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THE EVOLUTION OF U.S. CORPORATE LOGOS:
A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS

by

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Master of Arts
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the evolution of six U.S. corporate logos – Apple, McDonald's, Nike, Pepsi, Shell, and Starbucks – from each logo's inception until the newest version of the graphic emblem today. The objective is to determine the meanings that logos have for a corporation's identity, mission, and relationships, as well as the messages that logos convey to viewers (i.e., mostly customers). By "evolution" of logos here, the researcher means "ongoing transformation" of logos. The semiotic model used in this analysis is Charles Sanders Peirce's (1958 [1931]) semiotic framework. Peircean semiotics is made up of a three-part paradigm of signification: the representamen (or the sign itself), the object (or "referent" – what the sign refers to), and the interpretant (the effect on the viewer, or the viewer's interpretation).

Based on the semiotic data on logo evolution, the researcher found six main themes that emerged across the analyses of U.S. corporate logos. These themes are (1) Direction toward the Future, (2) Identity with Viewers, (3) Instant Recognition and Distinctiveness, (4) Consistency throughout Evolution, (5) Invocation of Change, and (6) True Representation of Corporate Identity. The ultimate conclusion of this analysis is that the communicative intent of a company, through its logo, tends to take a long time to develop. A successful logo is one that portrays the true objectives and principles of a company. For this reason, the ideal identity of a corporation tends to be built over a long period of time, which makes logo improvement "evolutionary" in nature. In all six cases, communication plays a major part in logo improvement.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Definition of Logos

Logos are symbols that differentiate one model or brand from another. They serve to recall a certain brand in a consumer's mind, and are typically easily recognizable. Rather than looking for brand names, consumers are familiar with, and look for, corporate symbols as visual shortcuts (Selame, 1988). Logos serve as a particularly crucial means of identification (Bennett, 1995), as well as one of the most important depictions of a company's verbal and visual promotion strategies. They serve as a communication intermediary between the company and its consumers, who are ultimately responsible for the business's financial success (Heilbrunn, 1998a; Lipovetsky & Roux, 2003; Scott, 1993; Zhang, 1997). A logo differs from a brand in that the latter is the materialistic representation of a product. A logo has a larger meaning; it is a graphic symbol that represents the true values of a corporation (Heilbrunn, 1998b).

More than just a mix of dyeing and printing, the logo serves as a visual front for the relationship between the producer and the consumer (Black, 2009). It is an emotional expression, which has been used as an indication of brand ownership, origin, and association. Logos also help facilitate brand recognition and loyalty among their consumers, which ultimately leads to development of brand equity (Muphy, 1990). Logos are, therefore, highly important company assets that firms spend a lot of money and time promoting (Anson, 1998). The investment is made by management with the understanding that it will generate returns in the form of enhanced brand reputation and corporate image. These allow for a greater competitive marketing positioning, which is vital for the long-term success of the corporation (Chen & Uysal, 2002).

Logos serve as visual representations of businesses, both public and private, to convey their content and purpose. They serve as identification, hopefully instant identification, through their use on their posters, advertisements, buildings, signs, and outdoor displays (Considine & Haley, 1992). The logo's purpose is to identify itself and the corporation as a quality producer of goods and/or services. They are part of the sign system used to communicate a destination's identity, both internally and externally, and are somewhat comparable to a signature on corporate materials.

The logo is one of five elements of corporate visual identity, the other four being name, typography, color, and slogan (Silva-Rojas & Roast, 2006). Logos are typically a combination of shape, color, pictures, and graphic design, and may or may not have the destination name attached to it. Logos may contain words (e.g., for a grocery store) or may not contain words (e.g., the current Nike logo), yet both are meant to convey to the viewer what is sold inside (McGee, Lomax, & Head, 1988).

<u>Study Objectives</u>

The purpose of this study is to examine the evolution of six U.S. corporate logos – from each logo's inception until the newest version of the graphic emblem today – in order to determine the meanings that logos have for a corporation's identity, mission, and relationships, as well as the messages that logos convey to viewers (i.e., mostly customers). By "evolution" of logos here, the researcher means "ongoing transformation" of logos. Corporate logos are everywhere, and Americans are constantly affected and influenced by the signs in their everyday environment. Logos tend to be recognizable, and familiar repetition plays a big role in how

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brands may distinguish themselves from one another (Selame 1988). Almost every U.S.

corporation has a logo that serves as a symbol of their magnitude to the outside world.

Semiotics is the methodology for conducting this analysis. By and large, semiotics refers

to the study of signs and symbols (Eco, 1979, 1986). Semiotics is a useful tool to concentrate on

(a) the development of signs that help identify and differentiate the meanings of design, and (b)

the explanation of sign functions and consumer meaning processes, including business,

motivational, and affective factors (Sebeok, 1991).

This analysis has two ultimate objectives. The first objective is to identify and describe

the essential semiotic components (and their structures) of selected U.S. corporate logos. The

second objective is to find common themes in the analysis of all those U.S. corporate logos. In

other words, what do all these corporate logos have in common (from a semiotic standpoint)?

These themes emerged "naturally" across the analyses of U.S. corporate logos. The researcher

did not force the data. An example of a theme emerging across past logo studies is that

successful logos have to able to portray the true identity of a corporation (Cohen, 1986).

Rationale for Conducting this Semiotic Analysis

Over the past two decades, corporate researchers have displayed significant interest in the

meaning of logos (Belk, 2002). To varying degrees, many of their works have been based on

semiotics, including (a) journal articles (e.g., Arnold, Kozinets, & Handelman, 2001; Bishop,

2001; Brannen, 2004; Hirschman, 1988; Holbrook & Grayson, 1986; Levitt, 1997; Levy, 1981;

McQuarrie & Mick, 1999; Pinson, 1988; Sherry & Camargo, 1987; Thompson & Haytko, 1997;

Zakia, 1986); and (b) books and book chapters (e.g., Boutaud, 1998; Csikszentmihalyi &

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Rochberg-Halton, 1981; Fiske, 1989; Gottdiener, 1995; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1993; Jensen, 1995; Leiss, Kline, & Jhally, 1986; Schroeder, 2002; Solomon, 1988; Vihma, 1995). All of these authors looked at the semiotics of logos from a narrow perspective, namely the meaning of a corporate logo "for the time being," or what it means at a specific moment in time.

However, none of these authors looked at the evolutionary meanings of logos – how they change over time and why these changes were made. For example, Arnold et al. (2001) viewed corporate logos as symbolic acts. More specifically, by analyzing Wal-Mart's logo, the authors provided a broad-based semiotic analysis of the company's communication strategies – e.g., the use of metaphors, icons, slogans, and signs. From this perspective, not only was their study a skin-deep analysis of corporate identity but, also, it did not make the Wal-Mart logo the centerpiece of their analysis. Likewise, McQuarrie and Mick's (1999) study mostly centered on the visual rhetoric of logos, a long-established semiotic tradition that offers no new niche or gaps to fill in the discipline. The main gist to their research was investigating the role of imagery in creating consumer response.

In this analysis, the researcher's task was to determine, from a semiotic perspective, the reasons for the logo's changes –from the inception of the logo until the latest version of the graphic emblem today. A logo tends to take on a completely different representation decades later than when it was first conceived. This is where an important gap in the literature would be filled. The five contributions of this analysis are as follows:

- This analysis adds to the development of corporate identity and corporate communication by following one specific semiotic model (i.e., Peirce's three-part model of signification).

- It is the first to use an in-depth application of Peirce's three-part model of signification (representamen-object-interpretant) to particular corporate logos (U.S. corporate logos).

- This study compares the logos of six corporations. Most studies have provided a semiotic analysis for only one company.

- This study offers a thematic analysis in addition to the analysis of all six corporate logos.

- A challenge was conquered in this analysis: to not use the term "semiotics" loosely as has been done by some semiotic scholars to describe their work – perhaps because it looks chic, unique, or academic. Accordingly, there tends to be a lack of in-depth application of any major semiotic approach or framework.

To be effective, the logo of Shell, one of the most successful oil companies in world history, has been restructured and revamped over the years to represent the true values of the corporation and to be easier to perceive by consumers and viewers. Hence, corporate identity has a propensity to be evolutionary in nature. It would be too naive or "one-dimensional" to constrain this analysis of logos to their daily use by U.S. corporations. As Coombe (1998) argues, it is indispensable to investigate "multiple moments" (p. 17) of a corporate logo. Coombe (1998) continues,

> These would include places in people's daily lives, in the realm of public representations, the contexts and conditions of interpretive reception, the influence and contestations of those readings in private lives and social lifeworlds, the authorization, legitimation, denial, or injunction of those interpretations in institutional forums, and the potential transformation of such readings in new cultural practices (p. 17).

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Discovering what corporate logos means to viewers – and how they can receive a company's message more clearly – lends itself to a semiotic analysis. In addition, previous logo research focused on surface-level information about corporate logos. Accordingly, an issue addressed by the author of this study pertains to the content, value, and meaning of logos below the surface of logo signs. Peirce's (1958 [1931]) semiotics is particularly useful, based on his index-icon-symbol model (as explained in this analysis later). An analysis of the connections between these symbols and their external referents was conducted for each U.S. corporate logo.

Semiotics is well suited for describing how meaning emerges in logo design and interpretation. Semiotics addresses this matter with regards to an application on structure and process in sign phenomena. Exclusive attention is accorded to commonalities in the choices, categorizations, colors, shapes, etc. of corporate logos. Due to the complexity of meaning and the outpouring of related marketing and consumer research, it is not surprising that logo scholarship is miscellaneous and fragmented. As vital as semiotics seems to be today, there is still uncertainty about its contributions (Mick, Burroughs, Hetzel, & Brannen, 2004). This is what this analysis has done: contribute fresh, new insights and data on the power of semiotics in the corporate world. Today's world is a competitive marketplace. A semiotic analysis of logos serves to explain the benefits of the communicative improvement of graphic symbols.

Practical Implications for the Business World

Corporate logos are real-world depictions used as a bridge between theoretical and applied concepts. Successful logos contain both a lexical and graphical element. "Lexical" is an adjective attributed to a classification or labeling of names, things, or objects (Murphy, 2010). In

other words, "lexical" is the written portion of a logo (Coca-Cola is an example); "graphical" is the artistic portion of it (e.g., a drawing, a picture, and icon, the colors used, etc.). In this study, the researcher is attempting to discover and isolate the meaning of both lexical and graphical types of information. The results may undoubtedly be used for real-world application when corporations seek to design a logo that is of utmost effectiveness. Hopefully, this study provides the groundwork for such components that make a logo the greatest quality possible – so that it can bring about all the success of which it is truly capable (Haase & Theios, 1996). A logo's effectiveness has important financial implications as well, in that it is estimated that Pepsi's most recent logo change cost more than $1 million, which did not include the cost for changing all the trucks, billboards, vending machines, signage, and other materials that displayed the old logo (Zmuda, 2008). Companies wishing to change or redesign their logos will find this information helpful, in light of the high cost incurred by these corporations to make such changes a reality.

Research Questions

The main function of a corporate logo is to communicate the company's identity and mission. At the same time, the purpose is to maximize connection with viewers (i.e., consumers). Based on the descriptions and objectives outlined so far, three research questions were created in order to conduct this analysis effectively:

RQ1: How does the ongoing transformation of U.S. corporate logos help companies communicate their identities and missions?

RQ2: How does the ongoing transformation of U.S. corporate logos help companies

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maximize connection with viewers (i.e., consumers)?

RQ3: What are the common themes that emerge throughout the analysis of the selected

U.S. corporate logos?

Preview of the Thesis Structure

This study begins with Chapter Two (a detailed literature review). In the review, the researcher provides an account on logo development, a description of the characteristics of both successful and unsuccessful logos, a communicative perspective of logos, and an explanation of corporate logos. In Chapter Three, the researcher describes the methods used to conduct this analysis. After describing in detail the tool of semiotics, specific elements of Charles Peirce's three-part model are illustrated: the representamen, the object, and the interpretant, followed by the researcher's actual approach for conducting this semiotic analysis. Then an explanation is provided as to why semiotics is the methodology used in this study. This study proceeds with Chapter Four, an investigation of the six U.S. corporate logos that were selected for this long-term project: Apple, McDonald's, Nike, Pepsi, Shell, and Starbucks. What comes subsequently is a description of common themes that emerged throughout the analysis of these six logos. This thesis ends with a conclusion section that also offers limitations and suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

Logo Development

Proper logo development is crucial, as logos are one of the main aspects of a corporation that communicate image, gain attention, cut through clutter, and speed recognition of the destination (Hem & Iversen, 2004). The primary person involved is the owner of the logo – the one calling for the logo creation or modification. Additionally, within the organization, key players consist of the stakeholders, the staff, and any potential companies within the organization's umbrella. The secondary player is the developer of the logo, as well as his or her consultants and designers. The third partner is the intended recipient of the logo (Hem & Iversen, 2004).

The creation of quality logos makes financial sense, as shown by Hyatt Hotels' logo change which cost an estimated eight to ten million dollars. This included both the logo's development and implementation (Bard, 1990). The process of logo development can be relatively expensive. It involves costs for initial design, management costs for time throughout the selection process, and logo placement on everything from business documents and cards to displays on buildings, packaging, and vehicles. Development guidelines would prove to be highly useful provided how frequently logos are developed, manager inexperience in this realm, the potential effects and consequences of poor image choices, and the cost of selection and implementation. In order to offer further knowledge for such guidelines, it is essential to determine the criteria that comprise a quality logo (Hem & Iversen, 2004).

Logos must be (1) recognizable, (2) bring forth a consensually held meaning for the intended target market, and (3) induce positive affect (Cohen, 1986; Vartorella, 1990). The degree to which development of a logo is efficient is dependent on the feeling evoked by the logo (positive or negative), the intensity of the affective reactions, and how closely the logo is linked to the identity and mission of the company. Positive emotions brought about by the logo can be achieved with first logo design and can be developed over time through increased logo exposure (Henderson & Cote, 1998; Zajonc, 1968).

Those ultimately having to keep the final design are the client, his or her staff, and his or her customers. It is, therefore, crucial that the designer present a range of design ideas and solutions, explaining and justifying them in detail, and to work intimately with the client to benefit from the client's individual experience and insight. Ultimately, logo development is a creative process involving collaborative discourse of various possibilities as they are investigated, enhanced, scrutinized and reworked. This process makes certain that not only an appropriate, practical solution is developed, but also that it is accepted and internalized within the respective organization (Hem & Iversen, 2004).

What are the opinions of the logo owner, developer, and recipients with regards to the present logo? This question taps into both the strengths and weaknesses of the existing logo (Spaeth, 1994). The following two sections attempt to provide an answer.

Characteristics of Successful Logos

Logos have been in use for a long time to denote brand origin and ownership and to construct brand associations. The Coca-Cola logo is one of the most recognized logos throughout

the world, used for over 300 beverage brands (Blue, 2003). Successful logos are symbolic in terms of their image attributes in that they serve to clearly differentiate the brand from competitors more successfully than their functional attributes (Belen del Rio, Vazquez, & Iglesias, 2001). An effective logo is then able to relay to a consumer the existence of a bonus based on the recognition of a greater value communicated by the specific brand (Leventhal, 1996).

Logo recognition occurs at two separate levels. Primarily, viewers must recall having seen the logo at some point in the past (recognition). Secondly, the logo must be linked by association to the proper corporation (recall). Therefore, to aid in viewer recall, a logo must be recognized by the consumer with little effort, and evoke a sense of familiarity (Zajonc, 1968). The message of the logo indicates the statement of a promise to shape the expectation of the consumer. Arguments exist that an effective logo also changes the manner in which buyers go about consuming the products and/or services that the logo symbolizes (Park & Petrick, 2006). The corporate logo is a means of building trust with the customer. When applied to a Web site, a company's logo has the potential to either increase (or decrease) conversion rates of consumers at first glance (Haig, 2008). Should the logo nonverbally communicate its "trustworthy" dimensions in its portrayal of an image, it is in essence influencing desirable and flattering attributes of the corporation. Such aspects as efficiency and on-time execution can be portrayed through a logo's design (Haig, 2008).

The logo must exist by itself and trigger, in consumers' minds, the whole host of emotions and images the company represents -- emotions and images that the company may have taken years to ascertain as the basis of its corporate identity. Logos that are able to portray these images and feelings effectively engender consumer loyalty to their corporation by being

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reminiscent of a positive corporate image. Logos that do not succeed in this regard not only neglect consumer loyalty and goodwill; they also may even produce a negative image of their company in the mind of their target viewers (Selame 1988).

<u>Characteristics of Unsuccessful Logos</u>

An unpublished 1994 report by the Schecter Group, which was reviewed by Upshaw in 1995, detailed that the way a consumer perceives a given corporate identity is highly shaped by the graphics used to represent the brand. A study of 27 well-recognized logos conducted by the Schecter Group found that 17 images negatively impacted consumer perception of the corporation (Upshaw, 1995). Similarly, the study claims that, while a logo may be an effective tool for differentiation, it may only serve to communicate, and thus not entirely shape a corporation's image. In essence, a logo that is poorly designed fails to be easily recognizable and will not aid in the differentiation of its products among others (Biricick 2006).

Logos may very well lose some of their appeal due to insufficient brand equity. Brand equity stands for the value of a brand as it is built up over time, and is measured by a consumer's awareness of the brand. The value of a corporation's brand equity may be calculated by evaluating by comparison, the future expected revenue from a branded product versus the future revenue from a non-branded product equivalent (Kapferer, 2008).

To drive home the power of brand equity, in the early 2000s, the Ford Motor Company decided to change the logo (and name) of all their new or redesigned cars to names that start with the letter "F." However, this did not end up working well for Ford. An analyst quoted in *The Toronto Star* warned that changing the logo (and name) of what was well known as the Windstar

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to the "Freestar" would bring about confusion and destroy the brand equity that had built up over time. The well-established Taurus had become one of the most noteworthy cars throughout U.S. automobile history. Its name would be discarded in favor of three new names, all of which would start with "F" – the Freestar, the Five Hundred, and the Fusion (Patton, 2010). By the year 2007, the Freestar had been discontinued with no replacement, and Ford declared record losses. All of a sudden, to the public's surprise, Ford's previously extinguished nameplate Taurus was announced to be re-used on an enhanced Five Hundred which marked disappointing sales, and logo recognition by the public was down to less than half, while a vast majority knew of the Taurus name (Sawyers, 2010).

A Communicative Perspective of Logos

In communicative terms, logos are symbol systems which transmit information (Alberto, Fredrick, Hughes, McIntosh, & Cihak, 2007). Sometimes, only one or two elements are required to uncover a logo's meaning (McGee, Lomax, & Head, 1988). The logo is a unique sign in that it contains not only a representative function, but also a pragmatic function in relation to its commercial value. In this sense, it shapes a reaction from the receiver with regard to recognition, liking, awareness, etc. Its status as a sign is multifunctional, and may be ambiguous (Heilbrunn, 1997).

Viewers have become accustomed to the plethora of visual imagery and symbolism to the extent that they do not even realize how much they depend on logos as indications of quality among the consumer culture (Selame 1988). Corporate communication divisions are faced with a hard matter of attracting attention amidst the massive amount of advertisements and mass media

products that comprise the "admass society", according to J. B. Priestly (Sparke 1986). A logo that is well designed becomes a visual shortcut for the meanings associated with it, and hence influences its viewers (consumers) to receive the brand message with its emotional effects, bringing about extreme loyalty to the brand. They attribute emotion to not only the company, but to the consumers as well (Bird, 1992).

The logo, as the most fundamental and crucial visual component of the brand, forms the initial and most long-lasting association between the customer and the company. Therefore, the creation of a recognizable logo is of extreme importance (Biricik 2006). The logo serves as a substitute for the personal relations of the corporation and the consumer, and therefore, must serve as a symbol of the trustworthiness and legitimacy of the manufactured goods or services (Black, 2009).

As Debord (1994) argues, the ability of a corporation to successfully communicate its mission and identity through its logo lends credibility to the fact that a logo's development plays a large role in constructing the display. Taking into consideration a marketplace powered by emotion, visual corporate identity has a great responsibility in connecting with consumers at that level. Logos thus become one of the most significant tools for generating emotion (Biricik 2006).

Communication of the brand message relies greatly on an effective logo. It is clearly the most significant aspect of the brand, as it is the feature of the corporation's brand message that is the most visible, and ideally becomes synonymous to the brand in the minds of consumers. Similar to other symbol systems, such as words, pictures, numbers, and language, logos are instruments for transmitting and acquiring information (Alberto, Fredrick, Hughes, McIntosh, & Cihak, 2007). Logos convey business purpose and content in both public and private corporations. Well-known companies are identified instantly by the logos displayed on their

buildings, posters, signs, products, boxes, packets, and advertisements (Considine & Haley, 1992). A logo's focus is on presence. The public is increasingly attentive to visual symbols such as logos, as well as their meanings and implementations. They have become the corporation's most significant visual image. It is said that a person is exposed to on average 1,000 to 1,500 logos a day (Heilbrunn, 1997). "Humans think visually. A picture is really worth a million words. And great brands have readily identifiable icons – just ask Nike or Apple or Shell -strong simple images that connect with customers" (Peters, 1999, p. 41).

One function of logos is that they "imply social rapport and social power" (Baudrillard, 1983, p. 88). Contributing a different function is that they are quite probably the most significant semiotic intermediaries to convey meaning within a corporation's visual and verbal promotion strategies (Heilbrunn, 1998a, 1998b; Lipovetsky & Roux, 2003; Scott, 1993; Zhang, 1997). Logos allow people to create a visual map of their immediate environment. They provide information for the identification of various goods and services available in a community, as well as safety and transportation information in one's surroundings (Alberto, Fredrick, Hughes, McIntosh, & Cihak, 2007).

Logos consist of combinations of color, graphic designs, shapes, and pictures. They may incorporate unique print features, terms, or words. Common logos include those with words, such as for a grocery store, and those without words, such as the McDonald's arches. Both are intended to suggest to the reader what the company is and what is sold within its premises. When learning to comprehend a logo, a person may only need to learn one or two elements to recognize its meaning (McGee, Lomax, & Head, 1988).

Corporate Logos

Product manufacturers authenticate their products in such a way that they are able to "win over" skeptical consumers. They manage to rhetorically and visually minimize the gap between consumers and their products, and convey trustworthiness to those who they will never meet in person. Through graphics, corporate logos assist in the establishment of a personal connection between the distant consumers and manufacturers by way of the brand logo (Black, 2009).

Corporate logos are different from university logos in that the latter function to identify universities in all forms of communications. Such logos serve to maintain the integrity of a university's reputation for academic quality, creativity, research, and leadership in higher education. University logos are not created for financial profit. They do not need to be recognizable from a long distance. Corporate logos, on the other hand, need to be identifiable by viewers (even from a remote location) as companies need to build a customer base so their profits can grow.

The word "logo" stems from ancient Greece. It means a name, symbol, or trademark created for fast recognition. The utilization of logos as symbolic trademarks can be traced as far back as the thirteenth century, as long as traders and merchants have been around. Early examples include goldsmith's marks, mason's marks, printer's marks, as well as watermarks created for the nobility. In the present day, a few hundred years later, they still hold the same identifying features vital to organizational identity. Logos provide a visual image, denoting the spirit of the corporation and the uniqueness of its products (Blue, 2003).

Advertisers use corporate logos as a fusion of cultural displays of sincerity and trustworthiness with images that provide visual entertainment in their advertisements. They

create an enhanced "personality" resembling the logo design itself (Black, 2009). Throughout centuries, logos have served to represent names visually, such as those of families (e.g. a royal family), religions (e.g., the Christian cross), and countries (e.g., the United States' stars and stripes). Presently, they are utilized in a commercial sense to develop brand equity (Keller, 2003). A vast majority of corporate logos, located practically anywhere in one's environment, convey their meaning instantly upon sight. Nike's swoosh typifies movement, and Ralph Lauren's polo player signifies clarity and leisure class (Patton, 2003).

The next chapter will provide an in-depth look at how these corporate logos can be analyzed using semiotics, the study of signs and symbols, in order to gain a more thorough understanding of the inner-workings of such logos on various levels.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODS

The method of analysis in this study is semiotics. Semiotics refers to the study of signs and symbols, particularly their processes and systems (Sebeok, 1976). Semiotics is "the exchange of any messages […] and the system of signs that underlie them" (Sebeok, 1991, p. 60). Fiske (1990) contends that the generation of meaning needs to be included in this definition. Messages contain signs, which are transmitted through sign systems. These sign systems are called codes. Meaning emerges only to the degree that the message receiver comprehends the code (Moriarty, 2002). Semiotics is centered on the comprehension of sign functions and their perception of meaning by the receiver, a process which includes both affective and motivational aspects (Nöth, 1990). This study focuses on the communicative role of a sign – particularly, a nonverbal sign.

Charles Sanders Peirce's (1958 [1931]) semiotic framework has deep roots in the field of philosophy. It is made up of a three-part paradigm of signification: the representamen (or the sign itself), the object (or "referent" – what the sign refers to), and the interpretant (the effect on the viewer, or the viewer's interpretation). According to Peirce, semiotics refers to the sign-object relation. Peirce's view of semiotics comes from the cognitive-philosophical realm. Thus, his view is largely centered on the examination of meaning interpretation and modes of cognition. Peirce's framework is one of two dominant paradigms that have been used for semiotic analyses of consumer and marketing issues (the other being that of Saussure) (Nöth, 1990; Pinson, 1988; 1993). Saussure's (1986 [1916]) framework is grounded in language, and is largely centered around arbitrary codes (Mick et al., 2004). Unlike Saussure's (1986 [1916]),

Peirce's semiotics goes beyond this, as evidenced by his "representamen-object-interpretant" analysis of the sign.

<div align="center">Representamen</div>

According to Peirce's "representamen-object-interpretant" model, the representamen is the actual sign itself. A sign is that which stands for something else: an object or a concept (Eco, 1986; Hoopes, 1991). Representamen means representation, a thing that represents something – as it would to an interpreting mind (Peirce, 1958 [1931]). The representamen has meaning to a person; it forms in the person's mind a corresponding image, or possibly a more developed meaning (Peirce, 1958 [1931]). The representamen stands for an object, as referenced to a type of idea (Popper, Shearmur, & Turner, 2008). A representamen signifies a given object. It is comparable to Saussure's "signifier" (see next section) (Silverman, 1983). A representamen serves to represent something in an interpreting mind. It can be best described as *something which represents* (Peirce, 1958 [1931]).

Peirce denotes three distinct types of signs: iconic, indexical, and symbolic signs. Iconic signs are explicit imitative representations; they stand for what they represent at face value. For example, a triangle is a geometrical icon. Indexical signs denote and imply cause-and-effect relationships, or physical connections (Johansen & Larsen, 2002; Neumann-Held & Rehmann-Sutter, 2006). For example, a footprint is indicative of a person having walked by. Likewise, bullet holes in a piece of wood mean there was a gun shot. An indexical sign serves as evidence of something. In the symbolic sign (e.g., school colors or a certain flag), the meaning, aka the

sign-object relation, is arbitrary, similar to how language is open to interpretation (Peirce, 1958 [1931]).

Object

The sign symbolizes its object. To be a representamen, it must be representative of something else: an object. According to Peirce (1958 [1931]), an object is something someone can derive meaning from. This element corresponds to Saussure's (1986 [1916]) signified, while the sign, as mentioned previously, corresponds with Saussure's signifier. The object is the meaning or concept – what the sign is referring to, or the referent. Take for example, the Soviet flag. The signifier is the flag as it exists (i.e., the piece of red cloth with the yellow hammer and sickle; this is something that that one can see and touch). The aspect that is signified is what the flag symbolizes and represents (e.g., Stalinism, communism, Leninism, etc.) (Matusitz, 2007).

The representamen does not provide acquaintance with the object, rather serves only to represent it. Peirce distinguishes two objects: the dynamic object (the actual reality of the object) and the immediate object (as represented by the representamen). For example, a piece of green paper that serves as a sample (= representamen) of the actual paint inside a can (= object) shows the shade of green only, as it is implied one is already acquainted with all of paint's characteristics (i.e., its contents, consistency, that it is used for covering, etc.).

Interpretant

The interpretant is the meaning or idea of the concept when it is decoded. It is the resulting thought/emotion created by the sign (Hoopes, 1991). The interpretant is the meaning or

idea to be decoded, the resulting effect in the mind of the interpreter as brought about by the sign. It is the interpretation or signification the sign holds for the receiver. The representamen brings about a response (i.e., that which is interpreted) based on how it relates to the object (Short, 2009).

Additionally, the interpretant can be categorized into three segments: (1) that which is represented by the representamen, or the immediate interpretant, (2) the interpretant that is actually formed by the representamen, known as a dynamical interpretant, and (3) the interpretant as it would be if it were understood correctly by representamen, or the final interpretant (Peirce, 1958 [1931]). We will see various aspects of these interpretants present among the various U.S. corporate logos under analysis.

Why Semiotics?

It is not enough to restrict analysis to a corporation's current logo as it is used daily. This would provide too narrow of a scope, making the analysis too "one-dimensional." Coombe (1998) denotes the necessity of studying "multiple moments" (p. 17) of a logo's existence. The logos under analysis have been modified from their original design through various instances over a span of time. Of interest are the semiotic strategies used to modify a corporation's logo so successfully. A semiotic analysis allows us to determine and understand viewers' perceptions of the corporate logo in its evolution. The semiotic approach was selected for several reasons.

To begin, the logo is the most essential semiotic mediator for meaning within a corporation's verbal and visual marketing strategies (Heilbrunn, 1998a, 1998b; Lipovetsky & Roux, 2003; Scott, 1993; Zhang, 1997). In a commercial sense, meaning is indispensable and

highly necessary (Mick et al., 2004). The question of "What is meaning in logo design and perception?" is addressed by semiotics as it relates to logo perception and design. Semiotics highlights sign structures and processes with respect to objects and observable details. However, despite its persuasive function in the marketing realm, meaning remains a highly complex phenomenon to investigate and theorize upon (Nöth, 1990; Ogden & Richards, 1923; Schirato, 1998).

Second, most logo analyses center on consumer attribution, recognition, or awareness (e.g., Siegel, 1989; Zmuda, 2008). Semiotics, however, delves into an additional realm: understanding of its functions and its power to successfully represent what a given corporation's graphic emblem intended. Accordingly, a corporate logo serves as a unique sign, as it contains both a pragmatic and representative function in accordance with its commercial value. The logo foresees a reaction from the recipient *vis-à-vis* liking, awareness, recognition, etc. (Heilbrunn, 1997). The logo's function as a sign can be ambiguous and multifunctional. Semiotics allows researchers to examine logos as signs, as well as the laws governing their relationships. Therefore, it becomes crucial to comprehend the functioning of this particular sign. Semiotic analyses of logos have been under-utilized in favor of inadequate information-processing approaches – e.g., approaches that put too much emphasis on cognitive and emotional-psychological processes rather than the study of the signs and symbols as they exist in the logo (Heilbrunn, 1997).

Third, a unique, valuable characteristic of semiotics is its considerable panoply of interrelated concepts for interpreting signs and explaining meaning in a methodical fashion. The sign is a flexible, atomic construct; it serves as the vital core of communication and meaning. The sign is germane to any physical or non-physical stimulus related to any human sense or

faculty. From this vantage point, semiotics deals with the complexity of meaning at all levels of analysis through various taxonomies of signs and meaning, frameworks of sign-meaning processes, and analytical methods (Mick et al., 2004). The semiotic model used in this analysis is the one articulated by Charles Sanders Peirce – not the one by Ferdinand de Saussure.

Saussure's (1986 [1916]) model can be applied to language-based sign systems. His approach is grounded in linguistics. For Saussure, meaning is mostly about sense and semantics (primarily symbolism). Hence, the link between the sign and what it stands for is made by convention. It is arbitrary (Moriarty, 2002). However, nonverbal systems such as logos are more appropriate for analysis using Peirce's model. The reason is that Peirce's three-part paradigm of signification (i.e., representamen-object-interpretant) incorporates other systems of signifying, such as mimesis and evidence (clues and cues), which are essential to visuals. In particular, Peirce's three-part framework emphasizes the concept of interpretation, which is the foundation for making sense of logos. Peirce (1958 [1931]) envisions meaning as both reference and sense. Meaning is a pragmatic issue; it is observable in the effect that the relation between a sign and its object has on receivers, or viewers (Mick et al., 2004). The fundamental nature of Peircean semiotics, then, is a thinking process derived from inference that results in interpretation.

It is important to understand the functioning of this unique sign – the corporate logo. While the vast majority of studies on logos concentrate on awareness or recognition, semiotics offers insights into a comprehension of its functioning and its ability to efficiently represent that for which it was intended. A semiotic analysis of logos allows the researcher to define what grants logos the status of signs and to examine the laws of their relationships (Heilbrunn, 1997). Instead of basing her whole argument on the simplistic play of signifiers suggested by Baudrillard (1994 [1981]), the researcher attempts to determine that the evolution of logos, as

Foucault (1974) might argue, is engineered for effect. The semiotic dimension of logos is instrumental for maximizing visibility, creating awareness, positive associations, and long-term consumer loyalty. Consequently, managing logo representation means managing semiotics. Signification is controlled by the corporation itself – enabled by the constant changes made to logos. Logos, in part, "represent the condensation of past knowledge and ideologies that have materialized technique, modes of desire, and knowledge for social control" (Gottdiener, 1994, p. 177).

U.S. Corporate Logos Selected in this Analysis

The companies chosen for this comparison have to meet some specific criteria. First and foremost, they have to be major U.S. companies on the world stage with a long-established record of activity and an established market. Such companies need to operate in the same global marketplace, being potential suppliers to the consumers internationally. As the world's brands move into the twenty-first century, logo design is becoming increasingly important as a means of differentiation. Indeed, in the contemporary mass market economy, only companies that are able to distinguish themselves from their competitors will succeed. The modern economy is riddled with challenges such as unprecedented levels of competition and a multitude of product choices for consumers.

Now, the question is, "Why analyze six U.S. corporate logos?" This is for two reasons. First, six is a good number to reach the length requirement for such a long-term project. Second, the reason is that six is a sufficient number for reaching conclusions and making generalizations (through themes) about U.S. corporations' missions and objectives. It is important to note that an

exception was made for the Shell oil company as its headquarters are located in the Netherlands. The corporation has established itself as a household name in the U.S. and has been viewed as an Americanized business, thus the researcher saw it fit to be incorporated in this study. Accordingly, the following logos are analyzed in this study:

<div align="center">Apple</div>

The selection of this logo allows for the discovery of clues about Apple's corporate culture. Apple Computer's history includes that of being a challenger – going against established norms, defying industry rules, and branching out on its own set of assumptions. The logo of the apple with the bite taken out of it recalls the Biblical reference of the forbidden fruit. The colors spectrum used in one of its original designs is in the wrong order, further portraying its refusal to conform to established rules (de Chernatony 2001; Hem & Iversen, 2004; Rijkens, 1992).

<div align="center">McDonald's</div>

McDonald's arches, symbolizing "drive in" (Patton, 2003), have similarly gone through changes. It started with its original golden arches, depicted with a red background and the brand name written on the right portion of yellow arches placed on the left side of the square signaling movement to the right. The logo design went through several transformations, and in 2000, launched its $500 million campaign denoting "We love to see you smile" including the smile design with the tagline as the corporation's new visual icon (MacArthur, 2000).

<center>Nike</center>

Nike's swoosh is the most recognizable logo worldwide (Bishop, 2001). In the very beginning, in 1971, the logo was commissioned to a university student by Phil Knights, the then-CEO, hoping that the student would invent a logo depicting speed (Goldman & Papson, 1996). Originally, it was an arbitrary design which held no intrinsic meaning at all. It has grown since then and adopted a philosophy by way of associated meaning with other meaningful symbols in the culture, such as Michael Jordan. Today, it holds meaning and inspiration to athletes as the embodiment of the physical form athletes strive to attain. Currently in its fifth version, the logo came about from a special design for pro-tennis player Jim Courier as displayed on his hat. After being defeated in the matches, he handed off the hat to Andre Agassi who proceeded to win the Championship, simultaneously portraying the simple swoosh to a crowd who recognized the simple logo with no script as its own (Goldman & Papson, 1999).

<center>Pepsi</center>

Pepsi's revamping of its well-known logo was described as a "quantum leap" and a remarkable transformation in the industry as well as Pepsi's position as a cultural leader (Zmuda, 2008). The transformation was initiated by a call to "bring humanity back" and make the logo more able to engage with customers, as well as more dynamic and alive. The redesign has an estimated cost of $1 million, not including the costs of taking down the old logo in all its displays, and replacing it with the new one. The new logo depicts a white strip across the middle of the Pepsi circle, depicting smiles. Various forms of the smile are used for its various brands such as Diet Pepsi (a grin) and Pepsi Max (a laugh). The current Pepsi logo has undergone its

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eleventh makeover throughout its 110-year existence. In the past two decades or so, five new

logos have been introduced (Zmuda, 2008).

Shell

The Shell logo, the symbol of one of the world's most successful oil companies, has gone

through several logo modifications, from its original design as a pictorial object of a pecten, to

the red and yellow shell seen throughout the world today (Mick et al., 2004); Howarth ,Jonker,

Sluyterman, & van Zanden, 2007). Its original meaning is derived from its presence in maritime

activity to the Far East, and ancient writing depicting the shell as an exquisite sign of genius

(Miller, Vandome, & McBrewster, 2010). It adopted the colors of the Spanish flag to cater to the

highly Spanish population at that time in its petrol stations in California (Howarth et al., 2007),

and later dropped the verbiage from its name when it became recognizable simply by its "Shell"

logo as it exists today (Wright, 2006).

Starbucks

The original Starbucks logo 1973 stood for both coffee and controversy. Depicting a siren

au naturel with her legs (or split tails) spread, this logo was said to be in extremely poor taste,

and led to a boycott of the brand by about 3,000 Christians. It went ahead and reintroduced its

original logo in the form of a topless mermaid. Starbucks then went on to "clean up" the design

imperceptibly, by draping hair over her breasts so no nipples were shown, streamlining her

midriff, and lengthening her hair. On the 35th anniversary of Starbucks, executives planned to re-

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release special edition cups with the original logo of the topless siren with two tails. These cups were banned by Washington school district unless the logo was sufficiently concealed (York, 2008).

Conducting the Analysis of the Logos

Primarily, information was gathered from researched sources and then compiled into a file document. Once the file was created and completed, the researcher took the compiled data and used the method of color-coding to sift through all the research that had been found. Using a set of blue, green, and red pens, the researcher tied each color to a concept of Peircean semiotics. Blue stood for representamen, or the sign itself, to which an underlining would indicate a representamen. In addition to underlining, notes on the side were written as to whether this representamen was iconic, symbolic, or indexical. The green pen was used to underline objects, or what the representamen stands for, while the red pen indicated areas that would be considered interpretant information, or how the sign is depicted among its viewers. Accordingly, the researcher relayed the findings in terms of the use of Peirce's semiotic framework. The next chapter reveals the researcher's findings based on the analysis that was conducted for all six logos.

CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS

This chapter analyzes all six logos chosen for this analysis. Each of the logos selected conveys a carefully intentioned corporate identity, and has a strong holding in the U.S. consumer marketplace. Its evolution is worthy of analysis in order to gain a grasp of what types of changes bring about logo evolution, and the themes that can be uncovered through semiotic analysis (in Chapter 5). Using Peirce's three-part framework, each logo has been researched to gain perspective on the meaning and purpose behind the logo redesign, and subsequently analyzed by the researcher in terms of this semiotic approach. This chapter analyzes logo evolution of Apple, McDonald's, Nike, Pepsi, Shell, and Starbucks.

<u>Apple</u>

The Apple logo was chosen in this analysis because it was at one time reported to be sixth among the most recognized logos in the world (Gobé, 2001). With a very strong following, and extreme, devout brand loyalty, the logo engenders such emotionality among consumers that a common identity is formed in allegiance groups known as "Apple's faithful, Mac zealots, members of the cult of Mac, Appleholics, Macheads, Maccies, Macolytes, and Mac addicts" (Kahney, 2004, p. 5). The logo is strongly attributed to the company's success over its products. As Gobé (2001) put it, "the power of their [the logo's] branding is all that keeps them alive. It's got nothing to do with products" (p. 1).

The Apple company was created as "Apple Computer Co" in 1976 (Biricik, 2006). The original logo is said to have broken the IBM mold, depicting a rainbow apple symbol in stark contrast to the existing technology scheme of IBM's blue block letters (Olins, 1990). Apple

Computer's history is defined as that of being a challenger – going against established norms, defying industry rules, and branching out on its own set of assumptions (de Chernatony, 2001; Hem & Iversen, 2004; Rijkens, 1992). There is speculation over Steve Jobs's choice of the apple as the logo. In brief, Steve spent a summer working in an apple orchard and thought very highly of the apple, equating it with perfection (Lemke, 2006). In doing so, Steve created a symbolic representamen as trying to portray the "perfect" corporation. It is said he was also a fan of the Beatles, and their label was "Apple Records," creating yet another symbolic representamen between his corporation and success. Indeed, the Beatles were extremely popular and renowned for many chart-topping records. Jobs apparently saw it fit that the Apple would be announced as the corporation's logo for lack of anything more inspiring (Norton, 2011).

The most primal Apple logo (see Figure 1) was drawn up by Ron Wayne in 1976 (Linzmayer, 2004). The representamen, or the sign itself, depicts a portrait of Sir Isaac Newton under an apple tree with ribbons encircling the frame, reading the title of the company.
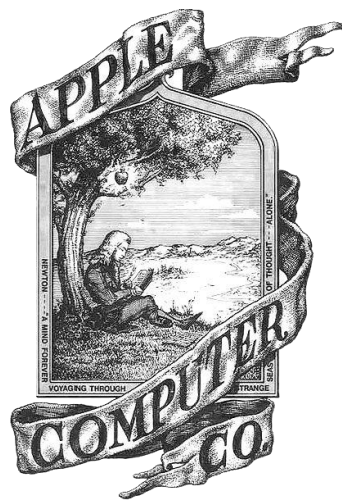

Figure 1: The first Apple Computer Co. logo in early 1976
(Source: Apple Advertising and Brochure Gallery- http://www.macmothership.com/gallery/gallery1.html)

The words on the perimeter of the portrait read "Newton… a mind forever voyaging through strange seas of thought" (Young & Simon, 2005, p. iii). This interpretant in the viewer is one of breaking convention, with the word "strange" meaning "foreign" or unexplored, yet untapped, whereas the term "forever" signals to the viewer a longitudinal perspective of new insights that occur among a "strange" world of possibility. The color selection was iconic, at face value for the viewer, in that it was a black and white image in the style of "early century drawings" (Birick, 2006, p. 57). The vignette depicted Newton with the slogan, "one of the greatest scientific minds of all time." This created an object for the referent of the vignette itself. The logo also symbolized Newton's conception of the apple falling from the tree as the inception of the rudimentary cognition of gravity, and the universe's function as that of clockwork. There is a strong symbolic parallel here of the beginnings of groundbreaking innovation, discovery, and genius in depicting this occasion in the midst of the logo.

Seemingly, this logo lacked style and could not be scaled down (i.e., reduced to a smaller image size) while maintaining the integrity of the logo. It was also said that this logo contributed to the less-than-overwhelming success in sales of Apple's first computer (Linzmayer, 2004). Not long after, Steve Jobs took action, believing the logo to be "too intellectual" for a brand, and much too intricate with details. Steve reasoned that the logo had to be enlarged in size in order for a viewer to read it (Linzmayer, 1999). To represent a brand, the logo needed more style (Moritz, 1984). In April 1977, Jobs contracted an advertising agency, Regis McKenna Advertising, to come up with a new logo redesign. The agency had a history of having helped several other well-known computer companies come up with their logo design, such as Compaq, Intel, and America Online (Biricik, 2006). This logo would be debuted with the release of the Apple II, which was launched on April 17th, 1977 (Lynn, 1998).

The silhouette of the 1977 logo (depicting an apple with what looks like a bite taken out of it) was thought up by Rob Janoff (see Figure 2). This silhouette of a bitten apple signals continuity in the company, as it has been used, and remained the same for more than 30 years (Robard, 2009). The color was updated too. This allowed for the consistency of the Apple logo's recognition throughout this timespan in its viewers, making it a strong interpretant between the company and its stakeholders.

Figure 2: Apple Logo in 1977
(Source: Apple Advertising and Brochure Gallery- http://www.macmothership.com/gallery/gallery1.html)

The inspiration for this logo came directly from the representamen at its core (no pun intended). Janoff, commissioned to help Steve Jobs, went first to the local grocery store to purchase apples (Linzmayer, 1999). Upon slicing them up, he gazed at them for a long while. The object, or "referent," he came up with was in part symbolic: "The fruit of his labor: a simple 2-D monochromatic apple, with a healthy bite taken from the right side" (p. 12). The idea for the bite may have derived from the play-on-word used with marketing the Apple I – that of a computer byte. This signal for the interpretant was that it spoke to computer-savvy people, who made the connection with the double-meaning and found it fun and clever, as opposed to logos that tend to be very serious (Linzmayer, 2004). The object may refer to the religious aspect of the apple – i.e., taking a bite out of the forbidden fruit that came from the tree of knowledge.

Without a doubt, the bite taken out of the apple symbolically recalls the Biblical reference of the forbidden fruit and further typifies Apple Company's position as a challenger of established norms (de Chernatony 2001; Hem & Iversen, 2004; Rijkens, 1992). Mollerup (1997) signifies the appropriateness of the logo, with the apple symbolizing knowledge and lust, crossed out with the spectrum of rainbow colors in the wrong order. He claims that this logo is appropriate in signaling knowledge, hope, lust, and anarchy as the object in the logo itself.

Though Janoff suggested the color be black with a white background to save cost on printing, Steve Jobs argued that color was essential to "humanizing the company." Steve was insistent upon adding them regardless of printing costs and hassles (the colors would seemingly overlap) (Linzmayer, 1999). From a Peircean semiotic standpoint, the representamen, or sign itself, added the iconic element of colors in what would be considered the wrong order (see Figure 2 again). With complete disregard to the rainbow prism, the colors were arranged based on Steve's individual thoughts on the order in which they should be laid out (Robard, 2009). The misaligned color spectrum further portrays the company's refusal to conform to established rules (de Chernatony, 2001; Hem & Iversen, 2004; Rijkens, 1992).

Typically, when a logo contains more than just one color, it is not recalled as well and, hence, harder to identify. Yet, for Apple, this was not the case. This is due to the interpretant recognizing the brand for its further meaning as being "Creative. Different. Diverse" (Olins, 1990). Similarly, the object of "playfulness" in the mark brings about, in the eyes of the receiver, the interpretant of how children see color, and that the colors shown in the representamen signified versatility and approachability. Indeed, in that time, computers were not standard in homes, and many people were not feeling comfortable with them. The newly designed logo was meant to reduce the fright factor in its market and increase the user-friendly playful appearance

to foster approachability. The new logo was a key contributor to Apple's success (Fluck, 2010).

A more technical approach is taken by Lizmayer (1999), who suggested the colors were added to showcase the Apple II's color possibilities, which was timely for the logo's release. This was instrumental in creating a corresponding object for the representamen, which would hopefully serve as an interpretant in the minds of consumers.

Overall, there lies much symbolism behind this version of the Apple logo, beginning with Biblical times. The book of Genesis depicts the story of God instructing Adam and Eve not to eat from the tree, and when the serpent taunts her for hiding away, he says that eating it will open her eyes and she will become "as the gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5). The apple was depicted by painters to be the forbidden fruit in the story of Genesis, and continues to resonate as such in this culture. This is a strong symbolic interpretant in that the company is willing to not only violate but also completely disregard norms and restrictions to convey its sense of independence and unwillingness to conform. In doing so, it also brings about a symbolic interpretant of the company by providing knowledge that would otherwise be forbidden to consumers (Biricik, 2006).

Another symbol is the apple as a symbol of knowledge. Eating the apple signifies the acquisition of understanding, as the Biblical story implies that knowledge is corruptive. The corresponding object is that knowledge brought to the masses through computers suggests the start of creation. The object is that computers are user-friendly and can be a natural part of spreading knowledge to the world. The interpretant in the image is a personal one, and can be interpreted based on one's cultural and Biblical schemas.

Figure 3: Current Apple logo, since 1998
(Source: Apple's official website - http://www.apple.com/)

The rainbow logo was used from 1976 to 2002. In 1998, a monochromatic logo – i.e., "monochromatic" means "one color" – was released with the new iMac, depicting a white apple with a sleek design, its object portraying a more futuristic, individualistic streamlined "new era of the Apple." Nevertheless, Steve Jobs's goal of maintaining the iconic apple shape had been long established in his company (Robard, 2009). Given the popularity and obsessive culture of Apple users, there is a very strong association between the representamen and its interpretant. There is evidence for a very strong emotional effect on the viewers, due to the logo's symbolic conveyance of innovation, creativity, and nonconformity. Profound brand loyalty is displayed by consumers affixing Apple logo stickers to their cars, and even getting Apple haircuts and tattoos (Kahney, 2004).

<u>McDonald's</u>

This logo was selected because of its long history, and remarkably established "golden arches" as well as its ability to withstand controversy through its brand efforts. It is also globally

known. While the U.S. may equate it with unhealthy, cheap, fast food, in markets throughout the world, it represents an indulgence (Oswald, 2007). McDonald's logo evolution is intentional. Each new logo version serves as a response to common consumer issues in order to directly influence the perception of the corporation. It serves essentially as a "voice" to renew itself and enhance its message among the public, with a strong emphasis on consumer recognition and differentiation from competitors. McDonald's capitalizes on brand recognition, and is well-known for serving simple, inexpensive, consistent American food. Seemingly, it came to be the world's most expansive restaurant chain with more than 30,000 stores in over 100 countries. McDonald's is responsible for feeding over 52 million customers collectively over the course of a day (McDonald's Corp. Media Center, 2011).

McDonald's drive-in hamburger stand was introduced in 1953 (Hess, 1986). It was started by the McDonald brothers, who asked architect Stanley Metson to provide a blueprint for their drive-in (Hughes, 2008). His plans included a rectangular building with a roof that tilted down from the front and back of the building. The roof was also to contain white and red tiles. One of the McDonald brothers sensed this was not as "revolutionary" as he had intended. His hope was to reform the way America (and the rest of the world) ate their food. As a result, he added two big golden arches into the design plans to make their particular stand more visible and memorable (Trimmer, 1978). Instead of these arches actually being added to the structure of the building, a sign-maker was contracted to design a sign depicting the "golden arches," and thus the new visual symbol for McDonald's was born (Hughes, 2008).

From then on, the white and red tiled stripes and yellow arches coincided with the original McDonald's hamburger stand drive-in. Around this time, such stands were becoming very well-known in the landscape of American roadside, and was instrumental in impressing the

image of such stands into American consciousness (Trimmer, 1978). The arches, supported by double 25-foot sheet metal (painted yellow), attracted lots of attention above and beyond the masses of signs, buildings, and phone lines which could distract from the venue's noticeability. The arches gave drivers ample time to not only notice the stand but also slow down and drive in (Hess, 1986).

Figure 4: Image of the original golden arches design in the McDonald's architecture.
(Source: McDonald's: You Deserve A Break Today- www.lexeat.com/McDonalds.html)

In terms of color and design, the arches were a golden color from their inception. These arches, as shown in Figure 4, were attached to the building's structure, but not used for support (Hess, 1986). In addition, McDonald's sought to "upgrade" its representation by seeking out a new logo. Originally, Fred Turner came up with a "V" based on the Cadillac emblem (Love, 1995), upon which Jim Schindler later extended into an "M" for the McDonald's store as it is viewed from a 45 degree angle. He also created the sign to resemble the red isosceles roof as the background for the words (as shown in Figure 4). The restaurant's physical arches were

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discontinued in the 1960s, leaving the golden arches logo as the physical sign itself (representamen) for the McDonald's brand in the minds of consumers (serving as the interpretant).

In terms of colors, as the representamen, yellow is one of the most popular colors among the 5-12 year olds (Singh, 2006). Therefore, the interpretant of the logo, developed by the Ronald McDonald logo as the human element of the brand, signifies in the minds of its consumers: children, fun, and fast food as well as the trademark golden arches (Rowley, 2004). Dickinson and Svensen (2000) state that colors used by corporate companies such as Shell, McDonald's, and Burger King have an emotional connotation in today's consumers – meaning "convenience purchasing." Other interpretants, based on the golden arches, are consistency in food – a.k.a., it tastes the same no matter where it is purchased, it means availability, etc. – quick service and food ready to eat when one is hungry, and generates a culture of gathering socially for groups and families, as well as being a leading fast food restaurant throughout the world.

The colors chosen to represent McDonald's are intentional. They produce an object to incite action among their consumers (the interpretant). Goldstein's 1942 research found that colors with longer wavelength, such as red, are seen to arouse, as opposed to colors on with shorter wavelength like green. In particular, the colors yellow and red are stimulants which engender expansive and forceful behavior (Elliot & Maier, 2007). Hutchings (1997) also concedes that a human's natural response to color stimuli is similar to their nonhuman counterparts, who are intrinsically guided to food by signal functions. In this case, red – the color of fruit – triggers a readiness to eat. Another reason for the color red in the logo (see figures 5 and 6), is that the color red is associated with happiness, and leads to such a cognitive process with the according behavior (Soldat, Sinclair, & Mark, 1997).

Figure 5: McDonald's still uses the red trapezoid 'roof' as a main component of its signage
(Source: Logo Design Love - http://www.logodesignlove.com/images/simple-logos/mcdonalds-signage.jpg)

Similarly, both the colors red and yellow were proposed to be positive colors by famous German poet Goethe (1982). Goethe considered red and yellow as inciting happiness, joy, and optimism (Birren, 1961). In a branding context, Chang and Lin (2010) found that participants in their study equated yellow in a brand with joy, brightness, and warmth. Similarly, customer perception of colors with regard to brand association, recognition, and identity was found to be the following: "Most participants were impressed by red and yellow colors […]. The color base of authority can trigger consumer brand awareness and shape brand image" (Chang & Lin, 2010, p. 3350). Corporations such as McDonald's have not only chosen colors that enhance and strengthen their corporate image and recall (see figure 6), but also combine it with the consistency and longevity of this logo. The viewer is infiltrated with a strong, lasting message of

the "golden arches" with either the red background or "roof" image in the logo (as shown in figure 5).

Figure 6: Red as a predominant color of the McDonald's logo
(Source: Brands of the World: http://www.brandsoftheworld.com/search/117866579/235380.html)

The McDonald's "I'm lovin' it" logo (see Figure 7) serves to reinforce an object based on the representamen; the words "I'm lovin' it" under the golden arches – that of family, fun, and community – are meant to reinstate the image of McDonald's products in the minds of consumers (the interpretant as decoded by consumers). According to Würtz (2006), the philosophy behind this new slogan was the following: "You're immediately at the center of attention – your individuality, your everyday life, situations in which you recognize yourself and where you would like to see yourself" (p. 286). This is the object represented by the new slogan under the arches. The interpretant is that consumers should go to McDonald's to experience

these attributes. Another strong object corresponding to the change in referent is the hope to communicate a response to the criticism it had been receiving. At this time, the object was to bring about a positive perception among the viewer, as the company had undergone some controversial criticism (e.g., obesity among the U.S. population and environmental issues) that were beginning to be associated with the company name (Schlosser, 2001). With regard to the environmental issues, Lewandowski (2009) denoted the corporation had changed its logo color in Europe to one of the golden arches depicted with a hunter green background in its initiative to show a more eco-friendly illustration

Figure 7: "I'm lovin' it" campaign logo
(Source: McDonald's official website - http://www.mcdonalds.com/us/en/home.html)

Overall, the "golden arches" representamen has an extremely large recall among consumers. In a 7,000 participant survey, people in Japan, India, Germany, Australia and the U.K. were more able to identify the McDonald's logo than the Christian cross (Schlosser, 2001). Needless to say, McDonald's is exceptionally effective in engendering emotion and having an effect on the viewer. Its logo changes are mainly attempts to curtail the message trajectory and

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bend it to convey different mindsets among McDonald's consumers, especially in response to criticism and controversy.

<center>Nike</center>

This logo was selected because of its strong presence in the athletic industry, its striking brand association within the athletic arena, and by virtue of it being the "current leader in a competitive advertising system geared to producing and maintaining the highest sign values" (Goldman & Papson, 1999, p. 16). The logo was born as a result of Phil Knight's transition from his original shoe distribution company, *Blue Ribbon Sports*, to starting his own brand of shoes in 1971, which needed to be marketed. He began by paying an art student at Portland State University $35 to design a logo/stripe to be displayed on the shoe's side canvas (Aderton & Nandand, 2011). He wanted such a logo or "stripe" to suggest "speed" or "movement," and make it clearly visible on the shoe's side so it could be seen vividly at a distance. It also had to be functional so it could support the shoe's structure, in the same way that Adidas "stripes" added support from the shoe's sole to the upper laces. By the same token, other logos such as Puma added forefoot support. Unfortunately, such a structural feature was not created. Though Knight was not particularly fond of the design, he unwillingly accepted it for lack of anything better. The name "swoosh" came about by a customer requesting a shoe with the "swooshie" fiber on the side of the shoes (Bick & Chiper, 2007).
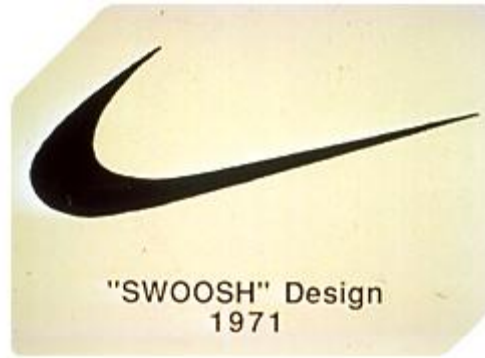
Figure 8: The original Nike 'swoosh' design
(Source: The LogoMix.com - http://www.thelogomix.com/files/u7/Nike.jpg)

Nike's swoosh started out as "strictly a symbolic and aesthetic accouterment" (Goldman & Papson, 1999, p. 17), an "empty vessel" with no real inherent meaning. It was simply a representamen, or a sign, which later attained a referent, as the sign came onto its meaning based on close association with various meaningful symbols. In accordance with Knight's vision, the original Nike logo was created for the effect of being fast, fluid, and simple so it could be seen clearly on a shoe. This original diagram (representamen as it is shown in Figure 8) is indicative of those things, and suggests the object according to what it was represented to be. A symbolic relationship is also seen in the swoosh being representative of a wing of the Greek Goddess, Nike, the goddess of victory. This symbolic relationship is indicative of an object, as Nike's appearance was that of a young, fit woman with wings that were often illustrated as a depiction of a victory wreath, staff, or chariot. Her strengths as a goddess were directly in line with Phil Knight's intended portrayal: that of a swift flyer, a quick runner, and strong charioteer. She also served as the inspiration for courage among warriors (Littleton, 2005). This object has a strong standing in terms of the logo's meaning among the public, or Nike's consumer base, as the corporate image largely surrounds these such traits, and inspires them among its customers.

In modern times, it adopted a strong image among the public when it came to be interpreted by the viewer as having connections to symbolic representatives associated with the brand. The most notable one was the notion of "Air Jordan" when Nike was able to prosper on Michael Jordan's success as a star basketball player (Petrina, 2000). The interpretant of the sign became the link, in the consumers' minds, to overwhelming success in basketball and the athletic industry simply by partaking in the brand that signified itself as such. Similarly, the representamen of the "swoosh" began to adopt several objects such as "devotion," and has now been associated with objects that make it currently very rich in meaning to consumers (Bruna, 2007).

Figure 9: A representation of the evolution of the Nike logos
(Source: LogoDesign.com - http://www.logodesign.com/logo-design-article-display/13/Logo-Evolution/)

Consumer recognition and athlete endorsement were the two main reasons for Nike's success in having its "swoosh" representamen stand for the company. Nike's logo is currently in its fifth version (see figure 9). The primary logo had the swoosh with the Nike words written across it, then the letters were capitalized and moved above it, then a box was put around it (Slack & Slack, 2005). The current version came about unexpectedly. Due to a strong association of the representamen in the viewer's minds, or the interpretant, Nike found that there was, indeed, a strong link between the swoosh logo and what the symbol stood for in the consumers'

minds at the 1992 Wimbledon tennis tournament. Tennis player Jim Courier participated in the

tournament. He was wearing a hat denoting only the swoosh logo with no written copy of the

name (Goldman & Papson, 1999). Eliminated early on in the tournament, he handed over the hat

to Andre Agassi, also a Nike sponsored athlete. Upon winning the championship, Nike received

an overwhelming amount of calls asking about where one could obtain such a hat. This was

Nike's wake-up call to realize that television viewers were very capable of easily recognizing the

logo without the name next to it. This signaled a very strong representamen-object-interpretant

relationship as the swoosh being a sign for the Nike brand corporation in the athletic arena

(Goldman & Papson, 1999).

Figure 10: Current Nike logo
(Source: Nike official website - http://www.nike.com/nikeos/p/nike/en_US/)

Since then, this strong unity has remained, as consumers take on the associations and

values of the logo (Bernstein Research, 2001). Consumers associate the swoosh sign with

notions of freedom and empowerment (Goldman & Papson, 1999), and it has become a great

vehicle for communicating a multitude of strong messages to its public (Bennett & Manheim,

2001).

<u>Pepsi</u>

This logo was chosen because of its long history, constant "cola wars" with its chief competitor Coca-Cola, and its remarkable evolution that distinguishes it from so many others in terms of design and distinction (Marconi, 1999). Having come about in 1898 (see Figure 11), it served to challenge Coca-Cola as the top company in the industry (Caparell, 2007). Their first logo shows a representamen as a red calligraphic logo which served to inscribe the company's name on its products (PepsiCo, Inc., 2009).

Figure 11: Original Pepsi Logo, 1898
(Source: Arnell Group, 2008, p. 8)

It is not by coincidence that the Pepsi 1962 Pepsi logo contains all the colors of the U.S. flag. According to Fiske (1987), a semiotics scholar, it is highly acceptable in our media-dense culture for such symbols to represent ideals and people. In this case, Davisson and Booth (2010) proclaim the logo's colors serve as representation of the U.S. flag. This logo (see Figure 12) represents this characteristic logo with its red, white, and blue colors incorporated in its layout.

Figure 12: "Modernized" version of the Pepsi logo, 1962
(Source: Arnell Group, 2008, p. 13)

Another more modern interpretation is its striking resemblance to the Obama campaign logo (see Figure 13). The Obama campaign logo was prevalent among youth culture, so Pepsi saw this as an opportunity for a future logo design in keeping with its patriotic theme. The logo depicts visual U.S. elements of the American icon of a "field of wheat" as well as the sunrise (bringing to mind Reagan's 1980 "Morning in America" campaign) (Sturken, 2009).

Figure 13: Obama campaign logo

(Source: Organizing for America: BarakObama.com - http://my.barackobama.com)

In a similar fashion, Figure 14 portrays the Pepsi logo as compared to that of the Obama campaign. These two logos are roughly similar in that the Obama campaign was prevalent among youth, as is Pepsi, and both designate patriot-inspired themes.
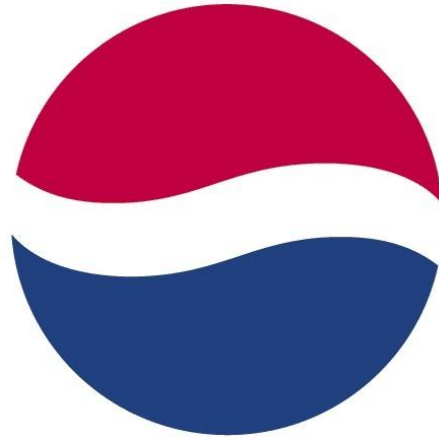
Figure 14: Pre-2009 Pepsi logo
(Source: Logo Blog **-** *http://www.logoblog.org/pepsi_logo.php)*

In addition to the patriotic-inspired schema, Pepsi's redesign leading to its current logo is a representamen of the same globe with a white wave across it horizontally, depicting a more flattened version of the former, with an upward right-slanting swell diagonally across the logo. It attempted to convey certain elements (objects) through the referent (sign) that were not entirely effective when it came to the viewer's interpretation (interpretant). A description is as follows: In the "cola war" between Pepsi and Coca-Cola, Pepsi dominates one region, that of youth – "Coke can't win on that turf – Pepsi owns it" (Fahey & Lafayette, 1991, p. 4). Further elements or objects of the representamen are entertainment, and freshness. The conveyance of the "refresh your world" campaign centers on Pepsi's encouragement of its consumers to take a fresh

perspective on their world, occupation, and lives and have a more positive impact through creativity and passion. While the campaign felt strongly about the conveyance of this message, the logo itself was not well received by consumers. Thus, there was a discrepancy between what the sign refers to (object) and its actual effect on viewers (the interpretant). Whether the interpretants are Pepsi-drinkers or not, anyone who looks at the logo is a stakeholder (or a potential consumer) as long as he or she has the vision to see the logo (Neil, 2009).

According to Neil (2009), "Pepsi's new logo has gotten a reception roughly as warm as might be given a bagpipe player stepping onto an elevator" (p. A1). John McWade, the founder and creative director of Before & After (a design magazine) referred to Pepsi's new logo as "static, empty, vaguely bland." He added that "it conveys no energy, no motion, no effervescence, and, well, it's not young." Critiques from other consumers include qualifiers such as "terrible," "awful," "stupid," and "monstrous." Ultimately, this conveys a very strong message that the representamen was not effective in portraying what it refers to (object) so that it was accordingly received well by the interpretant (stakeholders or viewers).

Information relating back to the Pepsi's logo's origins became available when the Arnell Group's 27-page document "Breathtaking," depicting its design strategy, leaked onto the internet for public viewing (Arnell Group, 2008). This document provides a basis for how the Pepsi logo went from its existing red/blue circle with the white wave across the middle (see figure 14) to a shift upward at about a 30 degree angle (see figure 15), with the hopes that this would signal the transmission from convention (old logo) to innovation (object of new logo). They hoped by tilting the white wave upward at an angle, this would signal a "breakthrough innovation" to "move out of the traditional linear system and into the future" (Arnell Group, 2008, p.3). This

was the heralding of the reinvention, starting with the horizontal wave of the old logo (in figure 14), and leading to the angled wave of the new logo (see figure 15).

Figure 15: The current Pepsi logo as of 2009
(Source: Pepsico: Pepsi Cola Brands - http://www.pepsico.com/Brands/Pepsi_Cola-Brands.html)

The 'breathtaking' document (Arnell Group, 2008) states that "True innovation always begins by investigating the historic path. Going back-to-the-roots moves the brand forward as it changes the trajectory of the future" (p. 5). Their historical work began by investigating shapes long before the first Pepsi logo ever came about, beginning with the Vāstu Śāstra in 3,000 BC., or the "Hindu Tradition of numerical harmony as spatial organizer" (Arnell Group, 2008, p. 6). It continues outlining elements through 2009, including the Vitruvian Renaissance in 1455, or "rediscovery of the Vitruvian principles and their publication," outlining the shapes of these high-profile landmarks in history and design (Arnell Group, 2008, p. 6). Not only did they look at historically prominent designs, but also both the bottle shape and logo design of all the prior Pepsi logos from 1989 to 2000. The purpose of looking at the bottles was to "Retain the best of PepsiCo's history and shape the next PepsiCo bottle into an icon for the brand" (Arnell Group, 2008, p. 7). By tracing circular renderings of all the Pepsi logos from 1898, they were able to analyze the "Pepsi Geometries: Perimeter Oscillations" of such logos, in circular forms

throughout what they call the history of "Pepsi's DNA" (Arnell Group, 2008, p. 8). Another

consideration in coming up with the current logo is an analysis using past artists' and architects'

use of the "Golden Ratio" for the golden rectangle, in which the ratio of long side to short side in

a given rectangle is that ratio, or the mathematical constant ration of about 1.618. According to

the Arnell Group (2008), human perception of beauty" is largely attributed to this golden ratio,

and this proportion is said to be "universally and aesthetically pleasing" (p. 18). Such

architecture as the Parthenon and art such as Da Vinci's Mona Lisa are in keeping with this ratio.
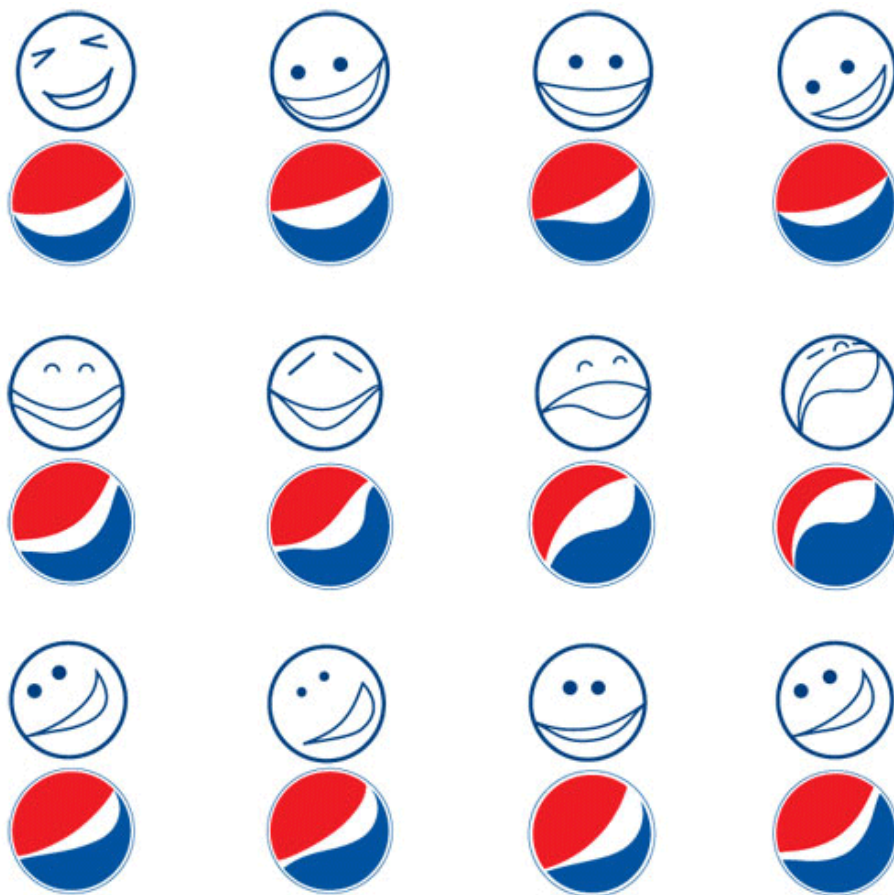

Figure 16: "The Face of a New Generation"
(Source: Arnell Group, 2008, p. 23)

Another depiction (see figure 16) was drawn up of what is labeled as "The face of a new generation" (p. 21), and earlier construed as "one identity, multiple emotions" (p. 22). Figure 16 illustrates the series of smiles that comprise the logo's object as displayed by the representamen that is the actual logo beneath the smiles. Once the smile-induced illustration was drawn up, several additional analyses were done based on a typical light path to the bottle, the logo's visual from a standard shopping aisle, and how the logo would be viewed by consumers in an aisle from 60 degrees, 30 degrees, and 10 degrees to decipher how it would be viewed by consumers once it was released (Arnell Group, 2008).

<u>Shell</u>

This logo was selected because although it was not a U.S. corporation by origin, it has a large consumer base in the U.S., and thus serves many consumers in the same market as the other logos selected. Certain logos were developed for U.S. use only, and this analysis will concentrate on its relation to American constituents, depicting certain states and logos used throughout the U.S. Shell has become a household name in the oil industry among U.S. consumers and the researcher found it worthy of analysis for its strong sign functions and analytical qualities.

The Royal Dutch Petroleum Company came about in 1890. It came to be called Shell in 1907 (Howarth, Jonker, Sluyterman, & van Zanden, 2007) because it has become well Americanized and is a household name as such. It had already established itself as the world's foremost leading oil company by the end of the 1920s (de Goey, 2002). By 2004, Shell could be seen in 140 nations with a total of 120,000 workers (Priest, 2007). Today, it is the world's third

largest oil company, trailing only behind Exxon-Mobil and British Petroleum. Its name "Shell" was employed for the first time in 1891. It became the symbol for kerosene shipment to the Far East by the original founders of Shell, Marcus Samuel and Company, for at the time, each tanker transporting kerosene to the Far East was assigned a name based on a few different shells (Henriques, 1969). Both the pecten logo and the word "shell" were brought about by Marcus Samuel and Company (Silver, 2001).

The original Shell logo was produced in 1904. Since then, it has moved from a realistic depiction of a pecten, or a physical scallop shell (see Figure 17), to the graphic representation known today consisting of the bold shape with the distinctive yellow and red colors (Heller & Pettit, 2000). Semiotics views logos as a portion of the sign system corporations use to communicate with audiences, both internal and external (Zakia & Nadin, 1987). As an expression of the corporation's identity to its audiences, the Shell logo can be seen as Shell's signature on any materials upon which it is displayed.

Figure 17: The first Shell logo, in 1904
(Source: 100 years of the Pecten: The history behind the Shell emblem - http://www-static.shell.com/static/aboutshell/downloads/who_we_are/pectenhistory.pdf)

The representamen of the Shell logo is the icotype, or iconic logo, as it would be represented in a photographic image (see Figure 17). The original Shell logo is the physical icon of the mollusk character, reflecting its original beginnings in nautical settings and activities (Mick et al., 2004). An iconic relation exists between the representamen and its pictorial object –

the object "shell." This representamen is an iconic sign in the sense that there is a topological

similarity between the signifier and its denotatum (Heilbrunn, 1997). Denotatum means "that

which is denoted" and reflects an actual object as indicated by a given linguistic expression

(Allan, 2001). The object is represented by a sign, which is symbolic. Just as mollusks are

prevalent in nautical settings and activities, the Shell corporation is highly active in such

maritime regions. This Shell logo exists as a visual symbol without the business name but there

is a clear association with the corporation's activities. Shell uses this logo as a differentiation

figure to the extent that the expression plane (i.e., shape, structure, typography) conveys meaning

about the content plane – the company's mission (O'Halloran, 2005). Consequently, the

expression plane of the Shell logo, as seen through the description of a simple structure, is

associated with a content plane representing the mission of the company (Liu & O'Halloran,

2009).

Additionally, the object is represented by another type of symbolic sign: the writings of

ancient Chinese philosopher Lao-Tzu, as well as the citizens of the Far East (where Samuel's

ships used to transport oil) considered the shell to be a symbol of genius, like an exquisite fine

pearl (Miller, Vandome, & McBrewster, 2010). The interpretant of this logo is that oil (or

accordingly, petroleum or kerosene), is precious, similar to the fine unique pearl found in the

shell. Another interpretant is that oil can be delivered anywhere on the planet, just as shells can

be found throughout the planet. Through a photographic depiction, the Shell logo takes on not

only a representative function, (in that it acts as both an icon and as a symbol), but also a

pragmatic function in that the actual logo is a signal generating a certain reaction from the

receiver. However, the logo is not meant to be emotionally sensitive, an "image sign," or to bring

about intense feelings in the receiver.

Between 1915 and 1948, Shell expanded its activities beyond petroleum as a result of its success. It now included natural gas and other petrochemicals to its list of products. Where its logo was concerned, colors were added, so it now depicted mostly a yellow shell with a red background, or another variation, that of a red shell with a yellow background. The logo did not merge both colors onto the same shell until 1948. The Shell name was also added to the inside of the logo (see Figure 18). The color mixing was a key semiotic move for Shell. The red and yellow colors were first displayed during the creation of Shell's service stations in California (Howarth et al., 2007).

Not only did the red and yellow colors aid Shell in becoming well-known throughout the world, but they have also represented, and continue to represent, the colors of the Spanish flag. Spain's red and yellow colors were selected based on California's early Spanish influence (Howarth et al., 2007). Many of California's early occupants were born in Spain (Jackson & Castillo, 1996). The symbolic relationship was timely. Shell did this in anticipation that an emotional bond would occur as a result of displaying the Spanish colors (Knobil, 2001). Peirce's semiotics includes the main category of meaning with respect to similarity between sign and object – called "iconic relations." In this respect, iconic characteristics include color (ex. Spain's red and yellow colors as indicators of the nation's flag).

Figure 18: The Shell logo, from 1948 to 1971
(Source: Shell.com: The history of the Shell logo -
http://www.shell.com.ng/home/content/nga/aboutshell/who_we_are/history/history_logo/)

Before fax machines and the Internet came about, many logos would include small details that ended up being blurred when the logo was displayed at a small size. During the 1950s, the Shell logo was simplified in an effort to increase its memorability and recognition (Silver, 2001). Raymond Loewy, the French creator of the 1971 Shell logo (see Figure 18), was also the designer of logos for BP and Exxon (Wright, 2006). The Shell logo is at this point a red and yellow shell which, once again, functions as the representamen, (or the sign itself) (Peirce, 1958 [1931]). This representamen is linked to two distinct objects. First, it is connected to an indexical relation of contiguity to the "Shell" company. Shell is indexically designated as the sender of the message in each representation of its logo, from the one witnessed on Shell-sponsored Formula Ones to those observed on the products sold throughout various stores. As the Shell logo is only visible when applied to a support-medium, the logo serves as an index for both the company and the company's products and services (Heilbrunn, 1997). The Shell logo, therefore, is not auto-referential. Instead, it portrays information about the business it represents – and everything associated along with it. The logo sends a message instead of the sender, similar to a stand-in. A logo's role is deep and powerful because its primary purpose is to create a connection between the sender as represented by the logo (the company) and a receiver (the consumers) (Jakobson, 1960).

Second, the representative power of the Shell logo is based on an indexical relation of contiguity between the representamen and its object. The power and coherence of this representative power depend on the interpretant of such a relation. In other words, the question is whether selecting the pecten to portray the company is reasonable or justifiable. From this standpoint, the indexical function of the logo is essentially found to be legitimate. Similarly, it is

questionable whether the logo can effectively be an identity sign of Shell (Heilbrunn, 1997). The indexical function of the logo achieves greater stability and legitimacy if the representamen corresponds with the corporation's identity completely, (or extremely closely). Identity contains a succession of identifying messages that the company seeks to convey in its transfer in a symbolic and figurative manner (De Geus, 1997).

In terms of recognition, the Shell logo has established itself as a successful portrayal, and has consistently been used to further sales promotions and bolster marketing campaigns for the Shell company. Its logo is a notable advantage that signifies a remarkable progressive communicational undertaking for the business. Undeniably, the logo has proven itself a "progressive venture." Shell adapted its logo about ten times. Instead of constructing evidence on the free play of signifiers as proposed by Baudrillard (1983), it can be asserted that Shell's logo adaptations are intended for effect.

The representamen of the new Shell logo (see Figure 18), unlike the 1904 version of the pecten (or Shell logo), is a depiction of a more evident shell, incorporating scallop-like features which define the visual identity system of the corporation. This is exemplified mostly by the color code: the use of yellow as the primary color, and red as the secondary one in terms of identity. This iconic relation serves as the representative act of the representamen in its figurative feature (i.e., the object). The iconic relation is based on joint pictorial codes of representation and symbolization that both the sender (the Shell corporation) and the receiver (the consumers and viewers) comprehend. This is the reason a company like Coca-Cola must adapt its logo to changing times or when promoting its beverages in cultures with diverse linguistic codes (Heilbrunn, 1997).

Up until the 1980s, Shell's business was completely independent in the United States. Shell Oil stock was traded on the NYSE and its operation was not controlled by the Group's central office in the Netherlands (The Hague). An unusual result of this independence was that the U.S. version of the logo was slightly different from the one displayed throughout the rest of the world. In the 1990s, Shell Oil's independence started to decrease gradually as The Hague-headquartered parent company took on more and more control of the U.S. business. The logo that had previously been unique to the U.S. was now displayed throughout the world (Howarth et al., 2007). Today, the Shell logo with the exact red and yellow company colors is seen at every Shell gas/petrol station in the world (de Goey, 2002). With regards to the shell pecten, the red and yellow colors have been modernized throughout the years. In particular, in 1995, an original bright, new, and consumer-friendly version of the Shell red and yellow were contributed to the logo in order to start out the company's new visual brand identity. This also distinguished Shell gas stations from its competitors (Howarth et al., 2007). This logo eventually became so recognizable that by 1999 it no longer required the Shell name to appear with it (Wright, 2006), as shown in Figure 19. Logo recognition and familiarity, in that "everyone" has seen or heard of the Shell logo, has been very beneficial to the Shell company. It allows for improved effect or influence among consumers in terms of both recognition and recall (Zajonc, 1968).

Figure 19: The Shell logo, in 1999 (previously only used in the U.S.)
(Source: Shell official website - http://www.shell.com/)

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The word "Shell" was present inside the logo until 1971, but as the company generated more popularity and profit, the CEOs felt it was no longer necessary to have the Shell name written inside the logo; instead, they had it appear underneath (see Figure 18). By the late 1990s, the company had established itself as such a well-known name that the "Shell" title was dropped completely (see Figure 19). Simanzhenkov and Idem (2003) denote this semiotic move depicted a "silent, but strong sign of Shell" (p. 207), that it had reached its peak. Today, Shell is one of only a small amount of brands throughout the world without a name association – solely the pecten. Thus, the strength of semiotics.

Shell's objective has remained the same: to aid consumer identification of the oil company with ease. As mentioned previously, the various logo transformations were created for an intended effect. They symbolize Shell's efforts to bring about the deliberate message they hoped to convey. As unique as the logo is, it is hard to pinpoint a free equivalent. Any substitute that is not imitative would neglect to portray the intended meaning, and would taint the corporate image and fall short of the logo's identifying purpose.

The reliability of Shell as a business centers on a shell logo that must always be consistent. The pecten serves as an atomic, flexible sign for the corporation. It relays to consumers the message that quality is an undoubtedly expected feature they can expect from the company, independent of the location where it is found (Gregory, 2002). Currently, the Shell logo is utilized by all of the company's chief branches: the main corporation, Shell, the U.S. subsidiary of Shell--Shell Oil Company, and Shell Canada. Due to the uniformity of the logo, there exists only one Shell, showing itself as comprised of one global philosophy (Cortada & Woods, 2000). The Shell logo is highly effective, as it has fulfilled its objective for presence. It

is not only familiar and recognized, but also brings forth a shared meaning among the public which stimulates the desired positive affect (Cohen, 1986; Peter, 1989; Robertson, 1989; Vartorella, 1990).

Starbucks

This logo was selected because Starbucks is the biggest coffee retailer in the world at present. It currently has over 17,000 locations in more than 50 countries (Starbucks Company Profile, 2011). Due to its pervasive nature, millions of people are exposed to its logo on any given day. This logo has received extreme notoriety and familiarity among consumers, with a strong evolutionary nature and tradition rooted in the depiction of the siren.

This analysis begins with the common element among all the Starbucks logos since its creation: the siren. The logo first came about when three college students created it after learning about classic nautical figures in art and literature, as the siren stands for power and strength (Phillips & Rippin, 2010). In Greek mythology, sirens signaled the forbidden and irresistible, being said to have sung a song to lure sailors to their doom. According to Phillips and Rippin (2010), "the mermaid is a boundary creature, inhabiting a space between sea and earth and between human and animal. As two beings in the same body, she is hybrid and ambivalent, an ambiguity that provokes and disturbs" (p. 8). Mermaids have also been linked to globalization and travel, and a favorite among sculptors who depicted their legs scaly and spread apart (Simon, 2009). The object as represented by the representamen (the siren) is "allying the brand with a grand vision for improving the human condition which sits uncomfortably alongside its other claims to be an escape from the world" (Phillips & Rippin, 2010, p. 10). Similarly, the name

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Starbucks was derived from the novel *Moby Dick* as the first mate on the ship was called "Starbuck" (Starbucks Coffee Company Profile, 2010).

The logo begins with a representamen (see figure 20), or sign of a female mermaid revealing clearly defined perky breasts, a crown, lavish hair, a protruding stomach, suggesting a ripe plump escapade for customers with her suggestive smile. According to Warren and Brewis (2004), her stomach signals "an overtly reproductive body, literally embodying 'excessive and disordered' physicality (p. 229). The object related to this is that the coffee is suggestive and seductive, similar to the temptation depicted by the siren. Symbolically, rather than signaling the demise of customers, it signified the seductive and irresistible qualities of the coffee sold within. Similarly, this overall logo was initially fashioned to look like a cigar brand (Schultz & Jones Yang, 1997).

Figure 20: First Starbucks logo, 1973
(Source: The Starbucks Logo: A visual twist of Starbucks history - http://gourmet-coffee-zone.com/starbucks-logo.html)

Such physical exposure brought about a strong interpretant among its customers, but not one that matched with the object the sign stood for. Strong reactions and even boycotts and bans were prevalent. Later on, Starbucks's decision to use its original logo on its cups for a short time to commemorate its 35th anniversary in 2006 started as a nationwide release to grab headlines

with the temporary reintroduction, but concerns with this release caused it to take place in the

Northwest only (York, 2008). The reaction to this cup resulted in pretty strong controversy,

something the Starbucks corporation had anticipated, but hoped would not occur. As York

(2008) put it, "we wanted to be invisible. We wanted the conversation to be about coffee, not

about anatomy" (p. 4). Not only was it banned by a Washington school district if students did not

cover the cup with a cover (York, 2008). It also brought on a boycott of the coffee chain by

3,000 Christians. In a press release by the founder of Resistance Manifesto, "The Starbucks logo

has a naked woman on it with her legs spread like a prostitute. Need I say more? It's extremely

poor taste, and the company might as well call themselves Slutbucks" (Media Should Be

Ashamed of Starbucks Nonstory Story, 2008).

The second version of the Starbucks logo, the mermaid's (a.k.a., Melusine's) nipples and

breasts disappeared and a more animated/graphic portrayal was depicted, rather than the

seemingly realistic drawing that had been seen in the previous logo. Instead of having her smile

seductive, her face was geared right to the viewer (Phillips & Rippin, 2010).

Figure 21: Second Starbucks logo, circa 1978
(Source: The Starbucks Logo: A visual twist of Starbucks history - http://gourmet-coffee-zone.com/starbucks-logo.html)

In 1987, the brown was dropped in favor of a green outside circle when CEO Howard

Schultz returned to Starbucks and bought the company from its founders. The original color

scheme was changed from the color of brown coffee, to a green, as this was the color of the *Il*

Gironale coffee house that Schultz had previously established in his time away from Starbucks.

Upon his return, the logo not only changed colors, but the text around the circle was also reduced

to simply "Starbucks Coffee" (Schultz & Jones Yang, 1997).

Figure 22: 1992-2011 Starbucks logo
(Source: Techshout.com - http://www.techshout.com/images/starbucks-logo-june08.jpg)

The logo, debuted in 1992, depicted an even more "cleaned up" image. The navel, linked

to child-bearing, was taken out and only the top part of the tails is depicted, not showing any

reference to the part where they meet, aka the genial area (Cheney, Christensen, Zorn, & Ganesh,

2004). Essentially, any reference to sexual seductiveness was eliminated (Schultz & Jones Yang,

1997). This allowed for a more viewer-friendly image, and one that was still in keeping with the

logo's history and evolution of the siren, but was a welcomed modification among consumers

(York, 2008).

Starbucks's evolution is still occurring, with its new logo debuted in 2011 depicting the

outer circle removed, and the green siren out of the circle. According to Howard Schultz, CEO

and Chairman of Starbucks Coffee, as stated in a video clip on the official Starbucks website: "This new evolution of the logo does two things that are very important. It embraces and respects our heritage, and at the same time evolves us to a point where we feel it's more suitable for the future" (A Look at the Future of Starbucks, 2011). There is an exceptionally strong future-orientation present, typifying that the current logo has been exhausted and that the new logo allows for expansion of the company. Schultz directly explains in the video the "new interpretation of the logo at its core." In terms of Peircean semiotics, the object of the new brand logo is said to stand for the "Starbucks experience," defined as the adoration of coffee, the relationships built with partners, and the connections built with its customers (A Look at the Future of Starbucks, 2011). He remarks that an important component of this new logo's object is the "freedom and flexibility to think beyond coffee" (A Look at the Future of Starbucks, 2011).

Figure 23: New Starbucks logo released in 2011
(Source: Starbucks Coffee Company - http://www.starbucks.com/)

The interpetant, based on the consumer's perception or mindset, is the familiar evolution of the token siren that has been present in the logo since its inception, denoting a rich history and strong tradition. The new logo allows for an adjusted perception of more possibilities, such as

Starbucks becoming more global, and not being constrained by not only the english text in the logo, but also the word "coffee," meaning it is capable of further expansion in its product offerings. As Howard Schultz posted on the corporation's official webpage: "Now, we've given her a small but meaningful update to ensure that the Starbucks brand continues to embrace our heritage and also ensure we remain relevant and poised for future growth" (Kavilanz, 2011). Further, the siren has symbolically "outgrown" the need for text to convey its message. The sign symbol stands on its own to represent the corporation and everything it stands for in the minds of consumers. Semiotics is a powerful tool.

CHAPTER FIVE: FINDINGS

Based on the semiotic data on logo evolution in Chapter 4, the researcher found six main themes that emerged across the analyses of U.S. corporate logos. These themes are (1) Direction toward the Future, (2) Identity with Viewers, (3) Instant Recognition and Distinctiveness, (4) Consistency throughout Evolution, (5) Invocation of Change, and (6) True Representation of Corporate Identity. The themes emerged naturally. To be more precise, the researcher identified information on logo evolution that was common across all analyses. In practical terms, the researcher read through each analysis and used the method of "color-coding," a technique whereby the information is displayed and highlighted by using different colors. Each color was tied to a prospective theme, and commonalities emerged based on the prevalence of a given color/theme throughout the analyses.

Theme 1: Direction toward the Future

Every business wants to grow and become more successful. The economy and corporate world are in constant flux. Given the cost of logo redesigns, it is important that the logo not only represent the corporation in its current state, but also offer plenty of room for expansion in future endeavors. According to Adams, Morioka, and Stone (2004), one of the things a designer must be sure to account for is that the current business being conducted may be very different from its long-term objectives. It is important to go over what the corporation hopes to achieve in the coming years and beyond (to the five and ten year marks). "Every company will evolve and change. The size of the company, product, and needs are in constant flux. […] It is human nature

to focus on our current needs: it is the designer's job to presuppose future needs" (Adams et al., 2004, p. 22). It is crucial to determine the potential growth opportunities inherent in the industry and look ahead to those, as a logo should function to enhance, not detract from future business ventures (Adams et al., 2004).

The logo of Apple exemplified this by using the releases of the company's computers to debut a new logo, taking a future-oriented approach in planning the message that would stand to accompany the products. This allowed Apple to send an even stronger brand image in having the new logo coincide with the release of a new product – e.g., this was particularly evident when the debut of Apple's second logo coincided with the emergence of the Apple II (Lynn, 1998). This allows for a more direct representamen-object-interpretant correlation in the consumers' minds in terms of the product-brand association. More importantly, there have been several instances of this future-orientation among the Apple brand, as its latest logo was first depicted on the Apple iMac upon its release (Robard, 2009). Tactics like these express the sense of a new age of Apple that is constantly revolutionizing in terms of the future.

The McDonald brothers had a vision of what the future drive-in would be like, and what would distinguish it from other drive-ins when they met with the architect to design the blueprint (Hughes, 2008). McDonald's also took into consideration its intentioned message trajectory and future plans with the "I'm lovin' it" logo. They used it to counterbalance the criticism it had faced. Taking on this future-oriented perspective allowed the designers and corporation to think "steps ahead" in terms of the message that would be portrayed through the representamen, its object, and how it would be decoded by consumers in its interpretant. Likewise, the first page of Pepsi's "Breathtaking" document depicted a literal trajectory with arrows leading from "convention" to "innovation" in the upcoming logo designs (Arnell Group, 2008). There is a

markedly clear intention for the new representamen, or sign, that would be the new logo. The latter would go from its present state to align with a future campaign, utilizing a logo that would convey this bridge "from convention to innovation" and move away from tradition, with sights set on a future brand breakthrough (Arnell Group, 2008, p. 8).

Similarly, the Shell logo – and the messages that it conveys – has become a prevalent symbol for oil consumption throughout the world. For the future years to come, the world will become increasingly dependent on oil. The recent riots in the Middle-East have caused gas prices to surge astronomically which, in turn, will have an effect on the U.S. economy. Lastly, Starbucks offers a strong message in unleashing the siren from the constraints of not only the outer circle, but the text which defines, and subsequently limits the corporation's growth in terms of products and globalization. Starbucks's latest logo send a strong object message that Starbucks seeks to expand its enterprise into new, multifaceted arenas, and had a clear intention in considering its future needs.

Theme 2: Identity with Viewers

Authors Adams et al. (2004) denote that the most basic, core questions for a designer to ask a client are: "Who is the client? Who is the audience, [and] what is needed?" (p. 22). Among the briefing questions in the work are consideration of the current audience, audience goal, and perception, both of the client's target audience, and its stakeholders, as well as the interpretant of the consumers ultimately supporting the business and determining its rate of success. Yet, it is argued that it goes deeper than simply asking the right questions. As stated earlier in the paper, logos are an emotional experience, and they must convey (quickly and efficiently) an emotion

among the consumers that represents the whole brand. A part of this has to do with recognizability and distinctiveness (discussed in the next theme) but, from an internal standpoint, the corporation must convey its identity strongly and distinctly with an emotional appeal that is easily identifiable among its viewers.

Apple has a very strong following, and its identity among viewers is extremely prevalent given its cohort of loyal followers (Kahney, 2004). To varying degrees, people have identified with the Apple brand. In a sense, they have also adopted it as their own based on the symbol of the Apple with the bite taken out of it (as we can see the Apple stickers on people's vehicles). The creation of Apple's logo has contributed to its viewer identity in creating a representamen of the striped apple logo intended to convey a sense of approachability and user-friendliness as well as a reduction in the fear associated with the use of a computer.

Another facet of Apple's identity with its viewers has to do with its marketing technique of giving out free decals with the purchase of a new machine, which began in the 1970's and continues on through today. These decals are displayed and recognized throughout the U.S. They are in high demand in other countries, so much so that they have been used for payment in lieu of money (Khaney, 2004). As Khaney (2004) remarked, "it's almost guaranteed that proud owners of brand-new Macs will affix a decal on their car, boat, bike, skateboard or storefront window. In fact, an Apple sticker is often the first thing people stick on a new car" (p. 9). One user even said he attached the sticker to his car then drove it to go pick up his iMac computer from CompUSA so that "everyone would have a look" (Kahney, 2004, p. 152). The representamen of an apple with the bite taken out of it has so much meaning among its loyal followers, consumers, and even average computer users, that it has incredible emotional appeal, and in essence has established a remarkable identity among its viewers.

McDonald's also has created a strong identity with its viewers, as the visual symbol for the "golden arches" has become a staple landmark across America's landscape. Similarly, choosing the color yellow seeks to identify with viewers in its popularity among 5-12 year olds (Singh, 2006), while the color red stimulates hunger and arousal (Elliot & Maier, 2007). Its visual symbol or the representamen golden arches conveys a strong interpretant message, and in essence, a strong identity among its consumers.

Nike has come to be known as a brand for champions in the sports arena. Its identity among viewers is rooted in its object of "Air Nike" and its association with Michael Jordan in the consumers' minds allows them to be superstar athletes in their own right. The logo conveys an emotion in its viewers as the apparel of dominating champions, winners and superstars in the athletic arena. Consumers have internalized these values and created this identity based on the representamen of the "swoosh" (Bernstein Research, 2001).

Pepsi has established itself to convey a sense of youth and identify itself as such (Fahey & Lafayette, 1991). A sense of refreshment and patriotism are signified by the brand and the symbolic object of the logo (Davisson & Booth, 2010). Identity among viewers was researched in the "Breathtaking" document in terms of smiles and "the face of a new generation" (Arnell Group, 2008, p. 23). However, the representamen of the new logo was found to portray an alternate identity among consumers, other than the one originally intentioned as the object of the representamen.

The Shell logo serves as a strong representation of the business it serves to represent, and is an effective stand-in for the Shell corporation. Identity among its viewers is strong as the representamen signifies its object, and is effective in conveying emotion and its brand as an oil company for passing motorists (Wright, 2006)

The Starbucks siren is seen by millions of people a day, and conveys a sense of identity in each and every one of them for its consistent service, the familiar and tempting siren, and the coffee products that lie behind its doors. Its logo on its storefront serves to identify itself truly and completely. Indeed, the objects that rest behind the sign of the siren are decoded by the receivers with recognized and identified meaning.

Theme 3: Instant Recognition and Distinctiveness

In a world cluttered with mass media messages, instant brand recognition through a given symbolic representamen is crucial. Accordingly, it must be distinctive and lend itself to being distinguished from the rest of the messages, as the average person is exposed to about 3,000 advertising messages per day (Vitale, 2007). The logos in this analysis serve to differentiate themselves from others (e.g., Pepsi vs. Coke). In addition, they need to convey, by and large, instant recognition of the brands they promote through the display of the representamen. This is due to a strong sign-object-interpretant relationship among many, if not all, the logos studied. Not only should the logo be able to distinguish itself and be instantly recognizable, but it should also convey the message of a greater value in the branded object vs. a generic equivalent (Leventhal, 1996)

Apple's iconic apple shape has a long history, which has helped it build recognition and has served to distinguish it from competitors. As such, when one sees the Apple logo on a piece of technology, there is no mistaking the brand associated with it. It is instantly recognizable and distinctive from other brand logos (Robard, 2009). The Apple brand has utilized the same logo silhouette since 1977, and it makes a remarkable statement on the establishment, contiguity, and,

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ultimately, the recognizability and distinction it has attained over time.

McDonald's has established this from the beginning, from the very first storefront it erected (Hughes, 2008). The initial design plans for the stand created instant visibility from the roadway and an effect that would hopefully serve to attract attention to the venue and escape the clutter that was prevalent throughout the roadway (Hess, 1986). This was the beginning of the "golden arches." With continued widespread recognition and very clear distinctive representamen throughout more than 100 countries, it has continued to prosper in terms of recognition and has clearly distinguished itself from its competitors solely through the use of the visual symbol.

With respect to the Nike symbol, all one need see is the swoosh to know what the company stands for (i.e., its object). The sign of the swoosh is not easily mistaken among its competitors, making it readily identifiable and a distinguishable feature among those in its class. This was clearly evidenced by the recognition of the Nike "swoosh" on its own among tennis fanatics at the 1992 Wimbledon tournament (Goldman & Papson, 1999).

The Pepsi logo is a representamen for people and ideals. Just as the U.S. flag represents patriotism, the Pepsi logo has adopted characteristics throughout its long history that make it unique, and distinguish it, more importantly, from its most high-profile competitor, Coca-Cola.

The Shell logo portrays a powerful image, declaring itself as the corporation it stands for among other oil companies. The red and yellow logo strongly conveys the brand identity through its visual symbol. By 1999, the logo was so recognizable that, in a similar fashion to the Nike logo, it did not require copy or text to be present with it, as it stood on its own due to the power of semiotics (Simanzhenkov & Idem, 2003). As discussed in the analysis, there is a strong conveyance of familiarity and recall among this particular sign symbol.

Lastly, the Starbucks siren has established itself as a symbol for the tempting coffee that it represents. A common trend among logos such as Nike and Shell is to rid the brand of its name and/or product within the context of its logo. In this case, Starbucks has had both. Its most recent logo symbolically "strips" the logo of its name and product line, leaving the siren to stand on its own as a representation of the corporation. Besides globalization opportunities and the possibility for future expansion into other markets, Starbucks is essentially stating that its power of recognition and familiarity based on just the siren – which has been a critical component of its logo since its inception – can stand on their own to convey the message without the use of text.

Theme 4: Consistency throughout Evolution

An additional common theme among the logos is one of consistency among each step of logo evolution, mostly including a common element present in all. Maintaining some consistent elements can aid in preventing loss of viewer recognition, instability, or a new viewership. Although logos are changing, a lack of consistency would mean that the new representamen, or the actual sign itself, would be portraying objects that may lose the link in being perceived among the viewer as the interpretant, and the sign-object-interpretant relationship would be damaged. By the same token, the representamen would no longer be representative of the corporation or its products in the viewers' minds.

The Apple silhouette of the apple with the bite taken out of it began in its second logo, which came about in 1977 (Robard, 2009). Since then, despite the changes in its color and/or style, its silhouette has remained the same and created strong consistency over the course of the company's existence. As Robard (2009) remarked, "the 'bitten apple' silhouette has been used

for over 30 years, only being updated in terms of color whilst the shape of the logo has remained the same, providing the company with a sense of continuity, building upon the logo's widespread recognition." Though the evolution of the logo occurs to affect the message, strong consistency is what makes the brand recognizable and, therefore, capable of being recalled among consumers as representative of the given brand.

McDonald's golden arches are the defining element of each of the McDonald's modifications. Whether the logo has a completely red background, stands alone, has a trapezoid roof attached, or has a new slogan, the "golden arches" sign is the representamen – the sign! – that signifies what McDonald's is. Consequently, it gives this sign meaning to the public who witness it. Similarly, its yellow color has essentially been held constant since its inception, creating consistency among those who view it as being representative of an American brand with inexpensive fast food (Oswald, 2007). Too much change would rattle the viewers' perception, and break the representamen-object-interpretant link of the sign symbol.

The Nike logo has always had some form of a representative "swoosh." The evolution consisted mainly of changed location of the verbiage, until the copy was discontinued in its final edition (Slack & Slack, 2005). Even older versions of the logo are still recognizable in today's modern times, as the "swoosh" is the defining element that signifies consistency among its viewership.

Pepsi's red, white, and blue colors are defining elements. So are its typeface and circular figure with the white wave across it. Consumers have been accustomed to such a symbol, matched with the red and yellow colors since 1929, when the logo went from red text to a blue and red sign (Arnell Group, 2008). It created a sense of longevity. Consumers expect the sign to be similar to distinguish it as the representamen standing in for the object of the Pepsi brand.

The Shell logo started out as a pecten (or a simple shell). To this day, the logo still contains semblance of the denotatum, or the actual shell pecten. Over time, colors were added (the same two consistent colors) and the name was dropped, but this process took place throughout the course of years. Abrupt changes that would disrupt viewer perception were avoided. As noted in Chapter 4, any substitute other than one that is directly imitative would completely neglect to represent the meaning associated with the corporate brand. It would no longer be identifiable as a visual symbol for the Shell corporation.

The Starbucks siren is the consistent quality of this logo. The consistency in identification of the logo with the siren in the middle makes it such that the logo released this year no longer requires guidance as to product or brand name. The siren now speaks for itself – at least, this is what the corporation hopes in terms of its 2011 release date. Consistency of both color and character make the logo readily identifiable among many of its consuming publics.

<center>Theme 5: Invocation of Change</center>

The six corporate logos in general, and their evolution over time, have the striking similarity of intending to reform and revolutionize the current nature of the industry. They are intended for effect, to break through clutter, and invoke change in the setting in which they are displayed.

The Apple logo, by far, exhibits these characteristics as it broke through the "blue block letters" of the existing IBM scheme (Olins, 1990). Although a plethora of colors within a given logo was typically not accepted (because it was not "printer friendly" and tended to bleed together), Steve Jobs saw it as giving human qualities to the company. The logo spoke to its

publics and portrayed an image of being different and diverse – among what was already available in the computer industry. Apple is the poster child for creativity and nonconformity, thereby invoking change by revolutionizing and reforming the current scheme of the computer industry.

McDonald's took a similar approach. Since its inception, its objective has been to reform how America (and the world) ate food. The golden arches on the infrastructure of the building created a visual and memorable mark that would break norms. It would break what originally lay within the scheme of the previously existing hamburger stand drive-ins (Hughes, 2008). Similarly, it was imprinting the image of these types of stands into the American's awareness (Trimmer, 1978).

Nike defied norms by not creating a logo that looked like a "stripe," as so many other shoe logos were (e.g., Adidas). Similarly, Nike did not provide support, as most shoe logos at the time had some sort of functional purpose. Nike's swoosh distinguished itself from the "stripe" landscape and took on additional meaning through the objects related to its representamen. Objects such as Air Jordan, the Greek Goddess Nike, and the apparel of champion athletes on the court created the swoosh to build a strong brand image – and a strong interpretant among the public with a groundbreaking identity.

Pepsi's original logo stood to be in contest with the domineering Coca-Cola, and invoke change into the beverage industry through arriving on the scene, thus partaking in the "cola wars." Its current logo traces back to its roots, investigating its "historic path" in order to bring about "true innovation" (Arnell Group, 2008).

Starbucks is currently the largest coffee retailer in the world, beating out many other coffee shops in gaining notoriety and prestige in both the coffee industry and in consumers alike.

The siren has been a staple element since its inception. Despite drama and controversy over its seductive effects (i.e., the bare breasts and the navel), the siren portrays a meaning stronger than say, its actual object – the coffee products it serves.

Theme 6: True Representation of Corporate Identity

Viewers must be able to get a glimpse of the corporation in its entirety, and what it stands for. For Nadaff (2004), "logos are often the most visual, most used and most recognized form of branding" (p. 1). Logos must not only have a visual presence, they must also portray a message consistent with the overall brand (Naddaff, 2004). If this does not occur, this can inevitably and unfortunately lead to the demise of the company (Balmer, 2001). Social psychology research indicates that consumers see logos as reliable signs when they are an accurate representation of what the corporation intends to express about itself (Green & Loveluck, 1994). Balmer and Soenen (1999) created the ACID test in response to a need for scholarly material that can be used practically for corporate branding. The goal was to assemble "seemingly different perspectives into a meaningful whole" (Balmer, 2001, p. 11). Balmer has since revised the original ACID test into the AC^2ID Test™, which rests on the idea that any missing alignment between identity forces among an organization will lead to corporate malaise. Hence, Balmer (2001) states the importance of aligning the following five identities: (1) actual identity of the corporation, (2) communicated identity, (3) conceived identity, (4) ideal identity, and (5) desired identity. Any lack of alignment would be considered "dissonance" (p. 2), where the corporation is either ahead or behind reality – e.g., if vision and strategy do not line up accordingly. In terms of logos, both "Cs" rest heavily in the logo as a central element of corporate identity not only in terms of the

communication aspect, but how people perceive the organization, or how it is conceived in their mind. Accordingly, the identity among the viewers must be in accordance with the actual, ideal, and desired identity of the corporation it serves to represent.

In regards to this analysis, Apple had a strong hold on its identity as an innovator, and its products justified it in 'breaking through the blue block letters" to create a different, diverse, and creative brand with a sense of humanity (Kahney, 2004). Due to its strong brand recognition and sheer amount of fans and followers who are loyal to the Apple brand (Olins, 1990), Apple's corporate identity is not only communicated to the viewers, it is also conceived in their minds (as the interpretant) of having encompassed the entire brand identity in alignment with all aspects of the corporation itself. McDonald's has remained consistent with its signature "golden arches." At the same time, it still communicates a message to consumers, an object of the symbol being consistent with cheap, quick, simple, consistent, inexpensive, American food (Oswald, 2007) as well as an atmosphere of family and fun (Rowley, 2004). The representamen of the Nike swoosh has long been communicated as an athletic brand with various large-scale endorsements. With superstar basketball player Michael Jordan and tennis champions Jim Courier and Andre Agassi representing their brand (Goldman & Papson, 1999), there is a strong consistency between the actual, ideal, and desired message in accordance with what is communicated by the logo (representamen) and conceived in the interpretant (Balmer, 2001).

Pepsi's message object was that of a U.S. brand, using patriotic colors of the American flag (Davisson & Boothe, 2010), and a sense of youth indomitable by its closest competitor, Coca-Cola (Fahey & Lafayette, 1991). Shell has a long-time object and corporate identity as a maritime oil company, and the Shell logo on its own (representamen) is strongly connected to consumers (the interpretant, or those who see the logo) who see the sign and recognize the

corporate identity as an oil company. In terms of its interpretant, its identity is widely known among motorists most everywhere. Lastly, Starbucks has conveyed a strong conceived message, or interpretant, and communicated identity with the representamen which related to the temptation of coffee signified by long-held sign of the siren. Given that the corporate identity is changing internally, it is clear that Howard Schultz, the CEO and Chairman, is aware that the communicated message (logo as the representamen) must change. Thus, the conceived logo (logo as the interpretant among viewers) must change as well. Having the word "coffee" in the text when the corporation's desired image is beyond coffee would cause some incongruence among consumers, thereby creating dissonance.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION

This chapter provides a conclusion, limitations, and future directions of this analysis of six corporate logos. With respect to Research Question 1 (RQ1), "How does the ongoing transformation of U.S. corporate logos help companies communicate their identities and missions?", it can be concluded that while maintaining a degree of consistency, modifications are made to the logo so it aligns with both corporate identity and viewer recognition. A logo must first serve the purpose of being a genuine symbol for the corporation's identity in its entirety. As such, how is the corporate message conveyed through its logo? Corporations can adapt their logo in terms of changing needs (e.g., Starbucks removing the copy from their logo).

Vis-à-vis Research Question 2 (RQ2), "How does the ongoing transformation of U.S. corporate logos help companies maximize connection with viewers (i.e., consumers)?," it was found that logos seek to maintain a strong representamen in terms of its interpretant. For example, the Nike logo had become so well known that it no longer needed the name in text near it (or underneath it) to be identifiable. Similarly, each logo has attained a strong sense of viewer identity throughout its evolution (see theme 2), as well as being easily recognizable and distinctive amongst the array of mass-mediated messages (see theme 3). A successful logo must be recognizable, easy to see, and understandable. Above all, it must be (1) identified from a remote distance, (2) discerned among other competing signs, and (3) remembered for a long time. In regards to Research Question 3 (RQ3), "What are the common themes that emerge throughout the analysis of U.S. corporate logos?," the answer was provided in Chapter 5.

Upon looking at the big picture of this analysis, the ultimate conclusion is that the communicative intent of a company, through its logo, tends to take a long time to develop. Let us

take the example of Shell. Its current image – i.e., the red and yellow pecten symbol – may have taken about one hundred years to build, but recognition and familiarity of the logo by the viewers have been achieved. Peirce's triadic framework of signification (representamen-object-interpretant) helps us understand that a corporate logo represents a continuous figurative transcription of the company's identity features. For instance, in the beginning, the Pepsi logo was a transcription of the "cola wars." Today, however, through its blue and red colors, it symbolizes America and youth. A successful logo is one that portrays the true objectives and principles of the company. For this reason, the ideal identity of a corporation tends to be built over a long period of time, which makes logo improvement "evolutionary" in nature. For all six corporate logos, communication plays a major part in logo improvement.

This analysis offers major contributions to the field of semiotics and corporate communication. First, it adds to the development of corporate identity and corporate communication by following a specific semiotic model (i.e., Peirce's three-part model of signification). That very semiotic framework indicates how the meaning of corporate identity can be deconstructed. Deconstruction refers to the process of uncovering meanings and making them accessible and understandable to the general public (Willis, 2007). Deconstruction is a method of interpretation, and this analysis has been the first to provide a semiotic interpretation of the evolution of multiple U.S. corporate logos. Second, it is also the first to use an in-depth application of Peirce's three-part model of signification to specific corporate logos. Third, a challenge was conquered in this analysis: avoiding the tradition of many semiotic scholars to use the concept of "semiotics" to describe their work – maybe because it looks chic, unique, or academic – and then neglect using an in-depth application of any major semiotic approach (e.g., the one from Saussure, Peirce, Morris, or Eco). Hence, these scholars give an unwarranted

impression that semiotics has no real or new insights to offer in the fields of corporate

communication or marketing.

LIMITATIONS

This analysis has two major limitations. First, the notion of "interpretant" is somewhat subjective. While there are varying types of interpretants (i.e., the immediate, dynamic, and final), only assumptions can be made from this research based on a generalized consumer base. Each viewer has a slightly different interpretation, and a different connotative base. For example, if a student used to go to Starbucks every day after work with a close friend but has since moved to a different country, the Starbucks logo, then, would have a different meaning, something reminiscent of the time spent with the close friend they no longer share coffee with (i.e., dynamic interpretant). With the exception of the commentary on Pepsi's current logo, the final interpretant is the only type of interpretant employed in this analysis. It is the logo as it is correctly understood and decoded by the representamen. For the purpose of this research, only the corporate message is emphasized, for it would be nearly impossible to gather data on every single viewer's resulting thought after being exposed to a logo. The response among the viewer is generalized and subjective – based on the logo's object and how it is to be interpreted by the viewer. Similarly, the term "consumer" is a generalized term that may not be characteristic of each person exposed to a given logo.

Second, each of the six corporations has had multiple logo changes since its inception. For example, Shell has changed its logo nine times, yet, the researcher only focused on the major changes that Shell has gone through – with respect to streamlining its logo. The rationale behind the researcher's decision has to do with time and length. If all steps for logo modification were considered for each of the six corporations, this analysis would probably be several hundred pages longer. For the sake of this project, the research conducted was adequate in terms of the

amount of logos under analysis – as long as it allowed the researcher to produce a set of

generalizable themes based on the logos in the analysis.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

For future research, it might prove interesting to study the effects of the evolution of logos on viewers. So far, we know a lot about the intentions of each corporation to streamline its logo over the years. Yet, little is known about the actual or measurable impact of logos on consumers. To this effect, scholars could administer surveys and ask people about their perceptions of current corporate logos by comparing them with their older versions. For example, the brand new Starbucks logo may not engender the intended effect based on the representamen (and the corporation's objectives).

A second area of future semiotic research of this type is one that focuses exclusively on logos of corporations from other continents, such as South America, Africa, and Asia. The analysis of six U.S. corporate logos was conducted by an American researcher. Therefore, it would be valuable to compare this analysis with a similar semiotic investigation – i.e., using the same Peircean triadic model – of corporate logos from remote places on the globe. Finally, as Hunt (1983) indicates, semiotics does not consist of unified, law-like generalizations that function as foundational attributes of most theories. Yet, Hunt's statement begs the following question: "What other methodology could adequately analyze the evolution of corporate logos?" The only viable method would be to actually conduct interviews with the CEOs of those six U.S. corporations and ask them why their companies have undergone so many logo changes. Similarly, interviews with the logo's designers may offer additional insight.

It is the researcher's hope that this analysis has informed readers on the importance of understanding the evolution of U.S. corporate logos. Many opportunities are waiting for semiotic

scholars to improve our understanding of the practical aspects of corporate communication and

corporate identity.

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