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A SEMIOTIC ANALYSIS ON THE POWER OF ADVERTISING IN PROPELLING SOCIAL CHANGE.
TOOLS AND STRATEGIES USED BY BRANDS THROUGH ADVERTISING TO PROPEL SOCIAL CHANGE.

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Key words *Advertising, Brand Communication, Design Activism,*
Sociocultural Studies, Semiotics

Abstract The present study focuses on the relationship between advertising
and social change from a semiotic point of view, more
specifically, trying to understand the tools and strategies used by
brands in the past to send their messages, change the world, as
well as improve their market share. Santaella and Nöth's (2010)
research mix, used to analyze advertising from a semiotic point of
view, founded on the philosophical principles defined by Charles
Sanders Peirce, will serve as the basis for the methodology. In
order to reach the objectives of the research, the analysis focuses
on a case study approach.

This study is meant to serve as a roadmap for all designers and advertisers,
find their place and see how they can design for a better tomorrow (for the
well as the brands they represent). As more people pay more attention to th
brand brings than the product they sell, the study of the tools and strategies
successfully by brands to build meaningful connections with their audience
essential for prosperous advertising and brand strategies.

Palavras-chave   *Comunicação de Marca, Design Ativista, Estudos*
Socioculturais, Publicidade, Semiótica

Resumo   O presente estudo tem como foco a relação entre a publicidade
e a mudança social de um ponto de vista semiótico. A pesquisa
foca-se na compreensão das ferramentas e estratégias utilizadas
pelas marcas, para abordar temas da sociedade, tudo isto
enquanto melhoram a sua presença no mercado. A *mix* de
pesquisa de Santaella e Nöth's (2010) para analisar a
publicidade usando os conceitos desenvolvidos por Charles
Sanders Peirce, servirá de base para a metodologia do estudo.
Uma análise de *case studies* é utilizada para dar encontro aos
objetivos da pesquisa.

O estudo servirá como guia para designers e publicitários, que
tentam criar para um mundo melhor (tanto na sociedade, como
para as marcas que representam). Visto que mais pessoas
prestam atenção ao valor que uma marca traz em vez dos
produtos que uma marca vende, a compreensão das ferramentas
e estratégias que as marcas usam para criar ligações
significativas com o seu público-alvo torna-se essencial para
uma estratégia de comunicação efetiva.

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Research Question:

What are the tools and strategies that brands use in their advertising to propel social change?

Introduction:

It is often wondered what it is that makes societies change and evolve. What is it about the world of yesterday that created change for the world of today? It is undoubtedly an agglomeration of factors, small and big, that build up towards changes in societies and behavior. The purpose of this study is to explore how brands, through their advertising, can use different tools and strategies to propel social changes and become a part of the cultural fabric of our society. The potential circularity between advertising and culture is going to be studied in this text.

Understanding the impacts that a brand can have on societies and communities, can help better understand the roles that advertising plays in day-to-day life, and how those roles can be used for good in propelling positive social change. In addition to this, the understanding of the power of brands in societies, and how consumers react to these actions by brands, can help us understand how advertising pieces can sell more value than products.

After a deeper understanding of the elements that go into designing for cultural change, and the history of how brands have created changes in the past takes place, a semiotic analysis of different case studies will occur in order to identify the success of brands in creating change, as well as the tools used by said brands that led to this change. The main goal of this study is to conduct an analysis of different case studies and identify the main components of the advertising pieces that led to positive social change, all this from a semiotic perspective.

Throughout the analysis, tools and strategies used in selling value over products for brands were identified, providing a roadmap for advertisers and designers.

I. Literature Review
1. Advertising from a Semiotic Point of View

To start off, it is paramount to conduct a study of how semiotics might be used to analyze communication and advertising. Understanding the theoretical framework that can be used to guide the interpretation of messages. To do this, a deeper look into Peircean Semiotics is fundamental, as he lays down the foundation for the interpretation of signs, which can be used as a guide for anyone studying semiotics through images. The reading on Peircean semiotics was conducted not only from his original texts, but from other authors who have explored his works, and explained them in more approachable ways. In addition to this, a study of the rhetoric of the image and its connection to semiotics is also important, as it connects the themes to advertising and the art of persuasion. In addition to this, the chapter will cover Sherry's semiotic approach to advertising, as he bridges the gap between the themes and explores the importance that semiotics can have in understanding advertising as a cultural system.

Lucia Santaella (2012) defines semiotics as "[...] a science, a territory of knowing and knowledge that is not yet rooted; it is a process of investigation that is still in progress" (Santaella, 2012, p.8) [1]. It is important to note that the theory of semiotics analyzed in this text, though having its roots in Peircean theories dating back to the 1860s, is to this day a science and an investigation that is in process of growth, and that it is still progressing.

1.1 Peircean Semiotics

Semiotics as a science had an interesting start, at it began almost simultaneously in three different parts of the world, and from three different people. Semiotics began in the US, the Soviet Union, and in Occidental Europe. Lucia Santaella theorizes that the conditions of the world during that time, and the "historical proliferation" (Santaella, 2012, p. 15) of the need to understand languages, signs, and codes, made emergent the necessity for a semiotic consciousness. The conditions of the world made it necessary to create a system for understanding the complexities and diverse nature of the world of language. Out of the three

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[1] Translated by the author from this original text: "Esse é justamente o caso da Semiótica, algo nascendo e em processo de crescimento. Esse algo é uma ciência, um território do saber e do conhecimento ainda não sedimentado, indagações e investigações em progresso." (Santaella, 2012, p.8)

emerging theories, Charles Sanders Peirce was the one that created a system, founded on image-based language that can be applied to the understanding of all phenomena.

Peirce was passionate about Logic as a field of research, and in addition to being a philosopher, he was a scientist, interested in a multitude of different fields. His varied interests made it clear to him that there was a need for the application of science and logic in more philosophical fields. The philosopher intended to bring the methodologies present in scientific studies to the world of philosophy. He saw semiotics as a field of logic, and even spent the later part of his life writing about that concept (Santaella, 2012). Peirce was a firm believer that the universe was in expansion. He postulated that from this mentality, this expansion was happening mostly in the minds of people. "This expansion, however, is based on radically dialectic logics, seeing as human thought produces concrete products, that have the power to affect and materially transform the universe" (Santaella, 2012, p. 25-26)[2].

In her study of semiotics, Santaella presents phenomenology as the basis of semiotics, of where semiotics takes all its principles. Santaella describes Peircean phenomenology as an agglomeration of all experiences and empirical knowledge, be it real or imagined that are categorized, simplified and universal to all phenomenon's (Santaella, 2012).

It is important to analyze how brands can create meaning, and how what they create might be interpreted and acted upon by the viewer. For this purpose, it is important to look at advertising from a semiotic point of view, to fully understand its reception by the viewer and its cultural significance, and how it may impact consumer behavior. Charles Sanders Peirce, the father of general semiotics, developed a model to understand signs and how they are interpreted.

> Peirce's Sign Theory, or Semiotic, is an account of signification, representation, reference and meaning. Although sign theories have a long history, Peirce's accounts are distinctive and innovative for their breadth and complexity, and for capturing the importance of interpretation to signification. (Atkin, 2013)

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[2] Translated by the author from this original text: "Esse crescimento continuo se alicerça, contudo, em bases lógicas radicalmente dialéticas, visto que o pensamento humano gera produtos concretos capazes de afetar e transformar materialmente o universo, ao mesmo tempo que são por ele afetados." (Santaella, 2012, p. 25-26)

Peirce's theory of signs was innovative in the sense that he placed the interpretant at the center of all meaning. Peirce was also the first to develop a model for visual meaning and interpretation; all this while Saussure was writing about linguistic meaning and interpretation.

In his sign theory, Peirce develops a three-part model of interconnected elements of a sign. This three-part model consists of the object (what the sign tries to represent), the signified (how it is represented), and the interpretant (how the viewer makes sense of it (the sign created in the interpretant's mind) i.e. a more evolved sign) (Chandler, 2007). This theory of signs comes from the categories defined by Peirce for the understanding of any phenomenon.

> I define a sign as anything which is so determined by something else, called its Object, and so determines an effect upon a person, which effect I call its interpretant, that the later is thereby mediately determined by the former. (Peirce cited by Atkin, 2013)

Peirce defined three categories for thought and nature. He saw that his triadic system applied to logic was universal and could be applied to various other areas of study (Santaella, 2012). According to the author, Peirce saw his category system as something not based on truth, but based on the experiences of an individual, resultant of their past, in which he finds three elements, that he thereby names categories. Santaella goes on to write,

> As a result, they are logical categories, that we apply to the field of psychological manifestations, not only because, as such, categories present themselves as alive and living, but also because, from that, it becomes clear, that to us, the world presents itself and is translated as language, the foundation of all Semiotics (Santaella, 2012, p. 40)[3].

The categories are seen as logical because they are based on our personal experiences but can be categorized and help us understand the world around us. Forming themselves and translating themselves into languages, i.e., the main roots for the practice and exploration of Semiotics. The three categories are therefore seen as the three factors for the apprehension of any phenomenon. He names the triadic system of categories, firstness, secondness, and thirdness.

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[3] Translated by the author from this original text: "São, portanto, categorias lógicas que aqui aplicaremos ao campo das manifestações psicológicas não só porque, como tal, as categorias se nos apresentam como coisas vivas e vividas, mas também porque, a partir disso, tornar-se-á claro por que, para nós, o mundo aparece e se traduz como linguagem, fundamento de toda a Semiótica" (Santaella, 2012, p.40).

1.1.1 Firstness

This category refers to the consciousness we may have in the present moment. As soon as the moment is described, it is no longer firstness, as it is no longer in that instant moment, and the conscious moment must be broken down to be described (Santaella, 2012).

> The consciousness of a moment, as it is in that exact moment, is not reflected nor broken into different pieces. As they are in that very moment, all elements of impression are together, and they are, as single feeling, with no possible division and no parts. What was distilled through descriptive fragmentation, as being parts of a feeling, are not in reality parts of the feeling in the exact moment but are parts of the moment when we reflect upon the feeling, after the feeling is gone (Santaella, 2012, p.40)[4].

From this, there is the understanding that firstness refers to the consciousness at a specific moment. As soon as it is remembered and not lived, it is no longer firstness. According to Santaella, Peirce defines firstness as the quality of feeling, the most candid and instant feeling we get as soon as we experience something.

1.1.2 Secondness

Secondness lies in the material part of the phenomenon. Santaella describes it, stating that while the feeling and quality of a moment in consciousness is the firstness of the phenomenon, "this quality is merely a portion of the phenomenon. For the phenomenon to exist, the feeling and quality must be imbedded in something material. The factuality of existing (secondness) is within that material embodiment" (Santaella, 2012, p. 47)[5]. We can thus describe the category of secondness as the sensation of the experience, which comes in two parts: "the feeling, and the

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[4] Translated by the author from this original text: "a consciência de um momento, contudo, como ela está naquele exato momento, não é reflexionada nem quebrada em pedaços. Como eles estão naquele vero momento, todos os elementos de impressão estão juntos e são um único sentimento indivisível e sem partes. O que foi destilado pela fragmentação descritiva, como sendo partes do sentimento, não são realmente partes desse sentimento como ele está no exato momento em que esta presente; elas são o que aparece como tendo estado lá, quando refletimos sobre o sentimento, depois que ele passou." (Santaella, 2012, p.40)

[5] Translated by the author from this original text: "Mas a qualidade é apenas uma parte do fenómeno, visto que, para existir, a qualidade tem de estar encarnada numa matéria. A factualidade do existir (secundidade) está nessa corporificação material." (Santaella, 2012, p. 47)

force of that feeling on a certain subject" (Santaella, 2012, p.48)[6]. It can be defined as another part of the experience. Peirce defines experience as the interruption of calmness, forcing us to think differently from before, that constitutes it (Santaella, 2012). "Secondness is what gives the experience its factual character, of fight and confrontation. Action and reaction still at the level of pure binarity, without government or a mediating layer of intentionality, reason or law" (Santaella, 2012, p.51)[7]. Although all categories include the experience, secondness includes the interpretation of the experience without the presence of any external factors.

1.1.3 Thirdness

The third and final category, thirdness, brings together the first and the second in what Santaella (2012) describes as "an intellectual synthesis" (p. 51). It is a layer that is intangible and refers to how we see the world through signs. The simplest way of looking at thirdness is through sign or representation, it refers to the ways in which we as symbolic beings, are positioned in the world. Santaella provides an example for this category, stating

> Blue, simple and positive is the first. The sky, as a place and time, here and now, where blue is, is the second. The intellectual synthesis, or cognitive elaboration – blue in the sky, or blue from the sky – is the third. (translated from Santaella, 2012, p.51)[8]

The premise is that our consciousness creates a sign, an undeniable connection between ourselves and the phenomenon. This is at the level of can be called perception. It's a layer of interpretation that comes between consciousness and what was understood from the phenomenon.

Rosa (2003) writes about the concept of continuity in Peirce's theories. The idea that each new interpretation is based on another, is part of his explanation on Peirce's writings on

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[6] Translated by the author from this original text: "Sentimento ou impressão indivisível e sem partes, qualidade simples e positiva, mero tom de consciência é primeiro. Não se confunde com sensação, pois esta tem duas partes: 1) o sentimento e 2) a força da inerência desse sentimento num sujeito" (Santaella, 2012, p. 48)

[7] Translated by the author from this original text: "Secundidade é aquilo que dá à experiência seu caráter factual, de luta e confronto. A ação e reação ainda em nível de binariedade pura, sem o governo da camada mediadora da intencionalidade, razão ou lei." (Santaella, 2012, p.51)

[8] Original text: "Por exemplo: o azul, simples e positivo azul, é um primeiro. O céu, como lugar e tempo, aqui e agora, onde se encarna o azul, é um segundo. A síntese intelectual, elaboração cognitiva – o azul no céu, ou o azul do céu –, é um terceiro." (Santaella, 2012, p. 51)

continuity. The author cites Peirce on thirdness, "The truth is that there is thirdness in experience, an element of rationality that our reasoning can work and conform itself time and time again" (translated from Rosa, 2003, p.354, citing Peirce)[9]. The author shows the continuity to rationality and logic, and how logic is founded on something else that already exists.

To this category, Peirce denominates the interpretant. A person only knows the world because in one way or another it represents them and will only interpret that representation in another representation (Santaella, 2012). The author goes on to write, "To know and make himself known, a person creates a sign, and only interprets those signs by translating them into others" (translated from Santaella, 2012, p.52)[10]. She synthesizes her thought by writing about how to understand and comprehend is to translate thought into another thought continuously, seeing as we can only think something, based on a thought previously had (Santaella, 2012). In sum, thirdness is denominated as the interpretant, one based on cognitive interpretation, secondness is the object, or what can be seen as the material part of the phenomenon, and firstness, the quality of the feeling at the given moment when first interacting with the phenomenon.

According to Peirce, all of these must work together in order to send a message, and the interpretant is at the center of meaning of the model. The sign, as Peirce calls it, is the element "responsible for signification" (Atkin, 2013). Historically the sign has been mentioned in various scenarios, with different names to represent it, amongst them ""sign", "representamen", "representation", and "ground"" (Atkin, 2013). The object refers to what the sign is trying to represent, Albert Atkin creates a good analogy for the understanding of the object and sign, if the smoke is a sign for the fire, then the object would be the fire that the smoke signified.

Understanding that the sign is highly dependent on who is interpreting it, can be a good way to understand how brands can communicate with their audience.

1..2 Rhetoric of the Image

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[9] "Mas a verdade é que há uma tercidade na experiência, um elemento de racionalidade a que a nossa razão se pode exercitar e conformar-se cada vez mais" (Rosa, 2003, p.354 citing Peirce)

[10] Original text: "Para conhecer e se conhecer o homem faz signo e só interpreta esses signos traduzindo-os em outros signos" (Santaella, 2012, p. 52)

For this context, it is also fundamental to investigate the rhetoric of the image, as presented by Barthes, in order to understand its connection to semiotics and its importance in the advertising process. While the concepts have different meanings, they are connected. We can see semiotics as the "what". A system of identification of signs, that breaks down and interprets all the key players in a visual or linguistic message. Moreover, we can look at the concept of rhetoric as the "how", how can the signs and the system be used in the process of persuasion, and how might brands use semiotics to create messages that are undeniable and real for the viewer. How can semiotics be used in the advertising process to create experiences for the viewer that make them want to be part of the brand and its communication?

> […] semiotics is largely concerned with mapping out the codes, patterns, and conventions of signification, whereas rhetoric is concerned with how such codes, patterns, and conventions can be put to use in the processes of persuasion, identification, and articulation. (isearchnet)

Roland Barthes also conducted a study on the rhetoric of the image, which looks at advertising from a semiotic point of view. His process differs from that of Peirce, but he uses semiotics to understand the message that a piece of advertising is sending. In his work, he says,

> 'the signifieds' of the advertising message are formed a *priori* by certain attributes of the product that these signifieds have to be transmitted as clearly as possible. If the image contains signs, we can be sure that in advertising these signs are full, formed with a view to the optimum reading: the advertising image is frank, or at least empathetic. (Barthes, 1977, p.152)

The author explores the intentionality of the image in advertising, and how images are designed to retrieve some sort of interpretation from the reader. Different images have different connotations that will influence the viewer and send a message regarding the product. Nonetheless, while Peirce developed a whole new system to analyze images, Barthes, took theories from the interpretation of linguistic semiotics, adapted from the theories of Saussure, and applied them to the visual language.

One author that tried to bridge the gap between rhetoric and semiotics was Umberto Eco. The author took the system of signs developed by Peirce and applied it to rhetoric. "With his interpretive semiotics, Eco offers a theory of culture grounded in signification and

communication" (Mancino, 2018, p. IV). The author explores the impact of communication through semiotic theories. He links this interpretation to culture and explores the creation of meaning from the standpoint of all involving participants.

> Eco's project emphasizes the importance of signification in securing interpretive response and cultural meaning as well as the simultaneous value of communication as the labor that activates and enriches meaning shared between and among human interpreters." (Mancino, 2018, p. 1)

In her analysis of Eco's Rhetoric of communication and signification, Susan Mancino (2018) explores the enrichment of meaning in rhetoric from a semiotic point of view. She does this through the analysis of Eco's works. From Eco's doctrine, she reiterates the importance of signification in order to obtain results from the interpretants.

Linda M. Scott (1994) also writes about the importance of the rhetoric of the image in advertising and how it may lead to interpretations. The author speaks about the lack of importance given to the richness of rhetoric present in the advertising form. "Pictures are not merely analogues to visual perception, but symbolic artifacts constructed from the conventions of a particular culture" (Scott, 1994, p. 252). The author speaks of how there is more to images than regularly meets the eye, and that advertising images have symbolic power, constructed from the present culture of its environment, that is up for interpretation and that can have a persuasive effect on its viewers.

> The sender, therefor, crafts the message in anticipation of the audience's probable response, using shared knowledge of various vocabularies and conventions as well as common experiences. Receivers of the message use this same body of cultural knowledge to read the message, infer the sender's intention, evaluate the argument, and formulate the response. Cultural knowledge thus provides the basis for the normative interaction and persuasion. (Scott, 1994, p. 252-253)

The author speaks of the relationship between the object, sender, and interpretant of the message. The sender of the message might have a preconceived notion of how it might be interpreted due to the cultural shared knowledge within its environment, nonetheless, the response to any ad work is fully dependent on its interpretant. The interpretant will analyze the symbolism and the message of the piece of advertising, and formulate a response based on what they interpreted.

1.3 Semiotic approach to advertising and culture

Sherry (1987) approaches advertising as a cultural system and analyses it from a semiotic point of view. He theorizes that "advertising can be used as a vehicle for understanding structures of reality within a culture" (Sherry, 1987, p.441) and sees advertising as a way of producing knowledge. According to the author, advertising is a tool that shapes our experiences and has the power to shape and reflect our "sense of reality" (Sherry, 1987, p.441). Sherry theorizes that marketing can be one of the most important agents of cultural change in our contemporary society.

Before jumping into his interpretation of the power of advertising from a semiotic lens, the author explores what the definition of advertising may be. He takes interpretations of Geertz (1973) and Williamson (1978) to build a definition of his own,

> Advertising is a system of symbols synthesized from among the range of culturally determined ways of knowing that seeks to establish powerful pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in people by formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and clothing these perceptions with such an aura of factuality that the moods and motivations seem uniquely realistic (Geertz, 1973). More than merely a system of creating meaning (Williamson, 1978) it is a system of discerning or discovering meaning. (Sherry, 1987, p.445)

The author analyses advertising as an agglomerate of symbols that translate to impactful meaning in cultures and societies. Following the thought process of these authors, Sherry goes on to examine how advertising can be seen as an agglomerate of vehicles of "thought, emotion, perception, and understanding" (Sherry, 1987, p.446) and it becomes that way due to patterns of significant symbol clusters that contribute to the organizing of our experiences. He sees advertising as a tool with the power to create meaningful truths and motivate viewers to believe in the brands and see them as important "speakers" in our modern-day cultures. Furthermore, in his perception, advertising has the power to create new perceptions and new meanings associated with the brands that use their power wisely. In addition to this Sherry explores the idea that advertising "can create tremendous dislocations and catalyze change across cultures" (Sherry, 1987, p.446).

The author explores different ways by which advertising can be explored from a semiotic perspective and brings to the article different interpretations of the power of advertising when observed as a cultural system.

> We can use ads to develop inventories of material artifacts, behavior patterns, and social institutions to assess very broadly cultural foci and value orientations, to investigate verbal and nonverbal languages in isolation and interaction, and to examine the social context of rhetoric. (Sherry, 1987, p.450)

The author explores the power of advertising from a semiotic point of view, as it allows us to focus on the seller's intent and the buyer's response and make an analysis from there to explore the different factors by which it may impact. He sees ads to see into a culture. Ads can help us understand different points of focus and convergence within a culture and helps us analyze verbal and nonverbal languages (such as signs and symbols) to examine social context and influence as well as motivation. The author goes on to explore the theme of the relationship between goods and people. "From a 'practitioner's' viewpoint, these approaches provide guidelines for both creating messages and interpreting messages" (Sherry, 1987, p.451). The author provides insights on how advertising might impact both the sender and the interpretant of a message.

2. Materialist Culture

It is also paramount to look at the concept of materialism and materiality. Mostly due to their connections not only to advertising but also to cultures and societies. In this chapter both of those themes will be explored, starting with materialism and advertising. People often see advertising as the propeller of materialism and consumer culture, which in turn influences how people lead their lives, how they perceive other people, and how they act in a certain society. Furthermore, an exploration of cultural materialism will take place in order to understand how materiality can be a driving force that creates knowledge and becomes a part of the cultural fabric of societies.

In addition to this, a dive into cultural theory will be explored, starting with the theory of base and superstructure and leading into an exploration of the notion of totality. Learning about

how previous philosophers and thinkers approached the way cultures and societies are formed, and the intrinsic relationship they find between materialism and culture is important as it provides a framework for understanding how cultures and societies are formed, and how material production (usually accompanied by brands and their respective advertising) is related to culture and society.

2.1 Materialism and Advertising

There is some debate on how advertising may have a negative impact on societies, as it may lead to more consumerism and materialism. *"The critics of advertising have long criticized the advertising (as an institution) for propagating materialism"* (Sirgy et.al, 2012 citing Schudson 1984; Zinkhan 1994).

> Some scholars believe that the argument denouncing "hedonism as consumerism" represents a gross simplification of complex issues. Marketing does not create or invent wants but merely surfaces them: materialism became part of the human condition long before the rise of the advertising institution. (Sirgy et.al, 2012 citing O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy 2002)

It is often said that advertising "creates wants" and that it creates an artificial need that compels people to go out and make purchases, making consumerism an increasing power in our society today. Nonetheless, O'Shaughnessy makes the compelling argument that advertising does not in fact create new, invented needs, it simply responds to a growing necessity, and brings the needs to the surface. Further articulating that consumerism was present way before advertising was such a present force in our culture.

The connection between materialism and advertising is very much disputed by different authors. While some see advertising as a propeller of unhealthy consumerism, others see advertising as a response to already existing wants and needs in cultures and societies rather than the creation or invention of new wants and needs.

Other authors, such as Jones (2020), argue that while there is a connection between mass consumerism and advertising which might be a negative factor, the positives far outweigh the negatives. The author explores that the connection between consumerism and advertising is

nothing compared to the "potential to motivate progressive behaviours in various cultures" (Jones, p.1, 2020).

2.2 Material Culture

"Cultural materialism is the strategy I have found to be most effective in my attempt to understand the causes of differences and similarities among societies and cultures" (Harris, 1979, p. ix). Marvin Harris was one of the first authors to investigate Material Culture as a field of study. The author explores material culture as a scientific field to study cultures and societies. Harris sees material culture as the best way to define societies and cultures as well as what sets them apart. The author goes on to state that material culture "is based on the premise that social life is a response to the practical problems of earthly existence" (Harris, 1979, p. ix).

> In this work, Harris built on Marx's theory of base and superstructure to craft a theory of how culture and cultural products fit into the greater social system. He argued that technology, economic production, the built environment, etc. influences both the structure of society (social organization and relations) and the superstructure (the collection of ideas, values, beliefs, and worldviews). (Crossman, 2019)

The author took Marx's theories of the superstructure, which refers to the beliefs and values of a society and analyzed how material goods may have an impact on those structures of societies. He then uses this study to draw comparisons and similarities between different societies and cultures.

2.2.1 Notion of Superstructure

In his text Base and Superstructure in Marx's Cultural Theory, Raymond Williams (1980) explains the Superstructure theory. The author explains how this theory varied from the paradigm of what was the popular belief in the sense that the author theorized that consciousness, beliefs, and other abstract human experiences were created by people's actions rather than from a force outside human existence. As the author states "He is opposing an ideology that had been insistent on the power of certain forces outside man […] Marx's own proposition explicitly denies this and puts the origin of determination in men's own activities" (Williams, 1980, p.31).

Theories of base and superstructure rely on the idea that the base ("specific activities of men in real social and economic relationships […] always in a state of dynamic process" (Williams, 1980, p.34)) and the superstructure ("related range of cultural practice" (Williams, 1980, p.34)) have an intrinsic relationship between them, and that materiality can have as much impact on societies and cultures as churches, schools, and other institutions. The idea is that consciousness comes from the self and that our belief systems and cultures come as a result of the "base", material products and their production.

2.2.2 Notion of Totality

The notion of totality is related to the notion of the base and superstructure in the sense that it also sees consciousness as determined by the self, nonetheless, it doesn't create the distinction between the two systems and their relationship as explored in Marx's theory.

Totality sees society as something that "is composed of a large number of social practices which form a concrete social whole" (Williams, 1980, p.36). This theory however disregards social intention. The author sees totality as a concept that could be used in order to understand cultural systems, nonetheless, only when paired with other theories such as "hegemony".

Hegemony refers to the idea that the cultural norm is defined by manipulations by a group of people. This relies on the idea that perceptions, beliefs, and values can be formed by groups in a society.

2.3. Materiality

Daniel Miller investigates the idea of materiality as one of the driving forces of our society today. "The stance to materiality also remains the driving force behind humanity's attempts to transform the world in order to make it accord with beliefs as to how the world should be" (Miller, 2005, p.2). Miller looks at Materiality as the propeller in society's attempt to transform the world into something that aligns with society's current vision of what the world should be like. Furthermore, Miller looks at materialism from a cultural point of view, looking at its influence on societies and people. "The standard critiques of materialism found in newspapers and everyday discussions take their stand against the apparently endless proliferation of artifacts,

what George Simmel (1978:448) termed the "increase in material culture"" (Miller, 2005, p.4 citing Simmel). Daniel Miller writes about the difficulty in defining materialism, as there are so many uses in philosophy, colloquial language, and newspapers in daily life. Although the colloquial use of materiality can never be ignored, the author chooses to define materiality as a more "encompassing" one that aims to "situate material culture within a larger conceptualization of culture" (Miller, 2005, p.4).

The author explores the idea that we are not always aware of the material objects that surround us. Not realizing the presence of material culture gives it the power to set normative behavior as well as determine and set certain expectations and beliefs in a particular group of people. "[…] such a perspective seems properly described as "material culture" since it implies that much of what we are exists not through our consciousness or body but as an exterior environment that habituates and prompts us" (Miller, 2005, p.5).

Cultural materialism was developed by the author Marvin Harris in his book "The Rise of Anthropological Theory". This theoretical framework emerged during the 1960s and developed fully around the 1980s. In his work, Harris took the writings of Marx in the theory of base and superstructure to develop a theoretical framework on how "culture and cultural products fit into the greater social system" (Crossman, 2019). Harris argues that "technology, economic production, the built environment, etc. influences both the structure of society (social organization and relations) and the superstructure (the whole collection of ideas, values, beliefs and worldviews)" (Crossman, 2019). The idea that there are underlying influences between economic production (where brands and their actions take a large part) and the superstructure i.e., the beliefs of a certain group of people, is what is truly interesting about this theory. The author explored the idea that all the components of the system must be considered in order to truly understand cultures. Understanding this inherent connection between structures and superstructures allows us to understand why products and consumer goods are created in each place and context for those who use them. Understanding cultural materialism allows us to understand how brands can have a cultural and social impact, and how they may be used in a certain context in order to elicit a certain response from the viewer.

3. How Brands Have Shaped Traditions – and thus cultures

Traditions are part of our culture. They help shape the cultural fabric of our societies, and unlike cultures, which change and adapt more naturally according to a progression of thought, traditions are not so easily altered. For this reason, it is important to look at how some brands have been able to shape customs and traditions, as they are a large part of our cultural fabric

Twitchell argues that "advertising has become the dominant culture" (Twitchell, 2000, p.3). He believes that commercial culture, which swarms the world as we know it, is the largest enemy of high culture, as people nowadays know more about celebrities, ads, and sponsors than they do about the history and other "monuments of unageing intellect". Nonetheless, the author sees the importance of advertising as telling about our history.

> These humbler adjuncts to literature may prove more valuable to the future historian than the editorial contents. In them we may trace our sociological history, […] a panorama of life as it was lived, more informing than old diaries and crumbling tombstones. (Twitchell, 2000, p. 6 citing Calkins, 1946, p. 222)

The author sees advertising as something that can tell future historians how people lived their lives, their beliefs, their desires, their culture. The author also expands upon the theme by stating that our needs are mostly cultural. Advertising doesn't create artificial desires; it just feeds off the pre-existing, cultural desires of the consumer. Once we are fed and sheltered, our needs have always been cultural not natural" (Twitchell, 2000, p.15).

In this chapter, we will take a dive into the history of advertising and how it has shaped the way people lead their lives. More specifically, a look into how people celebrate traditions and holidays will be taken.

3.1 The Impacts of Brands on Day-to-Day Lives

It is known that brands can have a severe impact on the way people live their lives, from what they eat, and how they go about their day, to the very rituals and cultural events they take part in.

> Breakfast was the creation of the cereal companies (we used to eat dinner scraps to start the day), the coffee break used to be at four in the afternoon until coffee roasters moved it away from tea time to the morning, the

> cocktail hour is an invention of the liquor industry, the Ploughman's Lunch was introduced to the English in the 1960s and not in the sixteen century, and so forth. (Twitchell, 2000, p. 202)

We take many of our day-to-day lives and knowledge as given. The reality is that brands have a large impact on our creation of knowledge and the development of our day-to-day actions. What we believe and how we live our lives are carried largely by the way brands communicate their messages as well as the messages they are sending. In addition to the day-to-day experiences that shape the way we live our lives, there are also traditions, celebrations, and holidays that have been highly impacted by brands and advertising.

> Events like the super Bowl Sunday, the Oscars, Secretaries' Day, Spring Break, Cinco de Mayo, and even Saint Patrick's Day have been taken over by commercial interests. Anthropologists call the phenomenon by which one system is laid down over another system syncretism. Advertisers call it Nirvana (Twitchell, 2000, p.102)

Twitchell's statements on how the celebrations we value so much are so emphasized, transformed, and created by brands are evidentiary of the impact that brands and their communication can have on our cultural fabric. While many celebrations may come from earlier times, they are publicized in ways to help brands, transformed to increase brand equities, and consistently communicated in a way that persuades consumers to participate in brand actions.

3.2 The impact of brands on celebratory tradition

Even our most celebrated holidays have been shaped and influenced by brands. Santa Clause was green before Coca-Cola started its heavy Christmas advertising in the 1920s. Through its storytelling, Coca-Cola has become, to this day, a significant symbol of Christmas in Western cultures. What started off as the Coca-Cola Companies' attempt to sell their soft drink in cooler seasons, soon became the most important symbol of the brand. Soon enough all Folkloric images of the traditional Santa Clause were swapped out for the Coke Santa. From the 1940s the Coke Santa became the image that most everyone associated with the brand. Movies, illustrations, and Christmas cards amongst others all used the imagery created by Coca-Cola to explore and show what Santa looked like (Twitchell, 2000, p.105). This further inserts the

importance of the brand during this holiday, making it a necessary element for most people celebrating Christmas in our culture.

The same happens in Japan for the KFC brand, which since the 1970s has managed to become a symbol for Christmas in Japanese households, to such a point where fried chicken must be reserved months in advance.

Another situation that shows how advertising can shape customs is the way we celebrate Valentine's Day. Hallmark has completely changed the way societies celebrate Valentine's Day, and although it does have its origins in ancient Rome, Hallmark has revolutionized the gift-giving component of the holiday. The founder started selling postcards to celebrate the day in 1910 (Hallmark, 2022). The brand also focused on the production of Valentine's Day movies which further changed the perception that people have of the holiday and shaped how people want to celebrate the day.

Nonetheless, Hallmark isn't the only one to revolutionize this holiday. Cadbury created the heart-shaped chocolate box in order to propel their sales during this time. Richard Cadbury came up with the idea of selling chocolates for Valentine's Day. Cadbury took the Victorian symbols of cupids and roses and used them to decorate the chocolate boxes.

> Cadbury marketed the boxes as having a dual purpose: When the chocolates had all been eaten, the box itself was so pretty that it could be used again and again to store mementos, from locks of hair to love letters (History, 2021).

Nowadays, the heart-shaped chocolate box, accompanied by the postcards, is seen as Valentine's Day tradition. Cadbury was able to create an iconic product for the celebration of Valentine's Day and made itself a must-have for all people who wanted to celebrate the holiday.

Given this, we should ask ourselves how these brands may use their strategies to create positive social change and work as activists to create better societies in the future, more specifically, through their advertising. Moreover, it is also important to analyze how these brands become cultural icons, and how they can actively participate in building culture.

4. Cultural Design and Identity Brands

In this chapter, a look into Douglas Holt's framework of cultural design and identity brands will be explored. The former Harvard Business School Professor coined the term cultural design and wrote the book: "How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Design". The author sees brands as part of the cultural fabric of societies and theorizes that the way brands can do this is through the creation of identity myths. In order to understand this concept, the works of Douglas Holt (2004), Strategy (2022), Martin Roll (2020), and Gaurav Gupta (2014) were explored. In addition to this, an analysis of traditional branding strategies, in comparison to cultural branding strategies was set in motion to understand the underlying factors that distinguish them, and how they may help us understand brands and the impact they have on our culture.

4.1 Cultural Design

In an article by Strategy (2022), the author speaks about cultural design. This concept lies on the premise that "you can market your brand toward a culture, but an even more powerful idea is to make your brand become a cultural icon all on its own." The article, based on the thoughts of Douglas Holt (2004) expands on how brands are more likely to stay relevant when they are listening to the world around them and making their business decisions based on what they hear since nowadays, consumers have increasing power over brand success. The article goes on by stating that "when brands make the effort to participate in the culture they've built, they are far more likely to stay relevant" (Strategy, 2022). Brands such as Coca-Cola and Nike stay relevant because they keep informed on the subjects that are touching the world and use it in how they convey their messages.

Douglas Holt theorizes that in order to become part of the cultural fabric of societies, brands need to become icons, and they do this through the creation of identity myths. Douglas holt defines identity myths as a necessary element of an iconic brand. Holt describes them as simple stories that make sense of different cultural contradictions that might be present in our society. Identity myths are formed when brands create identities and realities for the viewer that align with their own emotions and thoughts. "Brands that resonate and show direction to the masses through brand stories and brand activities become inscribed in our culture. These brands, by creating an identity for themselves, provide identity to members of society" (Roll, 2020). When brands use their messaging to create content that speaks to the viewer, they become an

important part of the cultural fabric of that community, through the creation of identity myths, the brand embodies a role that goes beyond that brand itself, and into the lives of the people who interact with it. "The crux of iconicity is that the person or the thing is widely regarded as the most compelling symbol of a set of ideas or values that a society deems important" (Holt, 2004, p.1). According to the author, brands forge their path by taking important values of our current society and using them to create authentic identity myths that the viewer can identify with and that speak to the viewers' "desires and anxieties". According to Holt, brands can use cultural contradictions to address these desires and anxieties to ease the mind of the users and lead to social change. In this way, brands create and represent stories with a heavy symbolic load. They take aspects of history and current events and use their brands to address the issues and thoughts of a specific culture during that time.

The author speaks of how brands create identity myths in order to create personal relationships with the viewer and speak to their most inner thoughts. He goes on to expand on how nowadays, the stories associated with brands go beyond the communications of brands themselves, they depend on everyone and everything that ever communicates interacts, and has relationships with the brand. "A brand emerges as various "authors" tell stories that involve the brand. Four primary types of authors are involved: companies, the culture industries, intermediaries (such as critics and retail salespeople), and customers (particularly when they form communities)" (Holt, 2004, p.3). According to the author, without these "stories" a brand can't be of influence, and it is the interaction of these stories with day to day life that end up creating social conventions in the mind of collective consumers, he goes on by saying that "What makes a brand powerful is the collective nature of these perceptions; the stories have become conventional and so are continually reinforced because they are treated as truths in everyday interactions" (Holt, 2004, p.3). Gupta also explores this theme in her paper about modern and conventional branding models she states that "A brand's contemporary significance is a result of collective interpretations by multiple stakeholders over numerous but significant historical moments" (Gupta, 2013, p.6). This goes on to reinforce the idea that brands act as mirrors of historical moments and the thoughts of people during a certain time. Brands can make use of important moments in history, that have a deep impact on the way people think and feel, to create identity myths that create a bond between the brand and their users, they reflect the

users' innermost thoughts and make the users reconsider their own mentalities, which can, in turn, lead to social change.

Once the brands become a part of the cultural fabric of society, they can be considered iconic, and have a cultural impact that goes beyond the norm defined by traditional marketing for brands. In addition to this, a brand's success in becoming a part of the culture of a society is measured not by its individual impact (which is mostly how marketeers today analyze the success of a particular brand action) but by the impact it has on a community or group of people.

Holt sees cultural branding as a strategy that works best for identity brands. Identity brands are those that use identity myths to become a part of the cultural fabric of society. He writes about how the cultural branding model works best with identity brands. In the case of identity brands, consumers see the products of those brands to promote their self-expression. "Products such as clothing, home decor, beauty, leisure, entertainment, automotive, food, and beverage are prime examples of identity products. Marketers refer to these categories as lifestyle, image, badge, or ego-expressive products" (Gupta, 2013, p.5).

4.2 Traditional branding strategies vs. Cultural Design Strategies

Traditional branding strategies rely on onion models and specifics to explain and justify their success. They use mind-share models that place brands at their core and measure brand awareness through them. They often neglect important details that could be used to create meaningful stories and create communities with the audience.

David Aaker (1998) writes about the creation of brand identities and improvement of brand equity in his book "Building Strong Brands". The author explains that the common error brands make when developing their identity is focusing on what he terms "product-related brand characteristics". While it is important for a brand to be known for its quality, and perceived quality is something that the author explores in his book, stepping out of that box and focusing on other values might be more productive for brands in terms of creating brand equity.

> Brand strategists are encouraged to break out of that box by considering emotional and self-expressive benefits, organizational attributes, brand personality and brand symbols as well. In taking the broader view of the brand, the likelihood of creating real differentiating value is enhanced. (Aaker, 1998, p.17)

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Douglas Holt (2004) criticizes the way cultural branding is disregarded in traditional marketing strategies by brand managers, who try to create rational models in a discipline that is very creative and based on intuition. He goes on to speak about how even creatives in the field feel the need to transform their ideas into models and charts in order to sell them to brands and explain their creative ideas in rational and mathematical ways. Holt developed a model for cultural branding that tries to make sense of it the way traditional branding models make sense of their strategies. He fights for a shift from mind-share models to cultural branding for identity brands and tries to make it more accessible for brand managers. "Identity value exists in the details that managers who follow mind-share principles routinely consider extraneous executional issues. By simplifying the brand so dramatically, managers treat the brand's most critical assets as strategically irrelevant" (Holt, 2004, p.21). The value in his critique is to say that all iconic brands, all brands with cultural weight and influence check all the boxes in conventional marketing schemes and charts, they lead to strong associations, they evoke an emotional response, they create buzz, and they lead to a community of consumers who are attached to the brand and what it has to say. Nonetheless "these observed characteristics are the consequence of successful mythmaking, not the cause" (Holt, 2004, p. 35).

The mind share model focuses on the unique selling proposition of a brand. It is not as easy to quantify as market share, but it provides managers and brand representatives to understand their path and how they are going to communicate. Holt criticizes this idea of a unique selling proposition, as it seems limiting to him that a brand would only have one selling point or one main benefit to draw from.

5. Brands acting as activists

5.1 Brand Activism

Tim Jordan defines activism as "generating the future of societies" (Jordan, 2002, p.23). According to the author, activism plays a deep role when it comes to the shaping of societies and collective mentalities. Another perspective is that "It reminds us that the world not only is, but is made" (Gitlin, 2003, p.5). Activism can thus be interpreted as one of the building blocks of our society. Brands often support causes of social and political substance to create change that goes

beyond the product they are selling and to create more meaningful connections with their audience. While many authors and marketeers support the idea of using brand activism to create connections with the target audience, some cases have proven to be ill-received by the viewers, who interpret it as just another way for brands to profit. According to the 2019 Edelman Trust Barometer, 69% of users search for brands that reflect their values and want brands to be more involved in societal issues. On the other hand, 56% of users believe that too many brands use societal issues as a marketing ploy to make more money, thus decreasing the trust they have in brands (Edelman, 2019). While brand activism can really help reinforce the message of a brand, and create meaningful connections with users, it can also be a precarious situation if they don't live by the message and the social issue they are supporting. For example, how brands like Nike supported Colin Kaepernick following the Black Lives Matter protests got backlash because even though their message was well-received, the brand itself didn't follow what their message was sent through their internal practice, such as having black board members (Vredenburg et al, 2020, p.1).

Douglas Holt (2004) also writes about how brands that are iconic, and therefore have cultural weight in society also act as activists, and lead cultures. They encourage viewers to rethink their principles and to "reconsider accepted ideas about themselves" (Holt, 2004, p.9). By challenging people's beliefs and helping people understand the world within their own terms, brands can act as cultural activists, and lead to a change in mentalities and accepted ideals.

Carl W. Jones (2020) also speaks about the potential that brands and mass media may have in culture and societies, as they can be the propellers for positive social change. He starts off by exploring the historic power of advertising, and how "before their negative health effects were known, Edward Barnays'1929 promotion of women's aspirations through a campaign to smoke, successfully branded cigarettes as feminist "Torches of Freedom"" (Jones, 2020, p. 1 citing Bernays, 2004). In the world of today, where consumers increasingly care about whether the brands they follow and their own values are aligned, it is more important than ever for brands to take a stand. This is not only good for society, but it also has the objective of generating sales and profits.

> [...] advertising is a capitalist tool used to promote 'democracy' through
> persuading consumers to buy products and services. Since we are now
> entering a post-Covid world that has rapidly changed how we work,

communicate, and shop, the way advertising defines itself arguably should be rethought. […] advertising is presented as a multi-faceted tool that can have the potential for motivating progressive behaviours within various cultures. (Jones, 2020, p. 2)

According to the author, brands give consumers the opportunity to choose what products, and services and messages they want to be a part of. They create a democratic system where people choose whom they want to believe in. In a post-covid era, where purchasing behavior has changed drastically, it is important for brands to rethink the way they sell their products. Especially during this time, it is increasingly important that brands understand the power they have in changing behaviors within the fabric of different cultures.

5.2 The Ethics of Design and Advertising

Different authors however express concerns regarding these actions by brands. Although many authors agree that brand activism can have powerful impacts not only in terms of social influence but also on brand equity, there is also always a downfall: the risk that these brands fall into woke washing, thus removing the authenticity of their cause and sometimes leading to opposite outcomes to those expected.

In today's marketplace, consumers want brands to take a stand on sociopolitical issues. When brands match activist messaging, purpose, and values with prosocial corporate practice, they engage in authentic brand activism, creating the most potential for social change and the largest gains in brand equity. In contrast, brands that detach their activist messaging from their purpose, values, and practice are enacting inauthentic brand activism through the practice of "woke washing," potentially misleading consumers with their claims, damaging both their brand equity and potential for social change. (Vredenburg et. al., 2020, p.444)

When a brand is fighting for a cause, the cause must be aligned with its brand message, its values, and its beliefs, both internal and external. When brands go after causes that might be important now but aren't specifically relevant to their own messaging, the message might be lost, and the consumer can see through that, making the brands' desired outcome impossible. In addition to this, it is important that brands fight for causes on the outside that they implement in

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their management as well. For example, Gillette's campaign against toxic masculinity was ill-received by viewers since the company continues to charge more for women's razors compared to men's razors (Vredenburg et. al., 2020). As a company that still participates in the "pink tax" it might be seen as a hypocritical act for the general public that the brand is creating campaigns promoting gender equality. "We conceive authentic brand activism as a strategy in which brands have clear purpose- and values-driven communication around an activist stance on sociopolitical issues while also engaging in prosocial corporate practice." (Vredenburg et. al., 2020, p.449). According to the author, for brands to avoid the pitfall of woke washing, they not only have to choose causes that align with their values, but they also must make sure that they are supporting these causes in their corporate and management departments. The authors define four main factors that must be considered to create a system that is authentic. These values are purpose, values, messaging, and practice.

It is also important to note the impact that poorly sustained brand activism actions may have not only on the consumers but also on the causes themselves. Using causes for their own benefits to trick consumers into engaging with the brand, can have negative impacts that go way beyond the scope of brand equity and brand perception.

> […] firms that woke wash can jeopardize the impact of authentic brand activism. If consumers do not trust brand activism as an authentic way to drive social change for sociopolitical issues, then the strategy is rendered less effective for social good outcomes. (Vredenburg et. al., 2020, p. 449)

Brands have the responsibility of promoting authentic brand activism, especially since by woke washing, they can create more harm than good. Not only in terms of the brand's success, and its relationship with its customers, who will likely lose trust in the brand, but also in terms of the cause itself, and the social change it could bring about.

Monteiro (2019), argues that design has done irreparable damage to society and that everything we are going through or might be going through soon, is because we designed the world to behave that way. The author sees design as a political act, one that we consciously must be aware of to know the power we may have over societies. He also sees it as designers' ethical and moral responsibility to act upon the damage we have done, to make the world a better place. "Design does not exist in a vacuum. Society is the biggest system we can impact and everything

you do, good and bad, is a part of that system" (Monteiro, 2019, p. 21), the author explores the idea that everything we create, good or bad, will have some sort of impact on the world around us. He goes further to state that something that is harming society, will never be well designed because good design comes from impact, and not aesthetics or function. With this premise, he doesn't believe there to be a well-designed gun, if that gun was specifically designed to kill people.

In addition to this, it is also important to investigate what levels of rhetoric can be seen as ethical or not. "Gimesy believes there are four levels of influence: coercion and manipulation, which are normally deemed unethical, and persuasion and education, which are deemed ethical" (Ferrier & Flemming, 2015, p.344). While persuasion and education can be used by advertisers and are usually seen as ethical. Using coercion and manipulation crosses the line of ethics.

6. Tools and Strategies being used by brands to propel these social changes

6.1 Storytelling

In order to understand how brands are propelling social change, it is important to deep dive into the tools and strategies being used by brands to bring them to this position. Robert McKee, a renowned screenwriter, and teacher identifies persuasion as the "Centerpiece of all business activity" (McKee, 2003). In his interview with the Harvard Business Journal, the screenwriter speaks about how storytelling is the best way to develop emotional connections with the viewers. This, in turn, is the best way to persuade users to get involved with a brand. The author identifies two main ways of persuasion. The first one, the traditional method, relies upon, as McKee names it, "conventional rhetoric." This method relies on PowerPoints, spreadsheets, and data to convey a message, a message that he deems to be forgettable. The second method, which the interviewee deems to be the most effective, relies on storytelling to send the message, McKee states "The other way to persuade people—and ultimately a much more powerful way—is by uniting an idea with an emotion. The best way to do that is by telling a compelling story" (McKee, 2003). In her article for Forbes Magazine, Kimberly Whitler explores the importance of storytelling for all marketeers. Selling it not only to create memorable experiences in a saturated and "media-fragmented world" (Whitler, 2018) but also to teach and learn. The author expresses how "One of the things that is unique about stories is that they

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transmit knowledge and meaning. We learn from observations, first-hand experiences, and by sharing those experiences through stories" (Whitler, 2018). Storytelling brings a unique power to brands, not only for themselves and the content they share, but also for the viewer, who will interpret it, remember it, and act upon it.

6.2 Anthropomorphizing of brands

Another tool that may be used by brands to create social change is by humanizing themselves. When consumers anthropomorphize brands, they are more likely to evaluate the brand based on its trustworthiness (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017). Anthropomorphizing brands can have a deep impact on the attachment that consumers have to the brands, which in turn can lead to increased brand loyalty, and a desire to be a part of the brand community (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017). Creating meaningful and human-like relationships between brands and consumers is a way to bring the two closer together and create a sense of trust from the consumer to the brand. In the article "Humanizing brands: When brands seem to be like me, part of me, and in a relationship with me" the authors speak of the great benefits of brand anthropomorphism and well as the potential downfall. The authors explore studies that conclude that while some cases may lead to an increase in brand attachment, it is also possible that it may lead to brand aversion "Consumers might be averse to brands that reflect dissociative reference groups with whom they do not wish to affiliate" (MacInnis & Folkes, 2017, p.14). The humanization of brands is a way to make a brand seem closer to the consumer. It is one of the tools that may be used by brands in their advertising to persuade the target audience into joining the brand community or becoming attached to the brand. However, this does not come without its downfalls. The brand needs to portray itself as a "human" the target would like.

6.3 Cause Marketing

Philip Kotler has a theory that summarizes the evolution of marketing and brand communication over the years, dividing it into Marketing 1.0 to Marketing 5.0. He speaks of the evolution of marketing as being something product-centric, to consumer-centric, and then later to human-centric (Kotler et.al, 2010, p.3). When speaking of how brands may deliver socio-cultural transformation, the author specifies that "A more advanced form of addressing social challenges

is cause marketing – a practice where companies support a specific cause through their marketing activities" (Kotler et.al, 2010, p.125). The author underlines the importance of cause marketing, and how it has the power to connect with consumers in a much more fruitful way. In his interview with Forbes, Philip Kotler explained all the stages of marketing including the stage he foresees for the future. He discusses marketing 1.0 (based on functionality, marketing 2.0 (based on emotion), marketing 3.0 (based on purpose), marketing 4.0 (based on digital), marketing 5.0 (based on information), and makes predictions on what marketing 6.0 will be. According to Kotler the focus in the future for marketers will be entrepreneurship, where new ways of communicating will be crucial to stay ahead (Rucker, 2021). In addition to this, Kotler was asked about the importance of each stage stating, "one might be tempted to ask which stage is most important. However, the trick is being a great marketer isn't about mastering one stage—it's about mastering all of them" (Rucker, 2021). It can thus be said that for Kotler, all stages of marketing are equally important and must work harmoniously to create positive brand growth and communication.

Thomas Kloster, who coined the term "goodvertising" has a lot to say about how advertising can create meaningful impacts on societies, as he stated for the guardian, "Brands have a unique opportunity to play a bigger role in people's lives and to deliver on real needs rather than just creating wants" (Kloster, 2014). The author believes that raising awareness is not enough anymore and that brands need to be agents of positive social change. To do that, they must escape from the traditional advertising route and make choices that bring them closer to their public and that identify true issues that can drive positive changes in collective mentalities.

Tara Gustafson and Brian Chabot explain how advertising and brands as propellers of social change can lead to benefits that lean into the real objective of any business. The authors define brand awareness as an important factor to lead brands to their main goal, which is increasing sales and income (Gustafson & Chabot, 2007). The authors define that one of the main steppingstones to reach this is brand awareness as advertising. While it is important for brands nowadays to be agents of positive change, as expressed by Kloster, it is also important to note that this action also increases brand awareness, which leads to a business's main objective, making a profit.

7. Advertising and Behavior

Adam Ferrier, an advertiser and psychologist, wrote on how advertising can be used to change behavior with Jennifer Flemming. In the book, the authors define 10 main strategies that can be used, as well as the "psychological principles behind each technique" (Ferrier & Flemming, 2015, p.10).

The author starts off by talking about modeling behavior. People act in accordance with how they see others act. People are more likely to act like the people and groups surrounding them.

> Learning would be exceedingly laborious, not to mention hazardous, if people had to rely solely on the effects of their own actions to inform them what to do. Fortunately, most human behavior is learned observationally through modeling: from observing others one forms an idea of how new behaviors are performed, and on later occasions this coded information serves as a guide for action. (Ferrier & Flemming, 2015, p. 251 citing Bandura (1977))

Seeing as through their communications brands have a lot of reach, they have the power to model behavior through their communication pieces and changing perceptions and mentalities within a social group. As brands become part of the cultural fabric of society, they become more of a voice for the masses.

In their book, the authors dedicate a chapter to how various behavior-changing techniques may be used in order to propel positive and social behavioral change. As advertisers are seen as masters of persuasion (and often manipulation), it is easy to fall into actions that might be perceived as unethical. However, the knowledge possessed by advertisers also gives them the power to act for the greater good. The authors also explore the fact that nowadays, especially, people have the power to bring up issues that concern them. As consumers, we have the power to support brands when they act for better social causes. The author shares an anecdote from his time in college, where he was listening to a conference and asked the speaker if people should be buying Nike's first sustainable shoe, when (at that point) the brand was known to resort to sweatshops in order to manufacture their products. The speaker avidly spoke in favor of Nike, stating that,

> […] we should support corporations when they do the right thing, not because they care or don't care. They are businesses that want to make money. They don't have feelings. When consumers support the 'good' shoe, the company will make more of them. (Ferrier & Flemming, 2015, p.252)

When brands act in favor of a social cause and try to shift certain behaviors (such as living a more sustainable lifestyle or fighting for minority rights), they do it because those communications will benefit the public's view of the brand. Ferrier and Flemming (2015) go on to state that when brands do good by the world and act according to the public's general values, they keep doing it, not only because it's good for the world, but also because it's good for business.

This is important because it can lead to the understanding of the power of consumers in society as well as the power they might have on the actions of different brands.

> As consumers become educated about the connection between their purchases and the impact of these, the more vocal they'll become in demanding that corporation's source ethical products. A case in point is Nike, which has dropped subcontractors that use sweatshops. (Ferrier & Flemming, 2015, p.353)

Not only is it important for brands to know the power they have in society, but it is also important to note that this power is cyclical, consumers also have the power to control the actions of brands, so long as they support brands that align with their values. This is further emphasized especially today with the rise of social media. The author calls them "clicktavists", social media users that take advantage of their platform to take a stand and are no longer as tolerant of a brand's bad behaviors. By holding brands accountable, people end up feeling happier with their purchases, and brands end up using their power to support social causes they (as well as their target audience) believe in.

II. Methodology

1. Research Structure

1.1 Problem Definition

Advertising and culture are connected, but an explanation of the tools and strategies used by brands to create this connection is scarce. What is it about some brands that lead to changes in societies, and why doesn't it happen with others? As brands are increasingly selling more value than products, the issue of how brands can use their power for the good of society becomes more prominent.

An analysis has been made on how celebratory tradition has been impacted by advertising. A clear connection is visible between how we, as a society, choose to celebrate different events and holidays and the impacts that brands have on those choices. In addition to this, advertising has also had an impact on our day-to-day lives, as we live through what brands tell us is important, healthy, or what they create to be the "norm" (as was seen with the Kellogg's example, that transformed the way western cultures experienced breakfast). There was a time in our society when cigarette companies were recommended by doctors, normalized for children, and promoted by different sporting events (Tobacco Stops with Me, 2022). It was not only normal but expected that people would be smokers. Today, as health impacts are more well known, those types of advertising are forbidden, but seeing how brands like Camel and Marlboro not only normalized but made smoking a must-have to "fit in", shows us how brands can have a deep impact on the way we live our lives. While that example might be a little negative, the goal of this study is to understand how brands can have a positive impact on our society, and how the mentalities and behaviors of viewers can change according to how they communicate their messages.

We also looked at how viewers today are more informed and more interested than ever in whether brands' values align with their own (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2019). It becomes in the best interest of brands to align with different social movements and push for social change. Nonetheless, it is important to remember the negative impacts it may have for brands to engage in woke washing, rather than truly embracing positive social change (both inside their own management, as well as in their personal messaging).

In addition, an analysis of Douglas Holt's (2004) study of cultural branding took place to understand how other authors have theorized the impact of brands and advertising on our cultural fabric.

The goal of this study is to find a correlation between positive social messaging in advertising and changes in cultures, through a semiotic lens. More than this, the goal is to see what strategies and tools are used by brands to fully transmit these messages, and if there are certain specifics in their communication that ellicit these types of responses.

The research question is thus the following: "What are the tools and strategies that brands use in their advertising to propel social change?".

1.2 Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that there is a circularity between societies and cultures with advertising. In addition to this, it is hypothesized that viewers are capable of changing behaviors when approached with communication pieces that transmit the right messages, with the right tools and strategies.

1.3 Research Objectives

The main goal of this study is to understand the underlying conditions that lead to the impact of advertising on our cultural fabric. Understanding these conditions through a semiotic analysis in order to understand how advertising can be used to create different interpretations by the viewer. These interpretations can lead to the understanding of how societies change and evolve, and how advertising and design can have an impact on that evolution, mainly through the changing perception and behavior by part of the viewer. In addition to this, a semiotic perspective on this analysis allows us to understand how the brand is communicating through signs, and what strategies they might be used to transmit their ideals and change behaviors.

The main objectives of the study are to use a case study analysis to analyze all the layers of an advertising campaign and pinpoint all the elements that could lead to social change. In addition to this, an understanding of the cultural context around the campaign, the response, etc. will truly help understand the value and the impact of each piece of communication.

1.4 Justification and Motivation

Curiosity regarding culture and advertising motivated this study. Understanding this cycle between advertising and culture is increasingly important, seeing as in such a saturated market consumers are more interested in brand values and communication than products.

This study, therefore, becomes important for advertisers, designers, and brand owners as it fuels the understanding of different strategies that can lead to positive social change. Brands have this power, to elicit responses from interpretants, and can use it for the bettering, not only of society but also of brands as well. Promoting different concepts and values is a win-win situation for societies and brands, but it must be well done, as has been seen at the beginning of this study, the repercussions of exploring these themes can do more harm than good.

Hopefully, this investigation will help brands understand their power and the tools that can be used to harness that power for good. As brands can perform as activists in society, and consumers are interested in that as well, it is important to identify what it was about campaigns in the past that made them successful. The motivation of this study is to pinpoint the different tools and strategies that led to this success in the past and make it a useful tool for advertisers in the future, who want to sell their brands beyond products and create a true connection with the viewer.

2. Methodology

In order to analyze this potential correlation between advertising and culture and look at all the elements that lead to this messaging in advertising by brands, a semiotic approach to the issue at hand will take place.

Santaella and Nöth's (2010) framework will be used in order to investigate different advertising case studies, observe them from a semiotic point of view, and see what strategies were used in order to propel social change. A look at the authors' investigation regarding the reading of advertising messages and their power will take place in order to draw conclusions regarding the relationship between advertising, social change, and culture. Seeing as Santaella & Nöth's framework will be the basis for the present investigation, a deep analysis and overview of their own methodology will take place.

There will be a deep dive into different campaigns developed by brands. These campaigns occurred not only for brand gain but also to change something in society. From there, an analysis

based on the authors' framework will occur in order to identify what it was about these campaigns that made them successful.

A semiotic approach to this issue allows for the analysis of all elements of the advertising message and allows for the dissection of the advertising piece to its core, from the message, the interpretation, and the symbolic meaning behind it. Furthermore, this methodology will provide an extensive overview of the phenomenon and allow the analysis to be made on all aspects of the communication. Analyzing and interpreting the signs and their relationships, as part of a greater social context, permits a bigger understanding of the tools and strategies being used by brands to develop this study.

2.1 Santaella & Nöth's Semiotic Approach to Advertising – Suggestion, Seduction and Persuasion

Peirce's triadic system to analyze phenomenon was the first to fully rely on the present, the moment of thought, the first moment of the experience, for its analysis. Making it universal in nature. This is how his theories separate themselves from Kant and Aristotle's. As Santaella and Nöth wrote,

> What Peirce was trying to accomplish in his new list, was a description solely based on elementary and universal conceptions, present in the mind, when anything to it presents itself. They should be formal and universal. […] Therefore, the return of the phenomenon, isn't mediated by linguistic constructions (as was the starting point for Aristotle's), nor by a given system of logic (as was the Kantian starting point) this is therefor the point of originality in Peirce's new list. (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.86-87)[11].

Santaella and Nöth, therefore, see this new system as the best for understanding the advertising message, as it looks at phenomenology from a universal standpoint, that can be adapted to any given experience. What resulted in Peirce's list were three elements that can be universally applied to the phenomenological experience; Firstness, secondness, and thirdness represented as quality, reaction, and representation (Santaella & Nöth, 2010).

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[11] Translated by the author from this original text: "Peirce estava tentando realizar na sua nova lista era a descrição apenas das concepções elementares e universais, presentes à mente, quando qualquer coisa a ela se apresenta. Elas devem ser formais e universais. [...] Portanto, o retorno do fenómeno, não mediado por construções linguísticas (ponto de partida de Aristóteles), nem por um dado sistema de logica (ponto de partida kantiano) constitui-se na originalidade da nova lista de Peirce." (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.86-87)

Santaella & Nöth discuss the triadic system present in an advertising message. The authors define suggestion, seduction, and persuasion as three fundamental elements to be at the center of the advertising message. In addition to this, the authors explore how these three fundamental elements seem to be correspondent in some way to Peirce's triadic system of phenomenology. "The element of suggestion is to the firstness, as to seduction is to secondness, and persuasion to thirdness" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.85)[12]. Just like in Peirce's triadic model, suggestion, seduction, and persuasion all work in unison in the advertising message. The authors explain how, Peircean categories, work in unison, some at times being more dominant than others, nonetheless, they are predominantly in balance and instability.

Suggestion refers to "an open field of possibilities" (translated from Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.94). Much like with firstness, the possibilities for meaning in suggestion are still undefined. As Santaella and Nöth put it, "The vague, the undetermined, the undefined and the possible provoke qualities of feeling, and activate our sensibilities" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p. 94)[13]. In addition to this, suggestion can become intertwined with seduction and persuasion, as the authors point out,

> […] through the relationships between text and image, and aura of suppositions, implied senses, imaginative conjectures and allusions that generate, in the territory of what is possible and feeling, a field that is conductive to the interlacing with seduction in the field of sensory and with persuasion in the field of comprehensibility. (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.94)[14] .

Seduction refers to the field of secondness, "Carrascoza (2004, p. 303) defends that advertising messages "have their line of meaning mostly built by two fundamental lines of persuasion: apollonian (with an emphasis on rational elements) and dionysian (dominated by

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[12] Translated by the author from this original text: "A sugestão está para a primeiridade assim como a sedução está para a secundidade e a persuasão para a terceiridade" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.85)

[13] Translated by the author from this original text: "O vago, o indeterminado, o indefinido e o possível despertam qualidades de sentimento, ativam a nossa sensibilidade" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p. 94)

[14] Translated by the author from this original text: "pelas relações entre texto e imagem, cria uma aura de suposições, de sentidos implícitos, conjeturas imaginativas, alusões que geram, no território do possível e do sentimento, um campo propicio ao entrelaçamento com a sedução no terreno do sensório e com a persuasão no território do inteligível" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.94)

proceedings that aim to awaken emotions)" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.95 citing Carrascoza)[15]. The authors identify the component of desire (one of the largest driving forces of seduction), as one which lies within the polarity between these two fundamental lines of persuasion as explained by Carrascoza (rational and emotional). Seduction lies in the field of secondness, it captivates the senses. It is often seen as the most criticized component due to its power to manipulate the viewer. More so than the logical information that the advertising piece may send, true desire is what motivates purchases, and this desire, as part of the field of seduction comes from "obscure promises" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.95)[16]. Nonetheless, just like secondness, seduction is never alone, "it feeds itself out of the dubiousness of suggestions, as persuasion feeds itself from both" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p. 95)[17].

Persuasion refers to thirdness. This is the most logical of the three, but it also focuses on arguments, tailored in their communication to convince and inform the viewer. It is highly connected to rhetoric, as it is used to provide powerful discourse, in order to persuade the viewer. As the authors put it "the art of extracting out of all subjects the level of persuasion by which it behaves is called rhetoric" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.95)[18]. While the other two focus on emotions and captivation of senses, persuasion goes to logical thinking and rational information to sell the advertising message.

2.2 Different Research Strategies for a Semiotic Analysis of Advertising and Their Roles

Brands are more than the products they sell. They are the emotions and responses they insight, as well as the interpretations they lead to. These actions highly focus on understanding the consumers' behavior and response, some of which happens without the full consciousness of said consumer. In their chapter regarding neuroscience and semiotics, the authors state that "a large part of our cognitive activities, i.e., all thought, including, and especially, our emotions,

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[15] Translated by the author from this original text: "Carrascoza (2004, p.303) defende que o discurso publicitário "tem sua trama de significados tecida fundamentalmente por duas grandes linhas de persuasão: a apolínea (na qual se destacam elementos racionais) e a dionisíaca (dominada pelos procedimentos que visam despertar emoções)"" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.95 citing Carrascoza)

[16] Translated by the author from this original text: "promessas obscuras" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.95)

[17] Translated by the author from this original text: "Ela se alimenta da dubiedade das sugestões, assim como a persuasão se alimenta de ambas" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.95)

[18] Translated by the author from this original text: "a arte de extrair de todo assunto o grau de persuasão que ele comporta chama-se retórica" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.95)

occur below the level of consciousness" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p. 172)[19]. According to the authors, the use of semiotics in the research process will always shift according to the different themes and concepts that are being approached in the research objectives.

Santaella & Nöth propose different ways to conduct the analysis of advertising through a semiotic lens. They see different strategies that may help when looking at advertising pieces, and different methods to conduct a proper analysis. With a growing number of communication channels and globalization, it becomes hard for advertisers to investigate what formulas work. Today it is even more important to look at a mix of research methods in order to truly understand consumer behavior and do a proper analysis for advertising. In this chapter, we will be looking into the strategies intended to be used in this study.

To start off, Santaella and Nöth (2010) explore Vannini's perspective on social semiotics, as a research methodology. Vannini sees structuralist semiotics as constricting in terms of understanding the social context when conducting qualitative studies. Although the authors keep Vannini's perspective and approach to social semiotics in mind, they developed a different approach, which they hope will help us understand advertising from a semiotic point of view, as well as its social and cultural context. The authors go on to state:

> When the consumption of meaning and values far outweigh the consumption of products, we hope to show evidence that semiotics […] is able to detect strategies used by communication, helping us understand the various layers of emotional and cultural influence that act upon the consumer. (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p. 173)[20].

The semiotic approach to advertising helps us understand all the layers that make up the advertising message, that is often taken in by the viewer subconsciously, and that speak to the cultural and emotional perceptions of the viewer. According to the authors, verbal and non-verbal messages in advertising tell rich stories of meaning, that speak to their cultural context, which makes the semiotic approach such an appropriate one for this type of study.

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[19] Translated by the author from this original text: "Grande parte de nossas atividades cognitivas, ou seja, todo pensamento, inclusive e, sobretudo, nossas emoções, ocorrem abaixo do nível de consciência" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p. 172)

[20] Translated by the author from this original text: "Quando se consoem muito mais significados e valores do que produtos, buscaremos evidenciar que a semiótica [...] está habilitada a detectar estratégias utilizadas pela comunicação ajudando-nos a compreender as variadas camadas de influências emocionais e culturais que agem sobre o consumidor" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p. 173)

2.2.1 Qualitative-Iconic

The first research strategy explored by the authors that will be approached in this study is the "qualitative-iconic" point of view. This method focuses on "impressions, sensations, and comparisons" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p. 174)[21]. According to Santaella & Nöth (2010) impression refers to not only the first impression of an advertising piece on the viewer, which is very important and hard to analyze (since qualities, much like the impressions they leave, aren't possible to place into segments, are vague, and happen all at once as a sensory experience). Nonetheless, the effects of qualities, aren't limited to first impressions, seeing as there are other consequences of qualities that the human species experience sensorily. In terms of sensation, and as explored by different authors in color and shape psychology, different qualitative elements (which are usually the responsible ones for "first impressions") can bring about different sensations in the viewer. For example, "[…] warm and vibrant colors excite the sense, while cold colors calm it. […] Harmonious shapes provide a sense of balance, while rapid collisions of shapes provoke tension and energy" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p. 175)[22]. In addition to this, qualities have a large power of suggestion embedded in them. This is due to the comparisons and associations that can be drawn from qualities, more so than the sensations and impressions they bring to light. This suggestive power in qualities comes from associations and comparisons, both literal and abstract that can be made by the viewer. Experience can lead to different associations with other images, other sounds, and different analogies. In terms of comparisons, this relates not only to visible qualities, but also refers to more abstract ones, such as "delicacy, purity, harmony, elegance, nobility, strength, brutality, severity […]" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.175)[23].

This strategy explores comparisons by similarity. All the relationships and associations between qualities are what the authors denominate as iconic relationships. Iconicity works deeply within the field of firstness, it relates to the qualities, the impressions, and the sensations

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[21] Translated by the author from this original text: "Impressões, sensações e comparações" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.174)

[22] Translated by the author from this original text: "[...] cores vibrantes e quentes excitam os sentidos, enquanto cores frias o acalmam. [...] Formas harmónicas produzem sensações de equilíbrio, enquanto colisões repentinas de formas provocam tensão e energia" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.175)

[23] Translated by the author from this original text: "[…] delicadeza, pureza, harmonia, elegância, nobreza, forca, brutalidade, severidade, solenidade etc." (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.175)

caused by a phenomenon, that are hard to define specifically since they are in "an open field of possibilities" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.176)[24]. The category of qualitative-iconic refers to the senses and will be explored in that matter.

2.2.2 Singular-Indexical

The authors also explore the context of references as an important point in the research mix. In order to conduct a proper semiotic analysis, it is important to look at all the elements of the advertising piece as "singular-indexical" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.177). This is the second point of view we will be exploring. What separates Peirce's theory of signs from structuralist semiotics, is the presence and power of the interpretant. As such, when conducting the analysis, one must look at the context of the piece as well.

> In synthesis, speaking of elements that are singular-indexical means screening, in the message as well as in the communicative situation, traces that allow us to go back on its context as much as necessary in order to understand the environments of use and the consumer range to which a product is destines, as well as the functions it performs and its finalities. (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.177)[25]

With this, different questions must be approached when looking at different advertising pieces that tell us about the interpretant. Exploring the different parts of the identity as something that is already known and exists. Knowing this will allow for an analysis to be made not only of the piece itself but also with its context in mind (where it comes from, what is the history of the brand, what are the goals of the piece, how do pieces vary from their previous communication, who are these intended for, etc.).

2.2.3 Conventional-Symbolic

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[24] Translated by the author from this original text: "no reino aberto de possibilidades" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.176)

[25] Translated by the author from this original texto: "Em síntese, falar em aspectos singulares-indiciais significa rastrear, na mensagem e na sua situação comunicativa, traços que nos permitam retroceder no seu contexto quanto for necessário para compreender os ambientes de uso e faixa do consumidor a que um produto se destina, assim como as funções que desempenha, as finalidades a que se presta" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.177)

Another research strategy explored by the authors is "patterns, conventions, symbols and culture" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.177)[26]. This point of view is called "conventional-symbolic" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.177)[27]. In this strategy products and their adverts are seen more as types and less as singular elements. With this, it becomes important to look at patterns in communication, and how they are generally. It is also more important to look at the cultural and symbolic meaning of the brands, the products, and the advertising. Asking questions in the analysis such as "What do they represent? What cultural values have been aggregated to them? What symbols, myths, and archetypes are being explicitly or implicitly triggered" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.178)[28].

A complete and valuable analysis of these advertising pieces consists of a mixture of research strategies presented by the authors, seeing as different strategies have different strengths and weaknesses, a more complete analysis can take place to fit the goals and objectives of different studies. Using the different strategies presented in this chapter will allow for a more complete overview of the advertising pieces, their cultural context, and the strategies used in order to motivate social change. For this purpose, an exploration of different advertising pieces will take place. This exploration is founded on Santaella & Nöth's framework of suggestion, seduction, and persuasion with the following strategies: qualitative-iconic, singular-indexical, and conventional-symbolic (see Figure 1).

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[26] Translated by the author from this original text: "Padrões, as convenções, os símbolos e a cultura" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.177)

[27] Translated by the author from this original text: "convencional-simbólico" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.177)

[28] Translated by the author from this original text: "O que eles representam? Que valores lhes foram agregados culturalmente? Que símbolos, mitos e arquétipos estão sendo explicita ou implicitamente acionados?" (Santaella & Nöth, 2010, p.178)
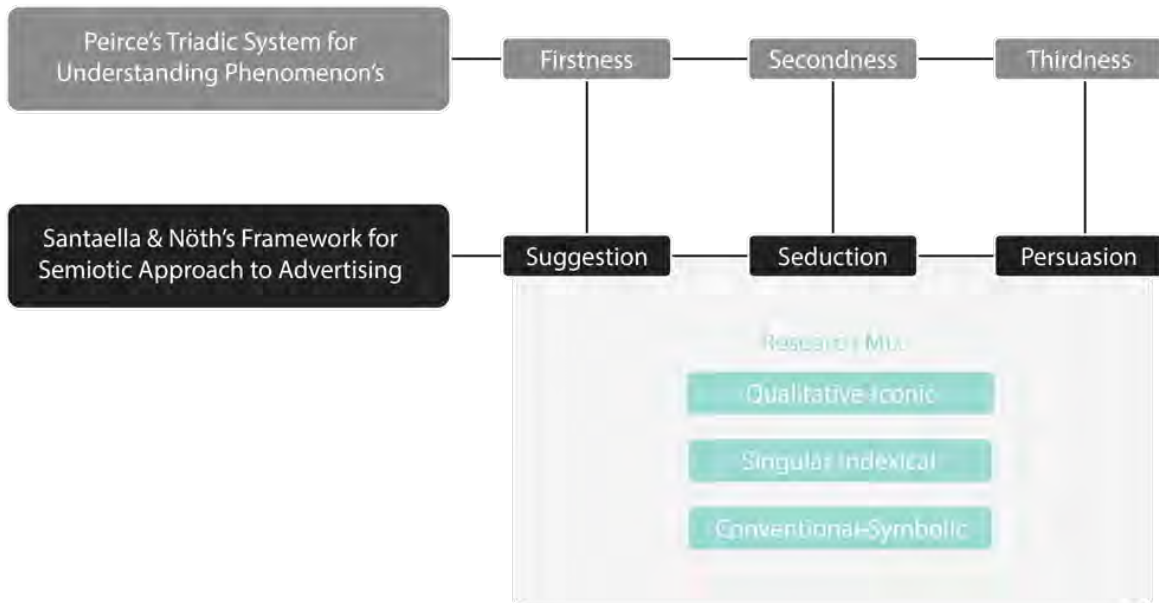
Figure 1: Board created by author from Santaella & Nöth's Framework (2010)

Figure 1 hopes to synthesize the information explored in the methodology and provide a simple guide to how the investigation will take place. The research methods and framework by Santaella & Nöth will be used in order to conduct this study. A mix of research methods explored by the authors will be used in order to draw conclusions regarding the different tools and strategies that are leading to brands and social change. This analysis will be done with the cultural context in mind and will investigate different case studies of advertising campaigns. In addition to this, a deep dive into the results of each campaign will take place in order to understand how and whether each campaign propelled social change.

III. Analysis:

1. Case studies approach

In this chapter, different case studies will be analyzed in order to draw conclusions regarding the different tools and strategies that can be used in advertising communication pieces.

A selection of five case studies was chosen, and for each one, a qualitative-iconic, a singular-indexical, and a conventional-symbolic research methodology will be employed. In addition to this, a small conclusive analysis will be written on the impacts of the advertising piece, and the tools and strategies that may have been used to lead to them. This analysis of case studies will allow for the interpretation of tools and strategies used by brands in the past, and how those may be applied in the future. The following advertising campaigns will be analyzed from a semiotic point of view: Dove's campaign for real beauty, Channel 4's Paralympics campaign to redefine people with disabilities, Nike's stance on racial injustice, Pedigree's campaign to "Feed the Good", as well as Airbnb's "We Accept". A global analysis of the different campaigns will take place, where a semiotic exploration of the pieces and their context will occur, and conclusions will be taken on the possible circularity between brands and cultures, and whether these campaigns have the power to change mentalities and beliefs. In addition to this, an overview of the strategies used by brands to propel these social changes will also take place.

2. Case Study Analysis

2.1 Case Study 1 – Dove - Real Beauty

This campaign focuses on breaking down paradigms of the meaning of beauty. The brand started communicating this message in 2004 (Unilever, 2017), and the results on the beauty industry and its stereotypes have been instrumental in providing a more open and inclusive mentality regarding what it means to be beautiful. As mentioned previously, brands sell more than products, they sell ideals, concepts, and beliefs. This campaign is a clear example of that. A brand that focused more on the perception of beauty and breaking down cultural norms than the products themselves. The question is, how did the messaging of the products have an impact on their sales, as well as public perception of the tackled social issue? In addition to understanding its mission and success, a more prominent question is, what were the tools and strategies used by the brand to create this shift?

In this analysis of the general campaign, different pieces developed throughout the campaign will be selected that are representative of each part of the research methods presented by Santaella & Nöth (2010). This will provide an in-depth and complete semiotic analysis of the campaign, which will in turn allow for a deeper understanding of the research question.

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2.1.1 Qualitative-Iconic Approach

Throughout this campaign, the use of white and dark blue is predominant. The colors displayed are pure and delicate and create contrast with the multiple skin tones celebrated in the imagery. The white creates a sense of unity within all the women, as they are displayed as equals, all beautiful in their own ways. The dark blue and white tones serve as a symbol for the brand, as it is present throughout the communication of the whole campaign (Figure 2 and Figure 3).

Figure 2: We See Beauty All Around Us
Source: https://api.time.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/dove-real-beauty-campaign.png

Figure 3: Real Women. Real Beauty
*Source: https://miro.medium.com/max/940/1*xYwjs0cctiqnPuXsfK-9eQ.png*

Throughout the campaign, women of different ethnicities, body types, ages, and skin tones are displayed as beautiful, and described by the text "we see beauty all around us" (Figure

2). All the women are smiling, with poses filled with confidence, that are further explanatory of the message portrayed by the brand.

The campaign started with billboards, that portrayed these images. In some, handwritten text was used in order to display the real side of the campaign. In all cases at first, different women were portrayed, all wearing white, all looking confident, and shown as equals. The text "Real women. Real Beauty" defies preconceived notions of the beauty industry, where women are altered and changed in order to fit the mold of what it means to be beautiful. Most women have one hand placed on their waist (figure 3) as to show a stance of confidence and power, giving the viewer a sense of self, and changing perceptions of what it means to be a confident, beautiful woman.

With time, the brand continued to show the real world, with real women, celebrating all body types, ages, and ethnicities, as they fight the issues of beauty bias, embracing women's natural beauty and fighting against image alterations and unrealistic portrayals of women.

Figure 4: Screenshots from: Reverse the Selfie
Source: https://youtu.be/z2T-Rh838GA

In the "Reverse the Selfie" activation (Figure 4) the brand might be trying to send a message that fights against the pressures of social media, and image alterations that lead to low self-esteem and unrealistic expectations of girls from a young age. The video starts with an image of an adult woman, displaying all current aspects of beauty and social media. "Perfect" hair, chin, nose, no pimples, big eyes, perfectly symmetrical. The video occurs in reverse, slowly we see the image as it goes back to its original state. Once the picture is longer posted, the effects are off, and the makeup is removed, all that is left is a sad-looking girl. The video displays a gloomy sensation, with instrumental music, interrupted only by the sounds of the phone clicking. A blue tone fills the screen to give that sense of gloom and sadness, where an image portrays such positivity but its reality is completely different. Although this campaign within the brand

communication is from 2022, some elements can be seen transposed from the beginning of Dove communication in 2004. The video starts with a handwritten note, featured in white on a black background to set the tone for the video. The end of the ad focuses on a message for parents regarding the dangers of social media, especially since the pandemic. In consistency with the rest of the communication of the brand, the white background with the blue text takes prominence.

Interestingly, the brand rarely displays its products in its communication, focusing more on ideals of beauty, values surrounding toxicity in the industry, and displaying real people, further showing more emphasis on the values and the messaging of the brand, than the products themselves.

2.1.2 Singular-Indexical

In this analysis, it is important to look for context, to look for how these pieces exist within a certain environment. Beauty campaigns before this one, and even after (though change is still happening) placed a specific type of woman at their center, making brands feel distant and inaccessible to most people. For this reason, symbols of beauty became predictable, unrealistic, and unattainable, especially with the rise of social media platforms, and photo and video editing platforms, that can change the way a person looks almost automatically. Understanding this context allows us to see why it would be so important for the public to see a shift in this type of communication, to one more inclusive and less restrictive.

In the "Dove Real Beauty Pledge", the brand states as one of its promises, to always place real women at the center of their communication. In addition to this, the brand promises to never alter images of women, to show diversity, to introduce women by their real names, and to always get their approval before sharing their images (Dove, 2022). By placing normal women at the center of the campaign, the brand was able to make the brand feel accessible and open to all types of women. Against the conventions followed by so many other brands in the industry during this time, the brand was able to provide a different sense and perception within the mind of the consumer as to what it means to truly be a part of the brand.

Figure 5: Various Images from Campaign for Real Beauty
Source: https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/wrinkled-wonderful

The images shown in Figure 5 are exemplary of how Dove challenged the history of the beauty industry. This campaign points toward a more inclusive environment, where qualities that were previously deemed negative, become part of what can be perceived as beautiful. They do this by making comparisons with the history of the industry, where weight, body type, and age were previously restricted.

In addition to this, the brand campaign engages in a self-esteem toolkit, to help parents manage the expectations and toxic mentalities of the beauty industry, they refer to many of these in their communication to help people navigate current social pressures.

2.1.3 Conventional-Symbolic

Throughout the campaign, different imagery of women is used in repetition with the potential goal of showing that beauty is diverse, and differences contribute to what it means to be beautiful. It challenges the preconceived notions of beauty previously displayed by the industry and imbeds in the mind of the interpretant a new definition of what it means to be beautiful. Showing so many different women explores the idea that beauty isn't symbolized by one single image, but that beauty is everywhere.

Throughout the campaign, traditional symbols of beauty are challenged, and it opens the door to new mentalities regarding beauty perception and ideals. Figure 6 and figure 7 show how

these differences can be brought to light, by substitution interior perceptions with exterior perceptions, and by externalizing issues of toxic beauty standards so common in the beauty industry, even to this day.

This campaign had a great impact in changing perceptions and defying the norms of beauty, and it is something they have done not only at the beginning of this messaging but to this day. One of the ways in which dove explores these themes is through experiential media. It started with Dove Real Beauty Sketches, (Figure 6) where women were challenged to describe themselves to a portrait artist. In the end, their descriptions are compared to the descriptions of other people regarding them. The idea is to defy the cultural standard of beauty and make people realize they are more beautiful than the way they see themselves.

In this sense, the brand celebrates inner beauty as something that is as important as exterior beauty, showing once more how inner perceptions can change the way we take our place in the world. Inner perception thus becomes a symbol for exterior beauty.
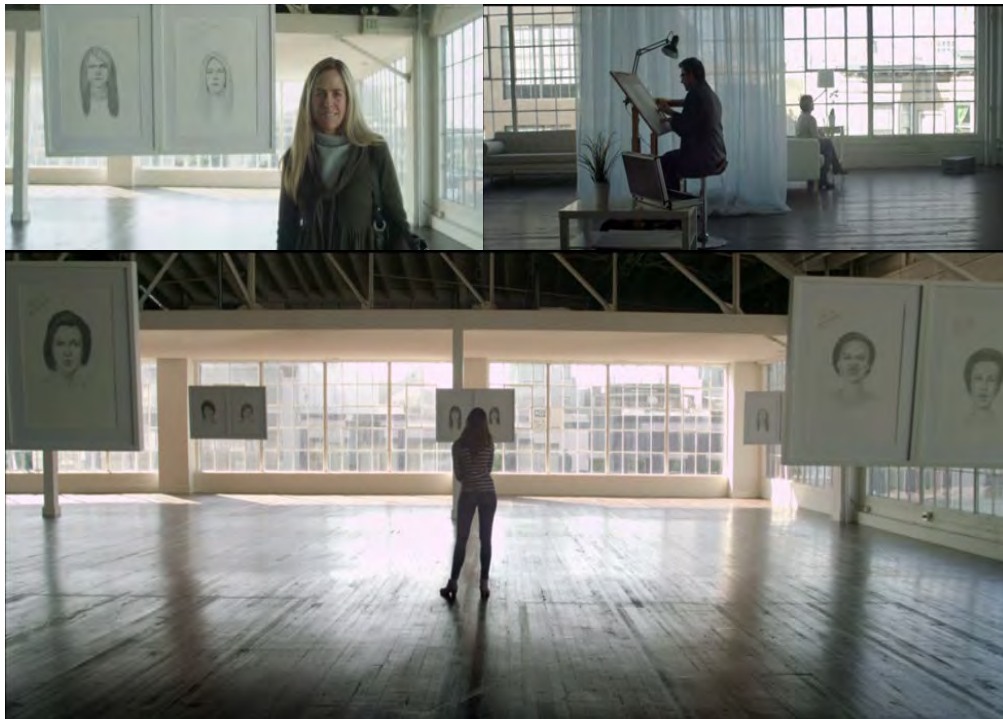

Figure 6: Screenshots from: Dove Real Beauty
Source: https://youtu.be/litXW91UauE

This campaign, set in 2013 (Figure 6) challenged modern conventions of beauty, and was a starting point of the mission of the Dove brand in the last 9 years, to challenge societal norms of beauty, change negative self-perceptions, and to celebrate real people.

With time, issues of beauty in our society have evolved, and the messaging of the brand has changed and adapted in order to adjust to new issues arising regarding beauty. Dove is now messaging towards young girls and mothers, in a battle against toxic social media standards of beauty. In order to target this issue, another experimental campaign led by the brand regarding beauty was developed. The campaign "Detox your Feed" targeted the relationship between young girls and social media, and how toxic that environment can be. In order to do this, the brand interviewed mothers and daughters and used AI in order to place the mothers at the center of the messages being sent by so many influencers.
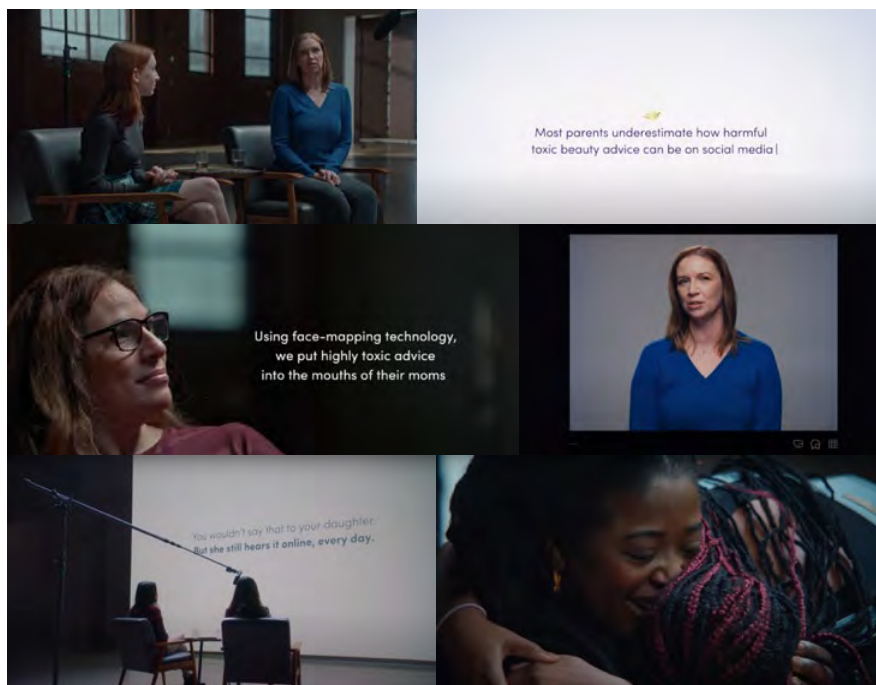
Figure 7: Screenshots from: Detox your Feed
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ohBL-dfCnww&t=92s

This type of advertisement has been very effective in terms of creating positive relationships with the viewer. Using experimental techniques to create emotional and perception-altering results. They do this by starting with one preconceived notion, and changing it throughout the advertisement, more importantly, they show that change as it happens. In figure 6

as well as in figure 7, the mentality that the interviewees begin with, and the mentality as it is at the end of the piece changes completely, and the goal is to transpose those changes of mentalities in the interpretant as well.

The representative power of the products thus changes, as they are no longer just soaps, creams, or beauty products, they are a representation of what it means to be beautiful and of the fight against toxicity within the beauty industry, especially among young girls. The videos maintain the same visual style, white text over the image, minimal, it focuses more on the people being shown and less on other external elements. Light instrumental music builds up and down to accompany the moments shared in the video.

2.1.4 How did this brand propel social change?

Due to its revolutionary communication strategy at the time, the Dove campaign for real beauty became a very successful one, nonetheless, it is important to understand what it was about the campaign that made it so successful.

The brand leans into storytelling in order to share compelling messages, placing itself away from the product itself, and closer to the minds and hearts of its target. Dove becomes a brand about more than the product it sells, it becomes a series of symbols and icons representative of a movement that came at the right moment given the cultural and social circumstances of its time.

In addition to this, the use of "cause branding" aids in the communication, as the brand focuses more on causes and values and less on the products they are selling. As we saw from Philip Kotler, a good way for a brand to deliver sociocultural change is to get involved in cause marketing. The brand uses its products and its communication activities to sell a specific cause or belief, thus aligning the brand with that belief and making it interchangeable for the viewer. With time, Dove became a representative of "real beauty" and promoted changes not only in the mentality of the viewer but also in the communication of the rest of the industry.

Nonetheless, there are still some critiques regarding the campaign. Unilever (the parent company of Dove) is also the parent company of other brands, that don't necessarily align with the message that Dove is trying to promote. A couple of examples of these are Axe and Fair & Lovely. "These brands promote messages that are in direct contradiction to the message that

Dove is attempting to promote, which is positive body image. Fair & Lovely, a popular brand marketed primarily to dark-skinned women, promotes a desire for "lighter skin"" (Celebre & Denton, 2014). It is interesting to see how a brand that fought so much for a movement, is related to brands that are still so behind in terms of their communication regarding the same themes.

The Dove campaign brought together a digital community that cared more about the values of the brand than its products, engaging in healthy conversations regarding self-esteem and the beauty industry. The success of the campaign can be attributed to some of these brand actions, as Celebre and Denton (2014) state, "Overall, much of the campaign's success can be attributed to it being the first digital campaign to drive participants to a supportive online community that reached over 200 million people worldwide, with over 26 million people participating in the campaign online (Springer, 2009)" (Celebre and Denton, 2014, citing Springer). The brand activations created a lot of engagement within communities and were able to elicit emotional responses from the viewers, focusing on the safety of children, body positivity, and self-esteem.

2.2 Case Study 2 – Paralympics – Meet the Super Humans

The next campaign we will be looking into is the Channel 4 campaign for the Paralympics in 2012. The campaign "Meet the Super Humans" can be interpreted as one that tried to change the perception of people with disabilities within the mind of the public, and showed them as super humans, rather than disabled. This campaign began in 2012 and was brought back in 2016 to combat the lack of audience in Paralympic games, it was once again brought to the audience in 2020 for the Tokyo Paralympic Games, with the campaign titled "Super.Human". Each of the campaigns sprouts from the previous and tackles the same issue. In all cases, the campaign redefines strength and perhaps aims to turn the perception of disability, into a perception of ability.

As part of the campaign, Channel 4 also released a comedy wrap-up at the end of each day of events, where people made comments and questions regarding disability in sports. The show was called "The Last Leg" through its description it can be interpreted that the goal of this show was to fight the stigma surrounding the issue at hand and to bring light to different themes of discussion in a light and playful way.

In this analysis, a deep dive into the different pieces developed for this campaign (from 2012, 2016, and 2020) will take place. Different elements will be brought up according to Santaella & Nöth's (2010) research mix (as seen in Figure 1). For this reason, a qualitative-iconic, a singular-indexical, and a conventional-symbolic approach will take place. In addition to this, an assessment of the brand and how it might have propelled social change will take place, where an overview of the tools and strategies used in the advertising will be deemed successful or unsuccessful in determining whether the communication piece reached its goal.

2.2.1 Qualitative-Iconic

Throughout the communication pieces, a darker grey tone and texture of concrete can be seen, this is symbolic of strength and power. The use of shadow and light is predominant throughout the pieces as they highlight what the athletes had to overcome to get to where they are now. The use of shadow and light also leads to an aura of mystery and power, often associated with the stereotypical superheroes.

Figure 8: Paralympics (2012)
Source: https://payload.cargocollective.com/1/9/316521/4930488/PARA_48sheet_304.8x609_800.jpg

The white text covers the image, with the words "Meet the Superhumans" in caps, presumably to motivate viewers to watch the Paralympics, and see these athletes as incredible, rather than disabled. The athletes stand in power poses (Figure 8), chin up, with serious faces, like they are ready to show their powers to the public. Smoke covers the images, providing a sense of mystery and power that can be seen throughout the brand messaging.

Figure 9: Various images from: Paralympics (2012)
Source: https://cargocollective.com/lgdi/Meet-the-Superhumans

In addition to this, and as can be seen in figure 9, the campaign featured solo images of the athletes, with the same text "Meet the Superhumans". The athletes take the center stage in the images. Light comes from the top corner and the images portray the hard work of the athletes, as well as their power. The corner of the posters features the name of the athletes and their sport, and the number 4 occupies the left-center of the image, as to remind the viewer to watch the Paralympics.

Figure 10: Paralympics (2016)
Source: *https://payload.cargocollective.com/1/1/50000/10707047/Ali-96_1340_c.jpg*

In 2016, channel 4 released the superhumans campaign again in order to get people to watch the Rio Paralympic Games. In their ads they feature athletes and the word disability, a red line covers the first three letters of the word, perhaps with the goal of redefining what it means to be an athlete at the Paralympics.

The communication piece continues its focus on lights and shadows, as they have a prominent role in the visual aspect of the piece. The athlete expresses a stern and focused look, as he powers through, showing his strength and determination. A green and blue tone covers the imagery, as well as yellow and darker blue on the weights, to allude to the Brazilian flag, home to the 2016 Paralympic and Olympic events. The image focuses on comparison, between athletes, and people who live their day-to-day lives with a disability, in this case, a mother, playing with her child, despite her impairment.

For the 2020 Tokyo Olympics, Channel 4 was back with a new campaign to promote inclusivity and participation in watching the Paralympic events (Figure 11). This campaign focused on a video advertising piece, where the use of smoke and light, as well as shadow, is still a prominent element in the communication. The contrast between lightness and darkness throughout the video also alludes to the state of mind and mentality of the athletes. This edition of the campaign, however, features more technological elements, with colorful lights, allusive to the Japanese culture and environment.

The video features the failures and adversities lived by the participants. In addition to this, alternating images of people with disabilities, in their training, personal lives, and competing are featured. The song has a message that states, "you might as well quit", and is placed in antithesis with sounds of effort and struggle, of athletes who give up so much to get to where they are. The way the sound and the imagery in the video contrast further sends the message of the strength and power of athletes in the Paralympics. A reference is made to Covid-19, featuring images of politicians and others in the field, partaking in the song, telling people to quit, but the athletes prevail. The video features a white message on a black screen stating, "to be a Paralympian there's got to be something wrong with you" and ends with the message "Super.Human" in broken glass, a response to the message featured in the song. (Figure 11).

Figure 11: Screenshots from: Super.Human (2020)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OjIP9EFbcWY

The video focuses on the hardships that come with being a Paralympic Athlete, in addition to this, it also explores the hardships of people with disabilities in their day-to-day lives. Throughout the video, images of different injuries fill the screen, to show the pain that the athletes go through beyond the lack of accessibility. This video has more of a comedic tone, it loses a bit of the mysteriousness of the previous editions but makes the conversation about disability in the sports world more accessible.

In all editions of the campaign, the brand uses colors and elements allusive to the country of the Paralympics in that year. Furthermore, the brand shows light and shadow in order to show the brighter parts as well as the adversities of what it means to be disabled. In addition to sending a message of hope, power, and strength, the campaign features the number "4" in all its pieces. This addition perhaps is not only to motivate viewers not only to watch the ads and change their perceptions of what it means to be a person with a disability but also to watch the Paralympics (on Channel 4) and be further in awe of the capacity of these athletes.

2.2.2 Singular-Indexical

For the longest time, the Paralympic events have been seen as secondary to the Olympics. Channel 4 envisioned a change in this perception and had the goal of raising the viewership numbers on their platform. They wanted viewers to be as excited about the Paralympic games as they were about the Olympic Games. In their research, they found that "Only 14% of the British public said that they were looking forward to the Paralympic Games, while virtually no one could name a Paralympian" (Channel 4, 2020). At the end of the Olympic games, channel 4 released a campaign, of posters and billboards (Figure 12), reminding people that the Paralympic

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games are still to come. The minimal design of the layout leads to a larger focus on the message being sent, that the Paralympics are just as important, if not more than the Olympic games. The humoristic aspect of the poster is once again important in facilitating communication regarding the topic.

The idea is to transform the mentality of the Paralympic games, from an afterthought to the main event, restating the Olympic games as the warm-up.

Figure 12: Thanks for the Warmup (2012)
Source: *https://i.pinimg.com/564x/52/ee/61/52ee6122b59beee87da214feccd945a5.jpg*

This change goes not only for the outside public, and how they perceive people with disabilities but also for the athletes and other people with disabilities. Channel 4 made it its mission, not only to feature athletes, but also other types of people with disability, and to have people with disabilities in the production team as well. Especially in 2016, we can see these efforts come to life, as the ad for the Olympics features all types of people, who deal with disability in their day-to-day lives (Figure 13).
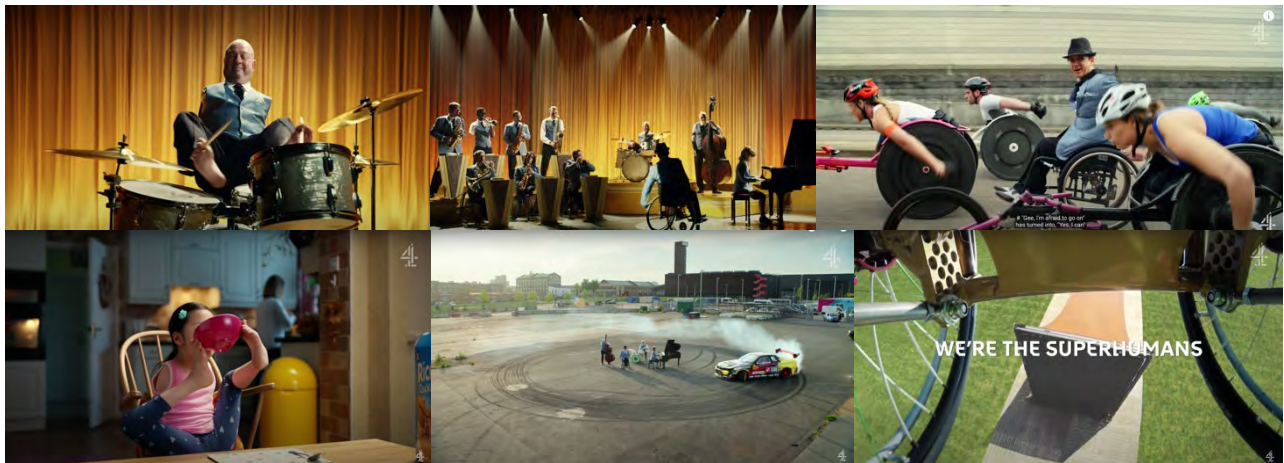
Figure 13: Screenshots from: Yes, I Can (2016)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IocLkk3aYlk

The ad features not only the athletes of the Rio Olympics as superhumans but also all the people that live their day-to day-lives with some sort of impairment. It displays a band of many elements, all with disabilities, and a song that repeats "yes I can" as one of its main messages. It shows people who have been told countless times that they couldn't do something, and then rebuttals that statement, with them doing incredible things, be it as athletes, musicians, children, or mothers amongst others.

Figure 14: The Last Leg (2012)
Source: https://cdn.comedy.co.uk/images/library/comedies/900x450/l/last_leg_correspondents.jpg

This campaign also featured a show, called "The Last Leg" (Figure 14). This show featured two disabled people, Adam Hills and Alex Brooker, as well as Josh Widdicombe who made an end-of-the-day commentary on the Paralympics. The show had a comedic tone and aimed to demystify and destigmatize disabilities for all viewers. It was such a success, with over

one million nightly watchers, that it kept being made even after the Olympics (Channel 4, 2020). Featuring a show such as this one, that challenged perceptions was super important for the success of the campaign. Furthermore, not only in the show, but also in the Ad (Figure 13) Channel 4 was able to show that they were more than just talk, as they hired people with disabilities, on and off the screen, and made their work environment a more inclusive one for all.

Before this campaign started in 2012, communication regarding the Paralympics was scarce, and the events were often seen as an afterthought to the Olympic games more than anything else. The change in how people with disabilities are portrayed repeatedly further distances the idea that people with disabilities are weaker, or meant to be pitied, and further celebrates the perception that people with disabilities are strong and powerful. The use of comedy in the communication (both in the show, "The Last Leg", as well as in some of the advertising created) opens the doors of communication regarding disabilities.

2.2.3 Conventional-Symbolic

Throughout the communication pieces, the perception of disability and what it symbolizes is challenged. Channel 4's activation, seemingly focused on challenging the stereotypes of disability not only in sports but also in societies. In order to do so, they showed disability in a new light, seeing people with an impairment as superhuman strength, rather than limited weak, which is often the perception.

This type of communication further brought light to the Paralympics as more than just an afterthought of the Olympic games, and brought value to the athletes, as more and more people participate in watching the games. The communication pieces challenged the status quo of the games and changed the impact of the games for the better.

Throughout the communication pieces over the years, the brand focused on breaking down ideas regarding disability, even with the word itself. Crossing off the first three letters and showing the viewer that being different doesn't mean being unable. It can be understood that through the repetition of the word superhuman, the brand was hoping that this word would register in the mind of the viewer and change the meaning of disability.

Figure 15: Screenshots from: Meet the Superhumans (2012)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tuAPPeRg3Nw

In terms of breaking the cultural norm of perception regarding this theme, the first campaign is the one that created the biggest waves (Figure 15). The video urges people to let go of their preconceived notions, to forget what they think they know about strength, to forget about what they think they know about humans, and to watch these superhumans in action at the Paralympics. It also gives context to many of the disabilities of the athletes and refers to their previous hardships.

2.2.4 How did this brand propel social change?

This campaign was followed by very positive feedback, bringing more people in to watch the Paralympic events, and motivating change in perception regarding athletes, as well as all different types of people with disabilities. As stated by the International Paralympic Committee (2020), "They [Channel 4] also increased the coverage to 700 hours (up from 500 in 2012) and continued their commitment to on- and off-screen diversity, assembling the largest ever team of presenters with a disability on British television and training 20 production staff with disabilities." The campaign goes beyond what is seen on the screen, it is about creating opportunities for people in marginalized groups within the company, which goes way beyond the communication for the Paralympic events.

Throughout this campaign, strategies were used including, cause marketing and brand activism. Channel 4 is a clear and positive example of what was discussed in the literature review regarding brand activism and its ethics. As Vredenburg et. al. (2020) discussed, authentic brand activism is one where the brand not only takes a stand regarding social issues through its

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communication, but they are also able to implement it in its own internal practices. One of the reasons why this campaign might resonate with so many, and create such a positive impact, is because the brand isn't only preaching what they believe, they are also practicing what they preach. Channel 4 ensured that 50% of its broadcasters were disabled and made it a mission to have people with disability represented in media. By practicing this in their internal management, Channel 4 normalized disability in TV and provided a more inclusive environment for all. This is already very powerful, not only to achieve the goal set by the company, to bring more viewership to the Paralympic games but also to open a field of opportunities for people that are often seen as incapable.

This campaign was extremely supported, and its impacts were extensively analyzed, to its possible to see if there was any social change occurring from the campaign. "Research revealed that 83 percent of viewers agreed Channel 4's coverage of London improved society's attitude towards people with a disability" (International Paralympic Committee, 2020). Channel 4 was able to broadcast people with disability in a way that was unexpected and uncommon, making them look powerful, cool, and strong. This communication strategy connected with people, who had a changed perception about not only the Paralympic events but also about people with disability in general.

> More than 40 million people—two thirds of the British population—watched the Games on Channel 4. Each day, the sporting performances were front- and back-page news in print media, with coverage on multiple pages in between. According to the London 2012 post-Games report, the overwhelmingly positive coverage led to one in three people in the United Kingdom, or 20 million residents, changing their attitudes towards people with a disability. Globally, the London 2012 Paralympic Games were watched by a television audience of 3.8 billion people, providing a rock-solid foundation for the continued growth of the Paralympic Movement. (Sir Philip Craven, 2016)

The campaign was able to reach a vast amount of people, and the fact that Channel 4 made the broadcast more accessible, increased the coverage of the event, and focused on bringing a new perspective to people with disabilities, made it so that a lot more people would be interested in watching the events. There was an increase in people watching the games, and in their studies, they found that 1 in 3 residents of the UK changed their perception regarding

disability. In addition to this, the campaign made it easier to discuss impairments and disabilities without the taboos and pre-conceived notions of before. Fostering these conversations allows for more open-mindedness and acceptance. As stated in Channel 4's case study report:

> In post-Games research, 83% of viewers agreed that Channel 4's coverage of the Paralympics improved society's attitude towards people with an impairment, while 64% of viewers felt more positive towards people with a disability. Nearly three-quarters of young viewers (aged 12-16) felt more comfortable talking about disabilities after watching the Paralympics. Rather than just being 'the bit after the Olympics', the Paralympics became an event in its own right, selling out for the first time. Disability became a mainstream topic of interest in the media, with admiration displacing sympathy and pity. (2020)

According to Channel 4's research after the ad campaign, the brand communication was able to change the perception of people with disability from feelings of pity to feelings of admiration. This change of perception allows for more equality between all different types of people. In addition to this, the campaign also brought many changes for the athletes as well. Furthermore, the campaign has the power to motivate younger people with disabilities to follow their ambitions and strive for success, because now they know it is possible. As basketball player Ade Adepitan (ex-basketball player and current broadcaster for Channel 4) stated,

> I had no TV experience, came from East London and sounded it, and used a wheelchair. I never thought that I'd have a TV career, I didn't think about making money from my sport," he says. "But now these kids are looking at wheelchair athletes like David Weir and Hannah Cockcroft and they're thinking, 'That could be me.' That's just a wonderful legacy, that disabled kids think they have as much opportunity as able-bodied kids. (Channel 4, 2020)

Understanding how this campaign can be an opportunity to change the reality for younger generations facing difficulties is a way to understand how a brand can have an impact on the cultural fabric of society. Having younger generations see people with disabilities on the screen helps them understand that as something normal, rather than a rare occurrence, and that wouldn't

happen if channel 4 hadn't gone beyond their communication and implemented these changes in their corporate actions as well.

2.3 Case Study 3 – Nike – A Stance on Racial Injustice

Since 2017, Nike has taken a stance against issues of racial segregation still present in the United States. In this case study analysis, we will be looking into the Collin Kaepernick campaign, and how it created an impulse for the brand to be engaging in other communication pieces related to the same theme. In addition to this, a deep dive into other campaigns, released by Nike, regarding racism in America will take place.

Collin Kaepernick was an NFL player, who took a knee during the anthem at a game in protest of police brutality and racial injustice. Although the protest of the athlete resulted in a lot of backlashes (he lost his place on his NFL team and hasn't been placed on a team since), Nike took a stand in support of Kaepernick and communicated the need for awareness regarding this issue. In 2020, the brand stood with George Floyd, a man whose death propelled the "Black Lives Matter" movement. The brand did a play on words with their own slogan, perhaps urging people to speak up and fight against racial injustice.

Associating itself to such a prominent and controversial social issue (nationalism and the intricacies of the history of the United States with racial injustice) was a large risk for the brand at the time. Nike's campaigns focused on this issue, especially at the start had a mix of reactions and reviews, especially from those who were most conservative, and led to some people boycotting the brand for its actions. The brand succeeded in the sense that it stood its ground and supported the athlete regardless of the reactions that the situation arose.

In reference to the conceptual board developed during the methodology phase (Figure 1), this chapter will consist of the analysis of different communication pieces done by the brand. An analysis focused on this sociocultural issue will take place, with different approaches; qualitative-iconic, singular indexical, and conventional symbolic. In addition to this, an in-depth study on the impacts of these campaigns, both on the success of the brand as well as on society will take place.

2.3.1 Qualitative-Iconic

Collin Kaepernick's campaign with Nike has an impactful first impression (Figure 16). The black and white imagery, the powerful message, and the closeness of the camera to the athlete's face capture the suffering and the importance of protest.

The use of black and white imagery in the advertising piece removes all distractions and makes the image more about the message and the emotion than anything else. The angle of the image and closeness to the face of the athlete brings focus to his eyes, making it so that it looks like the author is speaking straight to the viewer.

The message in the piece alludes to all the losses suffered by the athlete due to his act of protest. He sacrificed his career to speak up for this cause. This creates the connection between a brand and this social issue.

The contrast in the imagery lends itself to a further understanding of the athlete's emotion. The eyes transmit the pain and the suffering of many people in his community. The image is powerful and filled with hope. Everything is centered, balancing the image and guiding the viewers' eyes to meet with those of Kaepernick.

Figure 16: Nike, Collin Kaepernick Print ad
Source: https://static.globalnoticias.pt/dn/image.jpg?brand=DN&type=generate&guid=7942b047-ff53-434f-853d-6dcec935dd12&w=800&h=450&t=20180904202101

The brand made use of a current event, and a controversial one, to send the message of how important it is to stand up for what we believe in, even if it means losing something else. The slogan of the brand becomes even more important in this piece, it alludes to the message at the center of the campaign, just do it is not only about being the best athlete you can be, but also

about being the best person you can be, and using your platform to represent causes you believe in.
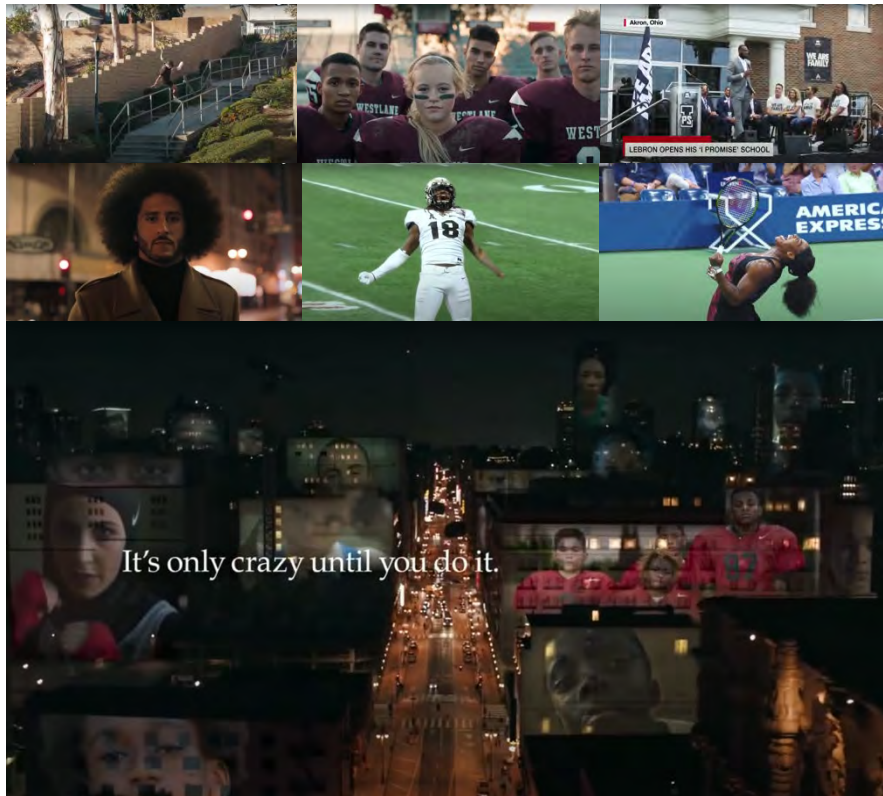

Figure 17: Nike, Dream Crazy
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lomlpJREDzw

In addition to this, the brand also released a video ad, featuring Kaepernick, and sending the message of what it means to dream big. Kaepernick voice overs the video, telling compelling stories of different athletes that dreamt big, and were able to achieve their goals. Of athletes who aren't limited to their sport, and athletes who just go for it.

This video ad sent an important message, not only to athletes but also to people who are wanting to fight for something they believe in. The statement "it's only crazy until you do it" applies to all walks of life, the video features not only professional athletes but also all types of people, who fight for their beliefs.

The video is in color, as opposed to much of the communication of the brand regarding the issue of racial injustice. A montage fills the screen, mixtures of failures and success compiled to show the hardships of all athletes, this concept transposed to daily life. In addition to this, the video features athletes of all ethnicities and backgrounds in their moments of success

and celebration centered on the screen in poses that transmit emotion and power. This concept is further explored in the end, as the videos displayed throughout the video fill the facades of different buildings. The video transmits the idea that change doesn't come easy, but having big dreams is something to be proud of, because change comes with big dreams.
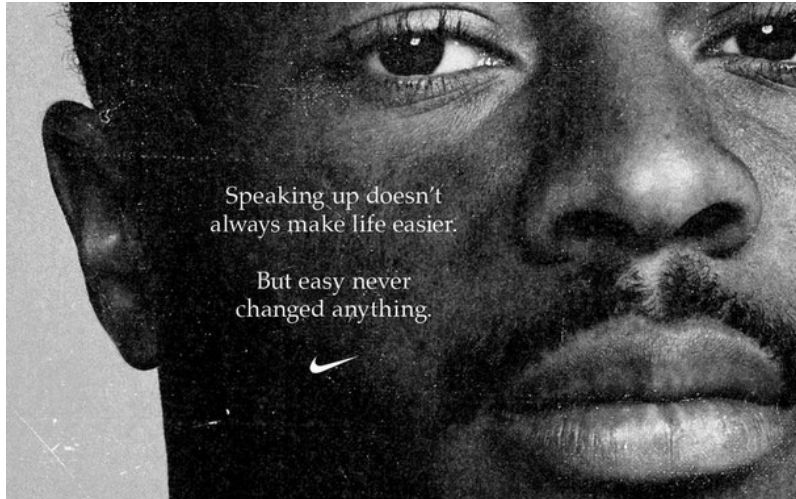

Figure 18: Nike, Raheem Sterling Print ad
Source: *https://thedrum-media.imgix.net/thedrum-prod/s3/news/tmp/56002/raheem.jpeg?w=608&ar=default&fit=crop&crop=faces,edges&auto=format&q=40&dpr=2*

Following the Kaepernick campaign, the brand started engaging in other pieces of communication that targeted issues of race. After suffering from racist comments during a game, the player was the face of a new Nike campaign (Figure 18).

The image features elements similar to those in the Kaepernick ad (Figure 16). The closeup of the face, the image in black and white, the focus is drawn to the eyes of the player, the written message at the forefront of the piece, as the main focus. Perhaps the ad speaks on the importance of speaking up, and once again the expression of the athlete speaks for not only his suffering but the suffering of many others, who are cast aside and judged solely based on the color of their skin.

The image editing features creases and textures, present usually in older images, giving the sense to the viewer that this is an old photograph, this could be connected to the idea that this is such an outdated issue in our society, with so much history, but that it is still worthy and in necessity of attention. The message expands the idea that change comes with speaking up.

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The power of the images can be connected to the power of the cause, and how the more people speak up, the more strides can be made toward a society that views everyone as equals. The concepts transmitted are similar to those in Figure 17, but with a different visual approach to the theme.

Figure 19: Screenshots from: Nike, Equality has no Boundaries (2017)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DWsUrMfDaG4&t=85s

This video came at around the same time and fights for a sense of equality. The premise is that the companionship and equality that happens in the field, where people are only judged for what they can do and not the color of their skin or their beliefs should be transposed to everyday life.

The video displayed in Figure 19 is in black and white, removing all distractions, and keeping the viewer focused on the message. In addition to this, the fact that everything is shot in black and white makes the imagery more uniform, and equal, further sending the message of the communication piece. The ad campaign features different African American athletes and artists, with a voice-over that criticizes systemic racism in the United States and celebrates the equality that happens within the fields. The white can of spray paint has a prominent role throughout the advertising piece, as the athletes spread the line that usually creates the limits of the basketball court into the city, in hopes of transposing the values of equality to everyday life.

In the background, Alicia Keys sings a song. The main message is "change is gonna come" which might be allusive to Sam Cook's, "A Change is Gonna Come", a song written against racial segregation in 1964 (Genius, 2013). In addition to this, a voice-over completes the video, and a message of equality is sent. The video starts with "Is this the land history

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promised?" a critique of the idea that "the land of the free" does not provide equality and equal opportunities solely based on race.

The white line is a powerful element throughout the video, it is no longer seen as a limit or a boundary, it is symbolic of the action of opening the boundaries. A token of hope in the mission of making society a more inclusive, diverse, and tolerant place.

Throughout the video various closeups of the athletes take place, in various moments, the video is showing an activity happening, but one person staring straight into the camera. This provides the same sensation as was discussed in Figure 16 and Figure 18. The closeness of the subject to the camera, paired with the fact that they are staring straight into it, gives the sensation that the message is being directly sent to the viewer, making the viewer a part of the experience, and the sole receiver of the message as if the message is directly for them, and they have the responsibility in acting on this matter.

The end of the video features a young girl, sitting on the shoulders of an adult, arm up in the air in a movement of hope and protest. The young girl finishes the video on a bright tone, providing a sense peace and balance.

2.3.2 Singular-Indexical

The political climate regarding racial injustice in the United States is an increasingly discussed topic and has been the cause of much polemic in the past. Nonetheless, Nike's campaign goes beyond that, as they also address the issue of racism in sports and general issues of equality. The campaigns developed by Nike exist in a specific time and place and accompanied the boom of the Black Lives Matter movement post the George Floyd tragedy. They seemingly read the current sociopolitical climate and communicated pieces that challenge the norms of current events.

Figure 20: Screenshots from: Nike, For Once, Don't Do It (2020)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=drcO2V2m7lw

The Black Lives Matter movement led the brand into giving up on its slogan, telling viewers to act, to stop pretending, and to start believing they can be part of the change. By changing their own slogan in order to send the message it can be interpreted that the brand reinforced its meaning, and its support of the cause, challenging the current political climate.

Nike, therefore, becomes embedded with this theme, as their communication is increasingly targeting this issue. The visual consistency of the messaging removes it from its singular power, and Nike becomes the general symbol of the fight against racial injustice.

2.3.3 Conventional-Symbolic

The repetition of the themes throughout the Nike campaigns challenges the cultural paradigm of race in America. The close-up images of the athletes in repetition, the focus on the eyes, and the emotion lead to a unified message that changes the perception of race in sports.

The communication reevaluates the standards of equality, but it also associates the brand (and its products) to values and principles that bring more value to the brand. In this way, Nike products gain a new life, where people who agree with the communication use Nike's products with pride, as a form of support for the cause. In this way, the fight for racial equality and the Nike brand become interchangeable, synonymous, and representative of each other.

Nike's "equality has no boundaries" (figure 19) activation brought symbolism and archetypes of sports and tried to propel those into perceptions existent in societies. If in the court the world is fair, why is it that so much injustice happens daily in the United States? Perhaps the

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brand had the objective of criticizing the fact that a country founded on the idea of freedom and equal opportunity has a system (of law enforcement, education, accessibility, amongst others) that doesn't support many of its citizens.

Through its communication, the brand was able to consolidate its status, and reaffirm its values within the scope of its brand actions. Nike's advertising pieces also break down conventions of race and sports, fighting for a more open and friendly environment perhaps in hopes of changing the lives of athletes everywhere.

2.3.4 How did this brand propel social change?

To this day, the Nike brand focuses a lot of its energy not only on promoting racial equality (as well as all equality) but also on representing athletes of color, funding different organizations, and readjusting its corporate management into a more inclusive environment.

At the start of the Collin Kaepernick campaign, (as was discussed previously) the brand received backlash for fighting for equality, but not hiring more people of different ethnicities within their own corporate bounds. Nonetheless, since then, the brand has done great strides in trying to create a more diverse and open work environment within its own personal management. The brand engages with different organizations that fight systemic racism, and empower black communities, having donated millions of dollars to the cause.

In terms of strategy, the brand focuses a lot on storytelling, cause marketing, and brand activism to promote its ideas and products. In addition to this, the brand represents many athletes and tells their stories as part of the communication. This makes the stories feel more real and impactful. Furthermore, the brand is focused on equality but makes proper commentary on current events to fuel its storytelling, making it so that the brand is not only selling its products, but they are also fighting for sociopolitical and cultural issues. Within storytelling, the brand focuses on compelling images and emotional video campaigns in order to create meaningful bonds with the target. By telling Kaepernick and Sterling's story, the brand was able to open the doors of communication regarding some of these themes.

Following the release of the Kaepernick campaign, the brand suffered a lot of criticism. People on social media were boycotting the brand, and even sharing videos of themselves destroying the brand's products "President Trump, who has been a very vocal critic of players

kneeling during the anthem, weighed in on Nike's endorsement deal Friday, questioning the company's decision "(Martinez, 2018). While the brand was fighting for racial equality, they were also supporting Kaepernick's decision to kneel during the national anthem as a protest, this resonated with many people, but it also offended a lot of people, that saw it as a disrespectful, anti-nationalist act. Getting involved in this situation, which caused such an array of mixed opinions was a risky move for the brand, but it ended up paying off, as "Nike's online sales grew 31% vs. 17% last year during the same period" (Edison Trends, 2018).

This is further proof that people support brands that align with their own personal values. Through its communication, the brand went beyond the utilitarian function of the product and made it so that the product was a representation of equality more than anything else. People who were touched by the communication of the brand post the Kaepernick campaign purchased brand products in order to show their support for the fact that the brand stood up for what they believe in.

2.4 Case Study 4 – Pedigree, Feed the Good

The communication strategy for this brand has been highly focused on the benefits of animal adoption. With time the brand started to go beyond that idea and focus not only on what we can do for animals but also on what animals can do for our society. This shifted the lens of communication into the good that comes with animal adoption, not only for the dog but also for the owner. The brand connects the idea of pet adoption to one of mental-health improvement. The brand has developed a number of communication pieces that bring together these concepts and create a positive association between dogs and mental health. The campaign "brings it back", released in 2019 is one that really resonated with a lot of people.

The brand made use of animation to send the message and followed the campaign up with limited-edition accessories that supported the communication in the video. The video "brings it back" (2019) tells a compelling story through animation, focused on the issue of mental health. A deep dive into other communication pieces done by the brand that targets mental health will also take place, in order to understand the whole environment in which the brand targets this issue. In doing so, a larger understanding of the relationship of the brand with these themes is possible.

In this chapter, an analysis will take place of this campaign and its impact on mental health association with pets. Much like in the other case studies the exploration will be focused on Santaella & Nöth's research mix for the analysis of advertising from a semiotic point of view.

2.4.1 Qualitative-Iconic

Figure 21: Screenshots from: Pedigree, Brings it Back (2019)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ar9XTHxyFfY

The video begins with an isolated character (Figure 21). His shadow follows him, elongated, as he walks alone through a desert. The footsteps following the character at the beginning of the video are representative of the long journey he is in, alone. The wind blows past him as he walks alone, tired. In desperation, the character removes a part of himself (love), all his light, beaming away from his body. The character throws it away, spiraling into darkness, reminiscing over his heartbreak, hands come apart, letting him fall deeper into nothingness. He falls into a happier place, as a dog comes running with the "ball" that the character removed from himself.

The campaign makes use of the typical "fetch" game to show that animals can truly be best friends, building the character back up. The video features purple and blue tones on the character, reinforcing the darkness around the eyes, to show the depressive state of the character. As the character melts into the ground and spirals, the color palette becomes darker, showing isolation and sadness. When the dog appears the color palette becomes brighter, the dog being a

symbol of a beacon of light. As the character places his heart back into place, the light that left his body comes back, fortifying the bond between the character and the dog. While during the spiraling and the beginning, the video provides a sensation of restlessness and desperation, the ending of the video provides a sense of balance, harmony, and peace.

The character is seemingly designed to provide focus on the expressions, although the face doesn't look realistic, the emotion it transmits does, showing the suffering of the character at the beginning as well as the impression of hope in the end. The long shadow that follows the character as he walks also provides a sense of loneliness and isolation. At the end of the video, the shadow is no longer such a prominent element in the video, as the dog walks alongside the character.

At the end of the video, text fills the screen, further reinforcing the message, "if you give up love, a dog brings it back, adopt one". This message reiterates the positivity in the relationship between dogs and humans. In terms of sound, a song fills the background, further enhancing the emotion in the video. In addition to that, the dog barking fills the screen in the moment of hope.

Furthermore, the brand released a limited edition of balls to go with the campaign, transposing the abstract nature of the animated movie into reality, possibly with the goal of strengthening the message.

Figure 22: Thematic Fetch ball, Pedigree, Brings it Back (2019)
Source: https://miro.medium.com/max/1380/0*td_TWboCzAliFRy0.jpg

This product accompanies the brand communication and allows users to be a part of the experience. In addition to this, it changes the meaning of love, hope, joy, and life, and associates it with the adoption of a pet. The boxes are adorned with colors from the video but in a more playful and joyful tone. In addition to this, the box comes in the shape of a dog head. As the user opens the box (resembling a dog's mouth) and finds the ball, the toy becomes representative of the piece of themselves they might be losing. This allows the user to experience the power of dogs in real-time, as they throw away hope, love, joy, or life, and their dog picks it up and brings it back. By materializing the abstraction of the video, the message becomes even more embedded in the mind of the consumer.

This was not the first time that brand engaged with this theme. Having released other campaigns that speak to the same concepts.

Figure 23: Pedigree, A dog makes your life happier, adopt (2013)
Source: https://www.adsoftheworld.com/campaigns/dog-4d48c793-7300-4ef2-bb4b-f205c6d6605e

This outdoor media campaign (Figure 23) shows how a dog can have an impact on someone's life. The images feature people alone, and how in a snapshot, how their lives can be changed if they adopt a dog. Images that at first show loneliness and isolation, suddenly show companionship and purpose. The comparative nature of the imagery provides a clear before and after, and how simple moments can be transformed. In the images, the people are looking down, which is effective in the sense that in the first image the protagonists look sad, and in the second image, they are no longer looking at the floor, they are looking at the dogs. In this way, it is possible to interpret that the brand is sending a message; that adopting a dog and being happy, are correlated.

In addition to this, the brand focuses a lot of its attention on its long-running campaign, "feed the good", where they show how dogs bring out the good in humans, and pedigree brings

out the good in dogs. In the campaign "First days out" the brand focused on the impact that dog adoption had on ex-prisoners when they got out. The video shows the influence that the dog adoption project had on their motivation and isolation post-prison and helped them reconstruct their lives (Figure 24).
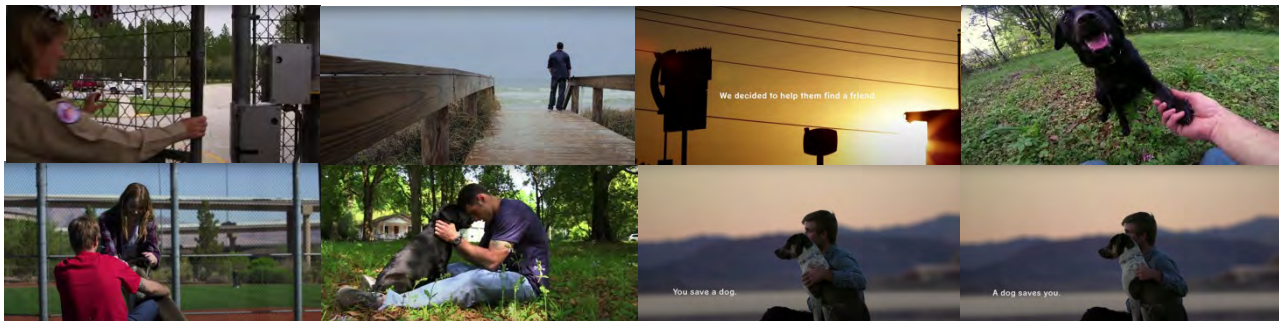

Figure 24: Screenshots from: Pedigree, First Days Out (2015)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7KIYoe16q9Q

This communication piece shows how saving a dog can save you too. The brand tells the story of two people with complicated lives, whose dog adoption stories helped them get their lives back on track. The imagery focuses on their day-to-day lives post-prison and how dogs had an impact on them, as they were battling uncertainty and isolation. In terms of first impressions, the video features powerful imagery of the significance of dogs, as they become part of their family. Much like in Figure 22, the beginning of the video gives a sense of isolation, while the end of the video serves as a beacon of hope for the future.

2.4.2 Singular-Indexical

Mental health is a current theme of discussion, especially post the Covid-19 Pandemic. Nonetheless, it is a theme that the brand has been approaching in their communication for a very long time.

The brand strays away from typical communication pieces in this market seeing as they place the benefit not only on the dog but also on the owner. While the theme of mental health is filled with taboo and stereotypes, the brand was able to demystify it and associate it with the benefits of dog adoption. The brand goes off the idea that consumers want what is best for

themselves, and pedigree sells not only dog ownership, but also their dog food as the best for the consumer. Happy dogs lead to happy people, and Pedigree leads to happy dogs.

Moreover, the brand focuses a lot of its attention on helping different organizations with dog adoption and partakes in many initiatives to improve mental health through dogs (as seen in Figure 24).

The graphic choices made throughout the video lead to the interpretation of the communication. The repetition of characters alone reinforces the idea of isolation and poor mental health. The fact that throughout the communication dogs continuously transform this experience makes it so that people further associate pets with mental health. This generalizes pedigree into a symbol of dogs, and dogs as a symbol of happiness.

In addition to this, the brand explores the perception of shelter dogs and aims to change those beliefs. The brand focuses on the idea that all dogs are good, and that getting a dog from a shelter and getting it a home is the best they can do.

Pedigree also describes animals as part of the family, just like any other member. This continuous characterization leads to consumers prioritizing the health of their companions and being more open to spending more on their animal's food.

2.4.3 Conventional-Symbolic

Throughout the communication of the brand, we see two main themes taking prominence, the rescue, and adoption of dogs, as well as the underlying focus on mental health. The association of the brand to issues that are increasingly topics of conversation in our society allows us to open the channels of communication and foster meaningful bonds.

The physical health and nourishment of the dog become a generalized symbol for the mental health and nourishment of the pet owner. Making animals symbolic of these types of issues gives the brand a more emotional meaning for the interpretant.

The brand has been doing great strides not only in opening channels of communication regarding mental health but most prominently, supporting animal shelters and helping dogs find happy homes. Pedigree as a brand thus separates itself from the product and becomes more about supporting humans in dogs in their quest for happiness.

In addition to this, the brand always focuses its messaging on pet adoption, the repetition of this messaging makes it so that adopting a pet seems like the only option for consumers.

Increasing adoption rates of animals is something that the brand feels strongly about and communicates it in all their pieces. While they approach the issue of mental health, they also celebrate people that adopt a dog.

2.4.4 How did this brand propel social change?

Comparatively to some of the other brands discussed, Pedigree isn't such a topic of conversation. Nonetheless, the communication pieces communicate ideas and stories that have the power to create meaningful associations between the product and the consumer. Its effective communication paired with its product gives the brand a larger purpose, which resonates with viewers. In addition to this, the brand has projects that joined with its communication motivate brand purchases. For example, every time a consumer purchases Pedigree, they are also feeding a dog without a home. This also serves as an incentive as it makes people feel good about their purchase, which is also a part of the mental health communication of the brand. Doing good and feeling good become interconnected.

Their messaging for dog adoption, paired with their communication that tackles hard topics, such as issues of mental health and depression, imprint in the mind of the consumer, and makes Pedigree seem like the only option for people's animals.

While most brands in the business focus on the specific characteristics that their product may give people's pets, Pedigree swayed from that and went for a communication strategy that is more emotional and has the power to make people not only consider Pedigree but also reevaluate the role that animals can have on our society, as they make us better people.

> We've had years when we've had more tactical support on the business where we've probably done a bit more like our competition has done, focusing on the product and ingredients," he says. "There's nothing wrong with that, really, but what we've continued to realize is that playing at that higher emotional level with consumers, really helping them understand what dogs can do for them and that we share that belief, has really resonated when we look at what's been most successful for the brand. (Beer, 2015 citing Mondzelewski)

This strategy paid off for the brand, as they retain a high spot on the consumers' minds and have seen their communication strategy pay off with time. Their communication strategy

goes beyond just their values, the brand applies it in their corporate structure as well. Furthermore, the way the brand has communicated over the years has stayed the same since the communication was effective not only from a social standpoint but also from an economic standpoint, as Mondzelewski stated "Our belief in adoption resonates directly with our consumers," he says. "When we moved from direct product messaging to sharing our Pedigree brand beliefs through adoption, we saw a 40% increase in advertising effectiveness" (Beer, 2015 citing Mondzelewski).

In terms of strategies and techniques used by the brand to create these responses and aid in the fight for more pet adoption, the brand has used quite a few. Starting off with storytelling, the brand makes use of stories from different consumers to share its mission. In doing so, they are using real-life stories that resonate with the viewer. In the video "brings it back" (Figure 21) the brand made use of emotional storytelling with an abstract approach to deeper issues. In doing so they lightened the subject matter and made it more digestible for the user.

The brand also engages in cause marketing to propel its mission even further. Having pledged to donate one meal to a dog in need every time you purchase Pedigree. This not only looks good for the brand it also makes the consumer feel good about their purchase. In addition to this, the brand has many partnerships with non-profits to further drive its mission. The Pedigree Foundation is a "separate non-profit entity" (Beer, 2015) nonetheless, it is connected to the brand in name, and furthers the message that Pedigree is trying to send.

> "We always say within the marketing department here that we have backbone to our campaigns," says Mondzelewski. "We're not going to go out and create campaigns about shelters and dogs doing good unless we're doing all these things behind the scenes to make sure dogs are finding loving homes. In today's day and age, consumers will see through you and know if you're really all about the values you claim." (Beer, 2015 citing Mondzelewski)

As previously discussed, the brand focuses its energy not only on its communication but also on what it can do behind the scenes to propel its messaging. Improving their corporate social responsibility makes the message that the brand is sending more legitimate in the eyes of the consumer. The brand focuses on creating meaningful bonds with the viewer, using different

elements in the communication that seeks to bring out an emotional response. From the music to the stories from consumers to the emotion in the animated video.

2.5 Case Study 5 -Airbnb – We Accept

The "we accept" campaign by Airbnb focuses on inclusion, no matter the race, ethnicity, beliefs, sexual orientation or circumstances of the person. The brand believes that people that don't share this point of view, are not allowed to be a part of their community or partake in their service.

The campaign came at a time of high tensions in the US as travel bans to Muslim countries were occurring. The campaign is above all, one against prejudice, and it took one of the largest stages for them to send their message. The ad campaign was shared at the Superbowl and received a mix of reactions, that led to many conversations surrounding the brand (Shorty Awards, 2017). The campaign was shared across media with the hashtag "weaccept" perhaps to fuel conversations surrounding the issue.

The brand's initiative also allows homeowners to share their vacation homes with refugees and natural disaster survivors in need, furthering Airbnb's message of inclusivity and acceptance.

In this chapter, an overview of Airbnb's communication and its impacts will take place (based on the information found in Figure 1) and an analysis will take place on the tools and strategies used by the brand to send this message. An overview of whether the brand was able to propel social change will also occur.

2.5.1 Qualitative-Iconic

Much of the brand communication features similar elements. All the advertising pieces in this campaign put diversity at the forefront. The fast-paced transitioning of different images throughout the campaign gives the messaging coherence and clarity.
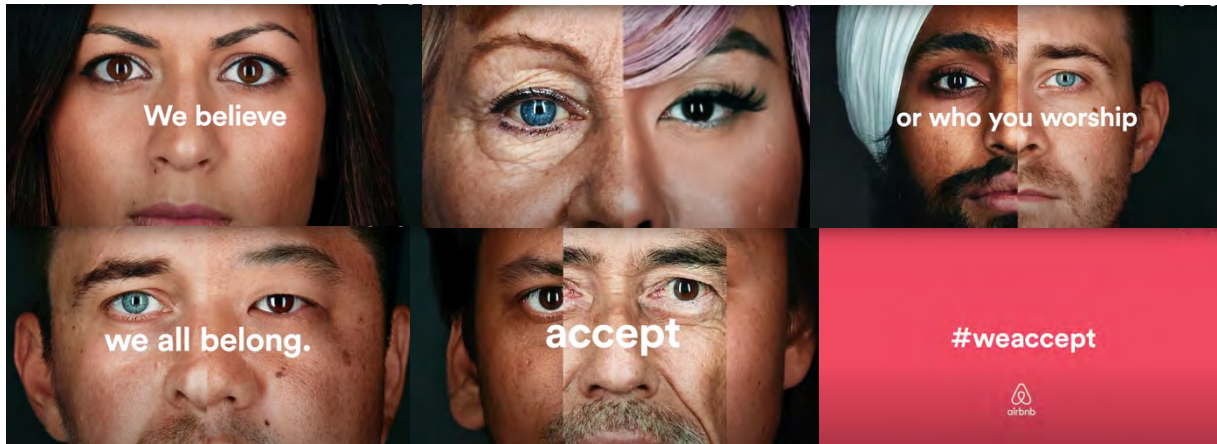
Figure 25: Screenshots from: We Accept (2017)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yetFk7QoSck

The imagery in the ad campaign (Figure 25) focuses on the closeup of different faces. As the video progresses, the images overlap creating a sense of balance and unity throughout the video. The way the images are displayed throughout the communication places all the people (regardless of their identity, gender, beliefs, age, etc.) at the same level.

The focus is on the eyes of the protagonists, the window to the soul, perhaps in order to show how at the end of the day, everyone is an equal part of society. White text overlays the images, sending the message of the brand. The brand speaks to the consumer in the first person, "we believe", "we accept", and "we belong", sending the viewer a personal and emotional message, from the brand, directly to the screen of the viewer. At the end of the video, the brand shares the hashtag "#weaccept" inviting the viewer to be a part of the movement of acceptance inclusivity, inviting positive communication surrounding the current political climate in the US.

The dark background, the expression of the eyes, and the closeness of the camera to the faces give the video a sense of seriousness and a solemn tone, descriptive of the current environment. The background music aids in this communication. The people in the video are centered, looking right the viewer straight in the eyes, giving it an aura of strength, power, and resilience.

The way the images transition from one person to the next, gives the imagery balance and uniformity, furthering the message that the brand is trying to send.
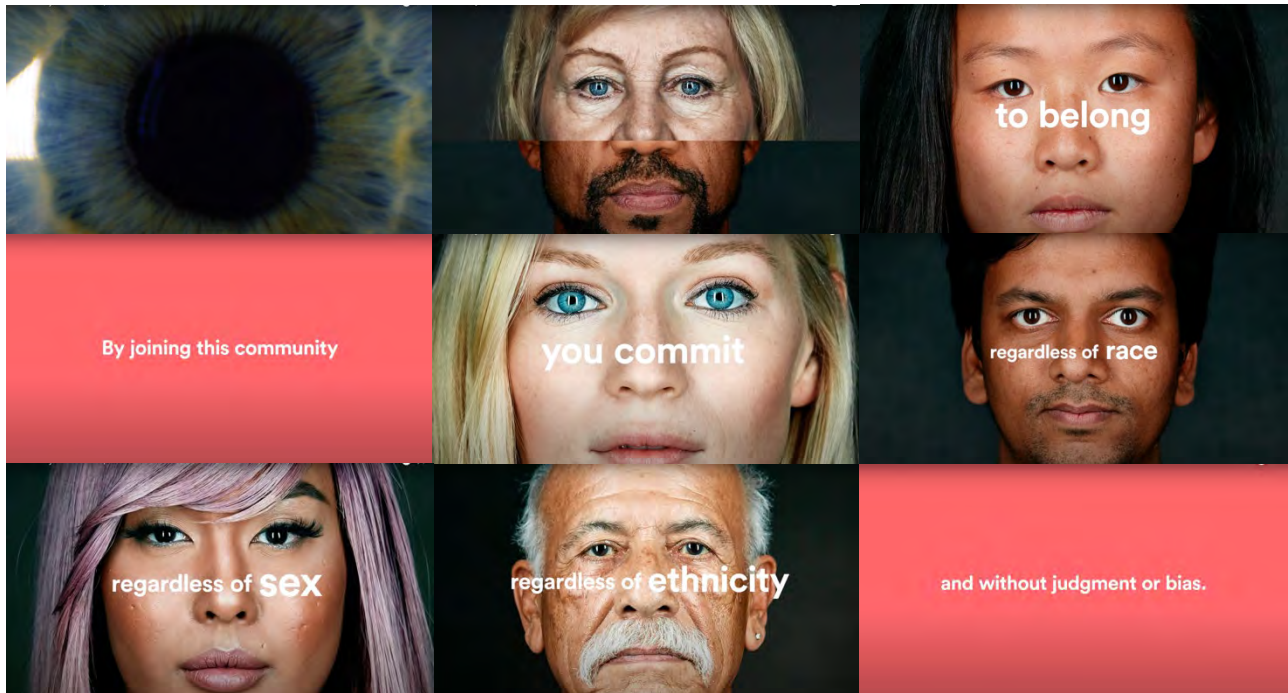
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Figure 26: Screenshots from: Community Commitment (2016)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=OXVRB_u9Y7M

The brand had also previously released a video regarding its community commitment, furthering the message that users of the Airbnb platform should respect and live by these values (Figure 26). This video has a similar graphic language as the "we accept" video. The premise is that people should be able to belong anywhere they go, and the brand pledges to reinforce these values for all people that are a part of the Airbnb community.

Much like in the other campaign (Figure 25), the focus is on the eyes and on the transitioning images of people throughout the communication. The video starts with a blurred image, a closeup of an eye, with the text "we believe" (similarly to the video shown in Figure 25). The images and text pass by quickly, giving the video a sense of urgency. The calm music counterbalances this sensation, giving the video a sense of unity and hope.

The brand also released an advertising video surrounding the destination of different places, and how being accepting of the people in those places can give visitors the opportunity to get to really immerse themselves in the culture.
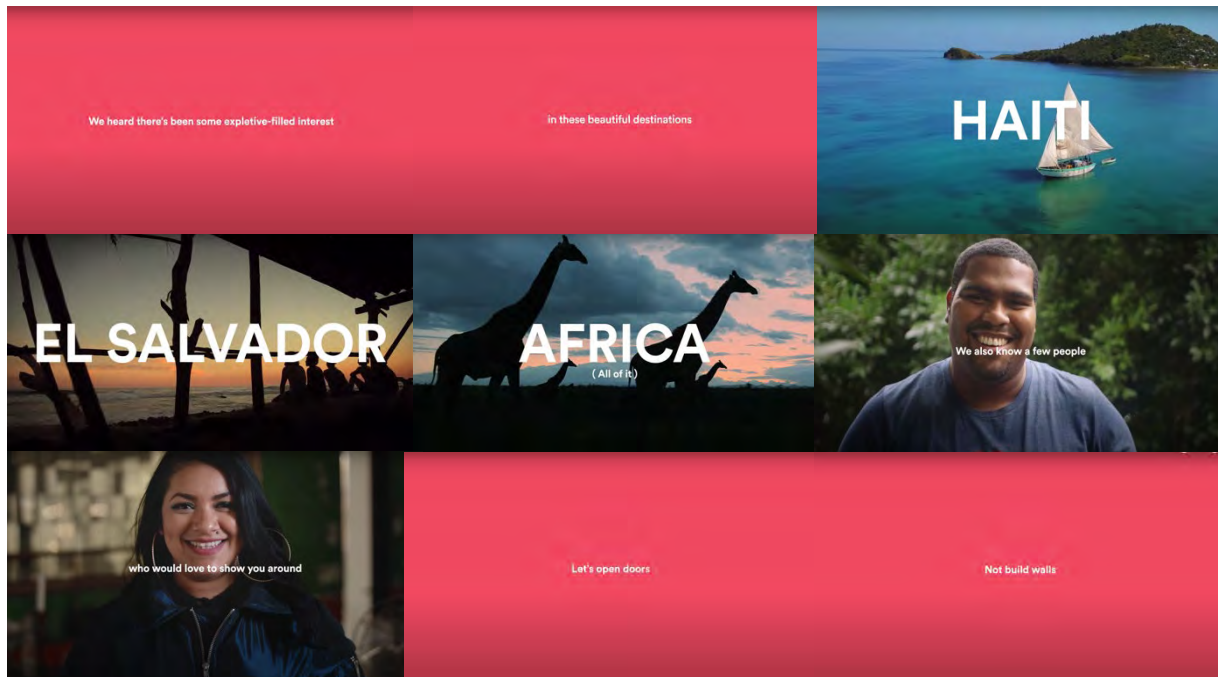
Figure 27: Screenshots from: Expletive-filled Interest (2018)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PBdh2LJkRBQ

This video, much like the others, celebrates people from all over the world. The brand explores the benefits that come with meeting locals from different countries. According to the brand, there is a growing interest of people who want to visit destinations such as Haiti, El Salvador, and Africa. The brand comments that the experiences would be a lot more stimulating if they truly got to know the culture of the places they visit. The brand brings together people from all over the world to share their experiences and provides a more open-minded mentality surrounding people who are different, opening doors rather than building walls.

The video features travel footage from different places and then skims through different images of the people that live there. In addition to this, a message covers the screen, talking about how so many people want to visit these destinations, and how there are people from there that could really provide a better experience.

The video once more finished with the hashtag, possibly with the goal of furthering the message and the opportunity for the message to be spread. All of the videos celebrate diversity and uniqueness, not only in people but also in places.

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2.5.2 Singular-Indexical

The different graphic elements of the pieces speak to the message that the brand is trying to send. The analysis of those elements leads to the understanding of where the piece came from and where they aim to go. The brand made use of the current social and political climates to send a message aligned with its personal values and mission.

Making references to the political climate in the United States gives the messaging a sense of urgency and power that would otherwise not be that way if the current environment had not made it such a prominent topic of discussion.

The brand becomes about more than a shared economy of housing, it is now an open space for people to host healthy conversations about diversity and inclusion. More than that, it is a community where people are encouraged to help those in need, providing housing for people who for one reason or another have been displaced.

The campaign distinguishes itself in the sense that the focus is on the people and not necessarily on the service. This campaign set the tone for the brand, as since that time they have been participating in an array of different initiatives to help refugees and promote inclusion in their corporate structure as well.

They also share this shift as part of their communication, showing how providing an inclusive and diverse work environment for the employees of the company is just as important as the messaging and communication they send out to the public, they send out the message that "acceptance comes from within" (Figure 28).
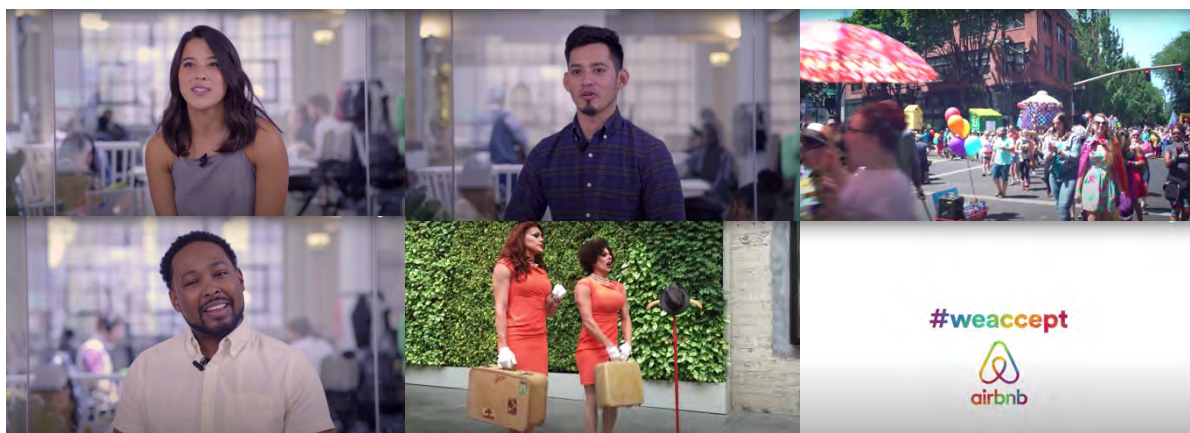

Figure 28: Screenshots from: Acceptance Starts from Within (2018)
Source: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gs-7WT1shy8&t=2s

In addition to having initiatives to support inclusion and equality the company also shared a documentary-style video where they showed the importance of having a good corporate environment as well.

By using a great variety of people, Airbnb places itself in a position where it is an open community for anyone who shares those values. This makes the brand more accessible and inclusive for everyone, not only in the service it provides but also in its internal culture.

2.5.3 Conventional-Symbolic

As the brand continuously markets this message, its communication becomes deeply intertwined with ideals of inclusivity and empowerment. The constant repetition of the human faces, all different but all placed at the same level, under the same circumstances, with the same visual balance, send the message of the brand and challenges the prejudice and bias according to gender, age, beliefs, nationality, sexual orientation, amongst others. The eyes so often featured in the communication become symbolic of the values of equality and inclusion that the brand is seemingly trying to send.

In addition to this, the communication either makes direct reference to or uses their timing to make observations about sociopolitical and sociocultural issues of the time. Alluding to different policy announcements that ban immigration, telling people to open doors do not build walls, as well as creating advertising that responds to policy, such as the super bowl "We Accept" ad, that came right when the United States placed a travel ban to many countries with many Muslim citizens. The brand continues this journey, as they keep providing options for homeowners to share their homes with people who have been displaced.

The repetition of the people in the videos celebrates their individuality while bringing them to a general symbolic status. These people are no longer just people, they are representations of the values that the brand is trying to transmit, they are acceptance and diversity.

The communication pieces challenge archetypes of society, as they place a large array of different people in one single moment. In addition to this, it helps the brand build on its status, as a brand that supports and embraces all kinds of people.

2.5.4 How did this brand propel social change?

The brand used different strategies to propel social change, amongst them, cause marketing, brand activism, humanization of the brand, and storytelling. All these strategies contribute to the success of the campaign and led to some social changes as well.

In terms of cause marketing, the brand has made great strides in fighting for the inclusiveness of people who have been displaced. This strategy goes not only for refugees, but also goes for victims of natural disasters, and more recently health workers during the pandemic. The brand promotes positive social action by part of its community, by allowing users to donate their extra homes to help people in need. In addition to this initiative, the brand also has different partnerships with non-profit organizations where people can donate to causes that the brand aligns with or where people can donate so that others have a place to stay. The brand uses this initiative to improve corporate social responsibility as well as to ensure that everyone in the community feels like they are a part of the solution. In addition to this, their policies make the viewer understand that the brand goes beyond what they say, they also act upon it. This is an increasingly important factor for consumers as was previously discussed, seeing as viewers are increasingly interested in whether the brands they support align with their personal values (Edelman Trust Barometer, 2019)
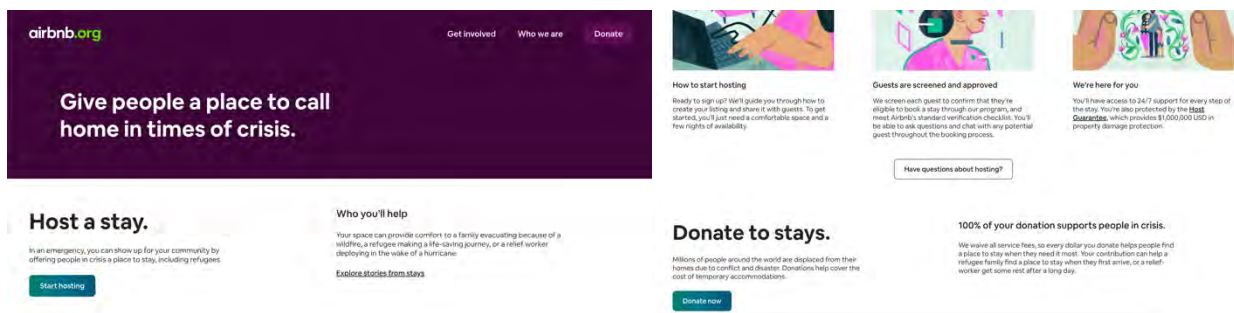
Figure 29: Screenshots from: Airbnb.org (2022)
Source: https://www.airbnb.org/

The communication of the brand is what pilots this whole movement and gets people willing and wanting to get involved. The ad campaign during the Superbowl was highly successful in the sense that it created channels of communication surrounding the theme.

The #WeAccept campaign was Airbnb's 3rd largest driver of Earned Impressions of all-time at over 87 million. On Twitter, #weaccept was the #1 used advertiser hashtag used during the Super Bowl, as Airbnb generated over 33k tweets during the first half of the game, more than any other advertiser, with overwhelmingly positive sentiment. Reactions to the overall campaign were 85% positive (based on Airbnb internal tracker). (Shorty Awards, 2017)

In terms of social and behavioral change, the brand had the goal of targeting audiences with different political beliefs on Facebook. They had the goal of tracking the results of the campaign in order to observe the reactions to their political statement.

On Facebook specifically, we invested primarily in promoting the 30 second #weaccept video and targeted all audiences across the political spectrum. The video was ultimately viewed 19 million times and shared 100,901 times, including 18,600 shares from FB users from conservative audience segmentation. It stands as our most shared FB video of all time, and maintained a view rate that was consistently 15% above our benchmark across all audiences.(Shorty Awards, 2017)

The brand was shared millions of times, and had a large community of engaged users, partaking in the hashtag and sharing the video as it reflected their own personal views on the subject matter. In addition to this, the brand was able to get shares on the video from the conservative side of the spectrum, which speaks to the open doors and the conversations that this campaign was able to bring to light.

The brand took what was happening in the world, saw how it related to its internal structure, and felt it was necessary to do something about it. Beyond just talking about the issue, the brand wanted to give viewers the opportunity to be a part of the movement for a more inclusive society. The advertising video was paired with multiple initiatives to help those in need, as well as the hashtag which gave people the opportunity to foster meaningful conversations and bring to light new issues, as can be seen in the statement released by the Shorty Awards below:

Beyond declaring its values, Airbnb wanted to turn its message into an actionable opportunity for people to take action around the world by supporting Airbnb's wider refugee relief initiative. Unafraid to elevate its internal battle against prejudice to the public level, Airbnb transformed

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their own Community Commitment into a global campaign called #WeAccept to drive the conversation around acceptance and inspire real action. (2017)

In addition to this, according to the Shorty Awards (2017), the brand had an increase in volunteers willing to give up their homes to help people who have been displaced.

Throughout the communication, the brand takes on a life of its own, with statements coming in the first person. In addition to this, the brand doesn't speak solely about itself and its workers, it speaks to the world by stating "we believe" the brand projects the idea to the user that everyone should feel this way.

In terms of storytelling, the brand uses this technique to empathize with the viewer. The stories told regarding inclusivity and union give the sensation that this isn't the current situation we are living in. The brand believes in inclusivity because right now the world is lacking. This is the message sent to the viewer throughout the advertising pieces. Furthermore, by sharing the stories of people who work for the company, the brand can create a deeper and more authentic bond with the viewer.

IV. Reflections, Contributions, and Limitations of the Study:

The objective of this study was to use a semiotic approach to advertising analysis in order to find similarities in the ways brands communicate their message in order to propel positive social change. As more designers and advertisers become aware of the tools and strategies successfully used in the past, more brands can join the movement of designing for a better world. This shift is not only good for societies, but also for brands, as they are able to build meaningful relationships with their targets.

In terms of contributions, the goal is to help future designers and advertisers understand their power, and how they can harness that power for good. The hypothesis was proven, that brands are capable of social change and that change is usually brought about by specific tools and strategies. The more this is studied the easier it will be for designers to use these strategies to create positive social messaging.

The world is in constant evolution and change. It isn't always possible to foresee all the social issues and dynamics that will arise in the future. For that reason, it is also hard to foresee

the strategies and solutions that brands will come up with as these issues arise. This study provided an overview of the strategies used today in order to propel social change while still maintaining a positive presence in the market. Nonetheless, the study is limited in the sense that since the world is in constant change and evolution, the solutions that have worked so far, might need adaptation in order to accompany future sociocultural and sociopolitical issues.

V. Conclusion:

Throughout the development of this research, the focus was set on trying to understand the correlation between brands and societies, and how brands can have an impact on the way people think and act. Furthermore, it was a goal of the study to identify the specific tools and strategies used by brands today in order to propel social change. The use of semiotic analysis allowed for a deeper understanding of different advertising campaigns (taking into consideration elements from Peirce's triadic system for the understanding of phenomenons). As a result, the analysis permitted the understanding of not only the elements of the communication pieces but also their impacts on the interpretant as well as their cultural background.

The process consisted of studying different elements that contribute to the resolution of this research problem. From an overview of Santaella & Nöth's studies, guided by the concepts developed by Peirce, to the understanding of how materialism has an impact on cultures, as well as the study of how brands have shaped cultures and traditions in the past. In addition to this, themes such as brand activism, cultural branding, and different strategies used by brands to foster meaningful relationships were explored in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the power that advertising and brands can have on society. Furthermore, the connection found by previous authors between the relationships between advertising and behavior took place. Looking at all this background information allowed for a more insightful analysis of the different case studies, and a better outlook on the different elements that comprise a positive strategy.

The hypothesis was that there is a circularity between societies and cultures with advertising. The semiotic analysis, based on Santaella & Nöth's research mix, allowed for the pinpointing of the specific tools and strategies used by brands to propel this change and become a part of the cultural fabric of our societies. Through this analysis the hypothesis was confirmed, as it made visible the different elements that comprise a successful brand communication

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strategy that targets value over product and creates a positive commentary on different issues facing our world today.

Throughout the case study analysis, it was found that brands engaging in cause marketing, storytelling, humanization of brands, and brand activism were able to propel social change and foster meaningful relationships with their audience.

Through all the brand strategies, cause marketing was one of the main elements in their communication. The brands associate themselves with different social issues, commenting about them on their advertising pieces, partnering with non-profit organizations, and implementing their values in their corporate structure in order to send an authentic message, that resonates with the viewer. But this is not enough, in all cases, the analysis led to the conclusion that the ads aim to create emotional bonds with the viewer. The strategies that led to these bonds were all different, while some brands took a more serious approach (for example the Nike campaigns), others leaned on comedy to open doors of communication to other issues (Channel 4 Paralympics).

Storytelling is one of the most important strategies to build these emotional connections, as was explored in the literature review "one of the things that is unique about stories is that they transmit knowledge and meaning. We learn from observations, first-hand experiences, and by sharing those experiences through stories" (Whitler, 2018). Different brands find different ways to tell their stories, be it from testimonies of other people, by taking elements from current sociopolitical climates, through emotional voice-overs, or animation, all these brands focus on storytelling in order to build a foundation of personal relationships with the viewer. These relationships allow for the brand to build trust, and get people involved in the causes they are supporting.

In addition to this, all the brands joined a fight for their values despite the norm and the taboos they challenged. Dove went against the norms of their own industry, Nike and Airbnb took a stand for a controversial political issue, and Channel 4 and Pedigree approached issues that are usually seen as taboo and brought them to light, opening doors of communication.

All the brands not only motivated positive conversations regarding the issues they approached, but they also gave the consumer options on what they could do to bring light to these issues and aid in their causes. Dove has different programs to help young girls and mothers as they navigate the toxicity of social media and the beauty industry. Channel 4 had a show

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where people could ask questions about disability in sports. Nike shares different organizations that people can donate to. Airbnb allows people from the community to house refugees, survivors of natural disasters, and more recently medical professionals during the Pandemic. Pedigree makes each purchase count, as people who purchase food for their own dogs are also purchasing a meal for a dog in a shelter.

In all the cases the brands prioritized value over their product. The campaigns rarely showcased the products, their benefits, or utilitarian components. Instead, they featured people, emotions, causes, and conversations. By fostering emotional connections with the viewers, and prioritizing the message, the brands were able to increase their market shares, while creating memorable and positive experiences for the interpretant.

Through the observations of the advertising campaigns and how they were received, it is possible to see the connection between advertising and social change. For example, since Dove started its quest for real beauty, the beauty industry has changed substantially, as more people demand representation. The Channel 4 campaign for the Paralympic games increased viewership tremendously. In addition to this, statements were released on how the brand changed the perception of people with impairments, not only through their advertising but also through their efforts to hire more people with disabilities within the company. Nike's campaign propelled conversations regarding the issues they transmit, and while the issue of racial injustice is still a prominent one in the United States, the brand fuels the conversation, never allowing it to be forgotten. Pedigree propelled the conversation of mental health, and associated it with the adoption of dogs, expressing how adoption is the only option for people who want pets. Finally, Airbnb promoted the conversation surrounding inclusivity, placing everyone as equals. Their political statements were shared by right-wing conservatives, and many homeowners have joined the mission of providing housing for people who have been displaced (Shorty Awards, 2017).

The research question of this study was "what are the tools and strategies that brands use in their advertising to propel social change?". Through the case study analysis, the identification of different tools and strategies that brands use in propelling positive social change occurred.

The study is relevant in the sense that it provides designers and advertisers with a roadmap for creating a better tomorrow. In addition to this, the understanding of the power that lies in the hands of brands allows them to also understand their responsibilities. As people resonate more with brands that speak to their own personal values (Edelman, 2019) it becomes

crucial that brands start creating with those values in mind. In addition to this, the literature review covered the issues that can come when brands create associations with causes without the necessary foundations. These issues can bring out distrust in the viewer, not only for the brands but also for the causes themselves. This makes it imperative that brands that are trying to build meaningful connections with their audience by bringing awareness to different social issues, do it with care and consideration, for the results can be more negative than positive if they don't (Vredenburg et. al., 2020). Understanding the tools and strategies used successfully by brands to bring light to different social issues while improving their relationship with their audience, allows other brands to do the same.

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