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Brands and Cultural Analysis

Arthur Asa Berger

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*This book is dedicated to my mentors: Maxwell Goldberg (English) and Ray
Ethan Torrey (Botany) at the University of Massachusetts in Amherst;
Marguerite Young (Writers' Workshop) and Gustav Bergmann (philosophy)
at the University of Iowa in Iowa City; and David Noble (History),
Mulford Q. Sibley (Political Science), and Ralph Ross (Humanities) at the
University of Minnesota in Minneapolis.*

FOREWORD

Arthur Berger has written close to 100 books. Maybe more. The subjects range from *Media and Communication Research Methods* to *the Academic Writer's Toolkit* to *the Genius of the Jewish Joke* to *Ads, Fads, & Consumer Culture*. Now, he brings his unique perspectives to the analysis and importance of brand “logos.” With “Branding: A Cultural Analysis,” Berger provides interesting, entertaining, and informative insights into the history and meaning of brands, branding, and their relationships to logos.

Who knew that “logo” was Greek for word? It was Greek to me. Or, that logos are not trademarks and vice versa. And so much more, relevant to understanding the important role of logos in the world around us. There is a fascinating analysis of the Starbuck logo, likening it to an iceberg with so many of its unconscious meanings and communications buried below the surface of that simple iconic drawing of a woman. A hidden number of cultural and societal meanings passed along with each exposure to the consumer. Berger explores this in some depth.

Logos are all-pervasive. In things, which surround us: every day and everywhere. From the moment we awake until we put our head down again on quite likely, “My Pillow.” We awake 6:45 AM and glance at the “Sony” clock radio. We go to wash our face with “L’Occitane en Provence” liquid soap. We put a “Polo” T on over our head and pull up our “Tommy Bahamas.” We perk up a pot of Starbuck’s, drive away in our “Mercedes” E300 and pull up to get a “Big Mac.” And, on and on throughout the day until we put our head down on our pillow and shut our eyes again.

Conceivably, we are interacting every minute of every day with thousands of brands and logos, some we own and use. Many more that we do

not. At least, not yet. It's hard to estimate the importance and influence that these little things called "logos" have on our lives and actions. But it is pervasive and it is profound.

It is also hard to believe that so many companies, with important products and brands, do not do nearly enough protect and connect this tool, which in many cases represents what the company may stand for most. Often, they do not utilize or coordinate their advertising, promotion, publicity, selling, and the other elements of the marketing mix to maximize and reinforce their company logo. Precious as it may be.

Why? So many reasons. No strategic direction from management. Too many folks in the communication and marketing approval process. Personnel turnover. NIH—new people want to put on their stamp. Ignorance, laziness, or stupidity. Or all three at once. This book provides ways to understand the importance to corporate and product positioning and communication of the value that the brand/logo should and can be. The very critical impact which it can have in the product or service selling process.

One of the many sagacious observations Berger makes is with his assessment of the Michelin Tire logo. A cartoon-like figure whose body is made up of layered tires. While this may be an eye-catching device and one which communicates both a "beckoning and friendliness," it does not convey what would seem to be the more relevant attributes for a tire—quality and/or safety. Both are high on the scale of consumer concerns in the purchase decision.

Contrast then, the Michelin logo with one of the greatest ever created: The Nike "Swoosh." Nike puts the "Swoosh" logo on virtually every product they market. They needn't do anymore because of the power that this logo radiates. It ubiquitously but quietly says that Nike, and everything that Nike makes, is "authentic sport." And, Nike supports their logo in every aspect of their marketing mix—advertising, brand event sponsorship, the most celebrated athlete endorsements, performance-oriented product development, store development and display, and on and on and on. The Nike logo is synonymous with "sports authenticity" and "sports authenticity" is synonymous with the Nike logo—and with Nike overall.

There is a wealth of knowledge that can be culled from reading this book. All sorts and sizes of companies will benefit from a deeper understanding of just how important their logo can and should be, and how to take steps to protect, preserve, and promulgate its use. Many I'm afraid may have to re-think how they have thought about their logo in the past.

Others will have to call the nearest brand and logo “expert” and order up a new one.

Founder and former Chief Executive Officer of
Goldberg Moser O’Neill

Fred Goldberg

Author of *The Insanity of Advertising*
(*Memoirs of a Mad Man*)

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I'd like to thank Fred Goldberg for writing the preface to this book, Jeff Samuels for writing an insert on legal considerations relating to logos and trademarks, Roland Greenberg for his photo of the Golden Gate Bridge, and Dirk vom Lehn to express my appreciation to the authors of the many articles and books from who I've quoted in this book. There is, it turns out, a great deal of interest in the academic community as well as in the corporate world in brands and branding and I've learned a great deal from reading a number of articles and books on branding, logos, shopping, and consumer cultures. On June 12, 2019, there were 13,260,000,000 "results" on Google search for the word "brand" and approximately, 8000 books on brands at Amazon.com.

I have altered the paragraphing in some quotes to make them easier to read but I've not changed the meaning and I have deleted the numerous citations in some scholarly articles which make these articles difficult to follow and which are not of interest to the general reader. Brands, it turns out, are much more complicated than we might imagine and play a much larger role in society, culture, the economy, the political order, and our lives than most people imagine.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Fig. 1 Images of the author

Arthur Asa Berger is Professor Emeritus of Broadcast and Electronic Communication Arts at San Francisco State University, where he taught between 1965 and 2003. He graduated in 1954 from the University of Massachusetts, where he majored in literature and philosophy. He received an MA degree in Journalism and Creative Writing from the University of Iowa in 1956. He was drafted shortly after graduating from Iowa and served in the US Army in the Military District of Washington in Washington DC, where he was a feature writer and speech writer in the District's Public Information Office. He also wrote about high school sports for the *Washington Post* on weekend evenings while in the Army. Berger spent a year touring Europe after he got out of the Army and then went to the

University of Minnesota, where he received a PhD in American Studies in 1965. He wrote his dissertation on the comic strip *Li'l Abner*. In 1963–1964, he received a Fulbright scholarship/grant to Italy and taught at the University of Milan. He spent a year as visiting professor at the Annenberg School for Communication at the University of Southern California in Los Angeles in 1984 and two months in the fall of 2007 as visiting professor at the School of Hotel and Tourism, Hong Kong Polytechnic University. He spent a month lecturing at Jinan University in Guangzhou and ten days lecturing at Tsinghua University in Beijing in Spring, 2009. He spent a month in 2012 as a Fulbright Senior Specialist in Argentina, lecturing on semiotics and cultural criticism, a month in Minsk in 2014, and three weeks lecturing on semiotics and media in Iran in 2015. He is the author of more than 100 articles and more than 70 books on media, popular culture, humor, and tourism.

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PART I

Theoretical Considerations



CHAPTER 1

Introduction: Thinking About Brands

Abstract This chapter considers topics such as the ubiquity of brands, the cultural studies nature of this book, the importance of logos and brands in consumer cultures, and the amount of advertising, for brands, to which we are subjected. It argues that because brands play such a large role in our lives, we don't pay much attention to them—except, of course, when we decide to buy something.

Keywords Brands • Cultural studies • Consumer cultures • Advertising

A Bloomberg analysis of the top 20 spots of the Billboard Hot 100 over the past three years found that the most popular brand name dropped was—somewhat unexpectedly—Rolls-Royce, which was mentioned in 11 songs. Eight of the top 12 brands are vehicles; the other four are Hennessy cognac, Nike's Air Jordan sneakers, Rolex watches, and Xanax. I really hope Xanax never makes a car. [Bloomberg]
Significant Digits, August 22, 2017

Psychology professor Jean Twenge studies differences between generations. A few years ago, she started to notice dramatic shifts in the behavior and attitudes of teens in the yearly surveys that she analyzes for her research. These teens were more lonely, more depressed, and more socially awkward than their predecessors. Because their childhoods coincided with the rise of the smartphone, Twenge calls this generation iGen—and her new book is the first to analyze the impact of the smartphone on an entire generation of kids.
The Conversation, August 22, 2017

Brands are taking back control. The trend we have all been suspecting is going on, through our own daily experiences, is gathering weight across adland. The latest figures from the WFA show that a majority of the world's biggest brands, some 70%, have changed media agencies in a bid to regain control of their spending. OK—so we're only talking about 35 global brands here, because the bar is set high on advertising across the planet, but between them these brands account for a \$30bn ad spend each year. So that is a lot of budget being moved to new agencies.

Sean Hargrave, *Media Post*, August 21, 2017

I've been thinking about brands for many years and writing about them, in articles and chapters in books as well, but the idea of writing an entire book on brands only came to me recently. When I asked a friend of mine who is a well-known futurist and who lectures widely how he got so many invitations to lecture, he said, "Because I'm a brand." Just recently, in the *New York Times*, there was an article about grade school teachers as "brands." So people are brands, like almost everything else.

ON THE UBIQUITY OF BRANDS

And then it occurred to me that just about everything I own and have purchased, except for fruits and vegetables and certain foods I buy in bins in grocery stores and supermarkets, is branded. And since almost all national brands are advertised on television, then all the commercials we see are about brands. In supermarkets, there are nationally branded products, which are heavily advertised, and generic store brands, which are generally much less expensive and, if *Consumer Reports* is correct, generally as good. Brands, then, have a cost.

So I decided to write a book about brands. I'd written a book on advertising, *Ads, Fads and Consumer Culture*, a book on shopping, *Shop 'Til You Drop*, and two books on marketing, *Marketing and American Consumer Culture* and *A Dictionary of Advertising and Marketing Concepts*. Given my background and interests, a book on brands made sense to me, as part of my continuing investigation of American consumer culture.

A NO-BRAND OR BRANDLESS BRAND

An article in the October 2017 issue of *San Francisco* magazine has an article about “The Brand That Hated Branding.” It discusses a new company,

Brandless, which sells a pared-down line of high-quality household staples, from organic peanut butter and fair-trade coffee pods to premium face cream and porcelain rimmed dishware, that each cost no more than \$3.

Brandless achieves its economies by making its supply chain more efficient and by avoiding traditional marketing. It has its products move directly to the Brandless distribution centers in Indiana and California. It has 165 products. Whether it will succeed is hard to say.

The article also compares some Brandless products with the same products at Whole Foods and found that in some cases, products at Whole Foods were less expensive than Brandless ones and with other products, much more expensive than Brandless. I would describe Brandless as an Internet Dollar Store on steroids, with products that are often more expensive than branded products. Brandless may not put a brand label on its products, but Brandless is, in the final analysis, also a brand. It is what we might call an “unbranded” brand.

I have made use of information from many sources in writing this book, which can be seen as a kind of literary documentary full of quotes from experts on brands, and an analysis of brands and their role in our lives and in society.

A SEMIOTIC AND CULTURAL STUDIES PERSPECTIVE ON BRANDS

Let me offer a quotation from the *International Journal of Marketing Semiotics* that offers a semiotic overview of brands and marketing.

By virtue of semiotics’ ability to account for the processes whereby meaning is generated, it constitutes the discipline par excellence for addressing the issue of brand signification. Semiotic approaches to branding have been furnished both from within the semiotics...and the consumer research... Semiotic approaches have been incumbent on different perspectives in the semiotic literature, such as Peirceanism, Structuralism, Social Semiotics.

Semiotics have been applied in various marketing related research areas, including strategic brand positioning, brand identity, brand equity and brand image, advertising copy development, advertising encoding and decoding, retail branding, media messages, package design, to name a few. The usefulness of semiotics consists both in furnishing typologies of brands as signs, as well as a conceptual and methodological platform for designing and managing brands as sign systems. As an applied market research tool, semiotics have been used either as a standalone research method or in combination with other qualitative and quantitative research techniques.

My subtitle, “And Cultural Analysis,” refers to my methods of analysis. This book can be considered a cultural studies text. That is, it uses many different disciplines, such as semiotics, psychoanalytic theory, and sociological theory, in trying to understand what brands are and their role in our lives and in consumer cultures in America and also in other advanced countries. Bishop Berkeley, the philosopher, said: “To be is to be perceived.” To this I would add, the brands we use help determine how we are perceived. We use brands both to help shape how we are perceived by others and to develop our sense of self. And branding is also used by tourist destinations, cities, countries, corporations, political parties, and so on. This book will explore many of these areas.

ON THE IMPORTANCE OF LOGOS AND BRANDS

What I didn’t realize when I decided to write on brands was how important they are to the corporations that own brands, to our everyday lives, to our society, and to our economy. Like many people, I thought all those logos and their taglines were trivial concerns, but as I investigated the matter, I found that logos, brands, trademarks, and everything connected with branding are of central importance to understanding our social and political order. As Naomi Klein writes in her book *No Logo* (2002: 7):

By the end of the 1940s, there was a burgeoning awareness that a brand wasn’t just a mascot or a catchphrase or a picture printed on the label of a company’s product; the company as a whole could have a brand identity or a “corporate consciousness,” as this ephemeral quality was termed at the time. As this idea evolved, the adman ceased to see himself as a pitchman and instead saw himself as “the philosopher-king of commercial culture,” in the words of ad critic Randall Rothberg. The search for the true meaning of brands—or the “brand essence,” as it is often called—gradually took the

agencies away from individual products and their attributes and toward a psychological/anthropological examination of what brands mean to the culture and to people's lives. This was seen to be of crucial importance, since corporations may manufacture products, but what consumers buy are brands.

In a sense, brands are the doorways through which corporations and corporate capitalism enter our households and ultimately take control of things. The average four-year-old can identify 100 brands, according to Paco Underhill in his book *Why We Buy*. And all the advertising to which we are subjected, if you think about it, is about brands of products. If we watch four hours of television a day, which is the average for American households, we are subjected to about an hour of commercial messages about brands. Over the years this adds up to thousands and thousands of television commercials, plus countless other advertisements for brands in newspapers, magazines, and on our smartphones. The greatest “repository” of brands is found on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), which offers not only brands of products to purchase, but also reviews by users about the brands they have purchased—reviews that many people use in deciding what brands of a given product to purchase. For example, recently I purchased an Amazon Echo Dot 2nd Generation. There are 62,674 Customer Reviews for this product.

We swim in a sea of brands in our everyday lives and because they are so ubiquitous and are with us from when we wake up in the morning and go to bed at night (our clock radios are all branded), they seem to be part of the natural order of things and we tend to neglect them and don't recognize their importance. Now, many scholars argue that brands are central to corporations and to understanding consumer cultures. In this book, I explore the role of brands in our lives and in our societies from a cultural perspective and discuss everything from the way we brand ourselves to the notion that Japan (like all countries) is a brand.



CHAPTER 2

What Is a Brand? A Semiotic Analysis

Abstract In this chapter, I define brands, deal with brand images, and explain how semiotics, the science of signs, is useful in analyzing brands. I deal with Saussure's theories and his notion that a sign is composed of a sound-object or signifier and a concept that the signifier generates. He also writes about concepts only having meaning in terms of their not being like their opposites. I also discuss the difference between denotation and connotation, metaphor and metonymy, and differentiation in brands.

Keywords Brand images • Signs • Semiotics • Signifiers • Signifieds • Metaphor • Metonymy

Language is a system of signs that express ideas, and is therefore comparable to a system of writing, the alphabet of deaf-mutes, symbolic rites, polite formulas, military signals, etc. But it is the most important of all these systems. A science that studies the life of signs within society is conceivable; it would be a part of social psychology and consequently of general psychology; I shall call it semiology (from Greek sēmeion "sign"). Semiology would show what constitutes signs, what laws govern them.

Ferdinand de Saussure, *Course in General Linguistics* (1966: 16)
The basic unit of semiotics is the sign defined conceptually as something that stands for something else, and, more technically, as a spoken or written word, a drawn figure, or a material object unified in the mind

with a particular cultural concept. The sign is this unity of word-object, known as a signifier with a corresponding, culturally prescribed content or meaning, known as a signified. Thus, our minds attach the word "dog," or the drawn figure of a "dog," as a signifier to the idea of a "dog," that is, a domesticated canine species possessing certain behavioral characteristics. If we came from a culture that did not possess dogs in daily life, however unlikely, we would not know what the signifier "dog" means. ... When dealing with objects that are signifiers of certain concepts, cultural meanings, or ideologies of belief, we can consider them not only as "signs," but sign vehicles. (p. 8, 9)

Mark Gottdiener, *The Theming of America: Dreams Visions and Commercial Spaces*

In *Marketing for Hospitality Tourism* (2nd edition) by Philip Kotler, John Bowen, and James Makens, we find a classic definition of brands (1999: 284):

A *brand* is a name, term, sign, symbol, design, or a combination of these elements that is intended to identify the goods or services of a seller and differentiate them from those of competitors. A brand name is the part of the brand that can be vocalized ... a brand mark is that part of the brand that can be recognized but is not utterable, such as a symbol, design, or distinctive coloring or lettering. A brand is a sign and a sign is anything that can be used to stand for something else. Examples are McDonald's golden arches and Hilton's H. A trademark is a brand or part of a brand that is given legal protection; it protects the seller's exclusive right to use the brand name or brand mark.

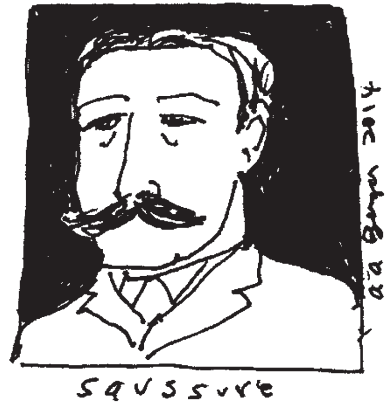
Later in the book, there is a definition of brand images (1999: 770) which reads:

Brand Image The set of beliefs consumers hold about a particular brand.

Kotler is a well-known marketing scholar and this passage offers a useful overview of what brands are and the different components of branding.

We can use semiotics, the science of signs, I suggest, to better and more fully understand some of the concepts we find in these passages from Kotler and his colleagues and to see branding in a slightly different way.

Fig. 2.1 Ferdinand de Saussure



Semiotics, which helps explain how people find meaning in the world, is, as you might well imagine, of great interest to advertisers and marketers and anyone interested in brands (Fig. 2.1).

SEMIOTICS, THE SCIENCE OF SIGNS

The term “semiotics” means sign, in Greek. In his book *Course in General Linguistics*, Ferdinand de Saussure wrote (1966: 120), “In language there are only differences.” He added, on the next page (1966: 121), “The entire mechanism of language ... is based on oppositions ... In language, as in any semiological system, whatever distinguishes one sign from the others constitutes it.” This is important because one of the fundamental aspects of a brand is differentiation—from other brands and from generic versions of a given product or service.

Saussure offers another insight into how the mind makes sense of things. He argues that concepts are purely differential and take their meaning from not being like opposing concepts. As he explains (1966: 117, 118):

It is understood that concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system. Their most precise characteristics are in being what the others are not ... Signs function, then, not through their intrinsic value but through their relative position.

We could substitute the word brands for concepts in this quotation and make a couple of other changes and the passage would be accurate and revealing:

It is understood that **brands** are purely differential and not defined by their positive content [that is, who they are] but negatively by their relations with the other terms of the system [that is, who they aren't]. Their most precise characteristics are in being what the **other brands** are not ... **Brands** function, then, not through their intrinsic value but through their relative position.

What this means is that since we make sense of the world by using concepts, we have to recognize that the concepts take their meaning by *not* being like something else and in many cases by being the opposite of something else. For example, the term beautiful has its meaning because it is the opposite of ugly. Cheap doesn't mean anything unless there is expensive. Meaning is not intrinsic to concepts but is based on their relations to other concepts in the "system" in which they are involved. If there's no opposite to concepts, they have no meaning. If everyone has a million dollars, the term "millionaire" becomes meaningless. If there are no lies, truth becomes meaningless.

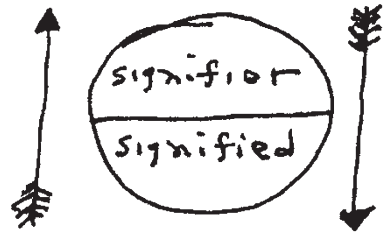
Saussure was one of the founding fathers of semiotics, the science of signs. His book *Course in General Linguistics* is considered one of the most important books written in the twentieth century. When I read Saussure, my life changed and I saw things in a different light.

SIGNIFIERS AND SIGNIFIEDS

Signs, for Saussure, had two parts whose relationship is based on convention: what he called a *signifier*, a sound or object, and a *signified*, a concept, or what the signifier means (Fig. 2.2). He writes in his book (1966: 67):

I call the combination of a concept and a sound-image a *sign* ... I propose to retain the word sign [*sign*] to designate the whole and to replace *concept* and *sound-image* respectively by *signified* [*signifié*] and *signifier* [*signifiant*]; the last two terms have the advantage of indicating the opposition that separates them from each other and from the whole of which they are parts.

Fig. 2.2 Signifier/
Signified diagram.
Berger after Saussure



We can apply this signifier/signified relationship to the Apple iPhone:

S	I	G	N
<i>Signifier</i>			<i>Signified</i>
Sound, Image, Word, Object			Concept generated by Signifier
word: iPhone or image of it			Product: Apple iPhone smartphone

Since the relationship between a *signifier* and a *signified* is arbitrary and based on convention, a word or logo or brand such as the iPhone and its meaning have to be created by the Apple Corporation and learned by people who will purchase these products. Apple could have called its iPhone something else, such as the aPhone, but it would still have stood for its brand of smartphone.

DENOTATION AND CONNOTATION

Semioticians also distinguish between denotation and connotation. Denotation is a description of an object and connotation involves the cultural meanings it has. The denotation of an iPhone involves a description of its length, width, and other aspects of the phone. Here is a denotative list of the specifications for the Apple iPhone7:

Retina HD display
7-inch (diagonal) LED-backlit widescreen
Multi-touch display with IPS technology
1334-by-750-pixel resolution at 326 ppi
1400:1 contrast ratio (typical)

Retina HD display
5-inch (diagonal) LED-backlit widescreen
Multi-Touch display with IPS technology
1920-by-1080-pixel resolution at 401 ppi
1300:1 contrast ratio (typical)
Wide color display (P3)
625 cd/m2 max brightness (typical)
Dual-domain pixels for wide viewing angles
Fingerprint-resistant oleophobic coating
Support for display of multiple languages and characters simultaneously
Display zoom
Reachability

The connotation involves Apple’s reputation for brilliant design and quality. It is the connotations connected to their names that brands seek to define and establish. The connotations are established by advertising, word of mouth, reviews, and other things, and by the iPhone’s cultural significance and the way users of the iPhone feel about it.

METAPHORS AND METONYMY

Metaphor communicates by analogy while metonymy communicates by association. What we must recognize is that much of our thinking is based on metaphor and metonymy, and weaker forms of metaphor named simile and of metonymy named synecdoche. They are used all the time in advertising to create emotional responses to brands that are being advertised. The chart below offers us an understanding of these forms of communication (Table 2.1):

Table 2.1 Metaphor and metonymy

Metaphor	Metonymy
My love <i>is</i> a red rose	Color red associated with passion, love. Rolls Royce associated with wealth
Simile	Synecdoche
My love <i>is like</i> a red rose	Pentagon stands for American military (part stands for the whole)
Uses “is like” or “as”	

Metaphor and metonymy play a much more important role in our lives than we imagine. As George Lakoff and Mark Johnson point out in their book *Metaphors We Live By*:

Most people think they can get along perfectly well without metaphor. We have found, on the contrary, that metaphor is pervasive in everyday life, not just in language but in thought and action. Our ordinary conceptual system, in terms of which we both think and act, is fundamentally metaphoric in nature. The concepts that govern our thought are not just matters of the intellect. They also govern our everyday functioning down to the most mundane details. Our concepts structure what we perceive, how we get around in the world, and how we relate to other people. Our conceptual system thus plays a central role in defining our everyday realities. (1980: 3)

Metaphor and metonymy, then, shape a major part of our thinking and our communicating—even if we don't recognize it as such or assume that metaphor and metonymy are just literary devices. These devices pervade our everyday speech, and advertisers and marketers use them all the time to communicate with target audiences. We may not be aware of it, but generally we use a number of metaphors when we talk with others.

DIFFERENTIATION AND PSEUDO-DIFFERENTIATION IN BRANDS

If brands are signs, then semiotics helps us understand how they function. And that is, as I've pointed out earlier, is because branding involves differentiation. But many products are basically the same, with their differences being trivial. So it is advertising and branding that must find a way to suggest they are different. As Anthony J. Cortese explains in his book *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising* (2004: 4):

Branding seeks to nullify or compensate for the fact that products are otherwise fundamentally interchangeable. Tests have shown that consumer cannot distinguish their own brand of soap, beer, cigarette, water, cola, shampoo, gasoline from others. In a sense, advertizing is like holding up two identical photographs and persuading you that they are different—in fact, that one is better than the other.

This persuasion is done through linguistic devices such as metaphor and metonymy, images, dramatic narratives we call commercials, and any other means that marketers and advertisers can devise to convince us to choose one brand of a product over another when both are essentially the same.

There are significant differences between some kinds of products, so it isn't correct to suggest that all product types, that is products in some given category, are the same, but for many products, the real differences are either negligible or imaginary. What brands do is confer a different identity on a product. Kalman Applbau explains this in his book *The Marketing Era: From Professional Practice to Global Provisioning* (2004: 95):

Marketers have branded things as objects that have been conferred a singular identity or unique commercial identity. They are classified in the human realm of experience (i.e. "named") and are simultaneously, to a certain aspect, owned things (i.e., trademarked). When a product type is branded, its identity is owned and the objects being trademarked can be controlled for purposes of gaining profit.

The commodity, the generic product, is the opposite of the branded product, and companies develop brands to distinguish themselves from non-named commodity products. But branding has now moved into the supermarket and where once we just had strawberries, we now have branded strawberries competing with generic strawberries and the same applies to some other fruits.

BRANDS AS OBJECTS

Celia Lurie, a professor of sociology at Goldsmiths College in London, has a slightly different point of view. She argues in her book *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy* that brands are objects: (2004: 1):

This book will claim that the brand in an object. What might this mean? An object, surely, is something that is external, fixed, closed; something solid that can be touched.

The brand does none of these things. But the brand satisfies some common dictionary definitions of objects. It is some-thing "to which some feeling or action is directed;" it is an object-ive in that is the object of a "purpose or intention," or even a whole series of purposes.

The problem here, I believe, is that she is using the term “object” as an object of attention or in a psychoanalytic sense and not in a physical sense, though she seems, at times, to insist on brands having a physical presence. She adds, later (2004: 1), “the preliminary definition of the brand adopted here is that it is a *set of relations between products and services*.” Then she qualifies her argument and suggests that while brands are incorporeal (not something solid that can be touched), they are not immaterial. Her focus on relationships reminds us of Saussure’s dictum that signs and concepts are based on relationships in some system of which they are part.

Saussure wrote about the relations between concepts and the systems in which they are embedded and the fact that the meanings of concepts are always differential. I suggest, then, that at the most fundamental level, brands are represented by signs—that is words, images, and generally speaking, names, often with distinctive typefaces and logos that attempt to confer a distinctive identity on certain products and services. And brands in a given category of product compete with other brands to attract customers and, once they “capture” them, if possible, keep them.



CHAPTER 3

Brands and the Psyche

Abstract Freud's ideas are useful in understanding how brands work and I discuss his theory about the different levels of the psyche and the importance of the unconscious, that part of the psyche to which we do not have access. I also discuss the work of Gerald Zaltman, who also deals with the unconscious, and Ernest Dichter, the father of motivation research. Freud's ideas about the id, ego, and superego are also used to help understand the role brands play in our psyches and our lives. I offer a discussion of the difference between two kinds of consumers: maximizers and satisfizers. I also deal with cult brands, like Apple and Harley-Davidson. I also offer an example of what I call a "myth model" and use it to explain how myths may play a role in our decisions to purchase this or that brand of an object.

Keywords Psyche • Unconscious • Id • Ego • Superego • Cults • Myth

You believe that you are informed of all that goes on in your mind if it is of any importance at all, because your consciousness then gives news of it. And if you have heard nothing of any particular thing in your mind you confidently assume that it does not exist there. Indeed, you go so far as to regard "the mind" as coextensive with "consciousness," that is, with what is known to you Come, let yourself be taught something on this one point. What is in your mind is not identified with what you are conscious of; whether something is going on in your mind and whether you hear of it, are two different things.

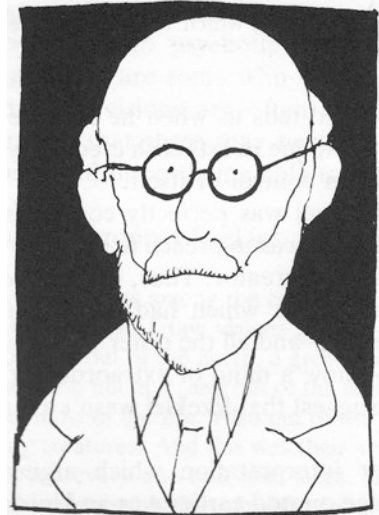
Freud, "One of the Difficulties of Psychoanalysis," 1910/1963,
pp. 188, 189

The basis of modern media effectiveness is a language within a language—one that communicates to each of us at a level beneath our conscious awareness, one that reaches into the uncharted mechanism of the human unconscious. This is a language based upon the human ability to subliminally or subconsciously or unconsciously perceive information. This is a language that today has actually produced the profit base for North American mass communication media. It is virtually impossible to pick up a newspaper or magazine, turn on a radio or television set, read a promotional pamphlet or the telephone book, or shop through a supermarket without having your subconscious purposely massaged by some monstrously clever artist, photographer, writer, or technician.

Wilson Bryan Key, *Subliminal Seduction*.

Freud's point, that we are not aware of everything that goes on in our minds, is central to understanding how brands function. Our psyches are much more complicated than we might imagine, it turns out, and it was Freud who did such a brilliant job of calling our attention to this matter (Fig. 3.1).

Fig. 3.1 Sigmund Freud. (Drawing by author)



FREUD ON THE PSYCHE

He believed that there were three levels to the psyche, best shown using the example of an iceberg. Our psyches, we can say, are *like* icebergs (a simile). We know that when we see an iceberg, floating in the water, what we see is only a small portion of the iceberg—around 15% of it. The other 85% of the iceberg is under the water. We can make out around five or six feet of the iceberg just beneath the water and the rest of the iceberg cannot be seen. The 15% of the iceberg represents consciousness. The five or six feet of the iceberg we can dimly make out represents what is called the preconscious or subconscious, which is vaguely accessible to us. The remaining 85% of the iceberg, which we cannot see, is the unconscious. And it is in the unconscious that our feelings about different brands reside and these feelings shape our decisions as shoppers (Fig. 3.2).

What Freud is suggesting, then, is that we are not aware of most of what is going on in our psyche, which means we are not as rational as we think we are. Many of our decisions are based on imperatives in our unconscious that shape our thinking and behavior. Ernest Dichter, one of the founding fathers of motivation research, suggested that the goal of motivation research is to discover the unconscious reasons that people do things, so that organizations, manufacturers, and so on can use this knowledge to better shape people's behavior—that is, get them to buy particular products or do whatever else is asked of them. In his book *The Strategy of Desire*, Dichter (1960: 12) writes:



Fig. 3.2 The iceberg and the psyche. (Drawing by author)

Whatever your attitude toward modern psychology or psychoanalysis, it has been proved beyond any doubt that many of our daily decisions are governed by motivations over which we have no control and of which we are often quite unaware.

Dichter and other motivation researchers, then, attempt to “mine” the unconscious and put it to work, for their particular purposes, so to speak. Sometimes this purpose is socially constructive, as in campaigns against smoking, and sometimes this purpose is commercial, as in campaigns by companies to get us to buy some product or service.

Gerald Zaltman, a professor at the Harvard Business School, also believes in the importance of the unconscious. He writes, in his book *How Customers Think: Essential Insights into the Mind of the Market* (2003: 50):

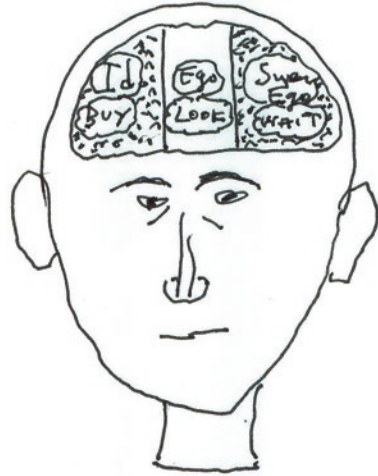
Consciousness is crucial in daily life for many obvious reasons. However, an important fact and one of the key principles of this book is the 95-5 split. At least 95 percent of all cognition occurs below awareness in the shadows of the mind while, at most, only 5 percent occurs in higher order consciousness. Many disciplines have confirmed this insight.

For Zaltman, then, only 5% of what goes on in our minds is at the conscious level. He quotes psychiatrist Alan Hobson, who explains (2003: 51), “We process many inputs automatically, and we have no conscious idea of the vast amounts of data that are saved or discarded.” Later, Zaltman adds, “unconscious judgments not only happen before conscious judgments, but they guide them as well.” So we are guided, Zaltman suggests, in many decisions we make about things like brands of products to purchase by forces in our unconscious (Fig. 3.3).

Freud has a second theory about the psyche in which he argued that it is made up of three forces: the id, the ego, and the superego. The id, ego, and superego are part of Freud’s *structural hypothesis* about mental functioning. Charles Brenner, a psychoanalyst, offers the following brief description of these three entities in his book *An Elementary Textbook of Psychoanalysis: Revised and Expanded Edition* (1974: 35):

We may say that id comprises the psychic representatives of the drives, the ego consists of those functions which have to do with the individual’s relation to his environment, and the superego comprises the moral precepts of our minds as well as our ideal aspirations.

Fig. 3.3 Id, ego, and superego. (Drawing by the author)



Freud's description of the Id gives us an idea of what it is like. He writes, in his *New Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*:

We can come nearer to the id with images, and call it chaos, a cauldron of seething excitement. We suppose that it is somewhere in direct contact with somatic processes, and takes over from them instinctual needs and gives them mental expression, but we cannot say in what substratum this contact is made. These instincts fill it with energy, but it has no organization and no unified will, only an impulsion to obtain satisfaction for the instinctual needs, in accordance with the pleasure-principle. (Qtd. in Hinsie and Campbell 1970: 372)

This seething cauldron of sexual desire, passion, and lust cannot be allowed to determine an individual's actions because we are social animals who live in societies, and civilization demands that we control our behavior. In fact, the demands that civilization makes on us are so great, according to Freud, in his book *Civilization and Its Discontents*, that we all suffer from great psychological pressure and pain. Much of this is caused by the superego.

It corresponds, as Brenner (1974: 111–112) notes, “in a general way to what we ordinarily call conscience. It comprises the moral functions of the personality.”

Figure 3.4, taken from a United Airlines advertisement, shows the conflict between id and superego elements of the psyche. It assumed that readers will know what id and superego elements are, but even if they

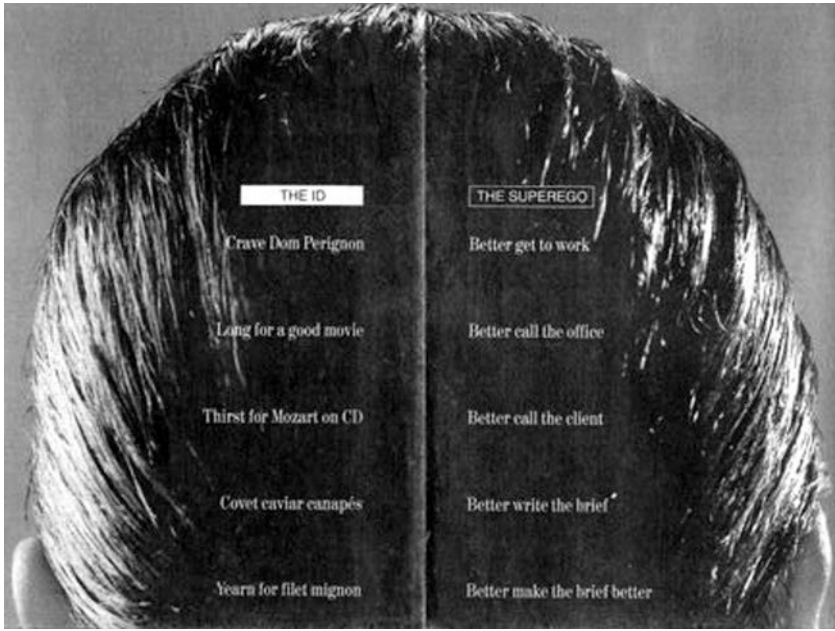


Fig. 3.4 Detail from a United Airlines advertisement

don't know, they can see there is an opposition between two elements in the psyche.

Freud lists the functions of the superego:

1. the approval or disapproval of actions and wishes on the grounds of rectitude.
2. critical self-observation.
3. self-punishment.
4. the demand for reparation or repentance of wrong-doing.
5. self-praise or self-love as a reward for virtuous or desirable thoughts and actions.

Contrary to the ordinary meaning of "conscience," however, we understand that the functions of the superego are often largely or completely unconscious. (p. 112)

There is an endless opposition that exists between the id and the superego. The ego, in between these two polarities, tries to mediate between them, operating always with the aim of self-preservation. The ego carries out its function by storing up experiences in the memory, avoiding excessively strong stimuli through flight, adapting to moderately strong stimuli, and bringing about changes in the world through activity.

Let me suggest that we can classify the things and services we buy, and many other things, according to whether they are, to some degree, id, ego, or superego dominant (Table 3.1).

So, without our being aware of the significance of much that we do, much of our behavior is shaped by forces in our unconscious and subconscious and by hidden imperatives from the id/ego/superego components of our psyches.

Zaltman devotes a chapter to stories and brands. Our ideas about brands, he explains, exist in our minds and are tied to stories about the brands that we have all internalized and which have an impact on our decision making. He quotes Larry Huston, a creative director at Procter & Gamble (2003: 212):

All brands have a story, a story that consumers tell themselves when they reach for the product in a store to buy it. The story will likely be subconscious if the person is already a loyal buyer or conscious in the case of a new trial experience ... In addition to word of mouth stories and purchase stories, many brands have creation stories. We have all heard the creation stories of HP, Apple, Microsoft, Coca-Cola, and on and on. Often the main character, or protagonist, in a brand creation story is an individual.

Table 3.1 Id, ego, and superego, and culture

Id Dominated	Ego Dominated	Superego Dominated
<i>Playboy</i> magazine	Textbooks like <i>Media Analysis Techniques</i> (Sage publications)	The Bible
Barbie Doll	Smithsonian Circuit Lab	Aesop’s Book of Fables
Lenox Champagne Flute	AmScope SW-3T24Z Microscope	Holy Water Vessel
Las Vegas, Nevada	Boston (home of 60 Universities)	Vatican City (and the Pope)
Gambling	Reading	Praying
Ferrari (speed)	Honda Civic (thrift)	Volvo (safety)
You choose:		

So the brands of products we like and buy are generally connected to some narrative based on radio and television commercials, print advertisements, cultural archetypes, word of mouth from friends who have the brand, the brand’s history, and the brand’s role in a particular culture. Some strong fans of brands are called, by marketers, “brand apostles” or “brand evangelists,” which suggests that some brands, such as Apple, have a quasi-cult following and there may also be some kind of hidden religious or sacred dimension to owning an iPhone or any other Apple product.

Consider the following chart, which suggests affinities between Apple iPhones and evangelical religions (Table 3.2).

I don’t think it is too far-fetched to see similarities between religions and certain cult products such as the Apple iPhone, Harley-Davidson motorcycles, and other products and brands which have cult followings. These cult brands exist because people develop very powerful emotional attachments to them and derive many psychological benefits from their attachments.

CULT BRANDS

David Forbes, a psychologist and marketing consultant, has a discussion of cult brands in his book *The Science of Why: Decoding Human Motivation & Transforming Marketing Strategy*. He writes that we are all, even though we are not aware of the matter, members of brand user groups. He then discusses cult products (2015: 85):

At the extreme end of identity-focused marketing are products that offer opportunities for exclusive “in group” self-definition to consumers who adopt them. Such “cult” brands can offer users the double benefit of providing both a unique identity *and* a sense of exclusivity, in a rather fascinating example of being unique together. Cult brands bring together folks who are happy to belong to a band of outsiders and who in the process form a band of insiders with exclusive knowledge about the superiority of their product. Apple is an example of a brand that has established cult status among its users by contrasting them to the outsider group of IBM users. Recent Apple

Table 3.2 The iceberg and the psyche

Religion	Apple corporation
The Bible	iPhone manual
Evangelists	Brand evangelists
Convince people to join church	Convince people to buy iPhones

ads actually personify the two user groups in an interaction that makes it all too clear that Apple users are “cool”—innovative, creative, laid back—while IBM users are clueless—not even aware of the disadvantages of their product choice.

He mentions another cult brand, Harley-Davidson, whose members have a distinctive style of dress and language, and other symbols of their membership in the Harley-Davidson brand cult.

I have a number of friends who have told me “I *love* my iPhone.” We can see that there can be an emotional attachment between electronic devices and the people who own them. On any number of cruises my wife and I have taken, we’ve met people who “announce” to the other passengers that they have Harley-Davidson motorcycles by their tee shirts, baseball hats, and jackets with Harley-Davidson logos on them.

When I got into conversations with them, a great deal of their talk revolved around their having Harley-Davidson motorcycles and their belonging to groups of motorcycle owners with Harley-Davidsons, and going to rallies of Harley-Davidson owners.

It is an iconic American brand, like the Apple iPhone and a number of other brands. Because of the emotional gratifications connected with belonging to a cult brand, companies with cult followers don’t have to compete on price. People who own these products have convinced themselves that while they may cost more than competing brands, the superiority of their brand to competitors and the gratifications they get from owning them are worth the difference in prices. Many of these products also function as status symbols and thus enhance our sense of wellbeing, of self-esteem, and of being a success.

Abraham Maslow, a psychologist, developed a theory of needs that can be applied to advertising and branding. His ideas were described in Lee Eisenberg’s book, *Shoptimism*, as follows (2009: 82):

In 1943, when he was in his midthirties, Abraham Maslow outlined how our behavior is driven by the quest to satisfy a series of needs. Once we address what Maslow called...“lower-order needs” we move on to ascending “higher order needs.” Some of these needs can be more material than others, meaning that the Buy comes into play as a means to satisfy them. Our need for safety and security is first, followed by our need to belong—our need for love and friendship and all that. Then there’s our need for self-respect and dignity. And finally there’s our need to “selfactualize,” to realize our full, individual potential.

Below I offer a list which shows higher-order needs at the top and moves to lower-order needs as we descend to the bottom.

- Self-Actualization Needs** (highest level of development)
- Esteem Needs** (status, prestige, recognition)
- Social Needs** (group membership, community, belonging)
- Safety Needs** (physical safety, economic security)
- Physical Survival Needs** (food, health, material goods, safety)

Maslow believed that “the American Dream” essentially involved lower-order “physical survival” needs such as our desire for material goods. At the highest level, we find self-actualization needs, which involve our realizing our potentials and living self-actualized lives. The brands of products and services we purchase play an important role in our satisfying our esteem needs and may even provide people with a sense that being able to afford the “best” brands is a form of self-actualization.

MAXIMIZERS AND SATISFIZERS

But what is the best? And how do we know how to buy what is best? In his book *The Paradox of Choice*, psychologist Barry Schwartz suggests there are two kinds of buyers: *maximizers*, who want to get the best brands and the best deals on them, and are anxiety ridden about achieving this goal. The other kind of buyers, *satisfizers*, are not obsessed with getting the best deals, are modest in their expectations, and are not anxiety ridden (Table 3.3).

Maximizers devote a great deal of energy in trying to get the best brands at the best prices and are always motivated by the idea that if they look a bit longer for what it is they wish to buy, they will find it for less money. And even when they purchase something, they are anxiety ridden because they fear that they may not have got the best possible deal. So every purchase is traumatic and loaded with meaning and psychological stress. Unfortunately, most Americans are *maximizers*, Schwartz suggests,

Table 3.3 The id, ego and superego

<i>Maximizers</i>	<i>Satisfizers</i>
Must have very best	Good is okay
High expectations	Low expectations
Anxiety ridden	Ease about purchases

who devote—maybe waste is more accurate—an enormous amount of energy to get the best “deal.”

A number of years ago I wrote an essay titled “To Buy is to be Perceived.” I was playing with the philosopher Berkeley’s dictum “To Be is to be Perceived.” My point was, that for many people, it is only when they are in a store dealing with a clerk to purchase something that they get much personal attention, and that attention doesn’t last for very long. It is through our purchases, at the unconscious level, that we convince ourselves that we exist, that our existence is good, and that we are worthy of love and attention. I am, perhaps, overdramatizing the act of buying, but I believe that there is an element of truth in what I am suggesting.

THE CONSUMER’S JOURNEY

When we buy something, and just about everything we buy has a brand—except for commodities—we are at the end of what marketers often call a consumer’s journey. That journey begins when we want something or may need something and have to decide what brand of that product or service to purchase. During the course of that journey we may investigate many different brands of the product, or models of the brand of the product and eventually come to a conclusion about what we will buy. Some people are aided in this journey by consulting magazines such as *Consumer Reports*, which offers expert advice on a wide range of products.

People may ask friends for word-of-mouth suggestions. An article by Janet Morrissey in the *New York Times* points out how important word of mouth is:

On average, 19 percent of a brand’s sales—or between \$7 trillion and \$10 trillion in annual consumer spending in the United States—are driven by social conversations, both online and offline, according to a new study conducted by Engagement Labs, a Canadian company that analyzes conversations around brands. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/11/26/business/media/advertising-social-media.html>

People may look at what other users of the brand of the product have to say about it on [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) or other places. And then, often after a considerable amount of study and investigation, they buy this or that model of whatever brand they have decided upon.

This journey will be affected by the brand stories they learn and by many other factors, including how much money they have to spend and all the material in their unconscious that may play a dominant role in their ultimate decision.

THE APPLE CORPORATION AND THE MYTH MODEL

In my book *Media, Myth, and Society*, I suggest that myths play a role in many of the decisions we make and things we do. We find a useful definition of myth in Raphael Patai's *Myth and Modern Man* (1972: 2)

Myth ... is a traditional religious charter, which operates by validating laws, customs, rites, institutions and beliefs, or explaining socio-cultural situations and natural phenomena, and taking the form of stories, believed to be true, about divine beings and heroes ... Myths are dramatic stories that form a sacred charter either authorizing the continuance of ancient institutions, customs, rites and beliefs in the area where they are current, or approving alterations.

Patai adds that myths still play an important role in shaping our social life and writes that (1972: 2), "myth not only validates or authorizes customs, rites, institutions, beliefs, and so forth, but frequently is directly responsible for creating them."

My myth model follows (based on my chart in *Media, Myth, and Society* 1972: 14):

a myth, defined as a sacred narrative that validates cultural beliefs and practices

psychoanalytic reflections of the myth (when we can find them)

historical manifestations of that myth (when we can find them)

the myth in elite culture texts (operas, theatre, serious novels, etc.)

the myth in mass-mediated or popular culture texts (songs, advertisements, TV shows)

the myth in everyday life activities (when we can recognize it)

We learn these myths from a variety of sources when we grow up and assume they have little relevance to our daily lives, but my argument in my book is that these myths actually play a significant role in our lives, even though we are not aware of this being the case.

The Apple Logo, of an apple with a bite in it, is based on the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. They were told by God not to eat from the Tree of Knowledge, but Eve was convinced by the snake that doing so would open their eyes and so Eve ate from the apple and convinced Adam to do the same. Here is the relevant passage from the Bible:

And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden. [9] And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou? [10] And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself. [11] And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat? [12] And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat. [13] And the LORD God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat. [14] And the LORD God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life: [15] And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.[16] Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

This is the story behind the Apple logo of the apple with a bite out of it. We can take this myth and apply it to the Apple corporation in the model that follows (Table 3.4).

Table 3.4 Myth model and Apple

Myth/Sacred story	Adam in the Garden of Eden. Theme of natural innocence until the apple is eaten.
Psychoanalytic manifestation	Repression (of knowledge of the Fall)? Suppression?
Historical experience	Puritans come to the US to escape the corrupt European civilization
Elite culture	American Adam figure in American novels. Henry James' <i>The American</i>
Popular culture	Advertisements for Apple products. Articles about Steve Jobs, the Apple Corporation, reviews of Apple iPhone, and so on.
Everyday life	Purchase an iPhone and other Apple products.

When we see the Apple logo, for it to have any meaning for us, we have to connect it to the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden. An apple with a bite out of it is a visual allusion to that story. What Apple promises us is that now that we have been expelled from the Garden of Eden, Apple products will help us gain more knowledge and do this better than any other competing brand of computer or smartphone or any other product category. Maybe enough knowledge so we can turn the world into another Garden of Eden—but one of our own making.

This study of the Apple logo suggests that images, like an apple with a bite out of it, are connected to narratives that play a subliminal role in our decision making about the brands we purchase, but also in many other aspects of our everyday lives. My book *Media, Myth, and Society* takes a number of important Hebrew, Greek, and Roman myths and shows how they play a role in our lives and in our societies. Given its relation to religious myth, it is not surprising that Apple has generated legions of brand apostles and that many Apple users belong to an Apple cult. I read in *The Wall Street Journal* recently about someone who calls himself an “Apple Addict” and who said he has 23 Apple products in his house. He is, I would suggest, a member in good standing of the Apple cult, even though he may not recognize that he is not only an addict but a member of a cult.

We must recognize that the leaders of cults exercise power and psychological domination over the members of the cult. The term “cult” comes from the Greek *cultus*, which means adoration, and it is often used for religions that are seen as spurious or unorthodox. The Apple cult, with its God-like founder Steve Jobs and its array of beautifully designed products, is, as cults go, relatively harmless, but it is of psychic value to its members and of great financial value to the Apple Corporation (Fig. 3.5).

It is reasonable to suggest, then, that a person’s decision to purchase an iPhone is not one based solely on rationality and its denotative qualities, but is one that it is also based on myth, on word of mouth, on reviews about the quality of iPhones, on advertising for iPhones, and on the cult-like nature of Apple purchasers. Apple’s success with iPhones, which have unusually high profit margins, has made it one of the wealthiest corporations in the world.



CHAPTER 4

Brands in Society, Society in Brands

Abstract After offering a summary of what the book deals with, I discuss grid-group theory, which argues that there are four competing lifestyles/taste cultures that exist in any society: elitists, individualists, egalitarians, and fatalists. I suggest how each of these lifestyles shapes our choices in automobiles, smartphones, wine, and so on, and our choices in media and popular culture. This leads to a consideration of class differences in societies and the role class differences play, according to the French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu, in determining our taste preferences. These preferences involve objects we buy but also political parties with which we identify.

Keywords Grid-group • Lifestyles • Elitists • Individualists • Egalitarians • Fatalists • Class differences • Taste

Sociology. The scientific study of the phenomena arising out of group relations of human beings. The study of man and his human environment in their relations to each other. Different schools of sociology lay varying emphasis upon the related factors, some stressing the relationships themselves, such as interaction, association, etc., others emphasizing the human beings in their social relationships, focusing their attention on the socius in his varying roles and functions. Whether sociology, as developed hitherto, is entitled to the rank of a science is still a matter of some disagreement, but it is uniformly recognized that the methods of sociology may be strictly scientific, and that the verified

generalizations which are the earmark of a true science are being progressively built up out of extensive and painstaking observation and analysis or the repetitious uniformities in group behavior.

Henry Pratt Fairchild, (Ed.) *Dictionary of Sociology and Related Sciences*

Everyday life is crisscrossed by patterns that regulate the behavior of its inhabitants with each other and that, at the same time, relate this behavior to much larger contexts of meaning (such as in our instance, canons of acceptable etiquette, the moral order and the sanctions of law).

These regulatory are what are commonly called institutions. Everyday life takes place with the enveloping context of an institutional order; it is intersected at different points by specific institutions that, as it were, reach into it, and its routines themselves consist of institutionalize behavior, that is, of behavior that is patterned and regulated in established ways. Again, it is important to understand the reciprocal relationship of these two aspects of our experience of society: everyday life can only be understood against the background of the specific institutions that penetrate it and the overall institutional order within which it is located. Conversely, specific institutions and the institutional order as a whole are real only insofar as they are represented by people and by events that are immediately experienced in everyday life.

Peter L. Berger and Brigitte Berger, *Sociology: A Biographical Approach*

It is useful to consider how far we have progressed in our journey to understand brands. If purchasing a branded object or service is the end of a journey, as marketers explain branding to us, so is understanding what brands are and how they work.

A SUMMARY

I have offered a definition of brands from a popular textbook on marketing and then considered the role that semiotics, the science of signs, plays in the way we find meaning in the world. Brands, I suggest, are signs; they are also messages that we use to show who we are and reflect our sense of taste and many other things about us. In the chapter on psychoanalysis theory, I discussed a number of Freud's ideas, such as the notion that our psyches have three levels: consciousness, a preconscious, and an unconscious. I quoted a marketing professor, Gerald Zaltman, who argues

that there is a 95-5 split in our psyches, with the 95 referring to the unconscious, which plays an important role in our thinking and decision making, including what brands to purchase.

I also dealt with Freud’s notion of our psyches having three components, an id, an ego, and a superego, which are constantly battling with one another for domination. I also suggested we can see many brands as appealing to one of these three forces in our psyches.

This brings us to this chapter, which deals with the role of brands in society and the way society shapes the creation of brands. As I point out in the epigraph, sociology focuses its attention on our social being—in the groups to which we belong, on our lifestyles, on our generations, on socio-economic classes, and on the role of institutions in society. I begin with a discussion of grid-group theory and brands.

GRID-GROUP THEORY AND BRANDS

Grid-group theory was developed by an English social-anthropologist, Mary Douglas. A number of other academics have used it to understand human behavior. This theory suggests that people face two major problems: the first problem is about *identity* and involves the way we answer the question “who am I?” The second problem focuses upon *behavior* and involves an answer to the question “what should I do?” We find an answer to the first problem by belonging to a group of some kind and all groups have either weak or strong boundaries and we solve the second problem, our behavior, by belonging to a group that has either hardly any or a large number of prescriptions or rules. The name that Douglas gives these groups is “lifestyles.” There are, then, four possibilities as far as lifestyles are concerned (Table 4.1).

Table 4.1 Grid-group lifestyles

<i>Lifestyle</i>	<i>Group boundaries</i>	<i>Many or few prescriptions</i>
(Hierarchical) Elitists	Strong	Numerous and varied
Egalitarians	Strong	Few
(Competitive) Individualists	Weak	Few
Fatalists	Weak	Numerous and varied

Table by author

In their book *Culture Theory*, social scientists Michael Thompson, Richard Ellis, and Aaron Wildavsky explain how the four lifestyles come about (1990: 6–7):

Strong group boundaries coupled with minimal prescriptions produce social relations that are egalitarian When an individual's social environment is characterized by strong group boundaries and binding prescriptions, the resulting social relations are hierarchical [sometimes known as elitist] Individuals who are bounded by neither group incorporation nor prescribed roles inhabit an individualistic social context. In such an environment all boundaries are provisional and subject to negotiation People who find themselves subject to binding prescriptions and are excluded from group membership exemplify the fatalistic way of life. Fatalists are controlled from without. Individualists and Elitists (sometimes called Competitive Individualists and Hierarchical Elitists) are the basic lifestyles in all societies. Egalitarians are critics of the status quo and try to elevate Fatalists, who generally find themselves at the bottom of the economic ladder.

We have to recognize that it is our membership in one of these lifestyles, and we are generally not aware that we are a member of a given lifestyle, that shapes, to a considerable degree, our lives as consumers.

We can see these lifestyles as four different brand-conscious consumer cultures that are part of the same society but which are all antagonistic toward one another. Many of the choices we make as consumers are shaped by the imperatives from our lifestyle and our antipathy toward other lifestyles. We can see the way members of the four lifestyles relate to brands of products in the chart that follows (Table 4.2).

Our lifestyles also shape our popular culture preferences, as the chart below shows. We tend to choose popular culture songs, programs, and so on that reinforce our beliefs, as members of a particular lifestyle, and avoid works that challenge them (Table 4.3).

This discussion of lifestyles is meant to suggest that our choices of brands and our popular culture preferences may be shaped by our lifestyles and group affiliation. This point is made by Mary Douglas in her seminal article "In Defence of Shopping," which appeared in Pasi Falk and Colin Campbell's *The Shopping Experience*. She writes (1997: 17, 18):

Consumption behavior is continuously and pervasively inspired by cultural hostility...We have to make a radical shift away from thinking about consumption as a manifestation of individual choices. Culture itself is the result

Table 4.2 Lifestyles and likely brand preferences

<i>Lifestyle</i>	<i>Elitist</i>	<i>Individualist</i>	<i>Egalitarian</i>	<i>Fatalist</i>
Automobile	Rolls Royce	Porsche Cayenne (many options)	Honda Civic	Used Fiat
Smartphones	Solarin (\$14,000)	Apple iPhone	Samsung Galaxy J3 (\$80)	Consumer Cellular 101 Flip (\$30)
Wine	Chateau Petrus 2100 (\$4000)	Amarone wine-making kit	2016 Fetzer Echo Ridge Sauvignon	Gallo Wine (in gallon bottle)
Running shoes	Brooks Ghost 10	Reebok Club C (design your own)	Fila Memory Finity (\$27)	Used (any) from Salvation Army
Cruise companies	Regent Seven Seas	Viking	Norwegian	Day Excursions

Table by author

of myriads of individual choices, not primarily between commodities but between kinds of relationships. The basic choice that a rational individual has to make is the choice about what kind of society to live in. According to that choice, the rest follows. Artefacts are selected to demonstrate the choice. Food is eaten, clothes are worn, cinema, books, music, holidays, all the rest are choices that conform with the initial choice for a form of society. Commodities are chosen because they are not neutral; they are chosen because they would not be tolerated in the rejected forms of society and are therefore permissible in the preferred form. Hostility is implicit in their selection.

Later she describes this cultural hostility as “agonistic,” based on our struggles to define not what we are but what we are not. This is often manifested by the brands of products and services we choose, among other things.

When Douglas writes about kinds of relationships, she is talking about our choosing to belong, without our being aware of doing so, to one of the four lifestyles—though sometimes that choice, in the case of fatalists, is often made for us. These choices are affected by our education, our socio-economic class, our tastes, and a number of other factors. But her point that consumption is *not* a matter of individual choices but is shaped by our membership in a lifestyle is what is crucial.

We chose brands because they are *not* used by members of other lifestyles, which means our choices are antagonistic. Her analysis reminds us

Table 4.3 Lifestyles and popular culture preferences

Topic	Elitist	Individualists	Egalitarians	Fatalist
Songs	“God Save the Queen”	“I Did It My Way”	“We Are the World”	“Anarchy in the UK”
TV Shows	<i>PBS News hour</i>	<i>Dynasty</i>	<i>The Equalizer</i>	<i>WWE Wrestling</i>
Films	<i>Top Gun</i>	<i>Color of Money</i>	<i>Woodstock</i>	<i>Rambo</i>
Magazines	<i>Architectural Digest</i>	<i>Money</i>	<i>Mother Jones</i>	<i>Soldier of Fortune</i>
Books	<i>The Prince</i>	<i>Looking Out for Number One</i>	<i>I’m Okay, You’re Okay</i>	<i>1984</i>
Games	Chess	Monopoly	New Games	Russian Roulette
Fashion	Uniforms	Three Piece Suit	Jeans	Thrift Store
You choose:				

Table by the author

of Saussure’s discussion of concepts. Concepts, he said, are purely differential. Their meaning stems from their relations with other concepts in a system. And consumption, if Douglas is correct, is also essentially differential, generated by hostility toward other lifestyles and their tastes.

BRANDS AND CLASS DIFFERENCES

On a *Washington Post* Internet site, there was a photograph of Louise Linton, the newly married wife of Steve Mnuchin, a billionaire member of the Trump administration's cabinet, who had just deplaned from a government plane. The commentary on the photo reads as follows:

In the picture, Linton is a study in white and beige, from her platinum locks to her studded sandals. She has helpfully tagged the various designer brands she's wearing. Thus, everyone knows she's dressed in Roland Mouret trousers, Valentino sandals and Tom Ford sunglasses. She is carrying an Hermès scarf. She doesn't mention it, but she's also toting a white Hermès Birkin. But you knew that, right?

This quotation points to an important aspect of brands: they are a way members of the upper classes can differentiate themselves from middle-class and lower-class people. Her clothes and jewels were worth an estimated \$13,000. Linton posted something insulting on her Instagram account (a response to someone) that irritated a large number of people and ignited a controversy about her taste for expensive brands. She later apologized, through her publicist, on social media.

The French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu discusses how taste is connected to social class in his book *Sociology in Question*. In his discussion of music lovers, he makes the following points (1993: 104, 105):

Tastes are inseparable from *distastes*: aversion to different lifestyles is perhaps one of the strongest barriers between the classes. That's why *de gustibus non est disputandum* [there is no disputing taste]...I will not surprise anyone by saying that a person's social class ... can be identified as infallibly from his preferred music (or simply the radio station he listens to) as from the aperitif—Pernot, Martini or whisky—that he drinks.

Bourdieu's point is that taste is connected to socio-economic class and is connected to education and status. The "distastes" that Bourdieu is writing about is another way of putting what Mary Douglas describes as the taste of members of different lifestyles.

He also believes that taste is socially determined, as he explains in his book:

Sociology reveals the idea of personal opinion (like the idea of personal taste) is an illusion. From this it is concluded that sociology is reductive, that

it disenchant, that it demobilizes people by taking away all their illusions.... If it is true that the idea of personal opinion itself is socially determined, that it is a product of history reproduced by education, that our opinions are determined, then it is better to know this; and if we have some chance of having personal opinions, it is perhaps on condition that we know our opinions are not spontaneously so.

Bourdieu's belief that our opinions and tastes are socially determined may strike people as far-fetched or absurd. But it is central to sociological theory and echoes the points made by Mary Douglas.

Companies use brands to generate, among other things, feelings of dependency on people who use these brands, since brands are the way many people define themselves. As Douglas Holt, a professor of sociology at Oxford University, explains in his essay "Toward a Sociology of Branding":

Branding is a distinctive mode of capital accumulation. Firms have at their avail a number of techniques to increase profits—from building a better mousetrap, to controlling distribution channels, to squeezing supply chains. Branding is one such technique, distinctive because it generates profits by creating and then exploiting various sorts of social dependency. A brand becomes an economic asset for the firm when people come to count on the brand to contribute to social life, when it is embedded in society and culture. Companies earn higher profits when their brands are woven into Institutions.
http://www.academia.edu/28485691/Toward_a_Sociology_of_Branding

What brands do, Holt suggests, is insinuate themselves into our social lives, and because certain brands play an important role in our lives, they can charge more than other brands and maximize their profits. A classic example is the iPhone, which has very high-profit margins. Because the difference between what it costs to manufacture an iPhone and the price it can get for these phones is so great, and because Apple sells so many iPhones, Apple is now an enormously wealthy and powerful corporation.

Approximately 23% of high school students in the United States own iPhones and another 40% of high school students say they intend to purchase an iPhone in the next six months. *Consumer Reports* now lists Samsung, a different brand of smartphone, as the best available, but few high school students are interested in reviews in *Consumer Reports* and they are more interested in being like "everyone" else or most everyone else.

Table 4.4 Socio-economic classes in USA

<i>Class</i>	<i>Percentage of population</i>
Upper-upper	1.4%
Lower-upper	1.6%
Upper-middle	10%
Lower-middle	28% Common man and woman
Upper-lower	33% Common man and woman
Lower-lower	25%

W. Lloyd Warner, a sociologist and anthropologist, has suggested that there are six classes in America in his book *American Life: Dream and Reality*. His analysis was made many years ago, in 1953, but it is still fairly accurate, though there have been changes in the number of people in the middle classes (Table 4.4).

For Warner, the so-called common man and woman are Upper-Lower and Lower-Middle class Americans. In recent years, the concentration of wealth at the top levels has increased considerably and the middle classes and lower classes are under considerable stress. Americans used to think of America as essentially a classless, all-middle-class country, but it is quite obvious that classes exist, are getting more sharply defined, and play an important role in every aspect of American society and culture, especially when it comes to political power and taste.

An American sociologist, Herbert Gans, wrote a book, *Popular Culture and High Culture: An Analysis and Evaluation of Taste*, that was published in 1974 and which defended popular culture against critics who argued that only “high” or “elite” culture can be thought of as culture. He writes (1974: vii):

I believe both to be cultures and my analysis therefore looks at both with the same conceptual apparatus. The apparatus itself is sociological, but it rests on two value judgments: (1) the popular culture reflects and expresses the aesthetic and other wants of many people (thus making it a culture and not just commercial menace); and (2) that all people have a right to the culture they prefer regardless of whether it is high or popular. In its conclusions the book is an argument for cultural democracy and an argument against the idea that only the cultural expert knows what is good for people and for society.

Gans suggests that America has a number of different “taste cultures,” each of which has different literature, art, music, and so on, and that

(1974: x) “all taste cultures are of equal worth.” What distinguishes the different taste cultures is primarily socio-economic class, which is based on matters such as education, income, and occupation.

He argues that there are five dominant taste cultures in America. In the chart that follows, I list the five taste cultures and the books, films, music, and so on that each prefers. The list is very similar in nature to the Warner list of socio-economic classes. Since this book was written in 1974, many of the works it talks about are dated and many magazines and television show no longer exist (Table 4.5).

What is important to recognize, Gans adds, is that (1974: 103) “all cultural content expresses values that can become political or have political consequences.” These taste cultures are political in that they portray one view of society and exclude others, and they reinforce certain beliefs and values rather than other ones.

There may not be any disputing of taste, but it seems quite evident that what we call “taste” is generally connected to people’s educational level, their socio-economic class, their occupations, and what Mary Douglas would call their “lifestyles.” What Gans calls “Low Culture” and “Quasi-Folk Low Culture” would most likely comprise what Douglas calls a “Fatalist” lifestyle. And it is socio-economic class and our level of taste that usually shapes our consumption of goods and services and the brands we choose to reflect our taste. That does not mean you can always equate brands with socio-economic class and cultural sophistication. Some very wealthy people dress “down” and drive around in old cars and some poor people dress “up” and may have new cars, but for all practical purposes, brands are indicators of socio-economic class and taste, and taste is socially determined.

Table 4.5 Taste cultures and preferences

High culture	Modern Music, “Primitive” Art, <i>Finnegan’s Wake</i>
Upper-middle culture	<i>Time</i> , <i>Newsweek</i> , <i>Psychology Today</i> , <i>Harper’s</i> , <i>the New Yorker</i> , <i>Ms.</i> , <i>Vogue</i>
Lower-middle culture	<i>Life</i> , <i>Look</i> , <i>Saturday Evening’s post</i> , <i>Reader’s Digest</i>
Low culture	Westerns. Ed Sullivan Show, Lawrence Welk, Beverley Hillbillies
Quasi-folk low culture	Tabloids, Old Westerns

Table by the author

POLITICS AND THE FOUR LIFESTYLES

Let me close this discussion by returning to the four lifestyles, which, for Aaron Wildavsky, a political scientist, can be described as political cultures. Just as members of the four lifestyles make decisions about products to purchase, so do members of the four political cultures make decisions about who they will vote for. I can suggest that members of the four political cultures might vote as follows. This analysis is highly speculative, I should add (Table 4.6).

It is because Democratic Fatalists tend not to vote that Republicans, who vote frequently, are able to do so well in elections, even though they may not be majorities in many states and nationally. Elitists and individualists are the “establishment” in the United States. They focus on “liberty,” while Democrats and other egalitarians focus on “equality.” Egalitarians are critics of the establishment and work to help the Fatalists. It is party identification, that is, one’s political culture, that shapes most of our voting choices. But not always. This chart is suggestive of what might be the case. It is difficult to determine how people actually will vote because there are so many factors involved such as the personalities of the politicians and chance events.

Table 4.6 Lifestyles and politics

Hierarchical elitists	Country Club Republicans like Romney and Big Business Elites
Competitive individualists	Wealthy Republicans like Donald Trump, small business owners, working-class Republicans who dislike “big government,” Independents
Egalitarians	Liberal Democrats who favor government power to help the American public in general and “lift up” fatalists
Fatalists	Do not vote very often but most probably are Democrats.

Table by the author



Marketing Brands

Abstract Here we consider the way brands are marketed, the relation between socio-economic class and brands, how millennials relate to brands, the VALS (values and lifestyles) typology, which advertisers use to gain insights into their target audiences, and the role of marketing in consumer cultures. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the growth in the availability of objects to be consumed and with a discussion of “life-style” in contemporary consumer societies.

Keywords Marketing • Socio-economic class • VALS (values and lifestyles) • Lifestyles

It is paramount to recognize that marketing works through more than just advertising messages. Marketing’s role encompasses management of the entire circulatory path from market research to product creation to distribution channel selection and management to pricing to advertising generation to media planning to point-of-sale promotion to merchandising to setting the terms of exchange to administrating sales and after-sales service and sometimes to supervising the discarding of the object (trade-ins, for example, or recycling) repurchase stimulation, and more.

Kalman Applbaum, *The Marketing Era*

In the second half of the twentieth century in Europe, or at any rate in France, there is nothing—whether object, individual, or social group—that is valued apart from its double, the image that advertises and

sanctifies it. This image duplicates not only an object's material, perceptible existence but desire and pleasure that it makes into fictions situating them in the land of make-believe, promising "happiness"—the happiness of being a consumer. Thus publicity [marketing and advertising] that was intended to promote consumption is the first of consumer goods; it creates myths—or since it can create nothing—it borrows existing myths, canalizing signifiers to a dual purpose: to offer them as such for general consumption and to stimulate the consumption of a specific object.

Henri Lefebvre, *Everyday Life in the Modern World*
The average four-year-old American child can identify more than one hundred brands.

Paco Underhill, *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*

Brands, we must remember, are words that are associated with products and services; sometime brands are the names of a person who created a product or service. Think, for example, of Dolby and Disney. It is the job of marketers to make sure that when target audiences hear or see or read the name of a brand, they will remember it and what they know about the brand will motivate them to investigate the branded product and purchase that brand of the product or service. Brands, then, have meaning. Xerox is an invented name, meant to capture people's attention, while the Disney Corporation is named after a person, Walt Disney, who made some animated films, developed theme parks—Disneyland and Disneyworld, and built his brand into a major media and entertainment business.

In the preface to *Marketing and Semiotics: New Directions in the Study of Signs for Sale*, Jean Umiker-Sebeok, who edited the book, writes (1987: xi):

Product meanings are not simple labels affixed to goods in advertising but are created against a backdrop of culture at large. Consumers are practicing semioticians with a considerable expertise in reading and manipulating the meanings circulating in their society, not just rational decision-makers in the economic sense or slaves of social convention or psychological impulses.

Her point is that brands are part of culture, and most specifically, what we call "consumer cultures," which is the term scholars use to describe modern societies where the production of goods and the creation, advertising, and marketing of brands is extremely important.

Marianne Elisabeth Lien's *Marketing and Modernity* is based on field-work she conducted with a Norwegian food company. At the end of her book she deals with an important aspect of brands—their personalities. As she writes in her discussion of “Western Modernity and the Disengaged Portrayal of ‘True Selves’” (1997: 254):

To the extent that a product manager succeeds in his effort to portray a brand product as having a distinct and readily apparent “personality,” this personality ought, according to the modern way of conceptualizing a “self,” to reflect some “deep core” of the product Product managers may literally pick and choose among a wide range of cultural idioms in order to construct a distinct “product personality,” and in this process both utilize and contribute to the arbitrariness characterizing the relationship between a signifier and its sign in modern advertising On the other hand, in their efforts to establish brand products, they try to construct products with an image that is coherent and stable over time, a “personality” that supposedly reflects some kind of authentic character of the product.

Consumers are taught, primarily by advertising, what a given brand's “personality” is, but the advertisers must find a way to capture the authentic nature of the product and connect it to important elements in the psyches of their target audiences. One of the most important elements, as we have seen in the previous chapter, is socio-economic class, but people with the same amount of money choose to buy different brands of cars, so our reliance on brands is not always only based on our income.

Marketers love to make typologies, which can be understood as classification systems which put similar things that are similar in some way into groups. This enables them to focus on what is distinctive and useful for marketing purposes in each group. I will discuss two important classification systems now: the Claritas analysis of more than 60 “segments” of the American public and the Values and Lifestyles (VALS) typologies. Both argue that it doesn't make sense to talk about Americans in general since there are many differences among them that are important for advertisers to recognize. Each of these different groups tends to use certain brands of products.

CLASS AND BRANDS

Claritas is a marketing company that classifies Americans into more than 60 different categories of consumers, called “elements,” who are target audiences for advertisers, based on things like their zip codes, the maga-

zines they read, and the television shows they like. Each of these groups has different values and beliefs, and each of which purchases different brands of everything, from automobiles to drinks. Claritas gives each of the groups’ jazzy names and argues that “birds of a feather flock together,” which means that advertisers can design commercials and marketing campaigns for brands directed toward each group that will resonate with them. Claritas also adds new “segments” from time to time. The wealthiest categories are as follows:

01	Upper Crust
02	Network Neighbors
03	Movers and Shakers
04	Young Digerati
05	Family Squires

The poorest categories are as follows:

64	Family Thrifts
65	Young and Rustic
66	New Beginnings
67	Park Bench Seniors
68	Bedrock America

It is possible to go to a Claritas website, My Best Segments, and look up the segments in one’s zip code. I live in Mill Valley, California, and my zip code is 94941. In this zip code, we have the following segments, all of which have high incomes but all of which differ in many important ways:

01	Upper Crust
02	Network Neighbors
03	Movers and Shakers
06	Winner’s Circle
08	Gray Power

Mill Valley happens to be an extremely affluent town. I bought my house in 1970 so I’m “grandfathered” in here and couldn’t afford to live in Mill Valley if I had to purchase a house at today’s prices. Houses in Mill Valley now generally cost more than a million dollars and that doesn’t buy a fancy house, by any means.

Claritas doesn't offer as much information on the Internet as it used to for the segments, but for a book I wrote earlier, it provided the following details about segment 03: Movers & Shakers for 2013 found in my zip code:

US households: 1,845,997 (1.55% of the population)

Median household income: \$100,170

Shop at Nordstroms

Read *Yoga Journal*

Drive a Land Rover

Mill Valley is in Marin County, one of the wealthiest counties in California and in the country. BMW automobiles in Marin County are called "Basic Marin Wheels," and you see a very high number of BMWs, Mercedes, Audis, and other upscale and expensive automobiles in Marin. One question that marketers have to wrestle with is why a person with \$50,000 to spend on an automobile chooses to purchase a BMW instead of an Audi, Mercedes, Porsche, or any other expensive automobile. And why is it that someone who could easily spend \$50,000 on an automobile buys a Honda Civic or a Toyota Corolla.

MILLENNIALS AND BRANDS

There are an estimated eighty million Millennials in America. They were, until recently, the largest generation and have only recently been exceeded by Generation Z, the generation of younger people. Different social scientists and marketing companies prepare different lists of the generations, but the one below is pretty typical:

<i>Generation</i>	<i>Dates born</i>	<i>Age in 2015</i>
Traditionalist	1922–1943	Over 70
Baby Boomers	1944–1964	51–70
Generation X	1965–1980	35–50
Millennials	1981–1994	21–34
Generation Z	1995–	Under 20

Marketers have been interested in Millennials and there have been countless articles and studies of Millennial behavior as far as consumption practices are concerned and, more specifically, brands that Millennials like.

Some people, I should point out, suggest that Millennials were born between 1980 and 2000, and others have variations on these dates.

In 2016, we find the ten most popular brands for Millennials are, in order of popularity:

1. Apple	6. Samsung
2. Target	7. Wal-Mart
3. Nike	8. Amazon
4. Sony	9. Microsoft
5. Coca-Cola	10. Victoria's Secret

We can see that half of the brands the Millennials like involve the Internet and new technology (shown in boldface), but missing from the lists, curiously, is Google, an Internet search engine they probably use every day. This list suggests that the brands Millennials like are not that different from brands those of older generations.

What the Claritas “segments” and other taste and marketing typologies generally reveal is that there is a close association between socio-economic class, education, lifestyles, and taste, and from the sociological perspective, brands exist in society and society, with all its imperatives (that shape people’s taste in brand preferences), exists in brands. Birds of a feather flock together and also shop for the same brands together.

THE VALS TYPOLOGY

In 1983, Arnold Mitchell, director of the Stanford Research Institute’s Values and Lifestyles (VALS) program, published *The Nine American Lifestyles: Who We Are & Where We Are Going*. In his preface, he makes some interesting points (1983: vii):

People’s values and lifestyles say a good deal about where we are going, and they help explain such practical, diverse questions as: why we support some issues and oppose others; why some people are strong leaders and others weak; why some people are economically brilliant and others gifted artistically—and a few are both; why we trust some people and are suspicious of others; why some products attract us and others don’t; why revolutions occur. By the term “values” we mean the entire constellation of a person’s attitudes, beliefs, opinions, hopes, fears, prejudices, needs, desires, and aspirations that, taken together, govern how one behaves We now have powerful evidence that the classification of an individual on the basis of a few

Fig. 5.1 Emulators. (Drawing by the author)



dozen attitudes and demographics tells us a good deal about what to expect of that person in hundreds of other domains. Further, the approach often enables us to identify the decisive quality-of-life factor or factors in a person's life.

Mitchell developed what became known as the VALS typology based on the survey that he and his colleagues conducted in 1980. The typology argues that there are nine groups of people, members of which share similar values that shape their behavior, especially as consumers. The advertising industry was extremely interested in the VALS typology because they thought it would help them be more successful with target groups of interest to them (Fig. 5.1).

The VALS (Values and Lifestyles) typology, shown on page 53–54, has nine groups in four categories:

Need-Driven Groups

Survivor Lifestyles

Sustainer Lifestyles

Outer-Directed Groups

Belonger Lifestyle

Emulator Lifestyle

Achiever Lifestyle

Inner-Directed Groups

I-Am-Me Lifestyle

Experiential Lifestyle

Societally Conscious Lifestyle

Combined Outer and Inner-Directed Group

Integrated Lifestyle

The VALS typology is useful to marketers because brands that are designed to appeal to emulators wouldn't appeal to Achievers and vice versa. The point is, if you know a great deal about your target audiences, you can fashion marketing and advertising campaigns to teach them. In the world of brands, knowledge is power.

MARKETING AND CONSUMER CULTURES

I define consumer cultures as ones characterized by a great expansion (some might say a veritable explosion) of commodity production, leading to societies full of branded consumer goods and services, and places where these consumer goods and services can be purchased. The "game" many people play in consumer cultures is "get as much as you can." Success is defined as having the most "toys" and the best brands of these "toys." This leads to a lust for purchasing brand-name products and conspicuously displaying them—as a means of demonstrating that one is a success and, ultimately, and this is unconscious, that one is worthy of admiration and love. The very act of consumption for economic elites has now also become aestheticized and sexualized, and is itself the source of a great deal of pleasure. America has long been the most important consumer culture but it has recently been joined by China, which now has 300 million middle-class people.

In *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, Mike Featherstone explains the importance of "lifestyle" in contemporary consumer societies. He writes:

Rather than unreflexively adopting a lifestyle, through tradition or habit, the new heroes of consumer culture make lifestyle a life project and display their

individuality and sense of style in the particularity of the assemblage of goods, clothes, practices, experiences, appearance and bodily dispositions they design together into a lifestyle. The modern individual within consumer culture is made conscious that he speaks not only with his clothes, but also with his home, furnishings, decoration, car and other activities which are to be read and classified in terms of the presence and absence of taste. The preoccupation with customizing a lifestyle and a stylistic self-consciousness are not just to be found among the young and the affluent; consumer culture publicity [advertising] suggests that we all have room for self-improvement and self-expression whatever our age or class origins. (1991: 86)

It is advertising and marketing that “teach” us about the world of consumer goods—what brands are fashionable and “hot” or, maybe even better for some people, “cool.” Semioticians tell us that everything we do is read as a “message.” At the same time, we are always sending these messages to other people and they are always sending messages to us. These messages are sent by our lifestyle decisions—our brands of clothes, cars, smartphones, and other material goods—as well as our body shapes, facial expressions, and body language.

In consumer culture, not only is there an exponential growth in the supply of things to purchase, that is, material objects, there is also a growth of leisure—which must be filled with the right kind of activities, depending upon one’s social class and status. Thus, the elites (those with high incomes and an appreciation of elite culture) tend to consume high-art cultural products—operas, plays, works of sculpture, paintings, and so on—while those in a lower class tend to consume more ordinary or down-market products—inexpensive clothes, drive-to vacations, and fast food, for example. It doesn’t always work exactly that way, of course. Some people with limited incomes love opera and ballet, but usually, as Gans pointed out in his *Popular Culture and High Culture*, there is a connection between socioeconomic status and taste level. More elite elements in society (socioeconomically speaking, that is) take expensive vacations, drive expensive cars, and go to trendy and generally expensive restaurants.

Growing up in a culture that stresses consumption, as we might expect, facilitates in many people a desire, and in some people a lust, to consume as a means of validating their lives. To modify a famous philosophical dictum, “I buy, therefore I am!”



CHAPTER 6

Brands in History and History in Brands

Abstract This chapter deals with the historical dimensions of branding and argues that branding is not a modern phenomenon tied to the development of capitalism and the growth of industrialization, but has existed for thousands of years. It takes issue, then, with views like Naomi Klein's about the origins of branding in post-industrial Europe. Next, I deal with the social significance of brands and their role in shaping our everyday behavior. This leads to a discussion of postmodernism, which represented a major shift in American culture and replaced modernism in the United States around 1960. Postmodernism is a culture of consumption and therefore of brands.

Keywords Capitalism • Industrialization • History of brands • Postmodernism

The first mass-marketing campaigns, starting in the second half of the nineteenth century, had more to do with advertising than with branding as we understand it today. Faced with a range of recently invented products—the radio, phonograph, car, light bulb and so on—advertisers had more pressing tasks than creating a brand identity for any given corporation; first, they had to change the way people lived their lives. Ads had to inform consumers about the existence of some new invention, then convince them that their lives would be better if they used, for example, cars instead of wagons, telephones instead of mail

and electric light instead of oil lamps. Many of these new products bore brand names—some of which are still around today—but these were almost incidental. These products were themselves news; that was almost advertisement enough. The first brand-based products appeared at around the same time as the invention-based ads, largely because of another relatively recent innovation: The factory. When goods began to be produced in factories, not only were entirely new products being introduced but old products—even basic staples—were appearing in strikingly new forms.

Naomi Klein, *No Logo*

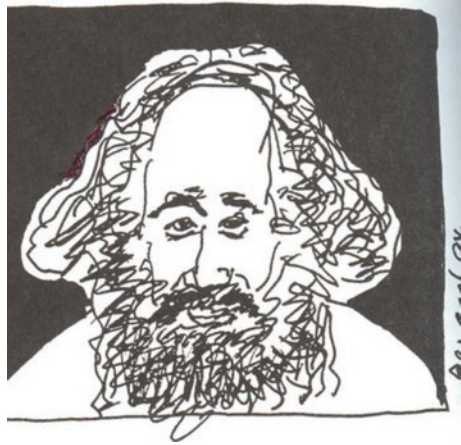
Brands feature large in the warp and weft of contemporary life and living. Arvidsson (2005) observes that since the 1980s they have been “spun into [the] social fabric as a ubiquitous medium for the construction of a common social world” (Arvidsson 2005: 3). Brands have become an expressive component of consumer habitats, working hard to generate and distribute resources for social formation, for understanding ourselves through the relationships with others that brands make possible. The logic of brands circulates widely, exciting cultures of narcissism that inform our age.

Paul Hower, Douglas Brownlie and Finola Kerrigan, “*The Exploding Plastic Inevitable*”: ‘Branding Being,’ Brand Warhol & the Factory Years

For many years, the conventional view about brands is that they are a product of the development of industrialization and the mass production of goods, along with the development of the mass media, which suggests that branding started, in earnest, in the nineteenth century. Branding can be connected, this theory suggests, to the development of capitalism. We needed brands to distinguish between products and services only when we had the manufacturing capacity to produce large numbers of consumer products, when we had aspirational consumers, and when we had the mass media to popularize brands in the general public, so they would buy what was produced.

There is, then, an important relationship between brands and capitalism and between what Marxists would describe as the exploitation of the masses by the elites who controlled the industries and the mass media. Brands, then, are the happy face of capitalism and may be considered, along with advertising, to be of central importance to the development of capitalism. This would mean that brands are not trivial matters. We tend

Fig. 6.1 Karl Marx.
(Drawing by the author)



to dismiss brand, reflected in their logos and the campaigns behind the logos, as trivial. In fact, brands play a major role in the development of capitalism and would be, in Marx's terms, instrumental in developing the false consciousness of the masses (Fig. 6.1).

As Marx wrote (quoted in Karl Marx, *Selected Writings in sociology and social philosophy*. (T.B. Bottomore & M. Rubel, eds. T.B. Bottomore, transl. New York: McGraw-Hill. 1964: 78):

The ideas of the ruling class are, in every age, the ruling ideas: i.e., the class which is the dominant *material* force in society is at the same time its dominant *intellectual* force. The class which has the means of material production at its disposal, has control at the same time over the means of mental production, so that in consequence the ideas of those who lack the means of mental production are, in general, subject to it. The dominant ideas are nothing more than the ideal expression of the dominant material relationships, the dominant material relationships grasped as ideas, and thus of the relationships which make one class the ruling one; they are consequently the ideas of its dominance. The individuals composing the ruling class possess among other things consciousness, and therefore think. Insofar, therefore, as they rule as a class and determine the whole extent of an epoch, it is self-evident that they do this in their whole range and thus, among other things, rule also as thinkers, as producers of ideas, and regulate the production and distribution of the ideas of their age. Consequently their ideas are the ruling ideas of their age.

We can suggest, then, that brands play an instrumental role not only in the development of a corporation's sense of itself, but also in the way that the attention of "proletariat" can be turned away from thinking about how it is being exploited to focusing its attention the pleasures of being consumers and participating in consumer culture.

This topic is discussed in Mike Featherstone's *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*, when he explains (1991: 13):

Consumer culture is premised upon the expansion of capitalist commodity production which has given rise to a vast accumulation of material culture in the form of consumer goods and sites for purchase and consumption. This has resulted in the growing salience of leisure and consumption activities in contemporary Western societies which, although greeted as leading to greater egalitarianism and individual freedom by some, is regarded by others as increasing the capacity for ideological manipulation and "seductive" containment of the population from some alternative set of "better" social relations.

In essence, what Featherstone points out is that consumer cultures are the creation of industrialization and of the manipulation of large number of people whose attention is turned away from the inequities of the class system in the United States to becoming members of our consumer culture. He adds that this enables people to gain status by displaying the goods they have purchased, and I'd add, the brands of their purchases, and that there are certain emotional pleasures in consumption that are, Featherstone explains (1991: 13) "celebrated in consumer cultural imagery."

David Wengrow, one of the editors of *Cultures of Commodity Branding*, offers some information about the history of branding. He attacks the notion that branding is tied to modern capitalist markets and societies and the post-industrialized west. He discusses the work of social historians Gary Hamilton and Chi-kong Lai, who explained in their book *The Social Economy of Consumption* that

a complex system of commodity branding—applied to goods such as rice, tea, wine, scissors, and medicines—had existed in late imperial China, where it can be traced back to the Song dynasty of the 10th Century AD...The basic claim—that branding was neither uniquely "modern," not "capitalist"—resonated with my own negative response to Naomi Klein's description of the "origins" of branding in post-industrial Europe. It seemed to me

that, in its fundamentals, what Klein was describing could easily be traced back across much earlier periods of human history: the anonymity of mass consumption, the shift of corporate enterprise from creating novel products to image-based systems of distinction, and the emergence of generic labels that attach (often highly imaginative) biographies to otherwise indistinguishable goods and packaging.

There is reason to believe, then, the branding is nothing new and can be found in Ancient Egypt around 4000 BC to 3000 BC, when labels were attached to various kinds of commodities.

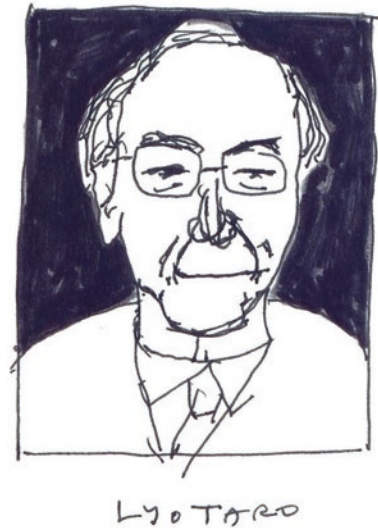
What this means is that branding is tied to natural human feelings about material culture and is tied to the moral, ethical, and cultural discriminatory codes that shape people's perceptions of the world and their behavior in it. Branding is, it would seem, tied to a human desire and need to classify and categorize things into different classes and evaluate these classes in meaningful ways. This behavior becomes necessary when consumers are confronted with an enormous number of kinds of goods and services and competing versions of both.

FROM BRANDS IN SOCIETY TO SOCIETY IN BRANDS

So branding has a long history and has played an important role in our economic and social development. I have just discussed this matter and the debate over whether brands are something modern or branding goes back far into history. Now I turn to a discussion of "society in brands," by which I mean what they tell us about society, how our culture creates them, and how people respond to them. In "The Cultural Codes of Branding," Jonathan E. Schroeder discusses the role that brands play in culture and society. His insights will be useful to us when we turn to my discussion of postmodernism and brands:

Brands are not only mediators of cultural meaning—brands themselves have become ideological referents that shape cultural rituals, economic activities, and social norms. For example, strong brands constantly develop prescriptive models for the way we talk, the way we think, and the way we behave—our goals, thoughts, and desires. Furthermore, brands may pre-empt cultural spheres of religion, politics, and myth, as they generally promote an ideology linked to political and theological models that equate consumption with happiness. Brand culture refers to the cultural codes of brands—history, images, myths, art, theatre—that influence brand meaning and value in

Fig. 6.2 Jean-François Lyotard. (Drawing by the author)



the marketplace ... we live in a branded world: brands infuse culture with meaning, and branding profoundly influences contemporary society.

For Schroeder, brands have a cultural impact and resonance that is very powerful; they are not trivial matters, by any means. This leads to a discussion of the roles brands play in contemporary postmodern American society (Fig. 6.2).

POSTMODERNISM AND BRANDS

There is a lot of debate about what postmodernism is and isn't and whether we still are in a postmodernist period. Some culture theorists argue that we are in a post-postmodernist era, but haven't figured out a name for it. One of the most famous descriptions of postmodernism comes from the French thinker Jean-François Lyotard. He writes, in his book *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*:

Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward meta-narratives. This incredulity is undoubtedly a product of progress in the sciences: but that progress in turn presupposes it. To the obsolescence of the metanarrative apparatus of legitimation corresponds, most notably, the crisis

of metaphysical philosophy and of the university institution which in the past relied on it. The narrative function is losing its functors, its great hero, its great dangers, its great voyages, its great goal. (1984: xxiv)

The metanarratives he is writing about involve the great, all-encompassing systems of thought we used to believe in, during the modernist period (as expounded in religions, philosophy, and science) that shaped our behavior. Instead, people now, in the postmodern period, have to rely on their own belief systems, which generates crises in legitimacy. Who is right? What ideas are acceptable, if you've junked a belief in progress and the importance of rationality?

It is generally accepted that postmodernism became a cultural dominant around 1960, when our literature changed, our architecture changed, and our lifestyles changed—dominated, in many areas, by the new media. The term postmodernism is a periodizing one that is connected to changes in our social lives, our economies, and most everything else. An analogous changed when modernism became dominant. It is described by the writer Virginia Woolf, who asserted in 1924:

On or about December, 1910, human character changed...all human relations have shifted—those between masters and servants, husbands and wives, parents and children. And when human relations change there is at the same time a change in religion, conduct, politics and literature.

Suddenly there was a major shift in the culture, which we can describe as the development of the modernist sensibility and it led to all kinds of other changes in culture and society.

A similar argument is made by postmodernists, who believe that around 1960 there was another monumental change, a seismic shift, whatever you will—from modernism that is reflected in the works of writers, artists, architects, and other creative people; this change affected just about every aspect of our culture and society.

Modernists accepted metanarratives and postmodernists rejected them. Modernists made a big distinction between elite culture and popular culture. Postmodernists reject that distinction. Modernists believed in hierarchy and centralized governmental control of life. Postmodernists stress fragmentation and everyone doing their own thing. Modernists were serious and earnest. Postmodernists are playful, ironic, and irreverent. Modernists were analog. Postmodernists are digital. Modernists stressed

libraries. Postmodernists stress the web. Modernist architecture was unified, stylistically pure. Postmodernist architecture uses many different stylistic modes in a building. Modernist individuals had a sense of a unified, centered self. Postmodernist selves are fragmented, with multiple conflicting identities.

Some postmodernist theorists argue that the pastiche, a work of art that is a combination of fragments from here and there, is the dominant art form of postmodernism. That explains why postmodernist novels may contain recipes and other kinds of material that seems incongruous. They are, in effect, literary pastiches (Fig. 6.3).

Lyotard uses the term “eclecticism” to describe postmodern culture and writes in *The Postmodern Condition* (1984: 76):

Eclecticism is the degree zero of contemporary general culture: one listens to reggae, watches a western, eats McDonald’s food for lunch and local cuisine for dinner, wears Paris perfume in Tokyo and “retro” clothes in Hong Kong; knowledge is a matter for TV games. It is easy to find a public for eclectic works. By becoming kitsch, art panders to the confusions which reigns in the “taste” of patrons. Artists, gallery owners, critics and the public wallow together in the “anything goes,” and the epoch is one of slackening. But this realism of the “anything goes” is in fact that of money; in the absence of aesthetic criteria, it remains possible and useful to assess the works of art according to the profit they yield. Such realism accommodates all tendencies, just as capital accommodates all “needs,” providing that the tendencies and needs have purchasing power. As for taste, there is no need to be delicate when one speculates or entertains oneself.

Postmodernism is, then, also a culture of consumption and, as such, one of brands. And that is because when we purchase products and services, just about everything we buy has a brand attached to it. The questions we face is which brands are ones that are most suited to us and our sense of self.



Fig. 6.3 Pastiche by Arthur Asa Berger



CHAPTER 7

Language and Brands

Abstract Brands rely on language to get their messages across. I begin with a discussion of Aristotle's writings on persuasion in his book *Rhetoric*, where he talks about the different modes such as ethos, pathos, and logos. This leads to a discussion of trademarks, popular brands, and slogans, with a focus on Harley-Davidson slogans and the relationship of a Harley-Davidson slogan to American culture and history. I point out that a company's slogan can connect with people at different levels and have multiple meanings, some of which function at a subliminal level.

Keywords Aristotle • Ethos • Pathos • Logos • Trademarks • Slogans • Harley-Davidson

Brand language is the body of words, phrases, and terms that an organization uses to describe its purpose or in reference to its products. Brand language is used in marketing to help consumers connect specific words or ideas to specific companies or products. When developing a brand language, word choice and tone are the two fundamental components. Word choice is the vocabulary that is used in the marketing or advertising, while tone refers to the attitude of the advertisement. Tone is not only limited to language but it can also be incorporated through visual elements as well as delivery. Brand language is a part of verbal brand identity, which includes naming of both corporation and the products they sell as well as taglines, voice, and tone. Another

benefit of developing a brand language is the ability for a corporation or product to be recognizable across international borders, while other advertising codes can be misinterpreted; words can be translated to ensure brand unity. As a part of the advertising world brand language's primary function is to identify a company or product and also differentiate that company/product from competitors. The language is used to get the attention of the consumer and then to relay information about what is being advertised.

Wikipedia

There exists, centered in North America, a subculture formed about an ideology of consumption with the Harley-Davidson motorcycle as its principal icon. Perhaps the most obvious impact of the subculture is its existence as a tight cluster of market segments united by common thread: commitment to a particular product, its symbolism, and the values it represents.

John W. Schouten, University of Portland, and James H. McAlexander, Oregon State University, "Market Impact of a Consumption Subculture: The Harley-Davidson Mystique"

Brands rely on language more than we might imagine. When we think of brands, what comes to mind most of the time is an icon that represents the brand, but brands also rely on language to send their messages, as the quotation from Wikipedia in the epigraph makes clear. Brands establish an identity for corporations and it is only natural that these corporations would use both images and language to communicate with potential customers.

ARISTOTLE ON PERSUASION

Aristotle offers some insights into how we can use language to persuade others. As he wrote in his *Rhetoric* Book I Chapter 2:

Of the modes of persuasion furnished by the spoken word there are three kinds. The first kind depends on the personal character of the speaker; the second on putting the audience into a certain frame of mind; the third on the proof, or apparent proof, provided by the words of the speech itself. (Cited in McKeon 1941: 1329)

There were three modes of persuasion, which we can modify to include written words, based on:

Ethos: The personal character of the speaker or writer (credibility)

Pathos: Stirring emotions in listeners or readers

Logos: Logical arguments in speech or written language

Rhetoric involves the way a person or group of people or a corporation attempts to influence people and shape their attitudes toward something—in our case, a product or service represented by a word or a slogan that usually but not always accompanies a logo. It is kind of ironic that Aristotle’s term, “logos,” is used not for logical arguments but for visual signifiers that are used to generate pathos in people.

It is useful to think of a brand or product name as the tip of a marketing iceberg. Underneath that name we find advertising campaigns, the history of the corporation with the brand name, the culture in which the brand is being sold, myths about the product, and related concerns. If we saw a brand name but knew nothing about the other aspects of the brand, it would be relatively meaningless to us.

TRADEMARKS

These insights are provided by Jeffery Samuels, a lawyer who specializes in trademark law.

For many companies, their trademark is their most valuable asset. For example, the value of the Google, Apple and [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) trademarks surpasses \$100 billion. (You can check *Forbes* Magazine for the most up-to-date valuations.) This is one reason companies spend a lot of money enforcing/protecting their trademark rights.² Trademarks are, essentially, source-identifiers. The source need not be identifiable; it may be anonymous. For example, many people do not know that Tide detergent is made by Procter & Gamble but that does not mean Tide is not a protectable trademark.³ While most trademarks are visual in character, at least in the U.S. sounds and even smells may be protectable marks provided they have acquired distinctiveness and are not functional (i.e., other companies don’t need to use it in order to effectively compete.

While trademark rights in the United States are based on commercial use, as opposed to federal registration, most trademark owners choose to seek registration of their marks with the United States Patent and Trademark Office (PTO). Registration is sought through the filing of an application, which includes basic information, including the mark sought to be registered, the goods and/or services that the mark is currently in use or

intended to be used, and the owner of the mark. The application must also be accompanied by a filing fee. The application is examined by the PTO to determine whether the applied-for mark is eligible for registration. If it is so determined, the mark will be published to allow third parties to oppose registration. If the PTO determines the mark is not eligible for registration, the applicant may appeal such determination to the PTO's Trademark Trial and Appeal Board. The issuance by the PTO of a federal registration creates a presumption that the mark is valid and that the owner of the registration has exclusive rights to use the mark on the goods and/or services set forth in the registration. Trademark owners may prohibit the use by others of marks that create a likelihood of confusion.

We see that trademarks are a much more complicated matter than we might have imagined.

POPULAR BRANDS AND SLOGANS

Some brands are based on someone's name. We find this in fashion where brands such as Ralph Lauren, Calvin Klein, Christian Dior, and Giorgio Armani are well known. Some brands are made up of new words, such as Xerox, or use numbers such as the vegetable drink V8. What is important for our concerns are the advertising slogans that go with some brands, such as Nike's "Just Do It." Below I list a number of the most popular slogans, the first of which, for Harley-Davidson, I will discuss in some detail.

1. **Harley-Davidson—American by Birth. Rebel by Choice.**
2. Volkswagen—Think Small.
3. Porsche—There is no substitute.
4. Aston Martin—Power, beauty, and soul.
5. Walmart—Save Money. Live Better.
6. Reebok—I am what I am.
7. Nike—Just do it.
8. Adidas—Impossible is Nothing.
9. Calvin Klein—Between love and madness lies obsession.
10. Marks & Spencer—The customer is always and completely right!
11. Levis—Quality never goes out of style.
12. Tag Heuer—Success. It's a Mind Game.
13. 3M—Innovation.
14. IBM—Solutions for a smart planet.
15. Sony—Make Believe.
16. IMAX—Think big.

17. DuPont—The miracles of science.
18. Energizer—Keeps going and going and going.
19. PlayStation—Live in your world. Play in ours.
20. EA—Challenge everything.
21. Blogger—Push button publishing.
22. Canon—See what we mean.
23. Nikon—At the heart of the image.
24. Kodak—Share moments. Share life.
25. Olympus—Your vision. Our future.
26. FedEx—When there is no tomorrow.

THE HARLEY-DAVIDSON SLOGANS

I will begin with the Harley-Davidson slogan “American by Birth. Rebel by Choice.” This slogan is an overt appeal to nationalism—being an American, and to personality characteristics connected with being an American, such as being a rebel and being free to choose to be one. Freedom is an important aspect of the Harley-Davidson corporate persona, because motorcycles are seen as a means of enhancing one’s freedom when on the road. The word rebel suggests individualism and someone who is willing to go against conventions—such as the convention that if you want to go somewhere, it is best to use an automobile, which is safer than a motorcycle, to get there.

If we keep in mind Saussure’s dictum that the meaning of concepts is always differential, always involves being what others (its opposites) are not, we arrive at the following polarities (Table 7.1).

Implications of Harley-Davidson Slogan

Thus, owning a Harley-Davidson motorcycle positions a person in a certain way and provides owners of these motorcycles—who also have to be able to afford them—with an identity, a perspective on life, and the oppor-

Table 7.1 Implications of Harley-Davidson slogan

<i>American</i>	<i>Foreigners</i>
Birth	Death
Rebel	Conventional (and boring) person
Choice	Control, domination, etc.

tunity to participate in gigantic rallies with many thousands of other unconventional, freedom-loving, like-minded rebels. People in crowds, as Gustave LeBon reminds us, don't act the way they do when they are by themselves.

The Harley-Davidson slogan is a nativist one that means more than informing us that the motorcycles are manufactured in the United States. It is a slogan that connects being born in America with being free and maybe, subliminally, even with the American revolution. Revolutionaries are rebels and revolutions are rebellions. All of these things I've been discussing are in the hidden or subliminal part of the slogan—the part of the slogan iceberg that is floating underneath the water and which gives the slogan its meaning and resonance.

A new Harley-Davidson slogan, which I recently accessed on the Internet, reads: "All for Freedom, Freedom for All: Freedom Machine." This slogan reinforces the connection between owning a Harley-Davidson motorcycle and freedom. In rhetorical theory, this phrase is called an "antimetabole," which means "turning about" and takes the form of inverting the order of words. We could diagram it as AFFA. It can also be described, in rhetorical terms, as "Chiasmus," which is described by Richard A. Lanham, in his book *A Handbook of Rhetorical Terms* (2nd edition) as (1991: 33):

The ABBA pattern of mirror inversion...The term is derived from the Greek letter X (chi) whose shape, if the two halves of the construction are rendered in separate verses.

This slogan is inherently egalitarian, but it is more than that. It asserts that one must be willing to give all for freedom and one must spread freedom to everyone else. There is an evangelical tinge to this statement and it can be connected to America's foreign policy of "spreading freedom" everywhere. That's what "Freedom for All" implies. Since new Harley-Davidson motorcycles cost between \$14,000 and \$24,000, it is necessary to have a considerable income to own one (that is, a new one) and be free, in Harley-Davidson's sense of the term.

There are also Harley-Davidson helmets and other accessories to complete one's identification with the company and its promise of freedom by owning a "freedom machine." Freedom, of course, is one of the core values in American history and culture, so owning a Harley-Davidson motorcycle is, for Americans, a means of reinforcing one's identity as an

American. Aristotle would describe these two slogans as first rate **pathos**, appeals to emotions.

The Harley-Davidson slogans tie into a basic set of ideas in the United States that contrasts (and I’m simplifying things here) our values and beliefs with those of people in foreign lands: originally found in Europe but now man other lands as well. They are shown in the chart below (Table 7.2).

American and European Core Values

Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote a poem, “America, My Country” in which many of these polarities are expressed. It starts off describing America as a “Land without history” and contrasts America with Europe, saying that America is a

Land where—and ‘tis in Europe counted a reproach—
Where man asks questions for which man was made.
A land without nobility, or wigs, or debt,
No castles, no cathedrals, and no kings;
Land of the forest.

This is the mythic land the Harley-Davidson portrays—a land “of the forest,” and one in which there is freedom from the restraints we associate

Table 7.2 USA and Europe contrasted

<i>America</i>	<i>Europe</i>
Freedom	Despotism
Nature	Culture
Individualism	Conformity
Conservative	Liberal
Forests	Cathedrals
Cowboy	Cavalier
The frontier	Institutions (church, nobility)
Natural law	Custom
Innocence	Guilt
Hope	Memory
Willpower	Class conflict
Agrarianism	Industrialism
Achievement	Ascription
Action	Theory
Equality	Hierarchy
Classless	Class-bound society

with living in other countries where freedom is often limited by historical traditions and cultural restraints. In the Harley-Davidson “All for Freedom, Freedom for All” worldview, the only restraints of consequence are freedom are stop signs and red lights and other traffic rules and regulations.

The conclusions of the study of the Harley-Davidson consumer subculture, discussed above, provide a useful insight into the nature of the Harley-Davidson consumer subculture or, as some might put it, cult. John W. Shorten and James H. McAlexander write in their article “Market Impact of a Consumer Subculture: The Harley-Davidson Mystique” (in *European Advances in Consumer Research*, Vol. 1, 1993):

There exists, centered in North America, a subculture formed about an ideology of consumption with the Harley-Davidson motorcycle as its principle icon. Perhaps the most obvious impact of the subculture is its existence as a tight cluster of market segments united by common thread: commitment to a particular product, its symbolism, and the values it represents...This paper deals with the marketing implications of the relationship between the subculture and the Harley-Davidson Motor Company. In doing so it draws parallels with other consumption-oriented subcultures and their symbioses with marketing institutions.

<http://www.acrwebsite.org/search/view-conference-proceedings.aspx?Id=11476>

We can see from this exercise in language and persuasion that a corporation's slogan can connect with people on many different levels and can have multiple meanings, many of which are subliminal. Much of this “hidden” content comes from advertising but also from the experience people have with the product and its role in giving them an identity. In the case of Harley-Davidson, we have a remarkable and powerful connection between a corporation, its conservative political principles, and the people who purchase and use its products.



Logos and Visual Signifiers

Abstract I describe logos as visual signs used by corporations in advertising and marketing. I discuss Naomi Klein's book *No Logos* and her thesis that corporations sell brands rather than products. This leads to an analysis of Starbucks's logos and whether they have evolved over the years. I suggest that logos are like icebergs and their meanings are connected to the cultures and subcultures in which people live. This discussion parallels my use of the iceberg metaphor to deal with the human psyche. I use Peirce's trichotomy of different forms of signs—icon, index, symbol—to discuss logos and consider a number of iconic logos, such as the Michelin Man, Viking Cruises, and the Mercedes Benz three-pointed star. I conclude with a discussion of the use of logos by apps on our smartphones.

Keywords Logos • Brands • Starbucks • Peirce • Smartphones

Logos and their colors—whether expressed as symbols (like Nike), logotypes (unique typographic treatment of the name, such as the FedEx identity of upright Roman letters designed by Landor), or a combination of both as in the case of the AT&T logo)—have been an essential part of all major branding strategies since the middle of the last century, Coca-Cola, IBM, and Mercedes are examples of successful identity programs that have withstood the test of time. Coca-Cola's particular typographic script and powerful red color are unmistakable and memorable; the IBM logo—it its distinct blue—is recognizable worldwide. Mercedes three-pointed, encircled star logo is not only seen as

a guarantee of superior engineering, but acts as a signature cachet value of the automobiles and translates easily into a sign of good taste and status for the cars' owners.

Mark Gobe, *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm for Connecting Brands to People*

Originally brands referred to producers. They had generally served as a trademark or a "maker's mark" that worked to guarantee quality or give the potentially anonymous mass produced commodity an identity by linking it to an identifiable (if often entirely fictional) producer or inventor or a particular physical place. Now the brand, or the "brand image" began to refer instead to the significance that commodities acquired in the minds of consumers.

Adam Arvidsson, "Brands: A Critical Perspective"

Logos are visual signs, a sign being defined as anything that can be used to stand for something else. In the case of logos, that "something else," generally speaking, is a corporation that manufactures products or sells services. It is useful to understand how logos can be defined before exploring their use in advertising and marketing. M. Neumier defines logos in his book *The Brand Gap* (2005: 1):

The term *logo* is short for *logotype*, design-speak for a trademark made from a custom-letter word (*logos* is Greek for *word*). The term *logo* caught on with people because it sounds cool, but what people really mean is a trademark, whether the trademark is a logo, symbol, monogram, emblem, or other graphic device. IBM uses a monogram, for example, while Nike uses a symbol. Both are trademarks but neither are logos. Clear? What really matters here is that a logo, or any other kind of trademark, is not the brand itself. It is merely a symbol for it.

The relation that exists between trademarks and logos is complicated but we can understand trademarks to be any symbol or visual signifier that companies use to distinguish their products from those of other companies.

Naomi Klein's book *No Logos* suggested that logos are much more important than we might imagine. Malcom Bernard, in his book *Graphic Design as Communication*, offers us an overview of her argument (2005: 158):

She begins her argument with the observation that the "astronomical growth in wealth and cultural significance of multinational organizations"

can be linked to a single idea, that corporations sell “brands” rather than products or things (Klein 2002: 3). Branding is different from advertising because branding is the “image: or “core meaning” of the corporation and advertising is the “vehicle used to convey that meaning to the world.” ... Global corporations such as Nike, Gap, Starbucks, McDonald’s and Coca-Cola, for example, see themselves as “meaning brokers,” rather than producers of products and those people who construct brands are described as “meaning seeking.” (Klein 2002: 21, 36)

If Klein is correct, brands play a much larger role in consumer cultures than we previously thought they did since brands are at the heart of the corporate world. It is estimated that for some companies, brands account for around 30% of their earnings.

Many corporations have logos that serve to identify them as brands and differentiate them from other brands. As Marc Gobe points out in the epigraph, corporate logos can take many forms, from the Coca-Cola script to the Starbucks logo, which, in its latest manifestation, doesn’t even mention the name of the brand or coffee (Fig. 8.1).

This logo evolved out of earlier versions, in which we see a mermaid and the words “Starbucks, Coffee, Tea, Spices” to one with a stylized mermaid and the words “Starbucks Coffee” to the current logo, which has no writing and only a mermaid. What the evolution of the Starbucks logos demonstrates is that as a brand and its logo become better known, the logo can be simplified to the extent that you don’t even have to mention what it is about. We also see a movement toward abstraction, from the first version which shows the mermaid’s breasts and scales on her body and has four words on it to the final version which only shows the mermaid in as simplified a version as possible, without mentioning either the brand or its product.

What Starbucks’s “product” is turns out to be rather complicated. Is Starbucks selling coffee or sociability? At the manifest level, Starbucks is selling coffee but at the latent or hidden level, it is selling sociability. When you visit a Starbucks, you see many people typing on their laptops. It would seem that being with other people has valuable psychological benefits. Do people buy Starbucks coffee because it tastes better than other brands or because it provides certain sociability gratifications they desire, and because of kind of corporation Starbucks is, its history, and its role in American culture? Starbucks hires war veterans and that leads people to think positively about the company, so its history and behavior play a role



Fig. 8.1 Starbucks coffee shop. (Photo by Roland Greenberg)

in our thinking about Starbucks. A recent advertisement in *The Wall Street Journal* (August 31, page A7) reads, in part:

Many veterans are asked questions that make assumptions about their service. Since 2013 we've hired over 10,000 veterans and military spouses—and we're committed to hiring 15,000 more. Asking better questions has brought us closer as co-workers, neighbors and friend. They're changing our perspectives and our company every day.

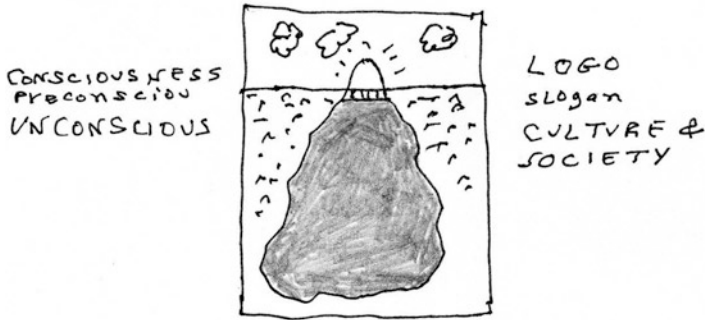


Fig. 8.2 Logos are like icebergs

So Starbucks is doing something positive for American society and people respond to that kind of behavior by purchasing coffee from their stores (Fig. 8.2).

Logos are like icebergs. The top of the iceberg, what you see, is the logo. Just underneath the surface is the part of the iceberg you can dimly perceive. In Freudian theory, the tip of the iceberg is consciousness and the area just below that is the preconscious (or subconscious). We can call the part of the iceberg one dimly perceives the slogan. But the meaning of the icon and the slogan are connected to the subculture or culture in which a person lives and all kinds of information stored in the individual's unconscious about the product and the brand. This information plays a role in our attitudes toward the brand and it is triggered, unconsciously, when we see a logo or whatever visual image. We have to remember that a great deal of material in our unconscious got there without our being conscious or aware of it being there, in what Gerald Zaltman calls "the shadows of our mind." People don't just purchase products; they also purchase the stories connected to the products so a logo connects people to stories about the brand and to myths and other cultural phenomena connected with the brand (Fig. 8.3).

Semioticians have explained how we find meaning in images. Earlier I discussed Saussure's writing on signs in which he argued that a sign is composed of a *signifier* (sound, object) and a *signified* (a concept) and that the relation between signifiers and signifieds is always arbitrary, based on convention. From this perspective, logos are signifiers and the corporation or entity that they stand for is the signified. One of the founding fathers of

Fig. 8.3 Charles Sanders Peirce



semiotics, the American philosopher Charles Sanders Peirce, developed a typology that helps us understand the mental processes involved in interpreting logos, icons, images, and other visual phenomena. He wrote:

Every sign is determined by its objects, either first by partaking in the characters of the object, when I call a sign an *Icon*; secondly, by being really and in its individual existence connected with the individual object, when I call the sign an *Index*; thirdly, by more or less approximate certainty that it will be interpreted as denoting the object, in consequence of a habit (which term I use as including a natural disposition), when I call the sign a *Symbol*. (Quoted in J. Jay Zeman’s “Peirce’s Theory of Signs” in T. Sebeok, *A Perfusion of Signs*, 1977: 36)

We can see these relationships more clearly in the chart that follows, which deals with the three kinds of signs in Peirce’s semiotics (Table 8.1).

Table 8.1 Peirce’s trichotomy

<i>Kind of sign</i>	<i>Icon</i>	<i>Index</i>	<i>Symbol</i>
Means of signifying	Resemblance	Causality	Convention
Examples	Photographs, portraits	Smoke coming from window	Cross, Star of David
Process	Can see	Can figure out	Must learn

Table by the author

Peirce differs from Saussure in that in his typology, icons and indexes are not based on convention but are natural. It is only symbols that are purely conventional. Symbols are complicated. Saussure said that in some cases they are quasi-arbitrary. We have to learn what they mean, but not everything can serve as a good symbol. For example, suppose one wants to create a symbol for justice. A feather will not be as good as a blindfolded goddess (suggesting impartiality) holding scale (suggesting being weighed and judged).

Generally speaking, corporate logos are symbols whose meaning is not evident; it is the job of advertising and marketing to teach people how to make a connection between a logo and the company behind it. There is no logical connection between mermaids and coffee or mermaids and Starbucks coffee shops. But we are exposed to so many signs on stores with Starbucks logos that we learn that the logo stands for Starbucks. Logos may be connected to historical events, such as the cross and Christianity and to philosophies and religions, such as the Star of David and Judaism.

PEIRCE'S TRICHOTOMY AND LOGOS

Based on Peirce's trichotomy, we can suggest that logos take on three forms: iconic, indexical, and symbolic. The first form involves semiotically iconic logos, in which there is a resemblance, sometimes a bit vague, between the logo and the product that we can see.

Iconic Logos: The Michelin Man

The Michelin Man, made up of tires, would be an example of a semiotically iconic logo. (I write "semiotically iconic" because the term "iconic" has been used so often for exemplary products, events, individuals, etc.) It is not self-evident that he is made of tires but because Michelin is a well-known brand, it is easy to see the Michelin man as made of tires and remember what the Michelin man stands for. He is friendly and beckoning to us.

Iconic Logos: Viking River and Ocean Cruises

Consider Viking cruises. Originally Viking only offered river cruises, but it has extended its brand and now also offers ocean cruises. In a recent

catalog, I received from Viking Ocean Cruises, an eight-day cruise costs between \$2000 around \$2300 per person. Viking cruises fit in the luxury category, but not extreme luxury. Some cruise companies charge around \$1000 a person per day. And many are much less expensive. A ten-day cruise on Princess from San Francisco to Mexico and back can cost as little as \$600 for an inside cabin.

The Viking logo shows a highly simplified version of a Viking ship with the name of the company in large letters and its slogan, “Exploring the World in Comfort.” In the course of our education, many people learn about the original Vikings, who were explorers, plunderers, and conquerors. So the use of the term “exploring” ties the company to the ancient Vikings but also suggests that passengers on Viking ships (Viking calls them travelers to differentiate them from tourists) are not sight-seeing tourists but “explorers.” An explorer is someone who visits unknown lands. The nice thing about being an “explorer” on a Viking cruise is that you can explore the world in “comfort.” That term doesn’t logically fit with “explorer,” but what it means is that Viking provides its passengers with the best of both worlds: the ability to explore the world (and it argues that its small ships can visit ports that huge mega liners can’t visit because they are so large) and to do so in comfort. Viking claims to dissolve the contradiction between explorer (danger, hard work) and comfort (gourmet meals, luxurious linens, etc.).

On the cover of the Viking Ocean Cruises brochure we find an indication that it won the *Travel & Leisure* magazine’s “World’s Best Awards” for its ships. On the inside cover we read:

TRAVEL WITH THE WORLD’S BEST

For the second year in a row, Viking has been named a #1 Ocean Cruise Line by *Travel & Leisure* readers in the World’s Best Awards.

So Viking cruise line ships have status and are, Viking suggests, the logical choice for those passengers for whom only the best is good enough.

The chart below shows the oppositions that logically follow from the way Viking positions itself. I will compare it with Princess, which is a mass market line, but I could have used other lines, such as Norwegian or Royal Caribbean (Table 8.2).

Table 8.2 Logos are like icebergs

<i>V I K I N G</i>	<i>P R I N C E S</i>
Elite	Mass Market
World's Best	Ordinary
Luxury	Economy
Explorer/Travelers	Tourists

The interesting thing is that all major cruise lines sell themselves as providing a luxurious experience to their passengers, so booking a cruise with Viking suggests one is looking for a level of luxuriousness above that of the mass market cruise lines.

Indexical Logos: Idea Corporation

A second kind of logo is indexical. With indexical logos, we can figure out some kind of connection between the logo and the corporation or service it stands for. Just as smoke suggests fire, so does the logo suggest the company and its products. Like all logos, people have to be able to interpret the logo correctly. There is a problem with these logos of what semioticians describe as aberrant decoding—not interpreting the logo the way it is was meant to be interpreted by the creator of the logo and the company connected to it. Generally, the connection is made by using the name of the company in the logo or the motto that goes with it.

Idea is a company whose logo works by substituting a bulb, which is conventionally used to signify “new ideas” in comic strips to the “I” in the name of the company. Ideas, in comics, are often shown as occurring when a light suddenly goes on. The light shines on a new idea and a bulb lighting up is used to show a new idea has suddenly popped into someone’s mind.

Symbolic Logos: Mercedes Benz

The last kind of logo is symbolic and here there is no logical connection between the logo and the company it represents. Most logos fall into this category and they obtain their meaning and resonance because of the advertising connected with the logo and the role of the company in society and the company’s cultural meanings.

The Mercedes three-pointed star is generally held to represent the way its engines are so dominant on the land, at sea, and in the air. There is a

history to this logo which has to do with the founders of the company. The Mercedes brand stands for luxury, German engineering (it competes with BMW on this front), and quality. The number three also has symbolic significance. We think of time in terms of past, present, and future. In Christianity, we have the father, the son, and the Holy Ghost. In folktales, heroes and heroines usually get three chances to do something, and in baseball, it is three strikes and you're out. Jokes usually have three parts before the punch lines. For most people, the Mercedes Star is a signifier of quality and people who own Mercedes cars, with some form of the three pointed star shown on the vehicle, it is a status symbol. This status is connected to the price of Mercedes automobiles but also to the way the company relates to people who purchase its cars, the style of Mercedes showrooms, and related concerns.

My classification of kinds of logos as iconic, indexical, and symbolic is artificial and there are logos that may contain iconic as well indexical or iconic and symbolic aspects, as well. Or all three. But it does enable to get a sense of how logos communicate to us and how cultural competence—that is, a knowledge of cultural codes and beliefs—is needed, in many cases, to understand a given logo.

Because “apps” (applications) on smartphones are shown by logos, we actually spend a good deal of time using logos and reacting to them every day. If the average smartphone users have 50 applications on their phones, that means they are seeing many of them each time they turn on their phones and look at the phone's opening screen, with all the logos lined up, and interacting with some that they use regularly: Facebook, Twitter, and so on (Fig. 8.4).

This advertisement for an iPhone shows a number of applications, all in the form of logos, on a typical smartphone. The advertisement is very busy, which is meant to suggest the enormous number of things an iPhone can do, “serving life's demands, one app at a time.” Since there are more than a million apps for the iPhone, that means there are a million logos floating around that can end up on people's smartphones, which enable them to do any number of things. Designing logos is, in itself, a huge industry or a business expense for corporations that cannot create their own logos. Some apps, such as those for phones, are what Peirce would call icons, showing an image of a phone, but others, such as the “F” for Facebook, are symbolic icons or logos whose meanings have to be learned.



Fig. 8.4 Advertisement for an iPhone

PART II

Applications



CHAPTER 9

The Branded Self

Abstract This chapter deals with the way people use brands of products they purchase to define themselves to others and themselves and gain an identity. It considers the works of Saussure and semioticians which suggest that the meanings of things are socially transmitted and socially learned. This suggests that society is more than just a group of individuals, as the German sociologist Georg Simmel pointed out. I also quote from the Russian scholar M.M. Bakhtin about the intertextual nature of the creative process and suggest this helps explain our use of fashion to help create an identity. This leads to a discussion of the role of semiotics in branding by Laura Oswald. The example of attending elite universities as a means of self-branding is offered, followed by a discussion of the role of fashion in branding. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the self as a collection of brands that we use, and continually change as we redefine ourselves to others.

Keywords Self • Brands • Semiotics • Intertextuality • Society • Simmel • Bakhtin

Teenagers are still young enough to be total suckers for image, for all the blandishments of advertising, identity marketing, media messages, trends and labels. They still believe in a brand name's power to confer status, cool, charisma, knowledge. They construct their identities by the

shopping choices they make—they're a lot like adults were back in the '50s, before we became so wise in the ways of image hucksters.

Paco Underhill, *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*

Brands, when they're working right, aren't mere love vessels, they're "valuable resources for identity construction"—ours, that is—according to Douglas Holt, an American social scientist now teaching at Oxford. Brands mediate the culture, and certain ones tap into what Holt calls "myth markets," and thus become "iconic: and highly profitable.

Lee Eisenberg, *Shoptimism: Why the American Consumer Will Keep on Buying No Matter What*

BRANDS HAVE BEEN ELEMENTAL to markets since traders first marked their goods as a guarantee for customers who lived beyond face-to-face contact. Yet it wasn't until the late nineteenth-century—when American hawkers of patent medicines began using their brands to promote not only physical remedies but also therapeutic salves for social ailments—when brands became important agents in what we now understand as consumer society. In the decades that followed, Madison Avenue creatives emulated this strategy, embedding intangible ideals in an assortment of everyday branded goods.

Branding became an increasingly sophisticated enterprise, tagging along as western societies moved from uniform statuses of mid-century mass society statuses of the postmodern.

Douglas Holt, "Toward a Sociology of Branding"

From a semiotic perspective, as I explained earlier, brands are signifiers that we use to help define ourselves to others and, to a certain degree, without being too reductionistic, we can say that we *are* the brands we assemble to forge a public identity. I will discuss this matter and relate it to Orrin Klapp's work *The Collective Search for Identity*, which shows how groups use style and brands to establish their identities.

The fact that our valuations of brands change and our sense of style is open to fashion currents suggest that identities based on brands are open to constant revision and change, which returns us to the question of postmodernism. Indeed, it can be argued that postmodernism (or certain currents in postmodernism) questions the notion that a self is a coherent entity and suggests that selves can be changed with little effort.

Jonathan Culler's book *Ferdinand de Saussure* (revised edition) shows how Saussure's ideas relate to the matter of the self and individual

existence. He writes, discussing the ideas of Saussure, Freud and Durkheim (1986: 86):

For human beings, society is a primary reality, not just the sum of individual experiences, not the contingent manifestations of Mind; and if one wishes to study human behavior, one must grant that there is a social reality ... In short, sociology, linguistics, and psychoanalytic psychology are possible only when one takes the meanings which are attached to and which differentiate objects and actions in society as a primary reality, as fact to be explained. And since meanings are a social product, explanation must be carried out in social terms.

In other words, if meanings are socially transmitted this means that society is “primary,” and is not just an abstraction for a group of individuals. Culler quotes Jeremy Bentham, who seemed to think that only individuals exist and who wrote (1986: 85) “society is a fictitious body, the sum of the several members who compose it.” Semiotically speaking, we need society or, in relation to the self, we need others to make the notion of the self possible. Without others there are no selves and we use the existence of others, and the knowledge they possess, and the way they respond to us to help us create ourselves.

Georg Simmel, a German sociologist, discusses this topic as well. He writes in “The Sociology of Sociability”:

There is an old conflict over the nature of society. One side mystically exaggerates its significance, contending that only through society is human life endowed with reality. The other regards it as a mere abstract concept by means of which the observer draws the realities, which are individual human beings, into a whole, as one calls trees and brooks, houses and meadows, a “landscape.” However one decides this conflict, he must allow society to be a reality in a double sense. On the one hand are the individuals in their directly perceptible existence, the bearers of the processes of association, who are united by these processes into the higher unity which one calls “society;” on the other, the interests which, living in the individuals, motivate such union: economic and ideal interests, warlike and erotic, religious and charitable.... Just so the impulses and interests, which a man experiences in himself and with push him out toward other men, bring about all the forms of association by which a mere sum of separate individuals are made into “society.”

Many other sociologists, from Emile Durkheim to the present, have dealt with this topic, as well—since the relationships that exist between individuals and society are a dominant theme in sociological theory.

Norbert Wiley, an American sociologist, has suggested in his article “Pragmatism and the Dialogical Self” that the self can be seen as “an internal conversation in which the present self (I) talks about the past self (me) to the future self (you).” This statement can be seen as a kind of updating, with a focus on the self and personal identity, of M.M. Bakhtin’s dialogical theory. As Bakhtin writes in *The Dialogical Imagination* (1981: 280):

The word in living conversation is directly, blatantly, oriented toward a future answer-word: it provokes an answer, anticipates it and structures itself on the answer’s direction. Forming itself in an atmosphere of the already spoken, the word is at the same time determined by that which has not yet been said but which is needed and in fact anticipated by the answering word. Such is the situation in any living dialogue.

The three time periods that Bakhtin discusses—the present, past and future—correspond to the three kinds of conversations Wiley says we have in creating ourselves.

Bakhtin also discusses the way texts (works of literature and by extension other phenomena) were often based on previous works, a concept that can be described as “intertextuality.” As he writes (1981: 69):

Certain types of texts were constructed like mosaics out of the texts of others ... One of the best authorities on medieval parody ... states outright that the history of medieval literature and its Latin literature in particular “is the history of appropriation, re-working and imitation of someone else’s property”—or as we would say, of another’s language, another’s style, another’s word.

I would suggest that a self, at least a public identity, can be seen, semiotically speaking, as a kind of text that is constructed, in an intertextual way, out of other people’s texts, or for the purposes of this investigation, their branded fashion creations, and other similarly branded commodities.

Let us recall that brands, for semioticians, are what Saussure called signifiers (yet they often are identified by what Peirce called icons) that companies use to help establish their identities. The essence of a brand is being “different” from other brands and from generic products. Brands use

advertising to establish an image of what they are and what kind of people use their products.

Brooks Brothers advertisements suggest a certain style of person and lifestyles of people who wear clothes from Brooks Brothers. It is the oldest men's clothier and is owned now by an Italian billionaire. It sells "classic" styles of clothes for men and women. When I was growing up, two of my uncles wore Brooks Brothers clothing and were very fussy about how they looked. They also wore Brooks Brothers underwear, which suggests that stylistic preferences sometimes don't show.

Brands, we may say, are pure connotation. Saussure said (1915/1966: 120) "in language there are only differences." From a Saussurean perspective we can say "in brands, there are only differences." Brands compete with one another and with generic products or commodities.

OSWALD ON SEMIOTICS AND BRANDING

Laura R. Oswald, in her article "Semiotics and Strategic Brand Management," discusses the role of semiotics in creating brands. She writes:

Over the past ten years or so, brand strategy researchers have come to recognize the importance of brand communication in building and sustaining brand equity, the value attached to a brand name or log that supersedes product attributes and differentiates brands in the competitive arena ... The contribution of brand meanings and perceptions to profitability—the Coca Cola brand is valued at over \$70 billion—testifies to the power of symbolic representation to capture the hearts and minds of consumers by means of visual, audio, and verbal signs. The semiotic—or symbolic—dimension of brands is therefore instrumental for building awareness, positive associations, and long-term customer loyalty, and contributes to trademark ownership and operational advantages such as channel and media clout. Consequently, managing brand equity means managing brand **semiotics**. (http://www.media.illinois.edu/advertising/semiotics_oswald.pdf)

It is semiotic theory more than anything else, she argues, that enables us to understand what brands are, how they work, and the role they play in consumer decision making. Branding claims distinctiveness—relative to other brands, that is. If three men or three thousand men wear the same brand of sunglasses, they cannot claim to be distinctive, except in relation to other brands. It is advertising, more than anything else, which

brands use to establish their identities and to portray the kind of people who use, or should use, that brand. Some brands use celebrities in their advertising. In other cases, a celebrity or prominent person wears a product which becomes popular.

What's important about brand-name products is that when we see a person wearing a certain brand or collection of brands, we get, we believe, a sense of what the person using the brands is like—if, that is, we have seen advertisements for the brand and know something about it. Branded luxury objects are status symbols and help confer high status upon those who use them. If a self is a kind of conversation we have with ourselves, what happens when we get tired of certain brands and switch to others? Is there a kind of dissociation that occurs as we take on a new self, based on new brands that we now find attractive?

ELITE UNIVERSITIES AND SELF-BRANDING

Perhaps the most important branding a young person can do is attend a high-ranking college. People who go to Ivy League colleges and other similarly high-ranking schools, such as MIT and California Institute of Technology, are branding themselves, at an early age and this element of branding lasts for the rest of their lives. People also make a distinction between attending an elite college as an undergraduate and as a graduate student. It is getting into an elite college as an undergraduate that is critical in branding oneself, though attending an elite college as a graduate student also helps confer status. Somehow, everyone I know who has gone to an elite college often finds a way to mention having been a student at Cornell or Yale or Harvard in conversations, even though they have been away from their school for 50 or 60 years.

We can consider universities and colleges as brands that play a role in branding their students. For those who do not attend an elite school, and may not have wanted to attend one, being a college graduate is also a brand. At one time only a relatively small proportion of Americans attended college. Now, attending college is much more widespread. Now, 30% of Americans have a college degree and around 11% of Americans have a graduate degree. So attending college brands a person, but it is not an elite brand such as attending one of the 50 “best” or most selective colleges and universities.

There was an amusing discussion of brands and the self in Vanessa Friedman's “Need to Help” column in the August 29, 2018 edition of *The New York Times*. She received a question from someone who wrote to

her and asked how he could come up with a personal dressing style. He concluded by writing “I’d love something that helps brand me at work and leisure.” She responded (p. A3):

The single fastest way to a personal brand is to choose one piece of clothing or aspect of appearance or color that makes you feel most like yourself ... and stick to it relentlessly: think Anna Wintour with her sharp bob and shaded glasses; Justin Trudeau and his cheeky symbolic socks; Steve Jobs and his Issey Miyake black mock polos I’d take a wander into a Thom Browne store.

What interested me about this piece was the way the questioner was searching for a way to brand himself and Friedman’s suggestions about using clothes and props like dark glasses to brand oneself successfully. Branding oneself is more complicated than one might imagine. It can be expensive, as well. An Issey Miyake mock polo costs around 200 dollars.

FASHION AND BRANDING

In his book *The Collective Search for Identity* Orrin Klapp offers an interesting catalogue of fashions in the 1960s that, among other things, offers insights into the way people use fashion to help create their identities and the problems that arise from relying on style to fashion an identity. He discusses a number of matters (1962: 75):

- (1) the sheer variety of “looks” (types) available to the common man
- (2) the explicitness of identity search (for the real you)
- (3) ego-screaming: the plea “look at me!
- (4) style rebellion (style used as a means of protest or defiance)
- (5) theatricalism and masquerading on the street
- (6) pose as a way of getting to the social position one wants
- (7) dandyism: (living for style, turning away from the Horatio Alger ... model of success)
- (8) dandyism of the common man as well as the aristocrat
- (9) pronounced escapism in many styles (such as those of beatniks, hippies, surfers, etc.)
- (10) a new concept of the right to be whatever one pleases, regardless of what others think (the new romanticism)
- (11) the breakdown of status symbols, the tendency of fashions to mix and obscure classes rather than differentiate them

This list suggests some of the different routes people can take when creating branded selves, and points out some of the problems branding causes, because in some cases the brand or its logos and icons that signify a certain status may not be recognized by others or may be misinterpreted by them. In some cases, people lie with styles. Klapp offers the example of a group of people who wear all the clothes that motorcycle riders wear and look like motorcycle riders, but don't have motorcycles. If you walk around with Harley-Davidson tee-shirts and jackets, people might logically assume you have a Harley-Davidson motorcycle, but as Klapp suggests, that may not be the case. A person may adopt the look of a motorcyclist but may not actually own a motorcycle.

As Klapp suggest in his book, some people dress down and hide their status by purchasing brands of clothes and cars that don't show their true socio-economic status, and the reverse occurs with some people who dress above their socio-economic status, by devoting most of their income to such things. Most people fall in between these two polarities, but we must recognize that just about everything we purchase is branded, though store brands of foods and household supplies and second or third tier brands of clothes still are brands.

Some people, who pay little attention to brands, end up as what Klapp would call "style less" or we would call "brand less" individuals, though from a semiotic perspective, this is not quite accurate and one can never be "style less" or brand less. There is, I suggest, no escape from brands; what many people do is find certain brands that they are comfortable with and use them to help create their selves—their public identities.

We can make a distinction between three levels of the self: the *persona* or mask—that is, the public self which is the branded self. At a level below that is the *privata*, the private self that we do not display to others and find difficulty in accessing most of the time. And at the lowest level is the *privatissima*, the self that we cannot ever know, but which plays a role in shaping our other selves. It may be that brands speak to something in this *privatissima* that then manifests itself in the brands we purchase to create our personas, our public branded selves.

THE SELF AS A COLLECTION OF BRANDS

The fact that the self is so often defined by the collection of brands a person selects to create a public identity, and the fact that people can easily change their branded selves suggests that the concept of "the self" is a

modernist one, based on a notion that a self is somehow lasting and coherent in its stylistic formation. The branded self, which argues that selves are based on the selection of brands that people think suit themselves, suggests a postmodern perspective on the self—one in which eclecticism and constant change rules. What we find in postmodernist societies, then, is a mixture of upscale branded products like Apple and Nike and cheap generic “no-name-branded” products, which can lead to a very personal style or, in some cases, as style confusion.

There are no static selves in postmodern societies, as people are continually reinventing themselves and since this is done through our fashion and various props, it means that postmodern selves are based upon the continual consumption of the right clothes, cars, smartphones, MP3 players (such as iPods), tablet computers, vacations, and other items that we use to influence the way people perceive us. Lady Gaga, who described herself as a “student of fame,” would be an example of the way we use fashion and props to continually reinvent ourselves. In the end, it is the dollar or other currencies that provide postmodern selves and societies with the means for creating their identities, and when you keep changing your identities, it can be quite expensive.

Note: This chapter is a revised and enhanced version of my article “The Branded Self” which appeared in the *American Sociologist* (Vol. 42, No. 2, 232–239, 2011).



CHAPTER 10

San Francisco as a Brand

Abstract This discussion of San Francisco as a brand is based on the fact that cities compete with one another to attract tourists, because of the financial benefits that tourism brings to a city. This chapter discusses a book, *The Tourist*, which contains information, in different chapters, about many of the different things tourists can do when they visit San Francisco. The chapter offers statistics on tourism in San Francisco and points out that a third of the tourists who come to the city are attending conferences of one kind or another. It concludes with a discussion of the Golden Gate Bridge and its cultural resonance and significance.

Keywords San Francisco • Brand • Tourism • Golden Gate Bridge

Usually, the first contact a sightseer has with a sight is not the sight itself but with some representation thereof Modifying everyday usage somewhat, I have adapted the term marker to mean information about a specific site Sightseers do not, in any empirical sense, see San Francisco. They see Fisherman's Wharf, a cable car, the Golden Gate Bridge, Union Square, Coit Tower, the Presidio, City Lights Bookstore, Chinatown, and perhaps the Haight Ashbury or a nude go-go dancer in a North Beach-Barbary Coast club. As elements in a set called "San Francisco," each of these items is a symbolic marker. Individually, each item is a sight requiring a marker of its own. There are, then, two frameworks which give meaning to these attractions. The sightseer may visit the Golden Gate Bridge, seeing it as a piece of information about San Francisco which he must possess if he is to make his being in San

Francisco real, substantial or complete; or, the sightseer visits a large suspension bridge, an object which might be considered worthy of attention in its own right.

Dean MacCannell, *The Tourist: A New Theory of the Leisure Class*
The tourism industry relies heavily on images. Consumers draw on a number of images to develop their attitudes towards a destination.

Gartner and Shen suggested that destination images are formed organically and inorganically. For example, film presents numerous images of destinations in their forefront and backgrounds, as do political events and literature, which, as consumers, we absorb in a natural manner. Tourism destination marketing campaigns, on the other hand, present images of destinations that are directed towards target markets through specific marketing channels, and are designed to manufacture attitudes towards the destination.

Finola Kerrigan, Ms. Jyotsna Shivanandan, and Anne-Marie Hede,
"Nation Branding: A Critical Appraisal of Incredible India"

When we visit a city like San Francisco or any other important tourist destination, there are certain things that are important to us. If you think about the list of topics MacCannell discusses in his book *The Tourist*, we find:

Areas of a city: The Haight Ashbury, North Beach, the Presidio, Chinatown

Distinctive aspects of a city: Cable cars, nude go-go dancers

Important architectural features: Coit Tower, the Golden Gate Bridge

Famous shops and stores: City Lights Bookstore

We can add to that list many other topics such as:

Interesting districts: the Castro, Mission, Chinatown, Fisherman's Wharf, and so on.

Celebrated restaurants: Seven Hills, Gary Danko, Boulevard, and so on.

Historically important sites: Alcatraz

Shopping centers: Union Square

Historical events: San Francisco burned down in 1907

Important personalities tied to the city: Harvey Milk, Senator Diane Feinstein

Well-known hotels: Palace, Fairmont, Ritz-Carlton Omni

Sports teams: Giants, 49ers, Golden State Warriors

Educational institutions: University of California Medical Center, University of San Francisco (USF), San Francisco State University (SFSU).

Elite art institutions: Ballet, Opera, Symphony, American Conservatory Theater (ACT), many small theaters, and so on.

Popular cultural institutions: Jazz Institute, music scene in bars and clubs

Natural areas of beauty: Golden Gate Park, beauty of the bay near Muir Woods

Climate: moderate: seldom very cold or very hot.

All of these considerations, and countless others, create an image of the city of San Francisco in the minds of people who live there or who are planning to visit the city as tourists. In my drawing of a brand as being like an iceberg, there is the part of the brand that is shown above the water—the various sights in San Francisco that attract tourists—and a part that is shown below the water: San Francisco’s colorful history, its neighborhoods, the images we have of the city from watching films made there, and reading books and seeing films that take place there (such as *The Maltese Falcon*).

San Francisco is the fourth most expensive city in the United States for tourists, according to *Travel and Leisure* magazine. New York is the most expensive city. Both are what I would describe as tourist “meccas,” cities that rank above the average cities as tourist destinations because they have so much to offer and that are so dependent on tourism or so popular with tourists. Other American “mecca” cities would be Las Vegas, Los Angeles, and New Orleans.

STATISTICS ON TOURISM IN SAN FRANCISCO

A report from San Francisco Travel offers the following statistics about tourism in San Francisco:

San Francisco welcomed a total of 25.1 million visitors in 2016, an increase of 2.3 percent from 2015. In 2016, the 25.1 million visitors brought \$9.69 billion in spending to San Francisco, up by 3.3 percent from 2015. “This is the seventh consecutive year of record-breaking growth for San Francisco’s tourism industry. The 25.1 million visitors and \$9.96 billion in spending create jobs and support services for people throughout the city and the entire Bay Area,” said Joe D’Alessandro, president and CEO of San Francisco Travel. “We continue to see steady growth, especially in the area of visitor spending.” Of the 25.1 million people who visited the city last year, 10.4 million were overnight visitors and 14.7 million visited for the day, with both figures increasing by 2.3 percent. Overnight visitors spent

\$7.77 billion (86.8 percent of all visitor spending), up 3.4 percent over the previous year.

<http://www.sftavel.com/article/san-francisco-travel-reports-record-breaking-tourism-2016>

Tourism is the most important industry in San Francisco and has shaped, to some degree, the evolution of the city. We must keep in mind that in a typical year, 25 million tourists spend time in a city of 870,000 people.

Approximately a third of the tourists who come to the city are attending conferences of one kind or another and San Francisco is currently expanding its conference center to be able to accommodate even larger conventions. The San Francisco Center for Economic Development offers the following statistics of interest about what we can think of as the San Francisco brand:

- 4500 restaurants
- 47 square miles
- 87,000 people work in tourism industry
- 150,000 visitors daily who spend \$29 million (in 2014) per day
- 31% of tourists are international visitors
- 25 colleges and universities
- Average temperature 50°F and 14°C
- Median age of residents: 38 years
- Median income of residents: \$78,300

These statistics offer us insights into the nature and size of the tourism industry and provide some information about the people who live in San Francisco.

There are, then, many different kinds of things that make up a city's brand. Because the city of San Francisco has so many positive features that make it desirable, it is not difficult to "sell" the San Francisco brand, which means it is relatively easy to attract tourists and conventions, even though it is an expensive city to visit for tourists (and an expensive city to live in for non-tourists). San Francisco has an enormous number of attractions for a small city of some 850,000 people in a small area, of about 49 square miles. And it is close to other cities and areas of interest to tourists, such as Muir Woods and the wine country.

Cities, from my perspective, are brands and are interested in attracting tourists and conferences as well as corporations to provide jobs and pay taxes. So San Francisco competes with other cities for tourists and for large

corporations to set up their headquarters in the city. San Francisco's argument is that it is a wonderful city with many advantages that executives in corporations will like, so it makes sense for corporations to have a strong presence, if not a headquarters, in the city. Executives generally want to live in cities like San Francisco, where the quality of life is very high. The quality of the public schools in San Francisco is not high, but people can send their children to private schools or live in small towns near San Francisco with good schools, like Mill Valley, Ross, or Belvedere. Professional people like doctors and lawyers also value the quality of life in San Francisco, which explains why there are so many doctors and lawyers and other professional people who live in the city (Fig. 10.1).



Fig. 10.1 Golden Gate Bridge. (Photo by Roland Greenberg)

THE GOLDEN GATE BRIDGE

I searched on Trip Advisor for the most important tourist sites in San Francisco and got the following list (the top five):

Golden Gate Bridge
Alcatraz Island
Chinatown
Lombard Street (very curvy section)
Twin Peaks

I will take the first of these sites for an analysis: The Golden Gate Bridge. It is the probably the most famous bridge in the United States and is considered one of the most beautiful bridges in the world. Here are some statistics about the Golden Gate Bridge:

746 feet high (to top of towers)
Cost to build: \$35 million (in 1933 dollars)
Construction started on January 5, 1933. It opened in 1937.
120,000 cars cross the bridge per day

The bridge shows that industrial structures can be beautiful. Because the Golden Gate Bridge is so beautiful, it has been seen in many films such as *Vertigo*, *Superman: The Movie*, *Star Trek IV: The Voyage Home*, *Dirty Harry*, *The Graduate*, and *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. Because it plays so important part in our popular culture, it attracts tourists from the United States and other countries, who can be seen walking between San Francisco and Sausalito so they can say that they walked the length of the Golden Gate Bridge. Semiotically speaking, it is probably the most distinctive signifier of San Francisco for Americans and for people all over the world. If you show most people of the bridge, they will recognize it and say it stands for San Francisco. It is one of the most important attributes of the San Francisco brand.

It also has the distinction of being the most popular site for many suicides in the United States and is the number one site for bridge suicides in the world. People who commit suicide by jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge invariably jump off the side facing San Francisco. When they jump off the bridge, it takes them about four seconds to reach the water and when they hit the water, they are traveling at around 70 miles per hour. A

small number of people actually survive their suicide attempts, but it is estimated that 1300 people have committed suicide from the Golden Gate Bridge since it was built.

We may consider the people who commit suicide from the Golden Gate Bridge in terms of what we might call the aesthetics of suicide. Killing oneself by jumping off the bridge is a kind of self-destructive grand gesture in which the people who commit suicide become part of the history of a beautiful bridge. There are many other bridges one can jump off, but jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge is, whatever else it may be, a testimonial to a sense of style and to the legendary status of the bridge. Jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge can be thought of as a brand of suicide that appeals to people who are suicidal.

We can see the Golden Gate Bridge as the polar opposite of the Statue of Liberty. The Statue of Liberty represents optimism and faith in the possibility of living the good life in a free society. The Statue of Liberty was, for the millions of immigrants from Europe who saw it when they came to the United States, a signifier of the future, of liberty and possibility. They landed at the “beginning” edge of the United States and had the rest of the country to explore. For these immigrants, the American Frontier still existed. San Francisco, on the other hand, represents the “end” of the continental United States, the place where the Frontier ended, and with it, Frontier theorists would argue, our sense of possibility. California marks the edge of the continental United States and if one is not successful in California, jumping off the Golden Gate Bridge represents, tragically, a final escape. But not for much longer. The Golden Gate authority will be putting up nets, at a cost of around \$50 million, to prevent people from jumping off the bridge and killing themselves.

Note: This discussion of the Golden Gate Bridge in this chapter is an enhanced version of a chapter on the Golden Gate Bridge that appeared in my book *American Icons*.



Japan as a Brand

Abstract In this chapter, we move from a focus on cities to a focus on countries, which are also brands and which compete with one another for tourists. Tourism is one of the largest industries in the world, if not the largest. It is a \$7.6 trillion industry. Japan is working hard to attract more international tourists, who are put off by Japan's reputation as being an expensive place to visit, though there are many other countries that are much more expensive, such as Switzerland and the United Kingdom. Japan's National Tourism Organization is doing what it can to attract tourists. The chapter then discusses various aspects of Japanese culture and the Japanese mystique, which are what attracts tourists. The chapter concludes with a discussion of Japan as an exotic destination—in which combines modern skyscrapers and concrete cities with ancient forts and temples, which tourists like because they sense that they are authentic.

Keywords Japan • Tourism • Culture • Roland Barthes • Popular culture • Geishas • Pachinko • Exotic

Japan is truly timeless, a place where ancient traditions are fused with modern life as if it were the most natural thing in the world.

Food

Wherever you are in Japan, it seems, you're never more than 500 m from a great meal. Restaurants often specialize in just one dish—perhaps having spent generations perfecting it—and pay close attention

to every stage, from sourcing the freshest, local ingredients to assembling the dish attractively. Moreover, you don't have to travel far to discover that Japanese cuisine is deeply varied. The hearty hotpots of the mountains are, for example, dramatically different from the delicate sushi for which the coast is famous. It's also intensely seasonal, meaning you can visit again at a different time of year and experience totally new tastes.

Traditional Culture

On the surface, Japan appears exceedingly modern, but traveling around it offers numerous opportunities to connect with the country's traditional culture. Spend the night in a ryokan (traditional Japanese inn), sleeping on futons and tatami mats, and padding through well-worn wooden halls to the bathhouse (or go one step further and sleep in an old farmhouse). Chant with monks or learn how to whisk bitter matcha (powdered green tea) into a froth. From the splendor of a Kyoto geisha dance to the spare beauty of a Zen rock garden, Japan has the power to enthrall even the most jaded traveler.

Dynamic Cities

The neon-lit streetscapes of Japan's cities look like sci-fi film sets, even though many of them are decades old. Meanwhile, cities such as Tokyo and Osaka have been adding new architectural wonders that redefine what buildings—and cities—should look like. There's an indelible buzz to these urban centres, with their vibrant street life, 24-hour drinking and dining scenes, and creative hubs that turn out fashion and pop culture trends consumed the world over. Travel is always smooth and efficient, whether you're using the subway to get around or the shinkansen (bullet trains) to go from one city to the next.

Lonely Planet Japan <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/japan/introduction>

Cities are brands and so are countries. It might seem strange to think about a country as a brand, but many marketing scholars and cultural analysts have taken that approach and see nations as brands that compete with one another for tourists and trade. Thus, for example, Cagri Yalkin, a professor at the Brunel Business School in England, has an article in the *European Management Review*, “A Brand Culture Approach to Managing Nation-Brands” (<https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12129>), that deals with different aspects of nations as brands:

The image of a nation brand is developed by a country's products, national characteristics, economic and political background, history, and traditions....

Nation brands are inextricably tied to international trade and consumer preferences through COO [country of origin] product country image, and cultural proximity. As Dinnie (2015) notes, studies on national identity are mostly studied by political science and IR scholars, while COO studies fall under marketing, management, and consumer behaviour.

In this analysis, I'm very much interested in Japan's popular culture, its national characteristics, its traditions, and other distinctive aspects of Japanese culture that enable us to see Japan as a brand. My focus will be on Japan as a tourist destination and the role of Japanese culture in attracting tourists. Tourism is an enormous industry—the largest in the world—and this chapter deals with Japan as a tourist destination. In this analysis of Japan as a brand, let me begin by offering some statistics about the tourism industry. We may think of Japan tourism as the figure against the ground of world tourism and competition for tourists from other countries.

THE TOURISM INDUSTRY

Tourism is an enormous industry. More than a billion international tourists are wandering around the world every year. We get an idea of the size and scope of this industry from the following material from [Statista.com](https://www.statista.com):

The travel and tourism industry is one of the world's largest industries with a global economic contribution (direct, indirect and induced) of over 7.6 trillion U.S. dollars in 2016. The direct economic impact of the industry, including accommodation, transportation, entertainment and attractions, was approximately 2.3 trillion U.S. dollars that year. A number of countries, such as France and the United States, are consistently popular tourism destinations, but other, less well-known countries are quickly emerging in order to reap the economic benefits of the industry. Worldwide, the tourism industry has experienced steady growth almost every year.

<https://www.statista.com/topics/962/global-tourism/>

When I write that Japan is a brand, I am talking about the way Japan sells itself as a tourist destination, in competition with other countries in Europe and Asia or any place else. Countries are all competing with one another to attract foreign tourists and gain revenues from the money tourists spend in hotels, in restaurants, in shopping, in sites of interest, and on other aspects of their travels.

The top-five most important international tourist destinations in the world are shown below (Table 11.1).

In 2015, Japan had 19.7 million international visitors, up from 13.4 million in 2014. So it is becoming increasingly popular, but relative to countries like France and the United States, it is in a different league. I looked at a chart of the one hundred most important cities as international tourist destinations and didn't find Tokyo on the list.

The ten most important cities as international tourism destinations are as follows (Table 11.2).

Hong Kong, we see, had more international tourists than Japan. So Japan has a long way to go before it is a significant (in terms of numbers of tourists) international tourist destination. But it had an increase of six million international tourists between 2014 and 2015, which suggests it is rapidly becoming more attractive as a tourist destination.

TOURISM IN JAPAN

Japan has a national tourist agency, the Japan National Tourism Organization (JNTO), that markets Japan as a tourist destination and, on the basis of the gains made in international tourism visits between 2014

Table 11.1 Most popular international tourism destinations

<i>Rank</i>	<i>Country</i>	<i>Arrivals in millions</i>
1.	France	82.6
2.	USA	75.6
3.	Spain	75.6
4.	China	59.3
5.	Italy	52.4

Table 11.2 Most popular international tourism cities

1.	Hong Kong	27.7 million
2.	London	17.3 million
3.	Singapore	17 million
4.	Bangkok	16.2 million
5.	Paris	14.9 million
6.	Macau	14.9 million
7.	Dubai	13.2 million
8.	Shenzhen	13.1 million
9.	New York City	12.3 million
10.	Istanbul	10.4 million

and 2015, it has been remarkably successful. It can be found on the Internet at: <https://www.jnto.go.jp/eng/>. There are also JNTO offices in a number of countries that provide assistance. Japan now has a goal of attracting 40 million foreign tourists by 2020, or about twice as many as visited it in 2017. That is a very ambitious goal. It attracted 24 million tourists in 2016, so it is becoming increasingly attractive to international tourists, even though it only attracts a third as many international tourists as does the United States.

We might ask ourselves: why has international tourism not been developed as rapidly in Japan as in other countries and what is it Japan has to offer foreign tourists that they can't find anywhere else? It is difficult to say why Japan has had trouble attracting tourists, but there are several factors that may play a role. For one thing, not many Japanese people speak English, the language of international tourism, so some tourists are put off by fearing that they will not be understood while in Japan.

Japan is also relatively expensive to visit. Tours to Japan may cost many times more than tours to Thailand or China. A ten-day tour in Japan with Go Ahead Tours costs approximately \$3700. I've seen ten-day tours of China (with airfare included from San Francisco) for as little as \$1300. Things are changing. Gate 1 Travel has a tour of Tokyo and Kyoto with flights for \$1799, which is very reasonable. Actually, Japan is less expensive than many other countries. In 2015, the ten most expensive countries to visit are (according to *CEOWORLD* magazine) as follows in order of being expensive:

1. Switzerland
2. United Kingdom
3. France
4. Australia
5. Norway
6. Israel
7. Denmark
8. Sweden
9. Italy
10. Austria

So even though Japan is more expensive than many other countries, it is not as expensive as many other popular tourist destinations, such as the

United Kingdom, France, and Italy. [PriceofTravel.com](https://www.priceoftravel.com) offers the following information on the cost of being a tourist in Tokyo:

Food and drink have a reputation for being outrageously expensive in Tokyo, but that's a bit misleading. If you want to eat in upscale restaurants or hotels then you'll pay dearly, but if you are interested in eating bowls of noodles or rice, like most of the locals do each day, then it can be done on a more modest budget. The key to surviving cheaply in Tokyo is being flexible and behaving like a local while you are there. Transportation is reasonably priced, especially if you opt for the all-day metro ticket. The city is basically a collection of villages so it's hard to see much on foot because each central area is spaced out from the others. <https://www.priceoftravel.com/15/japan/tokyo-prices>

While tours to Japan might be relatively expensive, independent travelers, who stay at modestly priced business hotels and don't go to expensive restaurants, find that Japan is not as expensive as many other countries. Double rooms in Japanese business hotel chains, which are very clean and generally well located, cost between \$65 and \$95 a night, according to information on the Internet (accessed on September 5, 2017). In addition, there are many inexpensive apartments in Tokyo available on Airbnb and other sites, some for less than \$50 a night for two people. People who are not used to international travel on their own probably end up taking tours, which cost around the same amount as people taking tours to England, France, Italy, and other important tourist destinations. Japan is a country that has a population of 127 million people squeezed into an area the size of California, which has a population of about 35 million people.

People in Japan live in a pressurized society, where 10,000 people a year work themselves to death. Japan has a huge economy but most people live in small apartments and houses (which average 1000 square feet), and though they are relatively affluent, the quality of life for many Japanese people is not very high. It is estimated that around 30,000 elderly Japanese people die of loneliness every year. With these statistics in mind—and they reveal a great deal about everyday life for ordinary people in Japan—let us consider the Japan that tourists see, attracted to Japan because of what I call “the Japanese mystique.”

JAPANESE CULTURE AND THE JAPANESE MYSTIQUE

In the first chapter of his book on Japan, *Empire of Signs*, Roland Barthes writes (1970/1982: 3, 4):

If I want to imagine a fictive nation, I can give it an invented name, treat it declaratively as a novelistic object, create a new Garabagne, so as to compromise no real country by my fantasy (though it is then that fantasy itself I compromise by the signs of literature). I can also—though in no way claiming to represent or to analyze reality itself (these being the major gestures of Western discourse)—isolate somewhere in the world (*faraway*) a certain number of features (a term employed in linguistics), and out these features deliberately form a system. It is this system which I shall call Japan The author has never, in any sense, photographed Japan. Rather he has done the opposite: Japan has starred in him any number of “flashes”; or, better still, Japan has afforded him a situation of writing.

What Barthes does in his “faraway” land, Japan, is analyze certain aspects of Japanese culture that struck him as interesting: Japanese chopsticks, Pachinko, Bowling, the empty center of Tokyo, and so on—all of which are part of what Barthes found to be a fascinating and mysterious country, full of wonderful signs that he could interpret.

What attracts international visitors to Japan is what I call “the Japanese mystique.” It involves what is truly distinctive about Japan: Japanese food, Japanese everyday life, Japanese culture, Japanese national character, the Japanese aesthetic, Japanese popular culture, Japanese history, and all of the other things about foreign countries that attract tourists. Japan is a remarkable blend of being both a traditional culture and a postmodern culture and, as such, attracts and fascinates many people. Earlier I quoted some scholars who wrote about the power of images to attract tourists. In this respect, in terms of the visual aspects that “sell” a country, Japan is unparalleled.

When I taught semiotics, one exercise I gave my students was to come up with a list of images that might be used in a travel brochure which would signify—that is, call to mind—a country, such as France or the United States or Japan. My students came up with the following for Japan: Sushi (and other Japanese food such as Tempura), Geishas, Sumo Wrestlers, Temple Gardens, Bullet Trains, Manga, and Mount Fuji. All of these images, semiotics suggests, represent Japan in the popular imagination. To these we could add Japanese festivals, Japanese castles and forts,



Fig. 11.1 Sanja Matsuri festival in Asakusa section of Tokyo. (Photo by the author)

the Japanese bow, and Japanese packages. They are all iconic aspects of Japanese culture and are commonly shown in travel literature. There are also iconic representations of Tokyo: its complicated metro system, the Royal Palace, the different sections of Tokyo, the Tokyo skyline, and so on. Japan is also represented in popular culture with its films, manga, and video games, which are popular everywhere (Fig. 11.1).

The Sanja Matsuri Festival reflects what the Russian scholar and communication theorist Mikhail Bakhtin called the “carnavalesque” spirit—a celebratory explosion of drinking and celebrating that manifested itself in the middle ages as a means of temporarily escaping from the austerity and bleakness of life in that period. As he explained in *Rabelais and His World* (1984: 255):

The carnivalesque crowd in the marketplace or in the streets is not merely a crowd. It is the people as a whole, but organized *in their own way*, the way of the people. It is outside of and contrary to all existing forms of the coercive socioeconomic and political organization, which is suspended for the time of the festivity.



Fig. 11.2 Ryōan-ji Temple in Kyoto. (Photo by the author)

The euphoria people in such festivals feel is a means of their breaking free from all the rules and regulations of their ordinary lives. Tourists who visit Tokyo in May, when the festival is held, become swept away by the spirit of the Japanese people.

In short, visually speaking, Japan has many powerful images to attract tourists. One of the most famous would be of the Zen rock garden at Ryōan-ji Temple in Kyoto. When I visited the temple, people seemed to be spellbound by its utter simplicity and elegance. They regarded it with something resembling awe (Fig. 11.2).

It is likely that potential visitors to Japan have seen images such as these in travel literature and also read articles about Japan in the newspapers, seen images of Japan on television programs, seen Japan in Japanese films, and read about Japan in guidebooks. In short, the typical tourist contemplating a visit to Japan has been exposed to many “markers,” as MacCannell describes them, before actually visiting Japan.

Scholarly tourism literature suggests that tourists are interested in authenticity and in the Japanese temples and gardens and ancient forts, they find it. In Japan there is the old Japan, the Japan of forts, temples, gardens, and Ryokan that is authentic. And there is the new Japan, the

postmodern Japan, of hyper-neonized sections of Tokyo. And in between there is the everyday life of the Japanese people, which is characterized in general by conformity. The Japanese have a term, *seken*, which can be defined as the “hidden gaze of society,” which the people believe is focused on them. This leads them to accept the many codes of conduct that shape everyday Japanese life.

It is because of the pressure the Japanese people feel on them that festivals are so meaningful and gambling (though technically it is not considered gambling by the government), in *Pachinko* parlors, is so popular. In some areas of Japan, people spend a quarter of their disposable household income playing *Pachinko* and the *Pachinko* style has influenced everything from the design of buildings to the look of restaurants and the sets of popular television shows.

There are an estimated 18,000 Pachinko parlors in Japan, many of which are owned by Japanese of Korean descent (who, though they have lived in Japan for many years, are treated like outcasts by the Japanese). Scholars of Japanese culture suggest that playing *Pachinko* is addictive and the bright lights and flashing displays actually put players in a kind of trance. For tourists, *Pachinko* parlors are a curiosity and tourists may peek into them to look around and get a sense of what they are like. They are a kind of bizarre avenue into everyday Japanese life (Fig. 11.3).

It is Japanese food that is probably easiest and the most direct means for foreign tourists to experience Japanese culture. When you walk down the streets in any Japanese city, you have a chance to look at the plastic reproductions of the food served in the restaurants. They show the food and what each dish costs, so you can know what dining in that restaurant will cost. There are also many low-cost noodle shops, where many Japanese people eat. If you eat in a typical Japanese restaurant, the cost of a meal is not prohibitive, but if you go to upscale Japanese restaurants, a dinner can cost \$100 or \$200.

There are also fugu restaurants that serve a fish that can kill you if its poison parts have not been cut out. The toxin in fugu is around a thousand times more toxic than cyanide, so eating fugu is, at least in theory, risky. The Japanese who die from fugu are usually people who have not taken out the poisonous parts adequately. In the fugu restaurants, experts prepare the fish and it is not risky. People who dine in these restaurants usually order a “full course” meal which includes many other dishes and costs around \$120.



Fig. 11.3 Plastic replicas of dishes in a restaurant window. (Photo by the author)

JAPAN AS AN EXOTIC DESTINATION

Because Japanese culture is so different from American or even Western European cultures, we can describe Japan as an exotic destination. The Greek root of the term “exotic” is *exotikos*, which also means foreign, distant, and strange. Tourists usually travel to foreign countries because they are in search of something different from their everyday lives—places with different food, different architecture, different clothes, and different entertainments. France is different from the United States in many respects, but it is not an exotic destination the way Japan is—or China or Thailand or India or any of the other countries with whom Japan competes for visitors.

EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE UNITED STATES AND JAPAN

The semiotician Saussure said, “In language there are only differences.” We can say the same about travel to foreign countries and in the case of Japan, the differences are considerable, which leads me to suggest that

Table 11.3 USA and Japanese culture contrasted

<i>Everyday life in the USA</i>	<i>Exotic aspects of Japanese culture</i>
Modern	Traditional and postmodern
The Big Mac	Fugu dinner
Well-done steak	Raw fish
The present	The past
Suits, dresses, jeans	Costumes
Familiar	Strange
The businessman	The geisha
The skyscraper	The temple
The TV wrestler	The Sumo wrestler
The football stadium	The Zen garden

Japan is an exotic travel destination. We can compare everyday life in the United States with the exotic aspects of travel in Japan. If we talk about modern Japan, the differences are not that striking, but if we compare everyday life in the United States with exotic aspects of Japan, as experienced by foreign tourists, the differences are striking (Table 11.3).

It is all of these topics that I have just been discussing that help create the Japanese “brand,” the Japanese tourist experience that has so many interesting, beautiful, remarkable, curious, and sometimes sublime experiences to offer foreign visitors.



Ocean Cruise-Line Wars or Selling the Seas

Abstract This chapter deals with the ocean cruise industry and with the competition between different cruise lines or brands. Cruises are increasingly popular and the different cruise companies are building new ships as fast as they can. There is a great deal of competition among ocean cruise lines for passengers and considerable market segmentation in the industry, which is very profitable. There is considerable brand migration in the industry as many people move to more upscale cruise lines over the years. The chapter offers a discussion of brand and price differentiation in the ocean cruise industry, which is developed by the way they advertise themselves and, more recently, in the way they design their ships. Some cruise lines charge \$1000 for a ten-day cruise and others charge \$8000 for a ten-day cruise on a luxury line.

Keywords Ocean cruises • Cruise lines • Brands • Advertising • Differentiation

The Most Inclusive Luxury Experience. This is cruising as it was meant to be—a sumptuous and very personal experience where your every wish, your every whim and you every want are met with gratifying luxuries, satisfying comfort and complete fulfillment of your wanderlust. Anticipate an unforgettable journey to the world's greatest destinations where everything is included, without exception and without compromise.

Regent Seven Seas Cruises brochure (Exclusively for *San Francisco Chronicle* subscribers)

What gives value to travel is fear. It is the fact that, at a certain moment, when we are so far from our own country...we are seized by a vague fear, and this instinctive desire to go back to the protection of old habits. This is the most obvious benefit of travel. At that moment we are feverish but also porous, so that the slightest touch makes us quiver to the depths of our being This is why we should not say that we travel for pleasure. There is no pleasure in travelling, and I look upon it as an occasion for spiritual testing. Pleasure takes us away from ourselves the same way that distraction, as in Pascal's use of the world, takes us away from God. Travel, which is like a greater and grave science, brings us back to ourselves. (pp. 13–14)

Albert Camus. *Notebooks, 1935–1942*. New York: Alfred Knopf. 1963.

Anyone who has ever purchased a pair of blue jeans knows that there are countless brands of blue jeans available, from very expensive brands that cost hundreds or even thousands of dollars to inexpensive brands that you can buy at a Target or similar store for less than \$20. We can say the same about automobiles, running shoes, and many other products. There is fierce competition between different products to convince someone to buy a particular brand of a product or service and not only a brand but a certain model of the brand. There are sneaker wars and automobile wars going on now and countless other brand wars as companies battle one another for customers.

The “war” I am going to discuss in this chapter is the war between competing ocean cruise lines for passengers to fill their ships. Marketers write about consumer journeys, seeing purchasing something as the culmination of a long narrative that begins with someone’s interest in something and ending with a decision to buy it. I am going to discuss an actual consumer journey—taking a cruise on an ocean liner, an increasingly popular form of travel. So I am writing about an actual journey at the end of a consumer journey.

I will begin by offering information about the ocean cruise industry.

THE OCEAN CRUISE INDUSTRY

Only around 15 % of Americans have taken an ocean cruise. But 15% of 320 million people are around 50 million people and they manage to fill quite a few cruise ships. In addition, people from other countries take

cruises on American ships and there are cruise lines in other countries, as well. The average cruise taker spends \$1728 per person for an entire cruise, generally for seven days, though some cruises on luxury lines cost \$1000 a day.

There is market segmentation in the cruise industry, like all industries. You pay more for a Porsche than for a Honda Civic, though both automobiles can get you to the supermarket and back. My wife and I took a ten-day cruise on the *Grand Princess* from San Francisco to Mexico in January 2, 2018, and it cost only \$699 for an obstructed ocean view cabin. A ten-night cruise on the upscale luxury line's *Seven Seas Navigator* costs \$6999 for its least expensive cabin. So, one night on the *Seas Navigator* costs almost as much as a 10-day cruise on the *Grand Princess*. Of course you get free wine and free tours and many other benefits, but you can see that there are tremendous price variations in the cost of cruises.

Some mass market cruise lines now offer separate sections on their ships for a more upscale experience. The Norwegian Line now offers "The Haven," which it describes as follows:

Your own luxurious enclave at the top of the ship, The Haven by Norwegian is where contemporary elegance, personalized service and privacy combine to create a unique cruising experience.

And other lines have the same kind of separate "cruise within a cruise" arrangement. This represents the introduction of overt class differences into cruising.

According to [Statista.com](https://www.statista.com), tourism is a \$7.17 trillion industry. The cruise industry is an increasingly important part of the tourism industry. The CLIA: Cruise Lines International Association offers some statistics on the size of the cruise industry. These statistics that follow, gathered from Statistica and the CLIA: Cruise Lines International Association web sites, offer some interesting information about economic impact of the cruise industry. The cruise lines will be building 47 new ships between 2015 and 2022. This suggests that cruising is an important kind of tourism and is growing increasingly popular. In an age of terrorism, many people find being on a cruise ship when they travel provides a sense of being safe and secure as well as being an "easy" way to travel. Once you get to the ship, that is.

Table 12.1 Reasons people take cruises

70%	Visit several ports on one trip
60%	Relax, get away from it all
60%	Be pampered
59%	High-quality entertainment
55%	Fine dining

People who take cruises tend to be affluent, have college educations, and are middle-aged. The CLIA made a list of benefits cruise takers thought were important. This list follows and contains no surprises (Table 12.1).

There were many other benefits in the CLIA list but the ones above are among the most important ones. This information was found by conducting surveys and covers both ocean cruising and river cruising. What the list doesn't mention is shopping and from my discussions with passengers we met on cruise ships, shopping seemed to be very important to them. In fact, cruise takers list shopping as one of their favorite activities while on cruises.

The cruise industry is extremely profitable. An article by Jack Hough in *Barron's*, titled "Cruising Toward 20% Gains in 2016," offers the following assessment of the industry:

Near the end of 2015, we sounded the all-aboard horn for the group's Big Three: Carnival (ticker CCL), Royal Caribbean (RCL), and Norwegian Cruise Line Holdings (NCLH). Through Wednesday they had returned 21%, 25%, and 27%, respectively in 2015 compared with 2% for the Standard and Poor's 500. All three could return another 20% or more in 2016. For a high seas trifecta, we like Carnival to win, Norwegian to place, and Royal Caribbean to show.

The cruise market is an oligopoly, with the Carnival Corporation, which operates about 100 ships (it owns Princess, Holland American, and many other lines), controlling nearly half the market. Royal Caribbean has close to a quarter of the market and the Norwegian lines have about 10% of the cruise market. Hough mentions that cruising has grown by 68% in the last ten years (ending in 2014) and that demand in China is growing by 80%. Many cruise lines are now stationing cruise ships in China and designing them to appeal to an increasingly affluent Chinese populace.

It has been estimated that in 15 years or so, the cruise industry in China will be enormous. It is growing by 80% a year and, in the future, a large

percentage of people taking cruises will be from China and other Asian countries. Right now, cruising is, to a large extent, an American form of tourism, since 60% of cruise passengers originate in North America and more than a third of all ocean cruises are in the Caribbean.

In the future, it is expected that more people from other countries will start taking cruises and will have to decide on which brand of cruise line to book and on which to book their trips. Now some cruise lines have ships stationed in China and that market, as I pointed out above, is expected to grow considerably. Soon, most of the major mass market cruise lines, such as Norwegian and Princess, will have cruise ships located in China. China now has a middle class of around 300 million people, which means that many Chinese people will be taking China-based cruises now and in the immediate future.

BRAND DIFFERENTIATION IN OCEAN CRUISES

As I have suggested and as we might expect, there are many different brands of ocean cruise ships and people planning to take ocean cruises have a considerable amount of choice in booking cruises. In Bob Dickinson and Andy Vladimir's *Selling the Sea: An Inside Look at the Cruise Industry*, we find a discussion of what they describe as "positioning" in the ocean cruise industry. They list five categories of cruise lines: budget, contemporary, premium, specialty, and luxury. Their book was published in 1997 so it is a bit dated, but it provides an insight into the different categories of cruise ships available. Below I offer a modified version of a chart they provided (Table 12.2).

Because of all the varying arrangements cruise lines make in their pricing and changes that cruise lines have made in the quality of their ships, rankings of cruise lines are arbitrary and websites on the Internet rank cruises lines differently from one another. They all promise "luxury" to

Table 12.2 Brands of contemporary cruise lines

<i>Contemporary</i>	<i>Premium</i>	<i>Ultra-premium</i>	<i>Luxury</i>
Carnival	Princess	Windstar	Silversea
Royal Caribbean	Holland America	Oceana	Seabourn
Norwegian	Celebrity	Cunard	Viking
Costa		Azamara	Regent Seven Seas
MSC			Crystal

their passengers but there are many kinds or levels of luxury. In addition, as I pointed out earlier, some contemporary cruise lines, such as Norwegian, offer a luxury component that is separated from the experiences of regular passengers on their ships.

It is through their advertising and word of mouth from cruise line brand advocates, as well as pricing, that people make their purchase decisions. In some cases, the difference in price between different contemporary lines or between contemporary and premium lines is not very large, so people book cruises by checking reviews on Internet sites such as Cruise Critic, by asking friends who have been on certain lines what they think of the line (and in many cases, a particular ship). Passengers on cruise ships spend a considerable amount of time at meals discussing cruises they've taken and offering their opinions about cruise lines and ships in that line. So people who take cruises can obtain a great deal of firsthand information about cruise lines and favorite ships from their fellow passengers.

Cruise lines also have reputations. Thus, Carnival is seen as a ship best suited for young people who like to party and do a great deal of drinking while Holland America has a reputation as catering to senior citizens and the elderly. If you look at the design of the new Norwegian line ships, you find many huge slides, which suggests it caters to people who are adventurous and are designed also to be attractive to families whose children enjoy the slides (Fig. 12.1).

The fantastic slides on the Norwegian *Getaway* are an example of the way the design of cruise ships have evolved. They are no longer simply means of transportation but have become sites for experiences and thrills of all kinds. These water slides are remarkable for their size and scope. Many cruise ships have water slides but not as large as the ones on the *Getaway*.

The design of the new Royal Caribbean mega-ships that can hold 6000 passengers plus a large crew is very radical. These gigantic ships are very profitable for Royal Caribbean and now many of the new ocean liners that are being built, designed for mass tourism as opposed to luxury cruising, are very large.

Cruise lines, which are brands, use advertising to position themselves and attempt to induce people to choose to cruise on their ships. The photography in the cruise advertisements and in the brochures which cruise lines send to people are usually quite beautiful. They show potential passengers what awaits them in the different countries they visit and on the



Fig. 12.1 Slides on the Norwegian *Getaway*. (Photo by the author)

ship they will be on. We “see” the places we will be visiting through the templates that the cruise lines provide us. The advertisements also provide rationales for taking cruises. The number of people I’ve met on cruises who have told me “You only have to unpack once” is astronomical.

As Dickinson and Vladimir explain in *Selling the Sea* (1997: 218):

The differences in major lines lie not in the way they build their ships or in the food they serve. They are, to a large extent, shaped not only by the guest’s cruise experience but by the advertising and other marketing communications that have created a personality for the brand.

Actually, there are considerable differences now in the design of cruise ships nowadays and in the quality of the food on cruise ships, which shape the way passengers think about each cruise lines, but Dickinson and Vladimir are correct in suggesting that advertising and marketing play an important role in establishing a cruise line’s “personality.”

The models that are used in cruise line photographs give us an idea of what the typical passenger is like (are they young couples with children, handsome middle-age couples or 30-year-old swingers? or all of them) and the photographs of the food are meant to suggest what the food will be like on a ship: filet mignon, fine wines, and an ambience of pleasure and refinement with sophisticated world travelers at the dinner table. There is also a kind of cruise line brand migration over the years as people who start cruising on a mass market line sometimes move up to luxury lines. For example, a friend of mine who used to cruise on the Princess line told me his next cruise will be on Viking's ocean line. His Viking cruise will cost three times as much as he spent with Princess cruises. Many people cruise on a variety of lines—primarily basing their decisions on the ports that a given ship visits. On the other hand, at the other extreme, I've met people who have only cruised on Princess ships. Their mantra is "you can't beat Princess for value." On a recent cruise on the Holland America line, I met many passengers who only cruise on that line.

In the epigraph to this chapter, I have material dealing with the personality of the Norwegian line, which focuses on "freedom," and from the Seven Seas line, which focuses upon "sumptuous" luxury. Every brand of cruise line seeks to define itself and differentiate itself from other lines, though many cruise lines, at all price levels, are owned by one company—the Carnival Corporation. Differentiation is what branding is about. At the beginning of this book, I quoted from Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the founding fathers of semiotics, who wrote: "in languages there are only differences." We can adapt that thought and suggest that "in brands there are only differences." And it is the task of marketers and advertisers to show those differences and find enough passengers attracted to the "personalities" of the different brands of cruise lines to fill the cabins.



Brand Sacrality

Abstract Taking a cue from the French sociologist Emile Durkheim, who wrote about the contrast between the sacred and the profane in religious thoughts, I compare brands and religions and suggest there are a number of similarities between the two and that brands can be seen as functional alternatives to religions. I then discuss the Apple Corporation and its logo of an apple with a bite taken out of it, which calls to mind the story of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. This leads to a discussion of the sacred nature of department stores, which I suggest are functional alternatives to cathedrals, and to discussion of religions as brands and brands as religions. Changing brands of smartphones from Android to Apple is, I suggest, similar to being converted to a new religion. I conclude with a comparison of Harley-Davidson rallies and religious festivals, which reinforce the attachment of attendees to their consumer cults.

Keywords Durkheim • Sacred • Profane • Functional alternatives • Conversion

All known religious beliefs, whether simple or complex, present one common characteristic: they presuppose a classification of all things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by two distinct terms which are translated well enough by the words profane and sacred (profane, sacré). This division of the world into two domains, the one containing all that is sacred, the

other all that is profane, is the distinctive trait of religious thought: the beliefs, myths, dogmas and legend are either representations or systems of representations which express the nature of sacred things, the virtues and powers that are attributed to them, or their relations with each other and with profane things. But by sacred things one must not understand those personal beings which are called gods or spirits: a rock, a tree, a spring, a pebble, a piece of wood, a house, in a word, anything can be sacred The circle of sacred objects cannot be determined, then, once and for all. Its extent varies infinitely, according to the different religions.

Emile Durkheim, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*
In short, the majority of men "without religion" still hold to pseudo-religions and degenerated mythologies. There is nothing surprising about this, for, as we saw, profane man is the descendant of homo religiosus and he cannot wipe out his own history—that is, the behavior of his religious ancestors which has made him what he is today. This is all the more true because a great part of his existence is fed by impulses that come to him from the depths of his being, from the zone that has been called "the unconscious." A purely rational man is an abstraction; he is never found in real life. Every human being is made up at once of his conscious activity and his irrational experiences. Now, the contents and structures of the unconscious exhibit astonishing similarities to mythological images and figures.

Mircea Eliade, *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion*

What would Emile Durkheim, the great French sociologist, have made of contemporary American consumer culture? Durkheim's classic study, *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life*, argues that the contrast between the sacred and the profane is of major importance in religions and that religions play significant roles in all societies. His discussion of the sacred and the profane in the epilogue sets the stage for our understanding of the sacrality of brands.

BRANDS AND RELIGIONS COMPARED

I will take a Durkheimian perspective and suggest we can see the sacred and the profane in contemporary consumer cultures. Religions, we can say, are like brands and brands are like religions. There are a number of interesting similarities between the two seemingly "opposing" domains

Table 13.1 Brands are similar to religions

Brands	Religions
Profane	Sacred
Logo	Symbol: Cross, Star of David, Crescent
Advertising	Holy text: Bible, Koran
Brand advocates	Missionaries
Cult brands	Sects
Department stores, Internet	Churches, cathedrals
Confidence	Faith
Creation legends (Steve Jobs)	Saints
Decision to buy	Hierophany

that I will discuss. I begin with a chart showing how brands and religions mirror one another (Table 13.1).

We can see that there are a number of areas in which brands and religions are like one another, leading me to suggest that brands, in a curious way, are functional alternatives to organized religions.

The Logo and its tagline are the profane equivalent of the symbols of the great religions such as the cross for Christianity, the Star of David for Judaism, and the Crescent for Islam. Logos identify specific brands and religious symbols identify specific religions. In *Man and His Symbols*, Carl Jung discusses different kinds of symbols (1968: 83):

When the medical psychologist takes an interest in symbols, he is primarily concerned with “natural” symbols as distinct from “cultural” symbols. The former are derived from the unconscious content of the psyche, and they therefore represent an enormous number of variations on the essential archetypal images The cultural symbols on the other hand, are those that have been used to express “eternal truths,” and that are still used in many religions. They have gone through many transformations and even a long process of more or less conscious development, and have thus become collective images, accepted by civilized societies. Such cultural symbols nevertheless retain much of their original “numinosity or spell.” One is aware that they can evoke a deep emotional response in some individuals, and this psychic charge makes them function in much the same way as prejudices

What is important in Jung’s thinking is his suggestion that symbols have the power to evoke powerful emotional responses in people. This applies to religious symbols but to other kinds of symbols as well, such as, in America, the American flag, the White House, Starbucks logos, and Apple logos. Symbols, we must recognize, speak to forces in our unconscious

and in some cases people are willing to sacrifice their lives in defending symbols.

Religions have sacred texts, such as the Bible, the Koran, the Book of Mormon, and so on, in which the basic beliefs of the religion are explained—often in the form of sacred narratives. Durkheim calls these beliefs a “church.” As he explains in his book *The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life* (1965: 69):

The really religious beliefs are always common to a determined group, which makes profession of adhering to them and of practicing the rites connected with them. They are not merely received individually by all the members of the group, and they make its unity. The individuals which compose it feel themselves united to each other by the simple fact that they have a common faith. A society whose members are united by the fact that they think in the same way in regard to the sacred world and its relations with the profane world, and by the fact that they translate these common ideas into common practices, is what is called a Church. In all history, we do not find a single religion without a Church....Even the so-called private cults, such as the domestic cult or the cult of a corporation, satisfy this condition: for they are always celebrated by a group, the family, or the corporation.

When I think of Durkheim’s ideas, here, I cannot help but think of consumer cults such as Apple owners, Oakland Raider “nation,” or of Harley-Davidson owners at their gigantic rallies. Organized religions have holy texts and consumer brands have advertising to show their logos and taglines and spread the word about a given product. From this perspective, advertising has a religious significance—religion meaning obedience to some doctrine or, more literally, “to bind.”

Cathedrals are gathering places for tourists. This photo is of a cathedral in Barcelona, Spain (Fig. 13.1). Department stores are also gathering places for people and are, as the following analysis suggests, similar in many respects to cathedrals.

DEPARTMENT STORES AND CATHEDRALS AS FUNCTIONAL ALTERNATIVES

Religions build churches and cathedrals where their members can worship, and consumer brands use a secular equivalent of a church, department stores—either real or virtual on the Internet—to consummate their



Fig. 13.1 Cathedral. (Photo by the author)

quasi-religious fervor and purchase products and services. I have dealt with the similarity of department stores and cathedrals in other writings and offer it here as a means of suggesting that there is a sacred element to department stores. Department stores are, I suggest, functional alternatives to cathedrals (Table 13.2).

Department Stores as Functional Alternatives to Cathedrals

This list suggests that department stores (bricks and mortar and virtual) and cathedrals (and church buildings of all kinds) are related in many ways. It also deals with the notion that those who can purchase certain expensive goods and services are a kind of “elect,” who are loved by God and deserve their good fortune.

As John Calvin (1509–1564), an influential Protestant theologian, explained (quoted in David van Tassel and Robert W. McAharen, eds. 1969, *European Origins of American Thought*):

Table 13.2 Department stores are functional alternatives to cathedrals

<i>Department store</i>	<i>Cathedral</i>
Modern	Medieval
Paradisiacal: Heaven on Earth Now	Paradisiacal: Heaven in the Future
Passion: Merchandising	Passion: Salvation
Sales: Save Money	Prayer: Save Souls
Sacred Texts: Catalogs, brochures	Sacred Texts: Bible, Prayer Books
Clerks	Clergy
Sell: Products	Sell: God
Possessions Signs of Spiritual Election	Holiness Sign of Spiritual Election
Big Sales Days	Religious Holidays
Sale of an Expensive Product	Conversion of a Sinner
Buy Incredible Gifts	Experience Miracles
Pay Taxes	Pay Tithe
Muzak	Religious Music
Lighting to Sell	Lighting to Inspire Reverence
Bad Credit	Penance
Advertising	Proselytizing
Cash Register	Offering Plate
Brand Loyalty	Devotion
Decision to buy	Hierophany

If we are only to pass through the earth, we ought undoubtedly to make such a use of its blessings as will assist rather than retard us in our journey. It is not without reason, therefore, that Paul advises us to use the world as though we used it not, and to buy with the same disposition with which we sell. (I Cor. Vii: 30, 31)

Calvin argued that we must avoid extravagant excesses and intemperance, on one side, and life-denying asceticism and austerity on the other.

Marketers now talk about how consumers are always engaged in a journey, whose final destination is the purchase of something that they feel the need or want. Needs, we must remember, are finite, while desires are infinite. We can describe the culminating experience, when someone (a customer) decides to buy something similar to what religious scholars call a “hierophany.” Mircea Eliade, who is a well-known scholar of religions (and a controversial one, as well), describes a hierophany as follows, in his book *The Sacred and the Profane: The Nature of Religion* (1961: 11, 12):

Man becomes aware of the sacred because it manifests itself, shows itself, as something wholly different from the profane. To designate the *act of manifestation* of the sacred, we have proposed the term *hierophany*. It is a fitting term, because it does not imply anything further; it expresses no more than is implicit in its etymological content, i.e. that *something sacred shows itself to us* By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes *something else*, yet it continues to remain *itself*, for it continues to participate in the cosmic milieu. A *sacred* stone remains a stone; apparently (or, more precisely, from the profane point of view), nothing distinguishes it from all other stones. But for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality.

What I am suggesting here is that we can make a comparison between people, at the end of their consumer journeys, making a decision to buy a brand of something and people, in religious environments, experiencing something sacred and psychologically important, such as experiencing Jesus Christ for Christians. In his book, Eliade describes the difference between sacred space and profane space (e.g., a cathedral and a department store or an office building) and sacred time and profane time (the calendars of Jews, Christians, and Muslims and the calendars found in all countries). He argues that modern men and women who might feel they are not religious still believe in any number of “camouflaged myths and degenerated rituals.”

BRANDS AND RELIGIONS

Benoit Heilbrunn writes in “Towards an Ideology of Neutrality” about the relation between brands and religion. As he explains:

There seems to be a sort of displacement of current ideology sources from the theoretical and the political towards the economic. In a “desecularized” context, economic entities (and mostly brands) have taken the symbolic space left empty by the retreat of the divine. Brands now pre-empt symbolic sphere that used to be the privilege of either religion or the political sphere. Among the numerous examples which could be quoted are:

*the borrowing of Judeo-Christian myths by brands: Santa Claus and its use by Coca-Cola provided a good example of this cultural and ideological borrowing;

*highly symbolic activities are not managed by economic entities: retailers like Carrefour organize social events like weddings (they take in charge wedding lists for instance).

There thus seems to be a radical evolution of the role of brands from management to government Through the power of their ubiquity, their visibility and their ability to promote endless discourse, brands shape the way we see ourselves, others and the world in general.

This discussion by Heilbrunn suggests that many of the functions traditionally connected with religion, such as the use of myths, of highly symbolic activities such as weddings (he also discusses funerals and Disneyland) are now tied to brands. In other words, he is affirming what I describe as brand sacrality.

People who see themselves as profane or who even see themselves as religious may find that my comparisons between brands and religion and my suggestion that department stores and similar kinds of enterprises can be seen as functional alternatives to cathedrals and churches of one kind or another, is forced and maybe absurd. And that is because they do not see their behavior as consumers as having anything to do with religion and believe their decisions are basically rational, whereas I argue that the purchasing of a product or service, which marks the end of the so-called consumer journey, is essentially emotional and has a religious dimension to it.

In this light, people who change brands are similar to people who convert from one religion to another and people who go to Apple shows or Harley-Davidson rallies are similar to those who go on religious pilgrimages. The passion of pilgrims in holy sites is, perhaps, a bit more intense than the way bikers feel in their rallies but not that much more extreme. Two Harley-Davidson bikers, a husband and wife, told me how they took two days of biking all day long to attend a rally thousands of miles away from where they lived. To my mind, they were not that different from religious pilgrims.

Those who believe that consumer decisions are essentially rational do not, I would suggest, take into account the unconscious that shapes many of the decisions people make. I discussed this topic earlier and quoted from Sigmund Freud and marketing expert Gerald Zalman on the matter. People may laugh at the notion that belonging to a consumer cult has a religious dimension to it, but when they attend a Harley-Davidson motorcycle rally with 25,000 or 50,000 other owners of Harley-Davidson

motorcycles and spend the time, however long the rally lasts, drinking and partying (and doing whatever else they do at these rallies), they are participating in the profane equivalent of a religious festival or gathering of pilgrims. These festivals reinforce the allegiance of the pilgrims to their religion just as attending a Harley-Davidson rally reinforces the attachment of attendees to their consumer cult.



Brand Discourse

Abstract The discipline of discourse analysis is introduced and explained, and its utility for understanding brands is dealt with. Discourse analysis originally focused only on language use but has evolved and now deals with images and sound as well. The language used in an interesting advertisement, for Hydracel moisturizer, is analyzed, in considerable detail, to show how the writer of this advertisement used metaphor to make an argument and convince readers to use the product. The analysis deals with the difference between scientific thinking and magical thinking in the Hydracel advertisement. The chapter concludes with a discussion of the cultural significance of the language used in a Harley-Davidson description of itself on its Internet page.

Keywords Discourse analysis • Language • Hydracel moisturizer • Harley-Davidson

In the late 1980s and 1990s a number of authors who had been working in linguistics began to realize that meaning is generally communicated not only through language but also through other semiotic modes. A linguist might, for example, be able to provide a thorough and revealing analysis of the language used in an advertisement. But much of the meaning of this advertisement might be communicated by visual features. The same would apply to a news

text that was accompanied by a photograph or a textbook where an exercise was part linguistic and part visual.

David Machin and Andrea Mayr, *How to Do Critical Discourse Analysis* *Language is a social practice—and many would want to say that it is the defining social practice. Our social relationships are almost wholly realized in language; language leads us to act and behave in certain ways, and it is a powerful shaping force in how we think and construct the world we live in. It would certainly be a mistake to believe that our social practices consist of nothing but language but it is equally certain that the way we use language is an essential part of our human experience. It may even be largely through the social practice of language that we actually “construct” ourselves as we negotiate through life Without necessarily realizing it at a conscious level, we follow socially and culturally constructed communicative conventions.*

Nicola Woods, *Describing Discourse: A Practical Guide to Discourse Analysis*

Discourse is generally defined in dictionaries as language or conversation or a treatise on some subject. Discourse analysts are scholars who are interested in how our use of language shapes our identities, our relationships with others and our society, and politics. Scholars in many different disciplines are interested in language but generally they are interested in what is said in discourses and not in how language is used. Discourse analysts are interested in the expression aspects of language, its form as well as its content.

DEFINING DISCOURSE ANALYSIS

In *Discourse Analysis: Investigating Processes of Social Construction*, Nelson Phillips and Cynthia Hardy describe how discourse analysis differs from other approaches to language (2002: 6):

Traditional qualitative approaches often assume a social world and then seek to understand the meaning of this world for participants. Discourse analysis, on the other hand, tried to explore how the socially produced ideas and objects that populate the world were created in the first place and how they are maintained and held in place over time. Whereas other qualitative

methodologies work to understand or interpret social reality as it exists, discourse analysis endeavors to uncover the way in which it is produced. This is the most important contribution of discourse analysis: it examines how language constructs phenomena, how it reflects and reveals it. In other words, discourse analysis views discourse as constitutive of the social world—not a route to it—and assumes the world cannot be known separately from discourse.

For Phillips and Hardy, language helps us construct our social and political world and focuses on the way our language functions.

Another discourse analyst, Teun A. van Dijk, discusses the main dimensions of discourse analysis in his book *Discourse as Structure in Process*. In his chapter “The Study of Discourse,” he deals with the main areas of discourse analysis (1997: 2):

(a) *language use*, (b) the *communication of beliefs* (cognition), and (c) *interaction* in social situations. Given these three dimensions, it is not surprising to find that several disciplines are involved in the study of discourse such as linguistics (for the specific study of language and language use), psychology (for the study of beliefs and how they are communicated), and the social sciences (for the analysis of interactions in social situations). It is typically the task of discourse studies to provide *integrated* descriptions of these three main dimensions of discourse: how does language use influence beliefs and interaction, or vice versa, how do aspects of interactions influence how people speak, or how do beliefs control language use and interaction? Moreover, besides giving systematic descriptions, we may expect discourse studies to formulate *theories* that *explain* such relationships between language use, beliefs, and interaction.

So there is very little under the sun that discourse analysis doesn't or couldn't have something to say about. Historically, discourse analysis evolved from linguistics, which traditionally focused its attention on sentences, but then moved on to conversations, to written language and eventually to multimodal discourse analysis, which covers both written language and images. When we think about discourse and brands, it seems to me that there are two possibilities of interest. First, there is discourse about branded products, which we can describe as product promotion or advertising. Second, there is discourse about brands, themselves, which we can describe a brand promotion and may be thought of as a kind of public relations.

A DISCOURSE ANALYSIS OF A BRANDED PRODUCT

In analyzing advertisements, there are countless things to keep in mind, such as the language used (including devices such as metaphor and metonymy), the typefaces used, the images shown, the colors used, the looks of the men and women in the advertisement (if there are any), the lighting, the spatiality, the background information needed to make sense of the advertisement, any allusions it makes, and so on. Since we are interested in discourse, here, it is logical to analyze an advertisement for a brand of moisturizer with a considerable amount of copy. With that in mind, I have chosen an advertisement for *Living Proof Cream Hydracel by Geminess* that appeared a number of years ago and which I have written about at times, but not to the extent that I am doing in this chapter (Fig. 14.1).

This advertisement takes a whole page, has a great deal of print copy in two columns, and only has a tiny photograph of a woman at the bottom of the page in the middle. There is no logo other than the typography of the brand: Living Proof Cream Hydracel by Geminess. The headline, in very large type, takes approximately a third of the page. It is nine words long.

“There is a fountain of youth.” To understand this phrase, one must know that there is a mythical “fountain of youth” described in Wikipedia as follows:

The **Fountain of Youth** is a spring that supposedly restores the youth of anyone who drinks or bathes in its waters. Tales of such a fountain have been recounted across the world for thousands of years, appearing in writings by Herodotus (5th century BC), the Alexander romance (3rd century AD), and the stories of Prester John (early Crusades, 11th/12th centuries AD). Stories of similar waters were also evidently prominent among the indigenous peoples of the Caribbean during the Age of Exploration (early 16th century), who spoke of the restorative powers of the water in the mythical land of Bimini. The legend became particularly prominent in the 16th century, when it was attached to the Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de León, first Governor of Puerto Rico. According to an apocryphal combination of New World and Eurasian elements, Ponce de León was searching for the Fountain of Youth when he traveled to what is now Florida in 1513, but this is a myth. The legend says that Ponce de León was told by Native Americans that the Fountain of Youth was in Bimini and it could restore youth to anyone.

There is a fountain of youth. It's called water.

Nature has been telling us this forever.
Water keeps a rose fresh and beautiful.
A peach, juicy. All living things, living.
Including your skin.
The millions of cells in your skin contain
water. This water pillows and cushions your
skin, making it soft and young-looking.

But, for a lot of reasons, cells become
unable to hold enough water. And the water
escapes from your skin.

(If you'll forgive us, think of a prune
drying up and you know the whole story.)

Now, moisturizers have helped but only
up to a point.

The truth about moisturizers.

Most people think a moisturizer literally
puts moisture into your skin.

Not true. (Your skin has all the water it
needs. Holding it there is the problem.)

An average moisturizer holds the water
in by blocking its escape.

But, unfortunately, this does not affect
your cells' ability to retain
water. This is where we
come in.

We are Living Proof by
Gemmesse. And our break-
through is Cream Hydracel.



Hydracel: nature's helper.

The name Hydracel tells you what we're
all about: water and cell.

Cream Hydracel actually helps the
cellular tissues retain water.

We let nature do the work, not heavy
creams. And this can make all the difference.

Your skin will breathe and start to
recover its water-holding power.

And your face will feel softer and look
younger, naturally.

It's as simple as that.

Our promise isn't a promise. It's a fact.

After just three days with Cream
Hydracel, your skin will feel softer.

After a few weeks, your skin will actually
look younger.

And it only gets better. Because Cream
Hydracel helps to restore — and maintain —
the natural water balance in your skin.

And this is what helps keep skin soft and
young-looking.

Nature gave you a fountain of youth.
Cream Hydracel keeps it flowing.

LIVING PROOF
Cream Hydracel
by GEMINESSE

Fig. 14.1 A discourse analysis of the Cream Hydracel advertisement

Readers of this advertisement must know about this myth for it to have any meaning, just as readers of all advertisements for any brand of anything must bring background knowledge to them if they are to fully understand them. The assertion that "There is a fountain of youth" is

obviously incorrect and it meant to attract our attention. Or, it is meant to suggest that our dream of finding a fountain of youth can be realized. The important word here is “youth,” for what the fountain promises is eternal life, since it provides us with the ability to *restore* our youth.

“It’s called water,” the next line, seems redundant, for fountains are, by definition, either natural jets of water or objects that use mechanical devices to release jets of water. But water is of great importance for Cream Hydracel (no longer being manufactured) since the product is a moisturizer.

“Nature has been telling us this forever.” We find here an appeal to nature and things natural and with the word “forever” a restatement of the dream of eternal life. In American culture, the word “natural” has great resonance since we see ourselves, mythically, as living in a garden country and maybe even a modern manifestation of the Garden of Eden, where we were promised eternal life, thanks to the fountain of youth there.

“Water keeps a rose fresh and beautiful.” Here we are offered an image of a flower that is connected in the popular imagination with romance and love and is very beautiful. The implication is that by using Cream Hydracel, we can look “fresh” and beautiful.

“A peach juicy. All living things living.” Peaches are a juicy kind of fruit and being juicy is suggested as something we may wish to approximate for what makes a peach juicy is that it has so much water in it. Water, we are told, keeps “all living things living,” which is much to be preferred since all living things end up, we all know, eventually dying. Unless, of course, they have access to the fountain of youth.

“The millions of cells in your skin contain water. This water pillows and cushions your skin, making it soft and young-looking.” Notice the use of terms such as “pillows,” “cushions,” “soft,” and “young looking.” These terms all suggest that water has a magical power to make our skin “soft” and “young looking,” for it is our ability to keep water in our skin soft and that makes us look young. This is possible because of the “millions of cells” in our skin that contain water. Here we seem to have science explaining to us how we can have soft, smooth, and young-looking skin.

“But, for a lot of reasons, cells become unable to hold enough water. And the water escapes from your skin.” Here we leave the realm of magical thinking about the fountain of youth and eternal life and return to the realm of science, where we learn that the millions of cells in our skin cannot contain their water and it escapes from our skin. A feeling of des-

peration is engendered as we find ourselves as a kind of reverse form of the fountain of youth, as the water gushes out from us, escaping from the containment of our skin. We become, so to speak, fountains of aging. At the unconscious level, this advertisement may also generate anxieties about women and their periods, for when women have their periods, they are, in a sense, fountains—but of blood, not water.

(If you'll forgive us, think of a prune drying up and you'll know the whole story.) This image of a dried-up prune is a very powerful one and is the opposite of a peach, described earlier, bursting with water. This image draws upon anxieties women have about their looks, their sexual appeal, and ultimately their fecundity. The advertisement draws upon fears women have about being able to reproduce and getting old with dried-up skin and a dried-up body. A prune is a plum that has dried up and has a black and wrinkled appearance. The prune creates a drama as women are posed with the image of themselves as gushing water, having skin that is wrinkled like a prune, and their bodies becoming a kind of wasteland.

"Now moisturizers have helped but only to a point ... Most people think a moisturizer literally puts moisture into your skin. Not true. (Your skin has all the water it needs. Holding it there is the problem.) An average moisturizer holds the water in by blocking its escape. But, unfortunately, this does not affect your cells ability to retain water. This is where we come in." Here we return to science and what it has to say about cells in the skin and what is distinctive about Hydracel: it is formulated to help women retain water in their skin cells. It instructs readers into a bit of cell biology. Moisturizers do not add moisture to the skin but block water's escape from the skin. But this is inadequate because it doesn't deal with the ability of cells to retain the water they already contain. The term "escape" is used again to generate an image of women becoming more prune like as the water escapes from their skin cells. In this advertisement we have a curious combination of magical thinking with the myth of the fountain of youth existing along with lessons on cell biology.

"The name Hydracel tells you what we're all about: water and cell. Cream Hydracel actually helps the cellular tissues to retain water. We let nature do the work, not heavy creams. And this can make all the difference." Here, the lesson is cellular biology continues and Hydracel explains how it is different from ordinary moisturizers, since it helps the cells retain the water that is naturally in the skin cells. The term "hydra" is, it seems, a reference to "hydrology," which deals with the circulation of water on the earth's surface. It also has mythological significance, but that

is not relevant to our interests here. Readers have been given a lesson in skin cell biology and any incorrect ideas they may have had about how moisturizers have been corrected.

“After a few weeks, your skin will actually look younger. Because Cream Hydracel helps to restore—and maintain—the natural water balance in your skin. And that is what helps keep skin soft and young-looking. Nature gave you a fountain of youth. Cream Hydracel keeps it flowing.” Cream Hydracel doesn’t explain how it restores and keeps the “natural water balance” in a user’s skin. It is an assertion that seems possible, given all the science Cream Hydracel has offered the reader. The end returns to the beginning of the advertisement, with a reference to the fountain of youth, which is, in essence, a return to magical thinking.

Consider the use of language in this advertisement. We find words such as “fresh,” “beautiful,” “peach,” “softer,” “pillows,” “cushions,” “younger,” and “natural,” which contrast with scare terms such as “escape,” “prune,” and “heavy.” The image of a peach that can become a prune is especially powerful since it is tied to fruits with which everyone is familiar. There is also the image of water “escaping” from the millions of cells in a woman’s skin that is compelling (Table 14.1).

This advertisement contains a set of polar oppositions that enable readers to make sense of the argument. Texts, by their nature, are composed of oppositions that are either stated or implied, and the Cream Hydracel advertisement has the oppositions I’ve discussed. It seems to be based on science, but in reality is based on magical thinking and the use of scare tactics: if you don’t use Cream Hydracel, water will be gushing out of the millions of cells in your skin in a torrent and you will change from having the complexion of a juicy peach to looking like a dried-up prune. If you do

Table 14.1 Magical thinking versus scientific knowledge

<i>Magical thinking</i>	<i>Scientific knowledge</i>
Fountain of youth	Cell biology
Water maintained in cells	Water escapes from cells
Skin breathes	Skin blocked (heavy creams)
Peach	Prune
Young looking	Old looking
Smooth skin	Rough skin
Light	Dark (prunes are black)
Natural	Artificial
Restore	Lose

use Cream Hydracel, you'll look young since it will restore your skin to when you were younger and had smooth skin and nature will keep you looking that way.

Incidentally, Gemnesse Cream Hydracel sold for \$25.00 for four ounces in 1976, which means it would cost around \$108.00 for four ounces in 2017. It was relatively expensive then and would be relatively expensive now. [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com) has moisturizers available for as little as \$4.00.

This discussion shows the way that brands like Gemnesse Cream Hydracel use linguistic devices like metaphor and similes as well as pseudoscience and psychology to generate fear and anxiety in women. It is hoped they will be persuaded to buy the Gemnesse Cream Hydracel brand of moisturizer so they can avoid looking like prunes.

BRAND PROMOTION: HARLEY-DAVIDSON

It is interesting to read what brands write about themselves. Below I offer a description of the Harley-Davidson company taken from its web site. It is written in a very simple manner and makes claims, in a modest way, about its stature and status:

Harley-Davidson, Inc., or Harley, is an American motorcycle manufacturer, founded in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in 1903. One of two major American motorcycle manufacturers to survive the Great Depression, the company has survived numerous ownership arrangements, subsidiary arrangements, periods of poor economic health and product quality, as well as intense global competition, to become one of the world's largest motorcycle manufacturers and an iconic brand widely known for its loyal following. There are owner clubs and events worldwide as well as a company-sponsored brand-focused museum.

The language of this text is very modest and simple, but it has a number of aspects worth considering.

History

It identifies the company as an American company that was founded as early as 1903 and one of only two motorcycles that survived the Great Depression and has had many different owners. Harley-Davidson also competes with motorcycle manufacturers all over the world. The

implication is that it has survived economic disasters and global competition because its motorcycles are so good.

Honesty

It adds that in the past Harley-Davidson has made motorcycles that were not always of high quality, but now, we must assume, because of the quality of its motorcycles, it is one of the world's largest motorcycle manufacturers.

Cultic Aspects

The company sees itself as “iconic” and has “many loyal followers” all over the world and these clubs sponsor events of all kinds.

Status

There is a Harley-Davidson company brand museum which, in the popular mind, suggests an elevated status in the world of goods and services.

There is, then, a good deal of information packed into the relatively brief Harley-Davidson description of itself. I have, earlier in the book, discussed the attachment many owners of these motorcycles feel about their bikes and the Harley-Davidson subculture, cult, or whatever you want it. Many people I've met have very strong feelings about having a Harley-Davidson motorcycle and being a member of the Harley-Davidson “loyal following.” I checked on the Internet and Harley-Davidson motorcycles, on the page I found, Motorcycle.com, the Harley-Davidson cycles sold for between \$9000 and \$34,000.

Manufacturers of goods, like Gemmesse and Harley-Davidson, use many different approaches and resources to persuade people to purchase their brands and not other brands of the same product. Analyzing the language they use in their advertisements and company statements provides insights into the way brands employ linguistic devices to attract the attention of potential customers and convince them of the value of the brand they are considering purchasing.



Mythology and Brands

Abstract After defining myths, and suggesting that myths still play a role in contemporary life, even though they do this in disguised form, we use myth to understand the mythic dimensions of the Harley-Davidson motorcycle company, suggesting it is connected to the myth of Hades. We show this by using my “myth model” in which various aspects of myths, as they inform psychoanalytic theory, historical experience, elite culture, popular culture, and everyday life, are examined and applied to Harley-Davidson.

Keywords Harley-Davidson • Myth • Myth model • Hades

As in the myths of Prometheus, Hercules, and other ancient heroes, Superman’s exploits revolve around a universal mythic theme—the struggle of Good and Evil. This is what makes Superman, or any action hero for that matter, so intuitively appealing to modern audiences The word “myth” derives from the Greek mythos: “word,” “speech,” “tale of the gods.” It can be defined as a narrative in which the characters are gods, heroes, and mystical beings, in which the plot is about the origin of things or about metaphysical events in human life, and in which the setting is a metaphysical world juxtaposed against the real world. In the beginning stages of human cultures, myths functioned as genuine “narrative theories” of the world. That is why all cultures have created them to explain their origins The use of mythic themes and elements in media representations has become so widespread

that it is hardly noticed any longer, despite Barthes' cogent warnings in the late 1950s. Implicit myths about the struggle for Good, of the need for heroes to lead us forward, and so on and so forth, constitute the narrative underpinnings of TV programmes, blockbuster movies, advertisements and commercials, and virtually anything that gets "media air time." (2002: 47–48)

Marcel Danesi, *Understanding Media Semiotics*
This is something that comes up in our work all the time: A store has more than one constituency, and it must therefore perform several functions, all from the same premises. Sometimes these functions exist in perfect harmony, but other times—especially in stores selling diverse goods, like cold drinks and medicines—those functions clash. We also saw this in a Harley-Davidson dealership, where a roughly three-thousand-square-foot showroom has to make room for well-off male menopause victims looking to recover their virility by buying bikes, blue-collar gearheads who are there for spare parts, and teenage dreamers interest in the Harley-logo fashions. All three groups want nothing to do with one another.

Paco Underhill, *Why We Buy: The Science of Shopping*

Since mythology informs much of modern life, and I've written a book *Media, Myth and Society* on the topic, it is not surprising to find many brands using myths either for their names or for products they make or services they offer. There are many websites that list brands tied to myths. Below I list some of the most common products with mythic connections:

Ajax (cleaner)	Hermes (clothes)
Amazon (e-store)	Midas (mufflers)
Nike (athletic supplies)	Olympic (cameras)
Pandora (music)	Mars (candy)
Saturn (automobiles)	Janus (investments)
Trojan (condoms)	Oracle (software)

There are many sites on the Internet with lists of brand names that have mythic roots. This is because, I would suggest, myths still play a role in our lives and thinking, though we are generally unaware of the extent and importance of their influence.

MYTH DEFINED

The Greek work “mythos” means story. In addition to Danesi’s excellent definition of myth, we find another useful definition of myth in Raphael Patai’s *Myth and Modern Man* in which is described in the following terms (1972: 2):

Myth ... is a traditional religious charter, which operates by validating laws, customs, rites, institutions and beliefs, or explaining socio-cultural situations and natural phenomena, and taking the form of stories, believed to be true, about divine beings and heroes...Myths are dramatic stories that form a sacred charter either authorizing the continuance of ancient institutions, customs, rites and beliefs in the area where they are current, or approving alterations.

Patai adds that myths play an important role in shaping social life and explains that “myth not only validates or authorizes customs, rites, institutions, beliefs, and so forth, but frequently is directly responsible for creating them” (1972: 2). Myth is sometimes used to describe false or unfounded beliefs, but my focus here will be not on myth as falsehood or error but on the cultural, psychological, and social meanings of myths as narratives and the way these narratives are involved in brands and consumer culture.

Mircea Eliade, whose ideas were discussed earlier, has an important insight into the nature of myth in his book *The Sacred and Profane* (1961: 95):

The myth relates a sacred history, that is, a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time, *ab initio*. But to relate a sacred history is equivalent to revealing a mystery. For the persons of the myth are not human beings; they are gods or culture heroes, and for this reason their *gesta* constitute mysteries; man could not know their acts if they were not revealed to him.

Myths, then, are about gods and goddesses whose stories are full of mysteries that and whose adventures, we will find, still have the power to influence our imaginations.

Companies use myths because they feel that their names suggest status and seriousness and a connection to important events in history and in the human imagination. Myths are about gods and goddesses, whose stories are full of mysteries and whose adventures, we will find, still have the

power to shape our thinking and behavior. These myths convey their messages to us based on unconscious imperatives that are built into the nature of language and of narratives. I would suggest that popular culture, which relies to a great extent on narrative texts (stories), often has mythic roots of which we are generally unaware. I follow standard academic practice and use the term “text” to stand for a film, a television program, a commercial, a comic strip, or a logo—that is, any work of art.

Eliade defines myth, I should add, as the recitation of a sacred history, “a primordial event that took place at the beginning of time” (1961: 95). Many of the heroes and villains in myths have a symbolic significance, which helps explain their significance, for, as Eliade explains (1961: 211), “it is through symbols that man finds his way out of his particular situation and ‘opens himself’ to the general and the universal. Symbols awaken individual experience and transmute it into a spiritual act, into metaphysical comprehension of the world.”

MYTH AND BRANDS: A CASE HISTORY

In my discussion of Apple’s logo, earlier in the book, I used a “myth model” that I developed to deal with the symbolism of the Apple logo and its connection to myths and sacred histories. In Apple’s case, the myth is the story of Adam and Eve. They ate an apple from a forbidden tree and were expelled from the Garden of Paradise. The Apple logo shows an apple with a bite out of it. The name of the Apple corporation is based on this myth.

I will deal with the mythic significance of another brand and suggest that the roots of the brand, Harley-Davidson, also have a mythic dimension, even if the Harley-Davidson name and its logo do not have obvious mythic significance to the average person. I will take, for my myth, the story of Hades, the god of the underworld. In Edith Hamilton’s *Mythology*, there is a drawing of Hades riding in a chariot with four two horses, carrying off Persephone, and bringing her down to the underworld. Beneath the drawing we read “The rape of Persephone.” Hamilton writes about Hades and Persephone as follows (1940: 50):

The lord of the dark underworld, the king of multitudinous dead, carried her off when, enticed by the wonderful bloom of the narcissus, she strayed too far from her companions. In chariot drawn by coal black steeds he rose

up through as chasm in the earth and grasping the maiden by the wrist, set her beside him. He bore her away weeping to the underworld.

So we have, here, a god commanding a chariot, which we can consider an ancient forerunner of the modern motorcycle. Hades is generally shown wearing a beard. Tartarus, or hell, is the part of the Hades' underworld reserved for people who are evil.

I will use my myth model to suggest the mythic dimensions of the Harley-Davidson brand:

Myth	Hades
Psychoanalytic Theory	Thanatos or the death wish
Historical Experience	HOG (Harley Owners Group) rallies, Hell's Angels rallies
Elite Culture	Dante's <i>Inferno</i> , Milton's <i>Paradise Lost</i>
Popular Culture	Harley-Davidson logo and advertisements
Everyday Life	Buy and Ride a Harley-Davidson

Myth Model for Hades

I chose Hades because he commands a vehicle and thus we can see him as a kind of patron saint of vehicles of transportation, eventually culminating in bicycles, automobiles, motorcycles, and the Harley-Davidson motorcycle, in particular. That Hades is also associated with rape is interesting because this matter is often associated with a particular group of Harley-Davidson owners, the Hells Angels, who are listed by the government as a criminal organization. Most members of the Hells Angels have beards.

Jez Frampton has a discussion of the significance of the Harley-Davidson phenomenon in his article "What Makes Brands Great" (in Rita Clifton, ed. *Brands and Branding*) 2009: 64–65):

Harley-Davidson has created a cult following because of the consistency between its internal beliefs and practices and what it communicates and delivers externally. Both Harley customers and Harley employees embody the basic attitudes of freedom, individualism, enjoyment, self-expression and self-confidence. This has resulted in an enviable loyalty rate where 45% of current owners have previously owned a Harley. The brand is also popular with non-owners as a significant component of revenue is derived from the licensing of merchandising and clothing.

Framton also discusses the way the company encourages its salespeople to spend time with its customers and even ride with them. This leads to customers having an emotional attachment to the brand.

In another chapter in the book, on “brand experience,” Shaun Smith discusses the image of the typical Harley-Davidson owner (2009: 106):

When you think of Harley-Davidson, do you think of grizzly, tattooed Hells Angels? Of the 4,000 people who went through Harley’s “Riders Edge” programme, a motorcycling safety course designed to attract new riders, in 2002, nearly 45% were female and half of those were aged under 35. Of course, the reality is that a Harley-Davidson is more likely to be ridden by a professional than a tearaway. The average purchaser of a Harley motorcycle is a married male in his 40s with a median household income of \$81,700. Harley has redefined itself. At a typical weekend rally, 25,000 people will show up, including all the company’s senior managers. Harley-Davidson management refers to these events as “super-engagement” because the leaders all active participants in HOG [Harley Owners Group] activities.

We can see why so many people are attracted to these motorcycles. Harley-Davidson describes itself as (2009: 106) “Fulfilling dreams for people from all walks of life who cherish the common values of freedom, adventure and individual expression.” There are, it turns out, more than one million people who are members of the HOG (Harley Owners Group) and they spend 30% more on Harley-Davidson products than nonmembers. So “community,” or whatever it is that HOG members feel, works out very well for the Harley-Davidson corporation.

The fact that most members of the Hells Angels ride on Harley-Davidson gives the brand a certain edgy quality that might have a subtle attraction for owners of Harley-Davidson motorcycles and be useful for the brand, even though the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club is considered to be a criminal enterprise by the American government. Most Harley owners are not “wild ones,” like Hells Angels, but some are. Many of the members of the Hells Angels MC are considered to be members of a criminal underground, which establishes a link between the mythic god Hades and the Harley-Davidson motorcycle brand.

A friend of mine who is a physician told me that many doctors describe motorcycles as “donor machines,” because so many motorcyclists die in crashes and their body parts are harvested to help people who need organs. It turns out that according to the National Highway Traffic Safety

Administration, 13.10 cars out of 100,000 end up in fatal crashes, whereas 72.34 motorcycles out of 100,000 end up in fatal crashes. So, riding a motorcycle is much more dangerous than driving a car. Whether motorcycle drivers hold unconscious death wishes is an interesting question. If they did, it would tie them to the Thanatos segment in my myth model. In classical psychoanalytic thought, Freud contrasted Eros, the life wish, with Thanatos, the death drive. In Wikipedia we read:

The death drive is sometimes referred to as “**Thanatos**” in post-Freudian thought, complementing “Eros”, although this term was not used in **Freud**’s own work, being rather introduced by one of **Freud**’s followers, Wilhelm Stekel.

Thanatos is the Greek word for death and there was a Greek god, Thanatos, who was the god of death. Eros was the Greek god of love and sexual desire.

This discussion is meant to suggest that myths often shape our behavior in ways that we are not aware of and to suggest that we all live mythically and that much of what we do has roots in ancient myths and rituals of which we are generally unconscious. Just because we are unaware of them doesn’t mean that they don’t affect us.

I checked on [Motorcyle.com](http://www.motorcycle.com/specs/2017.html) (<http://www.motorcycle.com/specs/2017.html>) to find the rankings of 2017 motorcycles and Harley-Davidson was not first in any category. It was second in the “Cruiser” category, behind Suzuki, and third and fourth in “Touring,” behind two “Indian Chief” bikes. But it was not mentioned in any of the other categories, such as “Standard,” “Sport Touring,” or “Off the Road.” That makes me wonder: is the popularity of Harley-Davidson motorcycles and other products a result of great engineering or of great marketing?



CHAPTER 16

Coda

Abstract This chapter acts as a summary of some of the main topics discussed in the book. I offer a brief primer on semiotics, which is useful in analyzing logos, icons, and other phenomena associated with brands since semiotics explains how we find meaning in words, symbols, and images. I also discuss group theory and its notion that there are four lifestyles in the United States which are all in conflict with one another. This is followed by a discussion of postmodern theory and its relevance to consumer culture and an overview of the contents of some of the chapters.

Keywords Semiotics • Brands • Group theory • Postmodernism

Consumers, marketers tell us, purchase a product at the end of a long “journey,” a topic I deal with in this book. That journey often resembles wandering through a labyrinth and is often marked by decisions that have to be made at various forks in the road along the way. Readers of this book have also come to the end of a journey. We have come to the end of our journey in which we defined brands, explored the nature of brands, and discussed their social, political, and cultural significance and a variety of other topics related to brands and branding. Logos may seem to be trivial matters, but for many scholars, logos are seen as central to the identity of

corporations and corporations are essential elements in consumer cultures and capitalist economic systems.

CULTURAL STUDIES AND BRANDS

This book is subtitled “A Cultural Analysis” because it uses a variety of disciplines in investigating its subject and is an example of a multidisciplinary approach called “Cultural Studies.” Cultural Studies is based on the notion that analyzing something like brands from many different disciplinary perspectives provides a better understanding of a topic, such as brands, than looking at a topic from one disciplinary perspective.

I offer, here, a brief overview or summary of the book, which calls attention to some topics I think are of particular interest.

Let me offer an analogy that might help us understand the importance of logos and brands. You go to a skin doctor because you have a brown mole on your leg. That mole could be harmless or it could be a signifier of a deadly form of cancer that is ravaging your body. So something that might seem to be trivial—such as a mole or a logo—can be connected to very important matters. For critical (Marxist) scholars, logos are the symptoms and capitalism is the disease. Other kinds of scholars may not think of logos as a symptom but they have interesting things to say about logos and their role in our societies and our lives.

Semiotics, the science of signs, is useful in understanding the nature of brands. One of the founding fathers of semiotics, the Swiss linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, said signs have two components: a sound or object, which he called a signifier, and a concept generated by that sign of object, which he called a signified. The relation between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary and based on convention. So a logo would be a signifier and all the ideas and beliefs connected to the logo would be the signified. For example, a Starbucks logo is a signifier and a delicious latte would be the signified.

The other founding father of semiotics is Charles Sanders Peirce, a Harvard professor who gave the science of signs its name. He suggested that there are three kinds of signs: icons, such as photographs, which signify by resemblance; indexes, based on cause and effect (think of smoke and fire); and symbols, such as the Christian cross, whose meaning has to be learned. For Peirce, a logo would be a symbol. Semiotics is important because it deals with how we find meaning in the world. Peirce said, “the universe is perfused with signs, if not made up entirely of them.” This

would suggest that semiotics is the master discipline. Whether it is the “master” discipline is open to debate, but it is very important since we spend our lives trying to find meaning in everything we see or do, or in everything others do.

I have also used psychoanalytic theory to deal with brands since it explains how our psyches function and the role the unconscious plays in our thinking about brands. One marketing professor, Gerald Zaltman at the Harvard Business School, argues that there is 95/5% split in the human psyche, with 95% representing the unconscious and 5% representing consciousness. It is the material stored in the unconscious, the seat of our emotions, that shapes much of our thinking and behavior and helps explain why we buy what we buy. I suggest that the psyche is like an iceberg, with the tip of the iceberg, about 15% of the iceberg, representing consciousness. We can see a small amount of the iceberg under water, but most of the iceberg, our unconscious, is hidden in the darkness and is not accessible to us. What is important to recognize is that forces in the unconscious shape people’s reactions to brands. I also deal with Freud’s ideas about the id, ego, and superego and suggest that we can apply it to cities and other aspects of our lives. Thus Las Vegas would be an Id city, Boston (with many universities) would be an ego city, and Vatican City, home of the Roman Catholic Church, would be a Superego city.

In my chapter on brands in society, I discuss grid-group theory and show how this theory, which posits four (and only four) lifestyles in societies, helps us understand why we purchase the brands we purchase and why we prefer certain kinds of pop culture. The four lifestyles—elitism, individualism, egalitarianism, and fatalism—are in continual hostility to one another. Mary Douglas, the social-anthropologist who developed grid-group theory, also argues that we purchase products and services based on our hostility to other lifestyles and imperatives from our lifestyles and not on the basis of personal taste, a notion that will strike many as quite radical. I also deal with the different social classes and the role that membership in a socio-economic class affects our interest in and taste for brands and our purchasing decisions. I also deal with different marketing typologies, such as the VALS (values and lifestyles) typology, which suggest there are nine “lifestyles” in the United States and the Claritas typology, which offers 66 different consumer groups who can be seen as targets by marketers.

Many culture critics see America as a postmodern society and I explore the nature of postmodernism and how it relates to our feelings about brands. Postmodernists argue that around 1960 in the United States there was a radical cultural shift and our modernist sensibility was replaced by a postmodernist sensibility in which our belief in “metanarratives” such as rationality and progress was rejected and everyone had to create his or her own narrative. Postmodernism is associated with a passion for electronic media and with an emphasis on consumption and thus branded products.

I have a chapter on what I call the “branded self,” in which I argue that many people more or less define themselves by the brands they purchase. Their identities are based on the brands of clothes and cars and other products they purchase—or can afford to purchase. If, at some time, we wish to change or modify our identities, we can do so by changing the brands of products we consume. This suggests that we see our identities and not fixed but as always open to change.

I also consider the use of symbols and language in brands and analyze two Harley-Davidson slogans, “American by Birth, Rebels by Choice,” and its latest one “All for Freedom, Freedom for All.” In the book I devote considerable attention to the Harley-Davidson brand and its cult followers, the mass rallies, and related matters. At the end I wonder: is Harley-Davidson’s popularity due to the quality of its motorcycles or to the brilliance of its marketing?

TOPICS COVERED IN BOOK

Among the other topics I deal with is the way cities, such as San Francisco, brand themselves and the way countries, such as Japan, brand themselves. San Francisco often has around 25 million tourists visiting it, many of whom are attending conventions of one kind or another. They spend close to \$10 billion in the city and play an important role in the economy of the city. I offer, as an example of nation branding, an analysis of Japanese branding and discuss what it is the Japan has to offer tourists as it competes with other countries for tourists. Most countries are competing with one another for international tourists, who usually spend a considerable amount of money (except for backpackers) when they visit a country.

I offer another example of brand competition in my discussion of what we might call “ocean cruise-line wars.” Ocean cruises are an increasingly

large segment of the tourism industry, which is a \$7 trillion industry, and there are many different brands of lines, from relatively inexpensive lines, whose inside cabins can sell for less than \$50 a night, to very expensive “luxury” lines whose cabins sell for \$1000 a night. So, cruise lines are battling other forms of tourism, on the one hand, and battling each other, on the other hand. What the cruise lines sell is convenience (“you only have to unpack once”) and degrees of luxury. Even passengers in inside cabins have the run of the ship, dine in the elegant dining rooms, and can partake of all that things that cruise lines have to offer passengers.

In my chapter “Brand Sacrality,” I suggest that brands are very similar in nature to religions. I discuss the Apple logo, with a bite taken out of an apple, and tie it to the myth of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. I also discuss ways in which Apple owners can be seen as similar to members of cults. This leads to my discussion of language in advertisements and my analysis of an ad for a moisturizer, which has as a headline, a reference to the “fountain of youth.” I suggest how the advertisement leads to magical thinking and compare this kind of thinking with scientific thinking.

I conclude with a chapter on mythology and brands and offer my “myth model,” which argues that myths shape many aspects of our lives, even though we may not recognize that this is so. I use the myth of Hades to deal with the Harley-Davidson corporation and its remarkable cult following. I point out that most people who own Harley-Davidson motorcycles are professionals who have media household incomes of \$81,700 and are not Hells Angels. I also discuss the fact that riding motorcycles is very dangerous, which explains why doctors call motorcycles “donor-mobiles.” My point in the article is to show how myths play a role in shaping our thinking and behavior and have a pervasive influence in our cultures.

THE BOOK HAS BEEN A JOURNEY AND AN ADVENTURE

Writing this book has been an adventure for me, for I didn’t know where my interest in brands, logos and related matters, would lead me. I always felt that like consumers of all kinds, whose journeys I have described as wandering through a labyrinth, that I, too, was wandering through a labyrinth and continually faced “forking paths.” Writing is like that. You always face choices (of words, of topics and so on) when you are writing, and one choice affects other choices and other decisions. I sensed that brands were

interesting and recognized that when we watch television commercials or read the newspapers or magazines we are exposed, endlessly it seems, to brands.

Television commercials are about products and services, but they are more importantly about brands of products and services. The typical American watches four hours of television a day and one hour of that time is devoted to commercials, so we are exposed to brands continually. If four-year-old children know 200 brands, think how many brands 40-year-old people know. I have spent almost 50 years writing about advertising but I didn't recognize, until recently, that I was also writing about brands.

Brands are the tip of the iceberg. Brands work by creating stories about the products they represent: creation stories (think of Apple and Steve Jobs) and use stories (television commercials and print advertisements) that we carry around in our minds. When we see a logo, it triggers responses in our unconscious about the brand and its history and uses and status and makes us susceptible to purchasing the product represented by the logo. The logo, in very basic terms, is the stimulus (think of the Starbucks logo) and the purchasing of the product (going into Starbucks for a cup of coffee) is the response. It isn't that simple, of course, because we have lots of stories floating around in our unconscious, but logos work that way, at least in principle.

I have made use of work by scholars in many different academic disciplines or fields in writing this book and I have used quotes from them because I not only wanted deal with their ideas but also wanted to show you how they expressed themselves, since that plays an important role in the way we think about things. I've also made use of ideas and material from other works I've published, but always in a modified or enhanced manner. I have also written this book in an accessible style, avoiding the endless string of citations of publications in parentheses (Smith 2016; Jones 2017; Brown 2015) one finds in some academic writing.

AN AUTHOR'S HOPES AT THE END OF THE JOURNEY

I would hope that you will find that reading this book was worth the effort and that you know a good deal more about brands and their role in American culture and society, and their impact on your life, than you did

when you began your journey. Writing the book was an adventure for me and reading the book has been a journey for you. I hope you will think it was worth undertaking.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Arthur Asa Berger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Arthur" being more prominent.

Arthur Asa Berger
Mill Valley, California



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