees and the practitioners constitute 80 per cent of the consumption of the tribe, but since collection of this information lies outside the scope of this study, I have adapted the 20/80 rule to the activity of the forum. Out of the 5569 posts, Christian is responsible for 1694 posts, and out of the remaining 4275 posts, the top ten per cent of the members of Ninjadivers, which I would call devotees and practitioners, constitute 3396 which represents 79.5 percent.

The different roles are coherent with Jenkins’ (2006) notion of identity not being static as well as his notion of multiple identities; practitioners and devotees have also been new inexperienced divers, and ordinary members of communities but have evolved and gained cultural capital which has given them the role and position they hold today. The concept of identity and identification will be taken step further in the upcoming chapters.

## **4.2 Identity**

In the following chapters on identity and identification, both open system divers and rebreather divers contribute, and for the sake of simplicity, when not referred to by name, the rebreathers are referred to as “interviewees” and the open system divers are referred to as “interviewed open system divers”. With the progression in experience and increased dive frequency, the interviewees were much more aware of the relationship between diving and their identity and they felt a stronger cohesion with other divers and an increased importance of the social aspect of diving.





The interviewees did not see themselves, nor their sport, as extreme, although some of them acknowledged that the rebreather unit allowed the diver to perform dives which could be characterised as extreme. They argued that rebreather diving is about mastering and minimizing the risks through preparation.

Peter W: *"When it comes to where to dive much deeper and things like that, maybe some people will opt out before, where I say well we undertake the task so and then we are preparing just for it [...] I just think that if you are prepared, then you are well on the way, as they say in the Army: "luck follows the well-prepared soldier" and it's also a bit like that when it comes to diving; that if you are well prepared then the luck is also with you if that happens anything."* (For translation see appendix C53)

Bo: *"I saw an interview, with someone, on YouTube with some English [diving] instructor who had been asked if he was an adrenaline junkie where he thought that he definitely was not, he was a control freak and I feel just like that ... "*(for translation see appendix C54)

Peter S: *"I do not really know whether you can call it [rebreather diving] an extreme sport in that [sense] it probably depends on what you do with it [the rebreather unit]. If you put up an open system against rebreather, well then you can very well dive around at 20 meters of water within not decompression boundaries on both and then it is in principle not particularly extreme. But as soon as you go down to 80 or a 100-120 some meters and you can do that on both systems, then it starts to become something more extreme and then I do not know if the risk is greater, it most probably is of course, but as long as you prepare yourself better and listen to yourself and don't take too big bites..."*(For translation see appendix C55)

Only Christian and Rune acknowledged that rebreather diving could be extreme, Rune stating that the rebreather opens up for the possibility of doing some extreme dives, something upon which Christian elaborated:

Christian: *"I think that as soon as you start talking about technical dives, where you consciously exceed your bottom time so that you get decompression stops, you have to obey and I think as soon as you start diving to deeper than 50 meters, then you start to call it an extreme sport."* (For translation see appendix C56)

The interviews indicate that rebreather divers and even open system divers have a different perception of when something is extreme or dangerous, as, for example, I as a non-diver with a “normal” or “non-diving experience” sense of what is extreme or dangerous when it comes to underwater sports. Rebreather diver and soldier Rune elaborated on the feeling of security and danger

Rune: *“The feeling of security is a subjective feeling it is clear that we can always talk about security as something that helps to enhance safety where you minimize the risk, but the personal feeling of security is a subjective feeling. You can stand on a cardboard box that is 30 cm high and feel that you are about to fall down and then you very scared and do not feel safe, but you may also stand on top of the parachute tower, out here [at the base], and you have the harness attached to your back and you feel secure. There is actually a greater risk of it going wrong than it is to fall of the box. So it's more a matter of the feeling of being safe.”* (For translation see appendix C57)

The interviews indicate that identity and the feeling of being extreme in terms of diving is mainly based on the self-perception that preparation makes rebreather diving less extreme and less dangerous. When asked if they were more willing to take risks as divers than in other aspects of what?, all of the interviewees dismissed this as not being correct, the same thing goes for them feeling different about themselves when being among fellow rebreather divers than other people.

The interviewees acknowledge that rebreather divers tend to go further than other divers, both in terms of the type of dives and investment but also in terms of the time and effort put into their sport as well as the importance of it. When asked about the dedication and whether rebreather divers was characterized as being a bit “nerdy” and by the interest in fiddling with equipment and in the technical aspect he agreed and answered: *“Yes, if he is not, then he should not dive rebreather, with rebreathers being how they are today, you have to want to fiddle with it.”* (For translation see appendix C58) Frederik also commented on the dedication, stating that:

Frederik: *“There is no doubt that if you choose to spend 100 of “the long ones” [100.000 DKK] on your sport you either have too much money or you are really passionate about your sport and those who have chosen to spend it, of course, they are dedicated.”* (For translation see appendix C59)

The example from the netnography where Christian communicates about his feelings of not being able to dive because he had had surgery as well as with his statement: *“I would say that if my wife said, “I do not want you to go out and dive, you have to stay home with the family.” Then I would*

*be divorced on the spot.*" (For translation see appendix XT) also show the importance of diving to Christian. It resembles a kind of addiction to diving that influence Christian's entire personality and implies that diving has become a big part of his identity.

Former rebreather Mads who is a close friend of Christian's has another take on Christian outspoken dedication to rebreather diving that it was his space where he could get a break from being a father and a husband with the obligations and challenges that comes with that role in his life. This indication from Mads and a vague indication from Christian about being a better father after having been out diving led to three follow-up focused interviews with Christian, Teddy and Peter W., who were all married and have children. In these interviews, Christian acknowledged that getting away from the family and out of the role of being a father and a husband into a free space where he could get new impressions and get renewed energy.

Christian: *"I would say it is probably the secondary reason for choosing to go on a trip, the first is to be with friends and have some great dives and number two it's probably as you say [getting away from the role of being a father and a husband]. Number three may also be because it is something you are good at and you have tried many times before and you know you can, so it also becomes a successful experience to complete such a trip where things they just add up."* (For translation see appendix C60)

This is also coherent with what Christian said in the primary interview, that he was a better father and husband after having been out diving. Teddy recognises Christian's motivation, getting away from the role of parenthood and all the responsibilities of having a family, when he goes away and dives, but reckons that he has it a bit easier.

Teddy: *"It is as I have said before, once you dive, you really do not think of anything else besides from what you are doing just there. If you have some problems well, they are more or less forgotten by the time you are on your way to the dive, so in that way it may well be [a break]. It is also immensely relaxing to dive. There periods where I might not have been out and dive where she [the wife] literally, well I do not know she asks if I will diving sometime soon"* (for translation see appendix C61)

In Peter W.'s case it was very different because his wife had been married to a diver before so she knew what she was going into marrying him, but he acknowledged that going out to dive was a free space where he could get renewed energy and that he was a changed man when he got back. Peter

W. ended the interview by saying that he would not like his wife to start diving, as that was his thing.

The indications from Christian and Teddy that they through diving gets out of the roles of being fathers and husbands are coherent with Brown (1996) Alcott et al (2003) Kaspersen (1996) Jenkins (2006) and Burkitt's (2008) notions that identity is not a static entity, as well as Hedgehog Review's notion that identity is created and sustained within the various circles of social discourse of which the interviewees are a part.

Former rebreather Mads has also "escaped" one role, that of the experienced rebreather diver and obtained a new role, that of a novice motorcyclist who has a lot to learn. Besides being coherent with the notion that identity is not a static entity etc., it is also coherent with Maffesoli's (1996), Firat & Schulz' (1997) and Featherstone's (2007) notions that postmodern consumers take on different (consumer) identities and consumption habits in accordance with changes in their lifestyle.

#### **4.2.1 Identification**

Identification is consists of two notions, that of (mutual) recognition, and that of identifying oneself with something and someone and according to Jenkins (2006) and Rosch (1998) is concerned with the understanding of who we are and who other people are. When asked if they identified themselves as divers or rebreather divers, the interviewees were unable to give a consistent answer. Christian and former diver Mads was able to give straight answers and they are examples of how diving have made it into their online identities such as email addresses and profile pictures, as well as into other aspects of their lives.



Christian: *"The picture I have on my Google account is me lying at 60 meters on a shipwreck between a rock and the ship's side. If we look at my background picture on my computer screen at work, well it is me, next to a large 100mm cannon. When people come into my garage, there are diving tanks all over the place, and when they come into my living room then there are rebreathers and tools. My wife continues to complain about if I cannot remove those things. I have a great picture hanging in my kitchen, which my wife was kind enough to buy for me. I think it [diving] is a big part of me, and when people they ask me what I do in my spare time I say that I dive [...] I like to talk about it and people are interested and it is exciting to talk about "* (for translation see appendix C62)

The other interviewees were all able to relate to the positive impacts of diving on their lives and all of them, both rebreathers and open system divers, with the exception of one, identified diving as relaxation, stress relieving and being present in the moment. They referred to troubles with their wives or money disappearing. One even called it an escape from reality.

Andreas (OC): *"It is definitely when I dive that I feel good, because you dive and relax and people are just so chilled, there's nothing, because you may not rush when you dive, you should not be stressed out, because those are all bad parameters? to diving "*(for translation see appendix C63)

Teddy: *"It is a stress relief process, because at the time you pack your gear and put it in the car, then you are not thinking so much about issues at home and stuff like that, you are completely in your own world and once in the water, then nothing else is on your mind but diving."* (For translation see appendix C64)

Rune: *"it is a bit like meditation, because it is a bit the same as when people sit and do breathing exercises at home when you breathe on a rebreather it you can actually hear yourself breathe..."* (For translation see appendix C65)

The social aspect has proved to be much more important than the assumption I had of diving as a sport based on individual performances. The interviewees all confirmed that large part, if not most of their social circles, which was not family or colleagues, were divers. There is a clear indication that the rebreather divers identify very strongly with the social aspect of diving, where they bond before and after dives and during trips. The social aspect was valued very highly among the interviewees who were all part of a community of likeminded people whether as a member of an online forum or an offline dive club.

The individuality of diving indicated that diving is a matter of personal identity coherent with Giddens' (1996), Brown's (1996) notions of stringent division between social and personal identity. However, the importance of the social aspect that all the interviewees implied, their connection to some kind of community of peers, and their feelings in this regard, indicate the identity connected to diving is more coherent with Jenkins' (2006) notion that all identity is social. Peter W. argued that the social aspect gave him a network and a community of likeminded people with whom he bonded quite quickly, like Christian for instance. Christian and Frederik acknowledged this and elaborated on it:

Frederik: *"I see more camaraderie, now let's go down and work on the old boat, that is what I think is super fun [...] If you do not think it is an enjoyment socially, then you have to stop diving"* (for translation see appendix C66)

Christian: *"I have also had times where I drove out to meet with my dive buddies, and we say "do we know if we can dive today at all, it is very windy?" Well, we try and drive out there and if we cannot dive, we just sit in the car drinking a Coke, chatting and stuff. So yes it [the social aspect] is also a big part of it and I will by far prefer to get away with those I know, and how you know that you will be enjoying yourself."* (For translation see appendix C67)

The bonding and mutual recognition is coherent with both Jenkins' (2006) notion of similarity as well his notion of mutual recognition that draws like minded people towards each other, a notion he shares with Moutinho et al (2007). The mutual recognition is also evident in Teddy's assertion that rebreather divers, who don't know each other and who meet, are automatically drawn to each other and instantly have something to talk about, something all of the interviewed rebreather divers were able to relate to. Christian also gave a couple of examples of conversation between two unacquainted divers who had just met, which confirm the coherence of the mutual recognition of rebreather divers with Jenkins' (2006) and Moutinho et al's (2007) notion:

Christian: *"We click quite fast and it is like that when we meet: "oh hey, well that was you, I met you on the Internet. Oh it is you who has the website and things like that. How are you, I remember you wrote something about that and that. Yes but I have sold it again because it was crap and something like that. Well, I've just booked a trip to ... "And then the conversation continues and I have never talked to the man before so yes, it quickly becomes the same topic you are talking about. The community is relatively small so there is always someone you: "Oh do you know?, you dive in that*

*club, do you know that guy. Yes him, I was on tour with him last year. Have been there..."*(for translation see appendix C68)

The mutual recognition results in fast bonding between rebreather divers. Christian gave an example of two rebreather divers whom he did not know, followed him all the way up when he experienced problems with his rebreather on a dive, to make sure that he got back up safely.

The mutual recognition however also has some “negative” side effects when, categorization and identifying oneself with a certain group or category of people and results in the rejecting others. This is closely related to the concept of group narcissism which has been indicated earlier Peter W., who was completely uninterested in other divers if they were not diving on a rebreather. This is coherent with Jenkins’ (2006) notion of inclusion and exclusion, and Tajfel's (1974) and Brown's notions of in-groups and out groups.

The concept of unification which has ties to the linking value of consumer tribe theory is also related to in-groups and out-groups; There is indications throughout the interviews that the interviewees do not see themselves as extreme and risk-taking but as thorough, well prepared and much more preoccupied with minimizing the risks.

Peter S.: *“I think that it is well considered what I do. I do not go down to 65 meters and climb into in a wreck somewhere, because if something goes wrong, I think it's too much I might be more prone to do it on a little more shallow water, but I do not know. I have probably become a bit of a chicken actually. I have an enormous desire to complete the dive in a sensible way and come home, I'm not planning to stay down there.”* (For translation see appendix C69)

This is coherent with Giddens’ (1996) Brown’s (1996) Onorato & Turner (2004) and Jenkins’ (2006) notion of the interpersonal categorization of ‘me vs. not me’ and it shows that it is not the risk/danger aspect or the search for an adrenaline kick that were the unifying factors in relation to the brand in Schouten & McAlexanders' (1995) research on Harley Davidson enthusiasts or quality in Kozinets (2002) coffee enthusiasts or Mitchell & Imrie's (2009) vinyl collectors. The unifying concept, which the interviewees identify, is the social aspect, being willing to spend a lot of time and money on their sport as well as mutual recognition and bonding through shared experiences when on dives and trips. The devotion is comparable to the quasi religiosity of Belck and Tumbats’ (2005) Apple Enthusiasts and Schoutens & McAlexander’s (1995) Harley enthusiasts, Rune elaborated on this:

Rune: *"A few weeks ago I was with the Danish Sports Divers Federation, who were writing an article about rebreathers and they borrowed my new rebreather to try it out, and they also said that it was difficult to assess, because every time they asked some, it is that device they have, which is the best, and I feel a bit like, "Well if it was not the best in my eyes, it would not be the one I had bought, then I would have bought another not..." (for translation see appendix C70)*

Christian took a humoristic position on what unified members of Ninjadivers:

Christian: *"Our wives they do not know how much money we spend on equipment, they don't really know, and I know uhm, I don't really want to mention any names but there is one guy, for example, he is running a kind of separate accounting and he prefers that you when you buy something from him, that you pay in cash because his wife checks his accounts. "* (for translation see appendix C71)

Peter S also referred to a post in which a Ninjadivers member said that his worst fear when he were to die was that his wife would sell his diving equipment at the price he told her he had paid for it.

### 4.3 Findings

The netnography and the interviews indicates that rebreather divers are quite different from other people who gather in communities and tribes, which according to theory is very diverse and heterogenic. The narrow niche, which set high standards for experience, investment and devotion seem to have influence on the composition of the group which in many ways is a homogeneous group of people.

The limited amount of netnographic data is an indication that the community of rebreather divers is formed elsewhere, something very different from current theory on tribes. The community of rebreather divers is created much more in offline settings, something all the





interviewees acknowledged. This suggests that rebreather diving is much more something the members of Ninjadivers do together rather than talk about. Ninjadivers were, for instance, not prone to communicate much online about themselves and their relations to diving and/or other divers. In fact, most of what is posted on Ninjadivers is of a technical nature. This makes the data retrieved from Ninjadivers very different from the expected rich and thick data, other researchers have based their netnographies on. Other studies have produced rich and thick community data in terms of identity, brand preference and consumption, i.e. Harley Davidson enthusiasts, Apple enthusiasts, record collectors and coffee connoisseurs.

The consumption in relation to rebreather diving has shown throughout the interviews that it differs with what theory on consumer tribes indicates that the linking value is the most important aspect of consumption because, with the exception of Christian and Peter S, none of the interviewees including, open system divers, bought a new unit on a regular basis. However, there are indications that the rebreather unit has an indirect linking value as it opens up for social activities through which the rebreather divers bond. The group narcissism displayed in the interviews and the netnography, the rebreather unit also exemplifies an “entry ticket” where members have to “earn” their membership through the purchase of a rebreather, which is an aspect that has not been covered in theory that for the framework of this study.

The concept of roles, derived in consumer tribes theory, when referred to the findings in this study indicates a community within the community or a tribe within the Ninjadivers community. the tourists or sympathiser are those who haven’t yet earned their membership, the ones who are subject to the group narcissism of the tribe. A new addition to this category are those experienced divers, who do not dive as much as they would like and who buys a rebreather with the expectation that having spent so much money on their unit automatically motivates them to get in the water more. When that does not happen, they retire from diving. Former rebreather Mads is an example of someone who was not able to do the dives he wanted, and who therefore has decide to sell his rebreather and put diving on a hold. The consequences for Mads losing contact with some of his diver “friends” as well as the rest of the interviewees admitting to having lost contact with former divers, has not been covered explicitly in the existing theory.

Another role which has brought something new in relation to the theoretical framework is the unification of Kozinets (1999) role of (online) community moderator with Mitchel and Imrie’s (2006) tribal chief, in , whose role as owner and moderator has given him the role of the chief, who holds the community or tribe together. The findings, in term of Christian’s role, also show that the

tribal chief not only is earned through cultural capital but that also can be taken as the result of a conscious choice motivated by certain goal.

## **5. Assessing qualitative data and limitations**

The chapter is reserved for my evaluation of the findings which have surfaced throughout the analysis. The evaluation is based on, Elizabeth C. Hirschman's (1986) four criteria for evaluation; these criteria are confirmability, transferability, dependability and credibility.

In terms of enhancing confirmability, Hirschman (1986) suggests, that the research ought to be assessed by one or more external researchers reviewing every step taken in the research process. Although I recognize the importance of improving conformability, I have conclude that it, time wise, was outside the scope of this master thesis, as it is a very time consuming process, and because finding a researcher with the insight and level of knowledge, within the area of rebreather diving as Hirschman suggests, to access this study would have been very challenging, if not impossible.

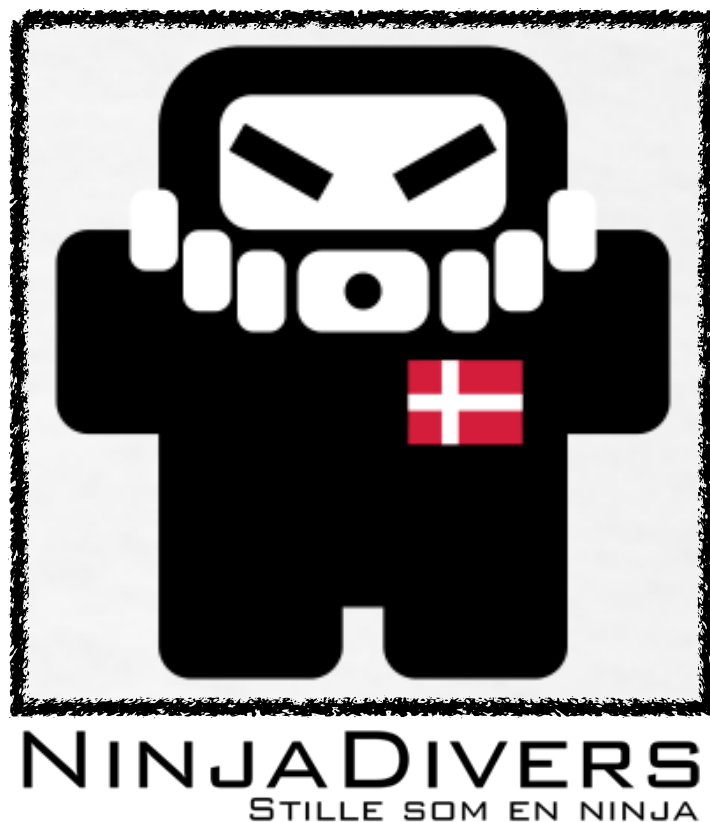
Transferability refers to which degree results of qualitative research can be generalized and or transferred to other settings and contexts. It is difficult to make generalizations on the basis of this study, since the number of primary interviewees is rather low in comparison with other studies. Rebreather diving has been and still is undergoing a development, becoming less technical and therefore more accessible to more people with less experience and smaller budgets. This makes the context of this study different from the context in 5 years.

The dependability is concerned with whether the research can be replicated or repeated, getting the same results. This is difficult to say, because the closedness of the community towards outsiders who do not own a rebreather, might make it difficult for other researchers to replicate this study. The netnography part would be easily replicated as it goes into written material, which will also be available in the future, but gaining access to interview might prove more difficult. I used a friend to help me get access to the interviewees, and two of them, Teddy and Frederik, openly admitted that it was my link to Christian that made them want to participate.

The credibility criteria involve accessing whether the findings of this study is credible or believable from the perspective of the interviewees as well as the members of Ninjadivers. All the interviewees and Christian as owner and moderator were all interested in the findings of this study and it has

been agreed that it will be published on the Ninjadivers forum for all members to read and comment upon.

The main limitation of this study is the number of primary interviewees, I was only able to get 8 interviewees to participate, one agreed to take part but never returned my call, so the number of interviewees is lower than other comparable studies. However, related to the relatively small size of the community and the number of core members, estimated by the interviewees, it is still usable. The different settings in which the interviews were held can also prove have been a limitation; due to large distance some of the interview have been conducted over Skype or over the phone with loss of quality as a result, this could have left to missed questions or answers which could have been usable. The last limitation could be, meaning lost in the translation from Danish to English since the interviews were all conducted in Danish.



## 6. Conclusion

The analysis shows that consumption habits among re-breather divers differ from normal consumption because up until now and maybe some time into the future, experience has been and is a prerequisite for being able to dive safely as a re-breather, without risking one's life. Another influential factor on the consumption habits when it comes to re-breather diving is the actual price tag and the economic investment in the unit and the course, which easily amounts to over 100.000 DKK. The economic factor automatically puts a damper on the eagerness or ability to keep a continuous purchase of new units, in spite of what I was told by a manufacturer whom explained that re-breather divers were keen to sell their new units if something better off turns up.

Some of the interviewees had consumption habits that influenced their lives, Peter S I, an instructor and commercial diver was one of them that was heavily influenced by his consumption habits of diving equipment. Moreover, Christian's, Rune's and Peter S' daily lives were influenced by their consumption habits related to re-breather diving too, Christian and Rune prioritised new diving equipment over clothes and going out, Peter S having no boundaries to his willingness to consume diving gear and having a separate secret economy that his wife was unaware of. The re-breather unit was something, which entailed identity shown by the customisation that over 90% of re-breather divers in accordance with the analysis did make their units fit the exact needs of the individual diver.

The purchase of a re-breather unit allows access to a network of likeminded people who share their technical knowledge and their experience on the online Ninjadivers forum. Here, they also arrange to go on dives together. This network of people have many similarities of that of a consumer tribe, and whether the entire community can be called a tribe or if there is a tribe within the community, it is difficult to say - since the members were more or less reluctant to answer my question when I posted them in the forum.

The interviews show that all of them convey signs of tribalism; in fact all interviewees showed a high degree of dedication, as there were signs of group narcissism towards outsiders, linking value, and the indication in the analysis that re-breather divers quickly bond with other re-breather divers whom they meet randomly.. Rebreather divers display mutual recognition. and the rebreather unit has become a symbol that rebreather divers identify with. The different roles are influenced by cultural capital in terms of skills, participation, experience and knowledge. Especially Christain's role as tribal leader is a clear indication that influences the conclusion that there is tribalism

amongst the re-breather divers on Ninjadiver. However, the extent of the tribe is difficult to establish. This is based on the indication that the importance of having a community of likeminded people to share ones passion with and that of the social aspect of re-breather diving, acknowledged by the interviewees. It can be concluded that the social aspect plays a vital role in how the consumer or tribe influence the identity construction of the interviewees.

The role of the online community has proven to play a much less significant role in the identity construction or bonding factor, than I had initially assumed . This is primarily based on my knowledge from other research within similar communities. The Ninjadivers community was by far much more of a gathering place where members could exchange technical knowledge; seek help and information - rather than a place where they uttered much about their passion of diving or its importance for them. From these findings based on the netnography and the interviews it can be concluded that the Ninjadivers forum works as a place to uphold contact and arrange gatherings where actual bonding and community building can take place. The influence on the identity construction is therefore limited or indirect.

So how do divers construct their identity through their sport? It would seem that in spite of it being a very individual sport, re-breather divers construct their identity through a social aspect, i.e. by being around people with the same passion, through shared experiences and by undertaking something which they are all deeply passionate about.

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## Appendix A - Interview Guides

### A1 Main interview guide

Navn

Alder

Uddannelse & Beskæftigelse

### Dykning

Hvor lang tid har du dykket?

Hvordan kom du igang med at dykke?

Hvordan gik du fra almindelig dykker til rebreather? Hvilke overvejelser fulgte med? Hvilke indflydelser var der (bade risisci og personer etc.)

Hvis du skulle sammenligne rebreathers med en anden sport hvad ville det så være?

Hvornår er en sport ekstrem og hvornår er man ekstrem i sin sport?

Er du ekstrem?

Hvorfor/hvorfor ikke?

### Forhold til dykning

Hvad søger du når du dykker?

- Hvad får dig til at vælge rebreather udover at det er den stille måde at dykke på og at der ikke kommer de forstyrrende elementer i form af luftbobler og lign.

Hvad kendetegner rebreather dykkere? (personen) (er han ekstrem/nørdet)

Giver dykning dig en fornemmelse af hvem du er? Eller er dykning med til at definerer hvem du er?

- *Hvordan ser du dig selv som dykker? (er du ekstrem?)*

Er der en sammenhæng mellem din livstil or dykning?

- Hvordan har dykning præget dit liv/livstil eller omvendt?
- Dykning er jo ingen folkesport men meget specialiseret, er dine andre valg i livet ligeså?
- Er der en sammenhæng mellem dykning or andre aktiviteter du dyrker?
- Dyrker du andre former for "ekstrem" sport?

Hvordan er du som dykker?

- *er du forskellig fra almindelige dykkere? Hvordan?*
- Hvad er forskellen på dig som dykker og dig som privat person?, ansat, ægteemand, far?

- *Har du lært noget om dig selv gennem dykning? - Hvad?*

Harley Davidsons entusiaster og Mac folk har et nærmest religiøst forhold til deres hobby.... Er det noget du kan nikke genkendene til?

## **Community**

Hvor stor en del af din omgangskreds er (rebreather)dykkere?

- Hvordan har det indflydelse på din dykning

Hvor meget fylder det sociale aspekt?

Gir (rebreather) dykning en samhørighed med andre rebreather dykkere? Som man ikke har med almindelige dykkere....

Har du tilknytning til nogen form for community mht Dykning (Dykkerklub/online fora) hvorfor?

- Hvad giver det dig at være en del af et community (evt ninjavers, dykkerklub etc.)?
- Hvordan er det at være blandt ligesindede?
- Hvad betyder relationerne til andre rebreathers for dig?

Er der nogen der har mere indflydelse end andre? (både forum og klub)

- Hvorfor?

Hvordan definerer man sin rolle blandt dykkere Dykkerklub/Ninjavers? (Christian)

- Hvilke roller er der i det community/den klub du er i?
- Er der et hieraki?
- Hvad har indflydelse på ens rolle blandt andre rebreather dykkere?

Har Ninjavers/Rebreather dykning/dykker klubben nogle uskrevne regler, værdier eller ritualer?

Har dem der er indflydelses rige i forummet/klubben også dem der er mest indflydelses rige når I er på ture?

Hvordan er du som medlem af det community du er en del af (evt ninjavers, dykkerklub etc.)? hvad bidrager du med?

Har din tilknytning til rebreather dykning/ninjavers ændret dit syn på dykning og måder at dykke på? (Typer af dyk, antal etc)

Er der rebreather organisationer og er du medlem af en sådan? Hvorfor og hvorfor ikke. hvis ja hvad giver det at være medlem?

Ændres din følelse af hvem du er alt efter hvilken sammenhæng du befinder dig i (sammen med dykker, familien, kolleger)

Hvad har du til fælles med de andre ninja divers ud over at i dykker rebreather?

Er der sådan en vi og dem følelse eller er der en samhørighed med andre dykkere?

- Er der forskel på den følelse mht almindelige dykkere og rebreathere?
- Finder man som teknisk/rebreather dykker sammen med andre der dykker det sammen

Har det at man dykker sammen en “bonding” effect? Kommer man tættere på dem man dykker med?

Hvor stor vil du mene at kernen på ninjadivers er, dem der er active, dem der dykker regelmæssigt og hvor dykning stadig er en passion?

Hvad sker der med folk der stopper med at dykke rebreather eller dykke generelt? Mister man forbindelsen med dem? (hvis ja hvorfor)

Har ændringen i din måde at dykke på (teknisk/rebreather) haft indflydelse på din omgangskreds?

- hvordan
- Har du mistet kontakt til dykkere som du tidligere har haft kontakt med da du/de ændrede måde at dykke på? Hvorfor?

## **Risici**

Presser du dig selv når du dykker? Dykker du udover dit certificate?  
Hvorfor?

Tænker du over farerne ved /Rebreather dykning?  
Hvordan/hvorfor(ikke)?

Er fare elementet noget af det der tiltrækker dig ved Teknisk/rebreather dykning?

Har fare-aspektet haft nogen indflydelse på dit valg af måde at dykke på/fravalg af måde og dykke på ?

Hvem/hvad har indflydelse på dit valg af udstyr/rebreather?

- Har Risici nogen indflydelse på dit valg af udstyr?
- 

Er du mere risikovillig når du dykker end i andre af livets sammenhænge) bilkørsel, investering etc...)

## Consumption

Hvad er trenden indenfor rebreather dykning? Hvordan har rebreather dykning udviklet sig og hvor er vi i dag og hvad venter i fremtiden?

Hva indebærer forbrug i forbindelse med dykning? (kun udstyr eller vil det at dykke også kunne kategoriseres som forbrug)

Har du nogle præferencer for mærker? (generelt/når det gælder dykning)  
Uddyb?

Er der en symbolic i det at dykke? Eller at have det rigtige udstyr? Eller kommer det an på funktionalitet?

Er der nogle specielle steder at dykke som er lidt forbeholdt Tekniske/rebreather dykkere?

Er du tech freak? Hvis ja hvad betyder det for din tilknytning til andre rebreather dykkere?

Har man stor indflydelse på hinanden hvad angår udstyr, dyk(steder) går man så lidt sammen i grupperinger?

Hvordan er forholdet til brands blandt ninjadivers eller rebreathers? Er der stærke mærke præferencer? Og hvorfor?

*Rebreather dykkerer er specielle i og med de når de har købt en rebreather straks er klar til at sælge den igen hvis der er noget nyt og bedre.*

- *Hvordan har du det med det? Er du også sådan?*

## Til almindelige dykkere

Ved du hvad en rebreather er?

Er det noget det har tiltalt dig?  
Hvordan/hvorfor(ikke)?

Hvad kender du til rebreathere?

Hvad kender du til rebreather dykkere?

Hvad mener du om dem?  
Hvorfor?

## **A2 - Interview Guide follow-up focused interview**

Jeg har lagt lidt mærke til at det virker som om man skal "løse" billet for at få lov at være en del af selskabet af rebreather dykkere med mindre at man har en anden indgangsvinkel til communities (mig via Christian f.eks.)

Da jeg interviewede Mads og vi kom ind på dig/Christian? Der sagde Mads noget som jeg fandt meget interessant

Mads sagde at Dykning er blevet lidt Dit/Christians Frirum væk fra skrigende børn og en kone der måske til tider har manglende forståelse for den her passion og interesse...

Er det noget du kan nikke genkende til?

## **A3 Interview guide former rebreather diver**

Navn

Alder

Uddannelse & Beskæftigelse

### **Dykning**

Hvor lang tid var du dykker?

Hvordan kom du igang med at dykke/rebreather?

Er rebreather dykning ekstrem? (in terms of adrenalin or devotion)

Hvad kendetegner rebreather dykkere? (personen) (er han ekstrem/nørdet)

Hvad fik du ud af at dykke?

Du har valgt at ligge dykningen på hylden og for at køre på motorcykel, hvorfor det?

Kan man sammenligne det med at dykke med det at køre motorcykel?

Harley Davidson/motorcykle entusiaster og Mac folk har et nærmest religiøst forhold til deres hobby.... Kan

Gav dykning dig en fornemmelse af hvem du var? Eller var dykning med til at definere dig som person?

- hvordan er det at køre motorcykel i den sammenhæng?

Var der en sammenhæng mellem din livstil og dykning?

Er der en sammenhæng din livstil og det at du nu kører motorcykel?

## **Community**

Hvor stor en del af din omgangskreds var/er (rebreather)dykkere?

Du var medlem af ninjadivers.... Hvad fik du ud af det?

Har det haft en konsekvens at du har ”meldt dig ud” har du mistet kontakten til de andre rebreather dykkere?

Hvor meget fylder det sociale aspekt? Er der sammenfald mellem dykning og det at køre på motorcykel

Gav (rebreather) dykning en samhørighed med andre rebreather dykkere?

Gælder det samme for andre motorcykelister?

Har du tilknytning til nogen form for community mht motorcykler (klub/online fora) hvorfor?

- Hvad giver det dig at være en del af et community (evt ninjadivers, dykkerklub etc.)?

Er der forskel på hvad det giver dig i forhold til communities af rebreather dykkere?

Er der nogen der har mere indflydelse end andre? (både forum og klub)

- Hvorfor?

Hvordan definerer man sin rolle blandt motorcykel folk? I forhold til dykkere?

- Er der et hieraki?
- Hvad har indflydelse på ens rolle blandt motorcyklister

Er der uskrevne regler og hvordan er de anderledes en blandt dykkere?

Er der en os og dem følelse blandt dykkere? (og motorcyklister)

Det virker lidt som om at man skal købe billet, i form af en rebreather, for at være en del af ninjadivers? Det virker på mig som om at man er forholdsvis lukket og afvistende overfor udefra kommende indtil man ligesom har købt eller at det er lige op over at man køber en rebreather?

Er det noget der går igen blandt motorcykelister?



**Appendix B - Netnography**

**Appendix C - Translations**

**Appendix D - Meta Matrix**