

'The Pinocchio Effect', When Managing The Brand Creation Process, Across Cultures

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Abstract

In global marketing and international management, the fields of Branding and Culture are well discussed as separate disciplines; within both academia and industry. However, there appears to be limited supporting literature, examining brands and culture as a collective discipline. In addition, environmental factors such as ethnicity, nationality and religion are also seen to play a significant role. This in itself adds to the challenges encountered, by those looking to critically apply learning and frameworks, to any information gathered. In the first instance, this paper tries to bring aspects together from Branding and Culture and in doing so, aims to find linkages between the two.

The main purpose of this paper is to distil current brand thinking and explore what impact cross-cultural, cross-national, and ethnic interactions have on a brand's creation. The position of the authors is that without further understanding in this field, a brand will experience what has been termed by them as the 'Pinocchio Effect'. Pinocchio was a puppet who longed to become a real human being; but sadly encountered difficulties. The conclusion presented is that the critical long-term success of a brand lies in three areas: how it is created; the subsequent associated perceptions; and more specifically in the reality of the relationships that it enjoys. Collectively these processes necessitate an appraisal of connecting strategic management procedures and thinking.

Finally, this paper looks into proposing future methods for brand evaluation and strategic management. The aim is to stimulate further thinking in a field; which transcends national, ethnic and cultural boundaries - in the interests of developing new insight, and to provide a platform for marketers to develop more effective communications.

Key words: Branding, Brand Management, Brand Creation, Cross-Culture, Consumer Behaviour, Ethnography

Introduction

Firms in a global marketplace are looking to create value through any means necessary and especially those methods which require the least resources. As a result, branding, by its nature draws from intangible benefits, can offer a 'fat free' approach by recycling existing assets, to a host of cultures. Branding of a product or service, across the entire value chain, is critical to the long term survival of firms. A brand's value is shared amongst stakeholders; who in turn seek to convert a brand's intangible components, through touch points, into demonstrable tangible gains. In

tandem, culture has also been investigated in a similar fashion. The management of both of these processes is therefore crucial, at both an operative and strategic level.

Where culture is discussed within business, its definition largely focuses on interactions between employees, and subsequent consumers. As a result, it is largely treated as a process; taking into account perspectives from management, organisational behaviour, strategy and consumer behaviour. On the other hand, brand thinking, when looking to gain insight into the mindset of the consumer, has drawn more from supporting disciplines rooted in the humanities - taking its lead from the arts, post-modernism and cultural anthropology. Whilst both perspectives seem to suggest approaches which acknowledge differences and diversity; they, nevertheless, attempt to guide interactions towards appraisal on non-connected and independent universal scales. In doing so, the suggestion of the authors is that modes for comparison and attempts to join the two disciplines are hampered.

Upon review, the authors suggest that the cultural components pertaining to ethnography, and their effects on the creation of a brand, often seem to be neglected. Instead much analysis favours investigation into the types of interaction encountered, once a brand has been created and as a result focuses only on human communications and knowledge transfer. Therefore, a brand is taken to be a given and its value becomes commoditised. The limitation of this approach is that where culture does play a role in branding, it cannot be treated in the same way in which humans define their own identities. Contrary to current brand thinking, humans tend not to base their cultural preferences on profit and loss.

The purpose of this paper is to critically review current brand literature and explore how the emergence of cross-cultural relations has impacted on the relevance and efficacy of a brand. Further to this, the question arises whether a brand can enter the cultural value system of a consumer; looking to defining their own identity. If brand thinking is to continue to progress in its importance, then theoretical strategic frameworks should in turn aim to accommodate and respond to consumer emotions; in a manner that demonstrates tangible value.

Managing Brands and their Creation

Keller (1993, 1998) classifies brand associations into three major categories: attributes, benefits and attitudes. It has been suggested that a brand in turn gains a personality, of sorts. Freling and Forbes (2005) conclude that a brand's personality "helps (at least in the consumer's mind) to define the consumer's image" (p. 412). The key recognition as they see it is in recognising that "the creation of personality is a 'joint venture' between the brand's management and the consumer" (Freling and Forbes, 2005, p.412).

Hayes, Alford, Silver and York, (2006) also describe a brand as an "active relationship partner" (p. 306). So much so that their findings suggested that "attractive brands, like attractive people, may be perceived as possessing certain relationship advantages compared to those perceived as less attractive" (Hayes, Alford, Silver and York, 2006, p. 306). This assertion seems to suggest that consumers firstly have what could be described as an almost full-blown relationship with a brand and secondly, a growing body of research is tending towards the exploration of how consumers view brands; away from just passive products and services. These standpoints on face value appear to give significance to the field of brand management within business, and therefore deem it academically worthy of further analysis. In doing so, they also guide brand thinking towards the humanities and social sciences methodological frameworks. In addition, they lend themselves to

the perspective of the authors, that a brand is created like Pinocchio - in the likeness of the consumer and with the aim of acquiring comparable human traits; which will be used to communicate emotive messages.

Echoing these sentiments, Doyle (1994) states that the core concern of marketing should be in the decommodification of products. The authors suggest that such an approach would lend itself towards enabling analysis, which encapsulates the more meaningful implicit and embedded facets of culture; that individuals experience. Miller (1995) argues for a materialist understanding of consumption that recognises the choices and the constraints which shape consumer behaviour in its widest sense. Collins (2001) uses Miller's premise to assert that "brands and branding represent important issues for analysis, because they have a capacity to (re)constitute reality insofar as they make certain representations of reality more-or-less persuasive and/or attractive" (p.192). In doing so, Collins (2001) says that there is an avoidance of consumer indifference. Therefore by merit of a brand gaining a memorable and favourable market position; this intangible and implicit component appears to be central to both the brand and the consumer.

Chevron (1998) asserts that "the concept of a 'brand' and that of a 'product' are diametrically opposed in many ways" (p. 261). In support of Chevron's (1998) and Collins' (2001) findings, it can be argued that a brand is created with the aim of transcending the tangible boundaries faced by a product. Therefore, the consumption of brand need not be restricted to specific product categories. An example of this extension has been cited by Klein (2000) where she observes that the Nike swoosh is one of the most requested tattoos in the USA. By individuals electing to have a brand tattooed permanently on their skin; they are not only explicitly demonstrating that the brand is of more significance and desirability than the product; but that it is also a worthy component of their own entire value system. Because tattoos are permanent, they also preserve the continued significance of the brand. In addition, it appears that brands can develop sublime characteristics, which outlive their associated products. Building on these brand characteristics, Nike has been able to enter new markets and extend its product categories. Furthermore, their brand has been used to pull seemingly unconnected markets together; under one coherent identity. Therefore, when brands are created, if embraced by consumers, they collectively become symbiotic beings and have the potential to eventually possess a life of their own; if strong enough. Again, it is felt that this phenomenon is in-keeping with the authors' Pinocchio analogy. Pinocchio relied on the support and guidance of others; in his pursuit to become more human.

Aaker (2007) states that categorization theory is a useful tool in understanding the process and objective of influencing. An extension of this approach can be used as a basis for managing brand creation. For it, "provides coherence to knowledge and judgements about nearly all aspects of daily life – including people, issues, products and brands" (Aaker, 2007, p. 16). Aaker (2007) follows this by asserting that there are two prevalent models of categorization: the first model "conceptualizes a prototypical, hypothetical object in the category that could be an 'average; or 'ideal' object. New objects could be evaluated as to how similar they are to the prototype...The second model conceptualizes a category as a collection of exemplars of the category, one or more objects that represent the category well" (p. 16). With this in mind, it is suggested that further research should attempt to gain opinions from subjects on both categories; in an attempt to test the strength of opinion and level of critical evaluation held by consumers.

Christensen (1999), concludes that a sizeable number of senior managers in industry, believe that the weaknesses of many methods outweigh their strengths; when

attempting to search for innovation in product ideas. They attribute this to insufficient focus on taking consumer preferences into account. Christensen (1999) asserts that consumers tend to scan across categories for something that will “do the job best” and “discover what the consumer has already discovered” (pp. 41-42). In contrast, “most brand architectures are not structured to help customers link the product with the job for which the product is meant to be hired. Instead, the marketers’ goal seems to have been to position the product to be used in as many jobs as possible. The unfortunate result is that the product and brand are sub-optimized for every job” (Christensen, 1999, pp. 47-48). Whilst Christensen’s (1999) findings confirm that brands provide a worthy promotional mechanism; they perhaps still encounter difficulties when marketing the benefits of the product itself. It would appear that this link remains latent and subject to consumer interpretation.

As discussed earlier in this paper, through adopting Chevron’s (1998) position, pertaining to brands and products being diametrically opposed; Christensen’s (1999) findings highlight that the strategic management of brand creation by many, appears to have inherent weaknesses. This brand innovation process seems to act independently from that of the product, in its initial stages. As a result, there are likely to be two stages - where the product is created; followed by its mapping to a brand; upon completion. The desire of a brand architect is to market the product to would-be consumers; but following Christensen’s (1999) suggestions, it appears to point towards degeneration in their intended message; upon reaching consumers. Without a successful appreciation of the unique tangible benefits from the product offering; the authors suggest that the future ability of a brand to gain a credible coherent identity will remain somewhat wooden and Pinocchio-like. Therefore, there is a case for a more thorough review of the strategic creation of a brand. Whilst Klein’s (2000) Nike example demonstrates brand potential; the core reason for a brand’s existence nevertheless is to provide a platform for its associated products. Taking this into account, investigations into how a brand is created, not just as a promotional vehicle, but also as an embedded component of the product are vital.

The core focus should be on viewing brands through the eyes of their architects; as their initiators. Whilst the indications are that these factors affecting a brand strategy may lead to consumer confusion and subsequently towards, what has been termed in the field of transactional analysis and psychotherapy as, ‘racket feelings’; nevertheless their effects remain secondary. Consumers do play an active part in a shaping a brand’s message; but unless guided by effective encoding on the part of the brand architect; the process will remain outside of the architect’s control.

In contrast to the findings of Dye (2000) and Brown (2001), Maklan and Knox (1997) suggest that customer value is “increasingly being generated by business processes traditionally outside the remit of brand management” (p.119), which in turn leads to a diminishing brand value. Their recommendations, for increasing brand value and ultimately bridging the gap with consumers; lie in optimising aspects of the supply chain process. del Rio; Vazquez and Iglesias (2001) found that one generally accepted view draws from an associative network memory model, where perceptions about a brand are “reflected by the cluster of associations that consumers connect to the brand name in memory” (p. 411). A way in which consumers were able to distinguish between brand associations, was by their level of abstraction, “that is, by how much information is summarized or subsumed in the association” (del Rio; Vazquez and Iglesias, 2001, p. 411). It is the opinion of the authors that whilst Maklan and Knox (1997) make a notable point; a crucial focus of research should still remain in examining the mindset of the brand architect; with respect to the intangible aspects of a brand. This is in light of the findings, as stated earlier in the paper, by

Doyle (1994), Christensen (1999), Collins (2001), Hayes; Alford; Silver and York, (2006), and Aaker (2007).

Cultural Dimensions in Marketing

By means of offering an allegory towards highlighting the suggested complexities faced, when reviewing culture, branding and consumer behaviour; the authors cite a study by Gong, Zhan and Tiger (2004), which examines the perceptions of Western firms when marketing to Chinese youth. Gong, Zhan and Tiger (2004), state that "Unfortunately, many Western marketers" have, "mistakenly" believed that it is hard to group Chinese youth into a distinct segment based on psychographics (p.46); due to a lack of understanding of 'old' and 'new' culture. In addition, the arguments of these Western marketers, according to Gong, Zhan and Tiger (2004), have been that the cultural frames of reference of these Chinese youth in question, are too dissimilar to enable their inclusion; as part a global youth segment. However, Gong, Zhan and Tiger (2004) assert this as being a fallacy, as these same Chinese youths, in fact exhibit comparable rebellious inclinations and share similar interests with their Western counterparts. Having stated this, Gong, Zhan and Tiger (2004) provide evidence indicating that the same Chinese youth "depend on the Internet for information, worship brand names, and chase fashions and trends." (p. 46).

These findings in themselves demonstrate that Chinese youth do in fact exhibit notable and definable psychographic traits, which could group them within a global market. They also appear to suggest that whilst brands are experiencing the benefits of cross-cultural consumption, denationalisation and deterritorialisation; there nevertheless appear to be significant gaps in understanding between cultures. Perhaps more worryingly, they indicate that marketers, in the absence of understanding, are still willing to market their products to an audience that they do not understand. In addition, marketer's definitions of culture, in this instance, seem to be less about actively mapping the progression of 'old' and 'new' and the subsequent stratification process; but instead more about what is known and what is not. The possible consequences are that gaps in cultural understanding, if not addressed, will prevail (if not increase); in affecting the ability to proactively market to defined segments. Comparably, the authors suggest that it should be of little surprise that there will be differences in held-values between generations. Therefore, the opinions shown indicate somewhat colonial, culturally diminutive, ethnically discriminatory traits. For it is unlikely that these same Western marketers would avoid attempts to classify and link similar segments, within their home territories; in such a dismissive manner. Moreover, having established the existence of a segment such as Chinese youth, there should be no reason why existing frameworks could not be used to then define their psychographic characteristics.

Two main fields of concern which the authors wish to highlight are namely, how consumers are being defined and the restrictive treatment of a brand as a mere commodity within marketing. A lack of understanding in these areas tallies with the shortfalls discussed earlier in the paper, as highlighted by Christensen (1999) and Doyle (1994). In doing so, the control of the brand's identity largely lies in the hands of the consumer and it risks never achieving greater market potential; without more comprehensive strategic management.

Whilst the paper is not exclusively examining Chinese youth; it can be deduced that there are likely to be similar inadequacies and traits; with respect to the understanding of other cultures and nationalities. Supporting these concerns, Whitelock and Fastoso (2007) in reviewing existing literature on international branding, found that very few African and Latin American countries have been

objects of research and that large areas of the Asia-Pacific and Sub-Sahara region have so far not been researched.

As a point of reference, it could be argued that countries which have inhabitants that share additional cross-border value systems, such as religion; may allow for further grouping and comparisons. Dawar and Parker (1994) analysed the existence, relative importance, and absolute magnitude of signal use in connection with branding, across thirty nationalities including China and Hong Kong. They conclude that the "variances in the use of quality signals are independent of culture and are likely to be driven by individual factors" (Dawar and Parker, 1994, p. 81). These findings lend weight to the possibility of looking at common cross-cultural defining attitudes. However it could be equally argued that in fact they contradict or confirm aspects of Gong, Zhan and Tigers' (2004) findings.

The issues of contention seem to be in whether culture is considered, how it is considered and the necessity of a brand strategy to encompass cultural components. In addition, there exists a ten year gap between both studies; in which time significant changes may have occurred. It is possible that in the absence of meaningful culturally-based strategic brand management; consumers may in fact suppress or adapt any of their own cultural traits. Whilst this will manifest consumer homogeneity; the drivers stem from a failure on the brands part, to achieve positive positioning. Therefore there is a real risk that with increased cultural diversity, denationalisation and deterritorialisation; will come increased difficulties in predicting consumers' behaviour towards a brand. If this is the case, then the authors suggest that the differences between Dawar and Parker (1994) and Gong, Zhan and Tigers' (2004) findings may in fact be evidence of this deterioration.

The findings investigating consumer-brand relationships, as discussed earlier in the paper, arising from work undertaken by Hayes, Alford, Silver and York (2006); consisted of a sample study analysing 142 graduate and undergraduate students, attending four universities in south-eastern USA. In contrast, Aiello et al. (2009), gathered data from a cross-national sample, in order to obtain a more complex understanding of how the country of origin concept operates in various countries across different product categories (convenience products, shopping goods and specialty / luxury products). Aiello et al.'s (2009) survey was conducted in Italy, France, Germany, Russia, India, China, Japan and the United States; comprising of 165 undergraduate management students. Both studies are considered by their researchers, to have an appropriate sample size, in line with social sciences methodologies; when analysing chief psychological processes versus generalisation. However, an interesting point to note is that in each of these surveys, countries appear to be treated as also constituting respectively homogeneous groups. Whilst this supports Dawar and Parker's (1994) position and could be used to address the concerns of Gong, Zhan and Tiger (2004); the authors suggest that this presents a significant cultural gap worthy of appreciation.

From the authors' experiences of lecturing in London universities; whilst all students may share English as their lingua franca, occupy the same age bracket, and currently occupy the same geographic location; these factors do not eclipse the effects of culture. There is no reason to suggest that London universities should be substantially different from those surveyed by Hayes, Alford, Silver and York, (2006); or Aiello et al. (2009). By the same token, the assumption appears to be that those opinions gathered from university sample groups in the respective studies, are to be taken in turn as being representative of those of wider consumer segments within the country; in which they are situated. Therefore, following these assumptions and approaches, indications from the authors' experiences, are that the London students

in question [Appendix 1], hailed from some 80 nationalities. Furthermore, when asked, these students felt that culture, ethnicity and nationality did help to define their personalities, mindset and subsequent brand choices. There also appeared to be a difference in opinion amongst the students, as to whether their country as stated constituted their culture, ethnicity, actual nationality; or in fact all three. In this instance, it was felt that students should be free to interpret this, in which ever way they saw fit. In doing so, the authors have departed from a more literal interpretation of nationality, as is often defined in business and management academic sources. However, the aim was to provide a platform for further discussions into how a marketer could investigate these significant factors in relation to branding.

Therefore, the position of the authors is that with increased cultural diversity and population migration, studies which are looking to gain insight into the perceptions and views of consumers on a national and a global level should not rely on segmentation based only on situationally specific geographic locations. Whilst it may be true that as a result of increased migrancy and cross-cultural interactions convergence, this process may reduce the ability to classify individuals due to country or residence, or origin – due to its diminishing significance. Without an appreciation of these factors, there is a risk of conclusions being drawn indicating a consumer convergence in opinions; which will perhaps mask distinct gaps in cultural understanding. The argument is that cross-national and national studies remain of significance; but diversity and consumer migration impact on the defining factors of a nation. As a result, the suggestion is that the identity of a nation will in turn change through increased cultural diversity. Therefore, there should be an increased focus on gathering data which cross-references culture against country of residence and country of origin. In the fields of branding and marketing, where expectations and analysis are being driven beyond reviewing materialist consumption, and towards opinions and emotions; culture offers a vital source of information.

If brand creation is to advance, its respective frameworks and approaches should take into account consumer perspectives and then seek to redefine them. Therefore, the authors suggest that future research into branding should contain within it more detailed mapping and flexible interpretations of culture, ethnicity and nationality. In support of this approach, UK organisations are encouraged to gather additional employee data requesting ethnocentric nations of origin; from the perspective of the employee. Within this, there is a removal of the necessity on the employee's part to provide evidence, or to treat nationality as being territorially specific. In doing so, there is an encouragement to fuse nationality with culture and ethnicity in a more figurative and implicit fashion. Furthermore, UK employment legislation and case rulings indicate a progression towards more flexible interpretations of culture, race, religion, ethnicity and belief.

Following on from this point, in Humphreys' (1996) analysis of Egyptian and UK senior managers in education, the recommendation is that systems from the Western world "may need to be modified and adapted in order to fit the value, culture, expectations and practices of other, particularly developing countries" (p. 39). Humphreys (1996) concludes that "It is perhaps a reflection of the possible complexity of such a task that produces the pragmatic but erroneous view that management principles are universal and therefore directly transferable to overseas projects" (p. 39). In the case of brand creation, therefore, research should look to review not only the systems used but also what effect culture has on them.

Holden (2002) reviewed existing cross-cultural management and anthropological frameworks and, as a result, suggested that managing across cultures is "the art of combining varieties of common knowledge through interactive translation. In order to

develop this modified concept of cross-cultural management, it will be necessary to come to an understanding of translation both as a process and as an analogy" (Holden, 2002, p. 227). Within this, he appraised the role of language, concluding that it can be seen metaphorically with "its symbolic powers serving to *unite* people with a sense of common purpose. Seen in this way, language is a very potent expression of company wisdom, lore and vision" (Holden, 2002, p. 236).

As discussed previously, Keller (1993, 1998), Freling and Forbes (2005), Hayes; Alford; Silver and York, (2006), identify that brands and consumers enter powerful interactions; which contain within them both implicit and explicit traits. The authors suggest that the most difficult to evaluate, yet valuable areas of investigation, lie within the implicit domain. Nonaka (1991), when looking at how tacit (or implicit) knowledge can be converted into the explicit, states that it is a process of "finding a way to express the inexpressible" (p. 4). Nonaka (1991) also concludes that "unfortunately, one of the most powerful management tools for doing so is frequently overlooked: the store of figurative language and symbolism that managers can draw from to articulate their intuitions and insight. At Japanese companies, this evocative and sometimes extremely poetic language figures especially prominently in product development" (p. 5). This view supports the findings of Holden (2002), as stated earlier. As branding draws upon both language and symbolism, it is felt that these sentiments can be carried through; whilst trying to decipher what stakeholders actually think and feel. In addition, there is reason to suggest that whilst Nonaka's theoretical framework and observations can be applied universally; their practical execution and expression may differ across cultures. As a result, individuals are likely to differ in the types of resulting brand relationships that they encounter.

A final point of interest lies in the study conducted by Roper and Shah (2007) on vulnerable consumers and the social impact of branding on children. Whilst children are not the main point of concern, it could be argued that economic migrants and their subsequent progeny are also 'junior' members of society; still in their infancy when making certain judgements. It is acknowledge that children possess unique attributes associated with their respective developmental stages. However, findings by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (UK) suggest that there are also cases of adult members of society who are found to be vulnerable and requiring additional support. It could be argued, therefore, that they may, in fact, share similar experiences, unique to mainstream society. These are likely to also manifest themselves in the relationships that they create with brands – as consumers and/or brand professionals. Therefore, upon review of brand thinking, an added dimension which takes into account the level of social interaction, appears to also be of importance.

When Brands brush with Culture

Nagashima (1970) surveyed US and Japanese businessmen's attitudes towards foreign products. Nagashima's (1970) research suggests that the national image of any country varies across cultures. An example given was that 'made in England' was found to be significantly more prestigious in Japan; in comparison to the United States. A case could be made therefore for a country constituting a key component within a brand's creation. In addition, Ward et al. (1986) have noted that the consumption behaviour is varied from one culture to another. They comment on how family orientations and their respective behaviours differ markedly across cultures. These studies would suggest that consumer's behaviour towards a brand does in fact alter - according to the influence of a combination of, cultural, national, environmental and ethnographic factors; if not individually. They still however offer little insight into

whether brands are created in a manner which is best suited to being able to cater for these different tastes.

Lelyveld (2001) referred to Timberland's surprise at "being hot in the urban community with no marketing at all...no one was more surprised by the phenomenon than the company itself" (p. 8). Unprompted by Timberland, the brand has been adopted as a prestigious unisex uniform by Hip-Hop music artists and fans. The originating and committed devotees of Hip-Hop, largely from initially Afro-American and Hispanic communities; describe Hip-Hop as a music, an art-form, a culture and a way of life. These are sentiments which continue to be expressed in numerous song lyrics - in addition to rhyming couplets, naming, lauding and describing the Timberland brand frequently. Lelyveld (2001) devotes some time to this area, mapping clothing brand names to Hip-Hop artists. As a result, Timberland has also reaped the benefits with having their brand acquiring more human traits, street credibility and 'coolness'; not to mention market share. Timberland's surprise appears to suggest that the brand was not created with this lucrative urban audience in mind. Therefore, the question arises, if a future brand architect wanted to create a brand for this same target audience, how would they go about doing it? It appears that brands, such as Timberland, are able to react to interested new segments; but without more understanding, they will perhaps find it difficult to initiate such interactions.

Further to this, more rationally based product purchases such as Islamic Finance; have also seen similarly surprising effects. Knight (2006) reports that banks offering these products have seen them consumed by white British non-Muslims. Knight (2006) continues by citing evidence in Malaysia of up to 25% of Islamic accounts being opened by non-Muslims. The figures, it could be argued, are especially surprising - considering that these financial products are non-interest bearing. The reason being that whilst they may be considered a necessity to someone following the Muslim faith; it begs the question that there must be an alternative emotional reason for someone outside of the faith adopting them; where economic gain seems to take a back seat. This is especially as a consumer has to satisfy more stringent approval criteria than with mainstream high-street interest-bearing products offered by the same banks.

In contrast, Tommy Hilfiger knowingly adopted an approach which strategically "focused on young urban African Americans to imprint his brand with a street hipness"; which finally spread to reach "a broad audience of all ethnicities" (Dye, 2000, pp. 144-145). Brown (2001) comments that whilst modern consumers are marketing savvy, the key to success lies in *Retromarketing* - by creating markets as opposed to serving them. Brown's (2001) findings would support the approach used by the Tommy Hilfiger brand. However a polemical case could be argued in response to these - with success lying in being able to predict accurately, current cognitive and conative consumer behavioural patterns. Further to this, it appears that it is the marketing, rather than the brand, which is being crafted towards being able to appeal to these consumers. Therefore the area of interest which still remains is how brands can be created to appeal to different segments; even before they are marketed.

Conclusion

As indicated in the literature, there appears to have emerged a two-fold consensus; that branding is:

1. Analogous to an individual in possessing comparable attributes, and
2. Subsequently engaged in a continuous symbiotic relationship, founded upon an evaluation of the brand's: looks, personality, credibility, equity, and desirability.

The weight that is attached to these components may be selective, reciprocal or intrinsic to an over-arching value system. Following this, the suggestion has been that the critical consumer paradigm is one which stems from their self-defined cultural framework. Collectively, consumers and brands attempt to manifest evolving and meaningful personalities.

With regards the effectual nature of culture on consumer behaviour, and ultimately brands; the literature seems to suggest two opposing positions, namely:

1. Culture has a significant effect on a consumer's decision making
2. Culture has no measurable importance on a consumer's decision making.

Ongoing and active human relationships tend to be based on a combination of rational and emotionally based judgements. Therefore if these principles are to hold true, in that a consumer also enjoys a comparable relationship with a brand; then there should exist sufficiently similar components. Case evidence appears to suggest that whilst consumers are actively purchasing overtly branded products, which are firstly a significant component of a commodity; and secondly, comprising brands which attempt to manifest a meaningful personality - no account however of a strategic brand, or cultural focus, appears to be documented.

These purchases fail to deliver an identical relationship to one enjoyed between individuals. Like the puppet Pinocchio, the brand has been created and filled with a desire to be seen as being a real human. However like a puppet, a brand relies on others in order to function. This reliance gifts control of its existence and identity to other parties and therefore warrants more strategic control from the brand architect; in order to succeed.

Whilst a cultural understanding and attempt to market a commodity to an increasingly diverse audience seems essential; in contrast, the core brand identity and product in most cases remains unchanged. This is not only seen at an operational level but at a strategic level as well. This lack of change may in turn lead to a drift and hamper future perceptions as to the future value of a brand. Consumers also seem to have little inclination or expectations towards a brand taking into account their value system, on an equal footing. Rather a brand exists like the puppet, in the story of Pinocchio – where the brand aspires to become like everybody else; but may in fact fall short with a brand's attributes estranged and below those of a real human being.

Therefore, the conclusion as presented is that the critical long-term success of a brand lies in three areas: how it is created; the subsequent associated perceptions; and more specifically in the reality of the relationships that it enjoys. Collectively, these processes necessitate an appraisal of connecting strategic management procedures and thinking. In addition, further areas of research should look to explore both the impact and potential of culture, with respect to branding.

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Supporting websites visited

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/home-diversity-equality.htm>

<http://www.equalityhumanrights.com/en/aboutus/pages/aboutus.aspx>

http://www.gos.gov.uk/gol/European_funding/Objective3/Equalopps/

<http://www.investorsinpeople.co.uk/Facts/Pages/default.aspx>

Appendix 1

Nationalities and countries of origin of undergraduate and postgraduate business students; taught and assessed by Author 1, in 2008 (in alphabetical order). Data is reflective of 550 students, from 20 cohorts, taken across 5 London universities.

The approach was embedded within class discussions and continued throughout the course delivery. As opposed to a formal survey being undertaken, the information was noted during informal semi-structured face-to-face class discussions. Courses lasted one term, amounting to approximately 10 weeks of contact time, ranging from 1-4 hours each week. Class sizes ranged from 10-75 students.

Conversations were in connection with discussions concerning brands, and part of ice-breakers, looking to acquaint students with the lecturer and their peers. The information was collected in order to allow the lecturer and students to stimulate further critical evaluations of culture, branding and marketing.

The question, as asked by the lecturer at the start of the course, was intentionally ambiguous:

"Tell us some things about you; that will help us to get to know you better"

Following these discussions; it is felt that the data listed below is reflective of students:

- Choosing to interpret this question as being one which allowed them to discuss their nationality and country of origin
- Perceiving that their national and cultural roots would be of interest
- Perceiving that their national and cultural roots help to shape their evaluations and personalities
- Wanting to volunteer this information as a matter of pride

The authors suggest that the method of questioning, course material and class environment, encouraged students towards holding these positions. Whilst this produces some form of bias; the rationale was that this was necessary – in order to investigate and gauge the level of cultural and national diversity.

The maximum number of nationalities in any one class totalled 30 and in some instances, cohorts contained no native British passport holders.

As a point of reference:

- Some subjects chose to list more than one nationality
- Some subjects stated their country of origin, as opposed to their 'passport' nationality
- Fewer subjects stated their 'passport' nationality, as opposed to a country of origin
- Students who were non-UK citizens, chose to offer a country name
- Students who were UK citizens, provided a UK city and country of origin
- Peer pressure encouraged all students to conform and participate

For the purposes of this research, there was no interest in how many students chose to identify themselves with each country; rather how many countries were apparent.

1. Afghanistan	27. Iran	54. Portugal
2. Algeria	28. Israel	55. Qatar
3. Austria	29. Italy	56. Republic of Ireland
4. Azerbaijan	30. Jamaica	57. Russia
5. Bahrain	31. Japan	58. Saudi Arabia
6. Bangladesh	32. Kazakhstan	59. Senegal
7. Brazil	33. Kenya	60. Serbia
8. Brunei	34. Korea	61. Scotland
9. Bulgaria	35. Kurdistan	62. Somalia
10. Canada	36. Kuwait	63. South Africa
11. Chad	37. Libya	64. Sri Lanka
12. China	38. Lebanon	65. Spain
13. Columbia	39. Lithuania	66. Sweden
14. Croatia	40. Macaw	67. Taiwan
15. Denmark	41. Malaysia	68. Tanzania
16. Egypt	42. Mexico	69. Thailand
17. England	43. Mongolia	70. Trinidad
18. Eritrea	44. Morocco	71. Tunisia
19. Finland	45. Nepal	72. Turkey
20. France	46. Nigeria	73. UAE
21. Germany	47. Norway	74. Ukraine
22. Hong Kong	48. Northern Ireland	75. USA
23. Hungary	49. Okinawa	76. Uzbekistan
24. India	50. Pakistan	77. Vietnam
25. Indonesia	51. Palestine	78. Yemen
26. Iraq	52. Peru	79. Wales
	53. Poland	80. Zimbabwe