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Building Brand Culture

Unlock your Brand's Cultural Potential

In collaboration with Matthieu Guével

Post-face interview,
with Raphaël Lellouche
« New Brand Theory »

QUALIQUANTI
CREATIVE INTELLIGENCE

GOOGTIME

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Building Brand Culture:
Unlock your Brand's Cultural Potential

Translation: Tamara McGinnis

Post-face interview, with Raphael Lellouche
« Towards Brand Theory »

« Culture est le chaînon manquant de l'analyse strategic de la marque »

« Culture is the missing link in strategic brand analysis »

Jean-Noël Kapferer

"The job of leadership today is not just to make money, it's to make meaning"

« La tâche du dirigeant aujourd'hui n'est pas seulement de faire des bénéfices, mais de créer du sens »

John Hagel and John Seely Brown, *The Power of Pull, 2010*

Acknowledgements

PREFACE

« Brand culture » is a relatively new concept, unlike corporate culture, which is already a long-standing idea.

Corporate culture is born out of collective adventure. The sensitivity and intelligence of thousands of men and women create something shared: a mental structure, a network of representations, a rallying point around common objectives, a sort of collective momentum. Corporate culture is reflected in both structures and behaviour. In the way things are seen and done. It creates a bond between employees from all walks of the company, whatever their department, their level or country. It provides a project to which everyone can adhere. Corporate culture is mostly felt internally: it is the glue that binds all the employees together.

Brand culture, on the other hand, creates a bridge between the brand and its customers. Over time, the brand strengthens its identity, creates a world that thrives on trends and lifestyles. It produces meaning, it gives itself a view of the world that it wants to share.

The primary role of agencies is to express the essence of the brand, what it stands for and what it believes in. Apple suggested that we «think different", Adidas reminded us that «Impossible is Nothing". These brand ideas nourished each of the brands' multiple messages. Progressively, brands develop their own messages, in their own specific way and with new perspectives. Culture builds a bridge between brands' identities and their customers.

Thousands of pages have been written on Apple's culture. And thousands more could have been written on Michelin's, Danone's and L'Oreal's. Or on Hermès' culture, based on timeless aesthetics and a relentless pursuit of perfection. It seems natural to speak of brand culture when we talk of luxury. We all can feel Hermes', Gucci's, Dior's and Louis Vuitton's different cultures. But what about the non-luxury world, what about the mass market? Is there really a Pampers' culture?

I think we can reply more and more in the affirmative. Pampers is no longer content to provide the most efficient diaper, it is involved in the well-being of young mothers and their new-borns' health. They have built an application that follows the daily evolution of the foetus; it distributes thousands of anti-tetanus vaccines; it funds breakthrough research into babies' sleep patterns... The brand's new purpose, combined with the multiple initiatives it takes, helps it build a richer and deeper culture.

Heads of major packaged goods companies have come to understand that they are in a world where brands are built differently. Brands lie at the heart of a subtle weave, where single-mindedness is no longer a virtue. It is no exaggeration to say that the principles of luxury marketing will more and more invade the business world, with complex, changing

and diverse approaches as opposed to the more straightforward approach of traditional marketing. Practices developed for luxury brands - more creative, more intuitive, less simplistic – can be the source of great success.

This is what the authors of this book brilliantly explain by pointing out that « *cultural strategy is not an optional add-on to a company's marketing strategy. A brand's cultural strategy is the pillar in any long-term brand management.* » In this respect, brand culture is becoming increasingly important. It gives brands a more prominent place in the social landscape. It gives them more substance, more density, more sense. It creates value.

Jean-Marie Dru, Chairman of TBWA\Worldwide.

INTRODUCTION: Cultural Potential

In the 2009 book, *Brand Content: How Brands are Transformed in Media*, we began with a simple observation: Brand communication is not limited to advertising messages. Brands are also expressed by producing editorial content disseminated in the media. The production of brand content has increased considerably over recent years, enabling brands to engage in introspection and the explanation of their historical and technical heritage, myths and stories of their inception – all of which in fact, make up their culture. Editorial content is ever finding ways to express brands. Venues, interfaces, events, historical realities, the handing down of knowledge, know-how and techniques and sensorial experiences are all modes of expression that are beyond content and part of the broader concept that is culture. This observation leads us to develop the idea of « brand culture ». Because a brand's strength lies not only in its sales, but increasingly in its cultural weight, i.e.: its ability to grasp and re-articulate or construct a cultural environment as the extension of its products. Some brands provide a looking-glass mirror of surrounding ambient culture, which is part of their power of seduction. In this book, we will attempt to analyze this power of « cultural reverberation ».

Table 1: From brand content to brand culture

Brand content	Brand culture
Message expressed through words	Milieu one can live in without thinking about it
Reliant on the media in which expressed	Reality which goes beyond the media in which expressed
Amongst brand's modes of expression	Network of the elements making up a brand

The emergence of « brand cultures » and the prevalence of brands' cultural dimensions derives from the realization that producing meaning has become as important as producing goods. Brands have moved beyond being exclusively commercial. They are no longer simply identifiers of products and services in the marketplace, but comprehensive realms, charged with meaning, poles of symbolic density, and cultural systems, with values

and practices, behavior, creative content and even lifestyle rules emanating from them. Brands don't only have culture, they exist within a culture. As explained by philosopher and semiologist Raphaël Lellouche in the post-face: « *A brand is a transmedia cultural entity, which is manifest and structured by the media or medias* ». This definition pinpoints an essential aspect of brand culture, in that brands exist in an environment or culture that is greater than they are, on which they are reliant, and which extends well beyond them.

Culture: interactivity, collective identity and the daily experience

Understanding and managing brand culture presupposes agreeing on the definition of culture and determining how to apply the concept to brands.

Anthropologically, culture designates a set of acquired behaviors in human societies. It is the way in which man lives in the world he has built, as opposed to animals which simply adapt to nature. All human acts culturally reconstruct a natural substrate. This « culturalization » of nature occurs through mediations which transform man's relationship with his environment, such as using tools, weapons, techniques or symbols.

Addressing a brand as a culture requires digressions in the typical interpretation of brands' roles and functions: firstly, considering brands as culture makes one realize that they are not fixed institutions, or simply a label on a product, but brands are a total process or activity. Thinking in terms of culture, leads us to imagine the brand as an entity that is alive, changing, built on substrates and in constant interaction with its environment - these interactions being constructed and made visible by the media.

UNESCO's definition is as follows: « *Culture should be regarded as the set of distinctive spiritual, material, intellectual and emotional features of society or a social group, it encompasses…*» In other words, culture is the identity of a collective group, which is a second important digression. This view is essential to understand that consumer buying or consumption functions as an expression of identity, requiring a common social foundation that gives one a sense of belonging to and recognition by a group.

Culture can also be considered philosophical and a concept linked to writing. Culture can be understood as characteristic of « cultured » people, as opposed to those who are not. This definition implies that « high » culture is acquired through learning or training, and is reserved for literate people able to understand and partake in literature, poetry, science and music. The others – peasants and blue collar workers, who either don't know how or have time to read – only get « popular » culture, often scorned and perceived as the absence of culture. The distinction between « elite » culture and « popular » culture has gradually eroded since the 19th Century, with certain aspects of « popular » culture – comics, rap music, advertising and even commercial culture – now considered « respectable » disciplines and part of university curricula. Alongside the historical development of technical media, this is being demonstrated with the advent of *Cultural Studies*. This research field emerged in the UK in the Sixties, looking at the culture of the « poor people

» with the idea that all social activity is cultural, from work to community relations, and including consumption. Culture does not reach them through books, but through other media: clothes, songs, professional trades and crafts, social rites, etc. In this way, it makes more sense to consider the concept of culture as a social phenomenon, which makes up the experiences of daily living in contemporary societies. This theory is especially current in today's media revolution, where printed material is increasingly losing ground to digital and audio-visual technologies.

Applied to brands, this definition implies a third digression or enlargement beyond traditional brands, including attachments that are physiological, such as practices, actions, materials, sounds, colors, smells, etc. The sound of a Harley, and the Apple or Sony interfaces are an intrinsic part of the respective brands. This means that brand culture cannot be reduced to a few simple words, but that it is also made up of images, icons, objects and ways of doing things, etc.

Table 2: Culture and Brands

Definition of culture	Implication for brands
Set of acquired behaviors	Brand is not an immobile institution, but a process, an interaction
Set of a society's collective aspects	Brand is recognized collectively, can be a medium for projection
Set of daily living experiences	Brand is not a set of words, or a single imaginary realm, it is embodied and experienced

Consumers looking for meaning and uniqueness

Hailing from the United States, over the past decade, the topic of brand culture has become increasingly prevalent. The books *How Brands Become Icons* (2004), *Brand Culture* (2006), and *Cultural Strategy* (2010) converge towards the concept of a brand as a cultural emitter. Their authors point out how brands embody views on the world and express models of myths, symbolism, codes, ideologies, etc.

Why are brands expressing their cultural aspects so pervasively now? For Jean- Noël

Kapferer, this current dimension is due to several factors: the end of ideologies, the existential void of a consumerism society overly focused on accumulating stuff, the economic crisis, and more…all converging to send consumers on a quest for meaning. In a society losing its values, people no longer consume just to meet basic needs, but rather to find structural points of reference. Thus culture provides people with meaning behind their existence and behaviors – and consequently to their consumer buying and habits. If brands wish to meet consumers' needs to buy with greater meaning, culture is required. Brands must play a role well beyond consumer purchasing. They must grasp major existential issues, provide symbolic resources, offer models for people to build and assert their identity. Fundamentally human, consumers don't only *ask to have something,* but *to be someone*. To meet this need, businesses must go well beyond identifying *insights*. They must delve deep into their brands' cultural resonance.

Globalization brings societies together faster and standardizes behavior, whilst accentuating brands' cultural foundation. In a global market, with fierce competition and free-thinking, fickle consumers, culture contributes to a brand's uniqueness and positioning. By stressing its existential dimensions, brands obtain greater public buy-in. In his analysis of globalization, philosopher Gilles Lipovetsky reveals two parallel points at the core of brand culture: …We observe a dual process of the « commercialization of culture » on one hand, and the « culturalization of commerce » on the other. Long considered a marginal economic sector and defying the logic of profitability, culture is quickly becoming a substantial and dynamic economic entity. Museums are exported like products; the economy of creative design, the entertainment market, the media and the internet have turned culture into a source of growth, revenues and jobs. Equally, the economic sphere is increasingly rampant with cultural signs. The economic sector is becoming « culturalized » as brands include a cultural dimension in their proposition. As CEO of DraftFCB and By Art, Nathalie Cogis points out: «…*Culture is fundamental because it is the fertile soil where our desires are forged: the desire to be oneself, to be accepted, to be recognized, to stand apart, to be fulfilled, to love…Culture is the bearer of our most powerful desires, as these desires are collective: the desires projected by a society and with which people identify* ».

The acceleration of innovations requires brands to likewise renew and update, whilst maintaining coherence and consistency. As such, culture offers brands an entire repertoire of meaning and sensory, emotional and intellectual pleasures as a source for updating products. In this ever-changing context of rapid obsolescence and technological innovations, culture is a source of both identity and creativity.

Table 3: Culture as value creator

Culture-identity	Culture-creativity
Culture is a source of continuity and permanence. It constitutes the foundation of identity	Culture is a source of renewal and innovation. It is alive and intrinsically creative
Static and « patrimonial » vision	Creative and dynamic vision of culture
The exploration of brand culture allows to reinforce coherence and refine brand identity, to disseminate to and instill in internal teams	Mobilization of culture as a driver of innovation opens up unexplored territories and new ways to approach products

Content is a means, culture is the end

Consumers need to identify the symbols, ideologies, practices, and the social and psychological recommendations of the brands they frequent. Through content, brands can take on the advantages usually reserved for media, such as influence, audience, leading a community, long-term relationships and partnerships with the many stakeholders. Creating and disseminating content provides brands[1] the opportunity to illustrate their rich culture and to reveal their history, know-how, craftsmanship and story. It is a privileged way to build culture, express a world view and take on the role of cultural agent.

Jean-Marie Dru addresses this in his book *Jet Lag* by showing how content provides a means for brands to cultivate an intention or quest for meaning beyond just selling products or services, as illustrated by Pampers. « *Pampers has constantly stressed the functional benefits of a dry bottom and their contribution to babies' physical and emotional development.* » Similarly as Picard (Frozen food producer) publishes a stylish recipe book featuring frozen ingredients, the brand uses content as a deeper « communication engagement » towards a culture of gourmet food, creating multiple initiatives. The ultimate goal of a content policy is to develop a cultural strategy rich in meaning.

1   *Brand content* formalized the analysis and promotion of the brand content concept, today widely recognized on the French market. Since the book's release in late 2009 and the website www.brandcontent.fr, the brand content concept has considerably spread. Our research naturally led us to address brand culture. See *Brand content : How Brands Transform in Media*, Matthieu Guével and Daniel Bô, Dunod.

Table 4: From commercial brand to cultural brand

	Commercial brand	Editorial brand	Cultural brand
Posture	**Commercial Posture :** creation and issuance of advertising message	**Publishing, Auctorial Posture** : occasional content creation and issuance	**Cultural Agent** : generalization of publishing posture
Communication	**Product + publicity = single message,** unilateral product communication (formatted ads TV / radio / print and packaging)	**Product + publicity + content = semantic density,** extension to universe expressed through editorial content (film, brochures, etc.)	**Aggregated chain of all media = organic critical mass,** creation and communication of an overall, global brand universe through all its components (stores, advertising, products, content, etc.)
Relationship with consumers	Consumers of products	Consumers of content	Brand performer

Book Outline

The objective of this book is to demonstrate the role of culture in interpreting and managing a brand.

We will begin to expose (i) the cultural foundation of brands and how to exploit their cultural potential.

Following, we shall expose (ii) how to build a culture that is authentic, creative and in interaction with its environment.

And finally (iii) we will expose how brand culture feeds consumers' identity through the mechanism of performativity.

The general conclusion (iv) will reveal how to accompany brands in building attractive and dense cultural poles.

We hope you enjoy the book!

PART 1
Revealing Brands' Cultural Foundation

Let us begin with the idea that brands are steeped in culture: They develop based on a cultural foundation which defines them, yet goes beyond them (chapter 1). This analysis will attempt to identify brands' cultural sources (chapter 2) to be efficiently deployed in the various forms of expression and channels (chapter 3**).**

CHAPTER 1
BRANDS ARE CULTURAL CONCENTRATES

Every brand is based on cultural references which predate them, and which are organized and combined in a unique way.

> **CASE STUDY**
> **Oasis and the land of plenty**
>
> For several years, fruit-juice maker Oasis has been communicating through animated fruit characters on a quest for spring water in a magical world. The entire imaginary realm of Oasis is inscribed in a broader culture of earthly paradise where nature overflows with abundance and drinks flow endlessly. Of course, Oasis did not invent this « *Land of Cocagne* » or land of plenty. It is deeply rooted in European culture since Medieval times and has been featured profusely in literature (Rabelais, Boileau, Boccace…), songs (Georges Brassens, etc.) and pictorial representations, the most famous of which is Brueghel l'Ancien. The brand's culture is based on an extremely powerful myth, placing it on a sound pedestal to ensure a close relationship with the public who shares this collective imaginary realm.

These values, practices and cultural references grow over time to become a source of innovation, ideas and concepts for brands. The challenge consists of conducting brands' cultural exploration to assist in revealing their culture within. In his book on the mythology of brands, George Lewi considers that « *…few stories can garner rational acceptance through an emotion. One way or another, these stories have been explored by the myths and legends that mark our culture and structure our way of thinking.*[1] »**.** Nike, Louis Vuitton, Google, l'Oréal and Microsoft all became successful as the bearers of a greater ambition or a collective connection whose various forms throughout history have been channeled into a modern representation. These brands' strength lies in their ability to reveal and exploit this resource, thereby establishing themselves as full cultural agents.

Leveraging culture

Leveraging culture, brands can bring their products and messages to resonate with references shared by all. However, this construction must not be opportunistic or a superficial tactic, but must be part of the brand's reality and further its deepest values.

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1   Georges Lewi, *Mythologie des marques*, Pearson/Village mondial, 2009, p. 4.

Some brands succeed in leveraging several cultural strata to establish a strong bond with their audiences. A flagrant example is Nike and their use of the ancient Greek athlete mythology.
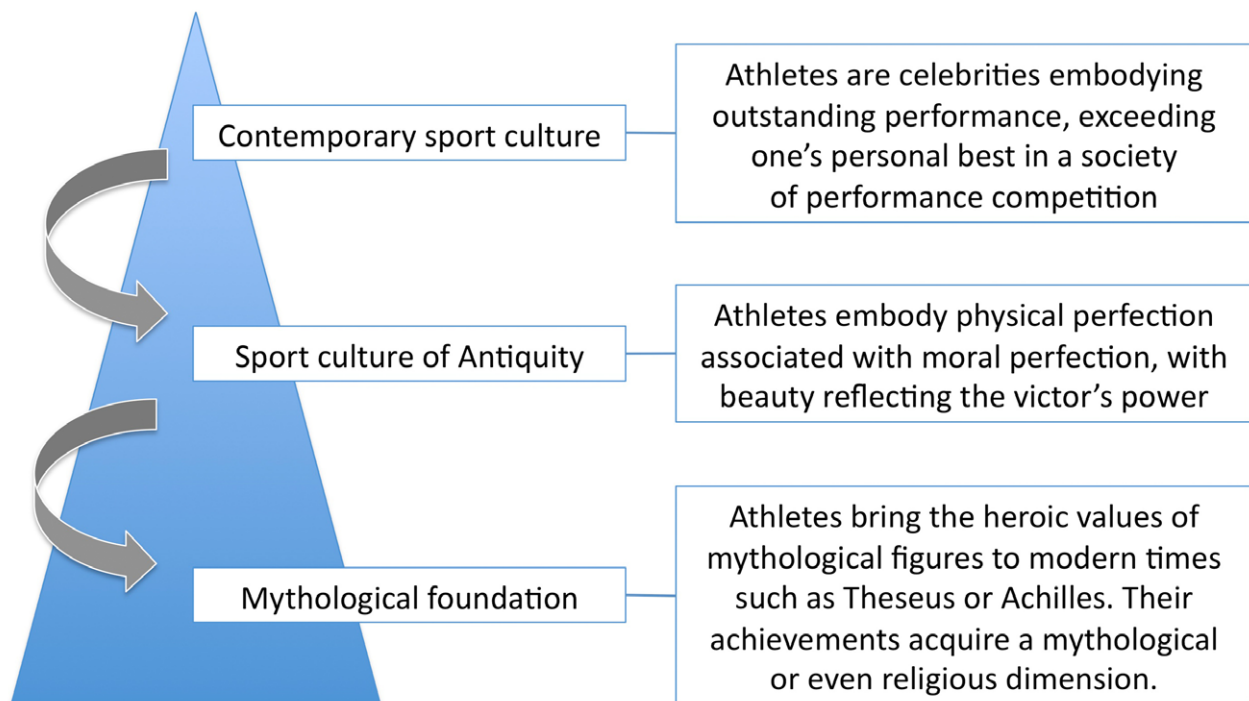
CASE STUDY
Nike's ancient Greek athlete mythology

« Wear it with pride », « Be unstoppable » « If you have a body, you are an athlete », « Victory is yours »… These phrases in bold letters address visitors in the stores on the Champs-Elysées in Paris and Niketown in London. These calls to heroics and to exceed one's personal best turn the stores into locker rooms (resounding with coaches and players) stadiums or circuses, with fans wildly cheering. Everything encourages visitors to walk in athletes footsteps. These aphorisms strive to jazz customers up, like athletes ready to bound onto the playing field. Niketown in London has *the Pool* for various athletic stunts on skates, skateboards, bikes, etc. and a DJ playing very upbeat music. Like in a health-club, the sofas look like piles of floor-mats strapped together. Mannequins sport jerseys splattered with simulated mud, to show that featured products can be or have been used in monumental exploits. All these elements consistently depict a culture of beating one's personal best and victory, combining athletic achievement and stories of Greek heroes.

Nike's spokespersons are assimilated with the heroes of ancient Greece or Rome. Some soccer players under sponsor (Cristiano Ronaldo, Wayne Rooney, Xavi…) are represented as statues posing like heroes of ancient times. The only difference is, rather than adorning a sword, they are holding shoes – their modern-day weapons. In the tennis section, Roger Federer is represented as a statue in full swing.

Champions' names are inscribed on the walls of Niketown, as if carved in stone, as clearly only stone could maintain these for posterity. Appreciating the athletes of Antiquity, accentuated by the statue figures, evokes the worship of great mythological heroes: The discus thrower becomes the new Theseus, the gymnast, the new Achilles. Exceeding one's personal best, becomes a sacrifice for collective salvation, just like Hector before the walls of Troy.

Nike has taken on one of the richest cultures, with an endless reservoir of values. Greek heroism and inspiration are present from the brand's inception – even the name Nike means victory in Greek. The Nike logo is a stylized version of an ancient winged representation of victory, with the *Victoire de Samothrace* being the most famous example. In adding a new cultural layer to this complex system and updating these values to the 21st Century, Nike perpetuates this culture, placing it on a sound pedestal to ensure a close relationship with the public who shares this collective imaginary realm.

Figure 1.1: Nike's cultural layers

Contemporary sport culture	Athletes are celebrities embodying outstanding performance, exceeding one's personal best in a society of performance competition
Sport culture of Antiquity	Athletes embody physical perfection associated with moral perfection, with beauty reflecting the victor's power
Mythological foundation	Athletes bring the heroic values of mythological figures to modern times such as Theseus or Achilles. Their achievements acquire a mythological or even religious dimension.

Other brands draw customers' interest by raising fundamental anthropological issues. Such is the case for Dior, whose ad campaign *J'adore* abounds in cultural references expressing the quest for immortality.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

Dior *J'adore*: The quest for immortality, analyzed by semiologist Odilon Cabat

Since 2010, *J'adore* by Dior leads perfume sales in France, dethroning Chanel *N°5*. This is due to the successful perfume itself and a significant and powerful visual ad campaign, built up over several years. The ad campaigns since 1999 with Carmen Kaas, followed by Charlize Theron, demonstrate the brand's consistent desire to maintain a particularly deep and dense cultural thread. The story breaks away from typical perfume campaigns based on seduction to build a much more significant story line. Through various Christian and secular references, the *J'adore* saga tells a story of the quest for immortality.

Contrary to other campaigns focused on romance, *J'adore* systematically and consistently deals with a much more involved anthropological theme. The pool of youth in the initial ads, where a woman dives literally into a pool of gold – the incorruptible metal – and constant references to baptism and to rebirth through the perfume as an elixir of life. The model calls upon a host of female archetypes

to embody the ultimate woman. Charlize Theron walking out of the water obviously evokes Aphrodite/Venus, endlessly represented in art as the goddess of love and beauty. In ecstasy in a bed of gold, the *J'Adore* woman is also Danaeus, the Greek princess that Zeus manages to seduce by mating with her as gold rain. Additionally, there is extreme coherence in the signs and product name which is the literal illustration of the brand name. Jean Cocteau used to say that Dior was « *the agile genius of our times, whose magic name included both God and Gold…* ». The perfume name connotes and reinforces this divinity – one only adores God. *J'adore* in fact, was one of the designer's favorite expressions. The omnipresence of gold also expresses the core message of the brand, famous for their post-war, hard-times launch of the famous « *New Look* »**,** and swirling skirts. The profusion of gold in the ads - even more so in the latest Château de Versailles ad - extends this lust for abundance and bounty as an antidote to the gloom of the economic crisis. Dior is part of the culture of excess, extravagance and crazed spending, embodied by the Sun King (Louis the XIV).

No culture, no brand

Psychologist and founder of the Palo Alto school, Paul Watzlawick said one cannot ***not*** communicate. Even refusing to communicate or silence is a way of communicating. Similarly, we can say that no brand is without culture. Even brands without a culturally rich universe, such as discount brands have culture, though close to bulk culture. These « ascetic », brands deny they are brands and refuse to develop any imaginary universe beyond product culture.

One of the keys in discount culture is the culture of bulk or batch. When discount brands create visuals to illustrate products, there is no decor or staging. Discount retailers feature many brand-less products with only a secondary name or description, which functions as a sort of production stamp. There is no intent to create an imaginary realm, but a raw and informative description on the product, sometimes enriched with objective details concerning location of origin, production conditions or standards and appellations which would typically appear on the back of the package: « …*whole grain sweet corn, grown in the South West of France* »**, «** *vinaigrette with plain mustard* »**, «** *rock salt from Guérande* »**, «** *type 45 whole wheat flour* »**,** etc**.** Packaging contributes to this soberness, often featuring flat, solid colors or transparency, always making the product appear in « bulk ».

This refusal of frills corresponds to deliberate neutrality, making products real, bulk and tangible. Customers don't buy Uncle Ben's rice, but rice by the kilo. The brand's involvement is minimal, its relationship with customers, only neutral professionalism, with no form
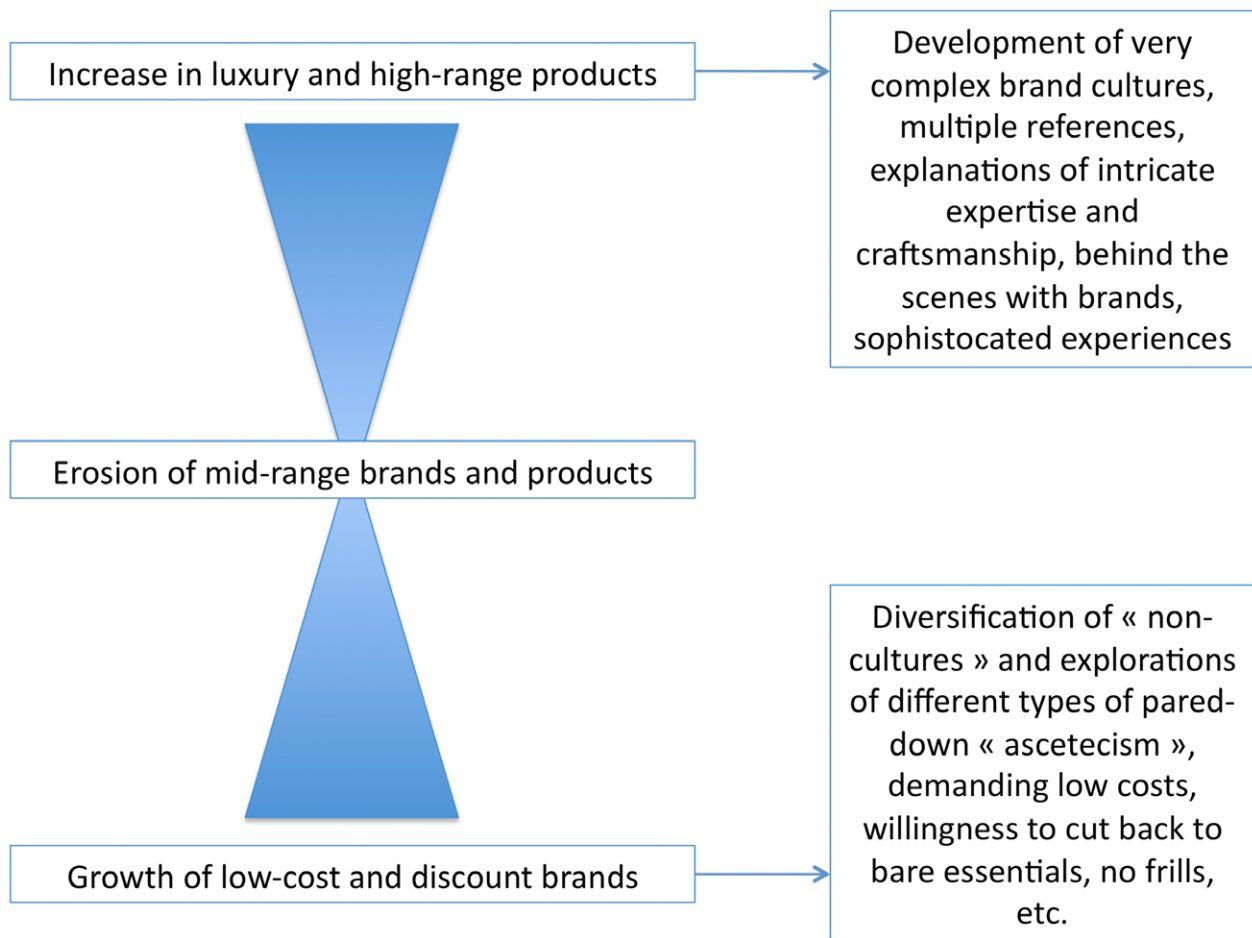
of seduction or « marketing ». This transparency is a posture having meaning and being justified by indicating the discount price: standardization and the lack of imaginary value correspond to low prices and minimal functions. On a second level, as semiologist Raphaël Lellouche explains in his studies on luxury and art, this strategy focuses on the depiction of the scarcity of money, which is a cultural articulation of a specific context: shortages, crisis, drop in purchasing power, corollary to the development of the smart consumer mythology. This is the depiction of a cultural representation of money, completely different from the luxury world (which represents consumers as being able to spend) that nevertheless applies codes and traditions.

Discount brand Culture	Luxury brand Culture
Depiction of money as rare	Depiction of money as abundant

The structuring of many markets in « X » formation, with an offer rich in entry-level and upmarket products, and the disappearance of mid-range products, encourages the polarization of brand culture, with cultures that are deliberately minimal[2], built on deliberate asceticism, and dense cultures which target projection in a fertile imaginary realm.

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2   It would be a mistake to think that « low cost » brands and their « minimal » cultures meant the end of marketing. On the contrary, there are dozens of ways to be ascetic and each culture must develop a vision in lign with its claims. An example in religion, the history of the Church saw many « minor orders » whose members took vows of poverty. However, the asceticism of Saint Francis of Assisi, based on a culture of courtesy and universal fraternity is completely different from the severe or militant asceticism of other orders. They simply represent potential sources of inspiration for brands wishing to adopt this posture.

Figure 1.2: Market polarization

| Increase in luxury and high-range products | → | Development of very complex brand cultures, multiple references, explanations of intricate expertise and craftsmanship, behind the scenes with brands, sophistocated experiences |

Erosion of mid-range brands and products

| Growth of low-cost and discount brands | → | Diversification of « non-cultures » and explorations of different types of pared-down « ascetecism », demanding low costs, willingness to cut back to bare essentials, no frills, etc. |

Luxury: the culture of distinction

Consumers identify 3 main characteristics of luxury brands: master craftsmanship, an invitation to escape or to dream by offering access to a wonderful world, and a privileged, exclusive and respectful relationship. Luxury culture is a culture of distinction. A brand can only be considered luxury if it is part of a legitimate culture in both the particular, non-commercial dignity of its products and the elite or social category it addresses. According to Raphaël Lellouche, « *…luxury consumers are identified by the constitution of elites, with luxury being first and foremost a social relationship between those who can enjoy luxury objects and those who cannot. Luxury aficionados must approach the cultural elite, called « high culture » or legitimate culture to gain social positioning and spark desire, as the elite are defined firstly by behavior, lifestyles and cultural consumption. The elite make up a privileged scene and references: not only do the elite observe each other, but they jointly establish the criteria of luxury and contemporary culture through must-see exhibitions, luxury venues and places to travel… Therefore it is essential for luxury brands to be present not only in transit areas (busy areas such as airports, luxury hotels, palaces, etc.) but especially in areas of high cultural density, frequented by the elite (museums, emblematic monuments, etc.)* ».

From product producer to cultural agent

Generally speaking, all brands are cultural agents since their products and/or services fall within the general scope of existence. A brand becomes a true cultural agent when it rethinks its object in a broader frame of representations as living and changing.

In the seventies and eighties, brands were not considered cultural agents. It was clear that brands had a cultural dimension without ever going further. Cultural inscription was reduced to what was called the « imaginary field ». Today brands are increasingly aware of their cultural roles, due to a recent revision of markers determining elite versus popular.

Just a few decades back, commercial culture was essentially only advertising. Though occasionally picked up by Pop Art and some sectors (mostly for critical representations), commercial culture was an isolated field. The three fields of legitimate, popular and commercial culture were relatively separate despite some areas of overlap or free circulation.

In step with media growth today, brands are increasingly aware that the array of representations and symbols manipulated in advertising are an integral part of culture. Popular and commercial culture have become if not respectable, at least worthwhile in exploring or sublimating for legitimate culture. Commercial brands step more legitimately into cultural creation alongside popular culture (through music, clothing, body style, etc.). Luxury brands strive to exploit and depict their connections with legitimate culture, such as the fine arts, painting, sculpture, classical music, etc. Over the past 10 years, exhibitions such as Bulgari's 125 year anniversary at Paris' Grand Palais, Van Cleef & Arpels at the Museum of Decorative Arts or « Orient-Hermès » at the Arab World Institute.

Figure 1.3: « Educated » culture and popular cultures
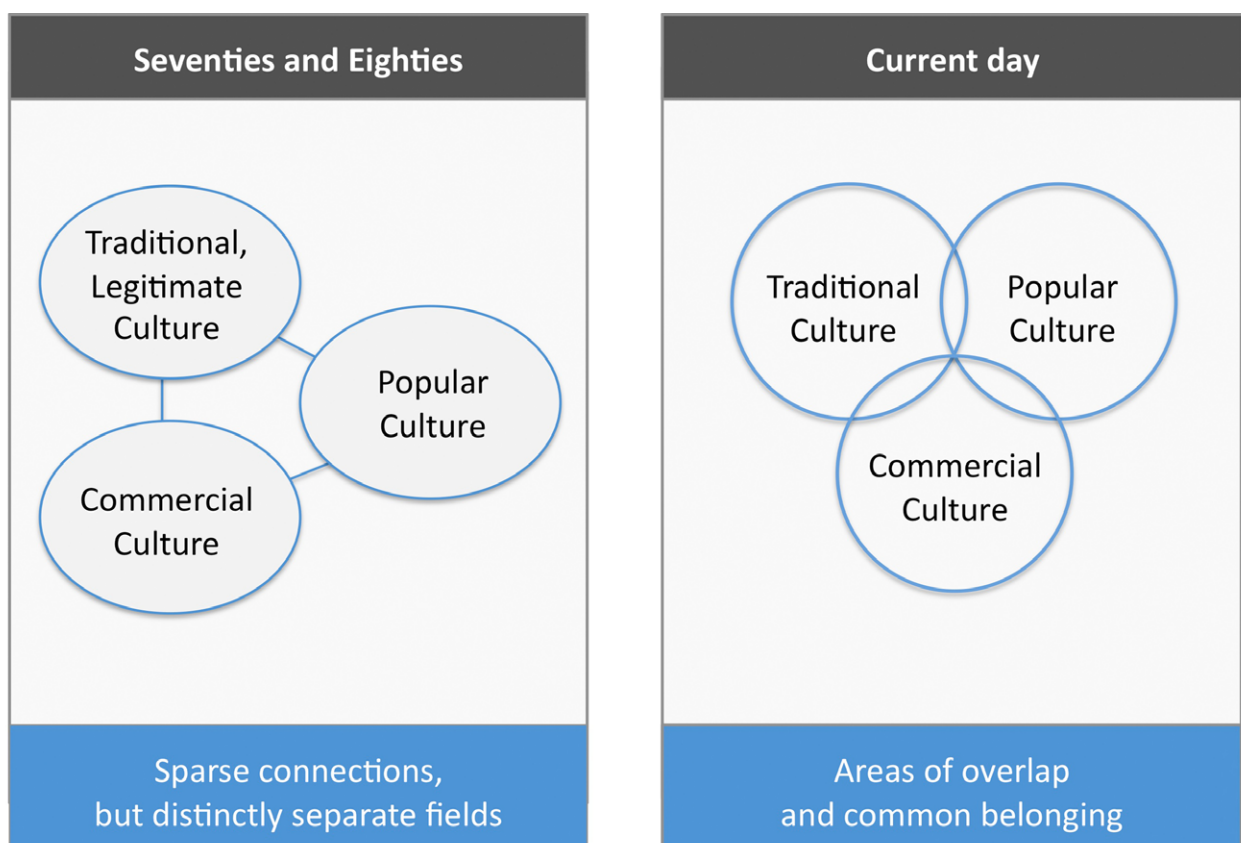
Brands have understood that their reach extends beyond conveying exclusively product-related commercial content. They get that their products exist in a global context, steeped in representations, practices, lifestyles, techniques and symbols, and are stakeholders in culture, with the value of some brands depending also on how much the ambient culture values these representations.

Brands are announcers in the public and cultural scope, amidst a heteroclitic ensemble of announcers (including artists, governments, individuals, institutions, etc.). Independent of their value-sign for consumers, brands have relevance and cultural responsibility. It is important to be a visible announcer, having the critical mass to exist as an announcer. Brands must develop a style, be involved in remarkable events, should arouse curiosity and enjoyment that is cultural, aesthetic and symbolic.

Brands are no longer simple producers of products and services for a market. When brands go beyond functional applications, they embrace a greater potential in their scope of responsibility.

A brand producing lighting equipment explores the pleasure produced by lighting or the beauty of a well-lit space. Brands producing baby products address child development. Canon stimulates user creativity while examining memories. HSBC takes banking a step further by becoming the expert in expatriation.

A car manufacturer looks at comfort and urban design, as BMW organizes the « *What is comfort ?* » exhibition at the Guggenheim in New York. Raphaël Lellouche explains that brands use their products to develop ideas, then subordinate their products to a governing idea such as « mobility » or « comfort » then apply this idea in all its cultural dimensions.

Atlantic manufactures appliances ranging from heating to air-conditioning, including heat pumps and towel warmers. The brand has developed culture around the idea of energy savings and thermal well-being. Their challenge is not only to improve product functions, but also to address issues such as perceived temperature, interactions between insulation and ventilation, air quality and good energy management practices. This cultural engagement is expressed in content production on their blog Ma-maison-eco-confort.atlantic.fr, which is poised to expand.

Furniture company Blu Dot launched an experiment to understand interactions between design, beauty and well-being. In New York City, they placed chairs equipped with GPS, then observed and filmed New Yorkers' reactions. The brand followed different people who took the chairs home to understand what they did with them and why.

Dulux Valentine, leader in home decorative paints, launched the « Let's Colour Project », a global call and movement to turn gray spaces into bright, colorful spaces. The brand suggests that everyone take charge of their environment through a psychological benefit, as indicated by Michele Klein in *Influencia*: « *Applying color is offering optimism, joy and well-being amongst friends and family...* »

According to strategic identity consultant Patrick Mathieu: « *Brands must accomplish their never-ending cultural mission. The problem for a brand is to leverage available resources,*

and to the best of their ability, address the anthropologic issues of their times and provide people with answers to the questions posed and issues raised. »

Brands have innate culture

An important observation is that brands do not just happen on their own. Brands fit into a culture, on which they are reliant and which goes beyond them. This comes mainly from brand founders who create these connections with history - without even knowing it. According to Patrick Mathieu « *A brand's origin is determined by the convergence of its founder(s) and history. This puts brands' omnipotence into perspective and stresses their dependence on an environment they did not choose. A brand inserts its culture into the world and its history. Additionally a brand contains the identity structure and unique-ness of its founder, and ensures its deployment and longevity. Consequently, brands don't control their fundamentals, quite simply because they did not create them.* » The example of L'Oréal perfectly illustrates how brands belong to the culture of their times and founders.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT
Eugène Schueller and L'Oréal by Patrick Mathieu, strategic identity consultant

In 1909, Eugène Schueller started a French company specializing in non-toxic hair color, which would become L'Oréal in 1939. At the end of the Nineteenth and the turn of the Twentieth Century, the taboo on women coloring their hair was lifted. Previously as Saint Louis had required prostitutes to color their hair, it was considered a religious transgression. As a result of growing secularization, laws were passed such as the separation of Church and State in 1905. Also between 1890 and 1910, a second historical and social milestone occurred with the invention of aspirin, the discovery of penicillin, pasteurization and vaccinations, transforming human health. Eugène Schuller's chemical formula invention, allowing women to safely color their hair, occurs at this historical crossroads.

A free-market entrepreneur, he considers the concept of « good health for all » a market to be stimulated. A healthy body is potentially beautiful; and all women have potential they should leverage. « *Because you're worth it* »… His creativity accompanies social evolutions (like the short, colored hairstyles sported by Coco Chanel and Louise Brooks in the 1920s & 1930s) and offers women the promise of « looking better, feeling better » as opposed to Shisheido's promise of balance or Nivea's of well-being. Eugène Schueller understood the importance of communicating on his values and launched the L'Oréal magazine, *Votre Beauté*, which invited women to take care of their health and beauty – he even penned most of the articles using several aliases.

The Groupe L'Oréal inherits this founding act, steeped in a major society milestone, and maintains the pride in this mission to universalize beauty or « beauty for all » by extending it to many brands and products. Being aware of this destiny, solidified by its family shareholdership (two generations and five presidents over 100 years), has enabled the Groupe L'Oréal to become a leader. As such, the Groupe L'Oréal constantly stimulates research teams to push the envelope in chemistry (with nearly 2 patent applications daily, and 4,000 new formulas annually) and marketing teams to recognize and seize opportunities to help women look and feel ever better. L'Oréal draws its greatness and considerable expansion from this history.

Companies have uniqueness, a way of functioning and thinking that make them inimitable. Over the past fifteen years, Patrick Mathieu has been working on exposing this uniqueness that enables them to « *create value* ».

EXPERT VIEWPOINT
Patrick Mathieu « Identifying brands' uniqueness ».

The challenge for brands is to focus on their uniqueness. Analysis begins with the awareness that brand identity is made up of a fundamental component, independent of the brand, though spearheaded and carried by the brand.

Just like people do not choose their gender, family, environment or location, brands do not choose their identity profile. To consider that brands have total freedom or that they owe nothing to anyone would be at great risk.

Brands are endowed with their essential identity profile from their founders. This binds them to culture and enables them to connect to people's existential issues which are also universal. To build content and organize or embrace meaning, a brand must be positioned culturally on important, even existential issues which truly impact consumers.

At a brand's inception, the « connection » between identity profile and story occurs through two factors:

- *Technical evolution* (without Internet, it would have been impossible to launch Google or Facebook).

- *Moral/ethical evolution*: exposing the elements of one's personal life in the public space becomes an issue of social existence and openness to the world, making it possible to create social services and tools for sharing one's private life.

According to Odilon Cabat, a company's uniqueness is expressed in many different ways. First and foremost, companies have technical culture: their businesses are founded on technical expertise, enabling them to produce products or provide services. However companies are not mere machines. Beyond the first functional level, companies have their own world vision, human culture and methods for managing interpersonal relations – expressed mainly internally. This reveals three levels of brand culture: technical, ethical and philosophical.

Technical culture, ethical culture and philosophical culture

Table 1.1: Degrees of brand culture

	Technical culture	Ethical culture	Philosophical culture
Key question	What ?	How ?	Why ?
Foundation	Know-how	Etiquette/ manners (civilizational, humanistic)	World Vision / utopic
Brand role	Expertise guarantee	Strength in organization	Driver of determination
Type of communication	Informative brochures, demonstrations	Ethics Charter offices, processes	Publicity, advertising extensive cultural universe
Addressing :	professionals, connoisseurs	Internal corporate organization, customer relations	A broader audience identifying with the brand's values

BtoB (Business to Business) companies provide an interesting example in the rank of importance of different cultural strata.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

B to B businesses' degrees of culture, according to Odilon Cabat, semiologist

B to B businesses communicate particularly on their technical expertise through informative brochures.

Ethical culture is often conveyed informally *via* employees who are in direct contact with clients. Employees reveal the company's habits, behaviors and attitudes, as well as the offices whose layout reflects the organization's management structure. When putting forward their teams' resumes and key attributes, they implicitly express corporate recruiting policy and HR preferences, as well as touch on internal processes.

Philosophical culture is the least explicit. In market research institutes, advertising does not allow one to differentiate businesses. When perusing market research guides, a host of interchangeable arguments is the norm. Therefore it is important to unearth the implicit: A business is considered superior by communicating to potential clients on its values, vision, philosophy, and ideally the utopia behind it. One could expect market research institutes to be explicit in their views on the major issues impacting studies, such as the interviewees' relationship, vision of representativity, etc.

Ultimately it is difficult for B to B businesses to communicate on these nearly invisible dimensions, often considered by the outside world as a sort of « black box ». Technical aspects and technological expertise require simplification to be understood. Ethical aspects and philosophical commitment must be developed and elaborated as programs. This enables B to B businesses to endow themselves with true culture and to become true brands.

Brands are cultural agents and are expected to become cultural leaders. They must be aware of how they fit into culture. In the following chapters, we will examine manifestations of brand culture and particularly cultural sources and dissemination vectors.

CHAPTER 2
BRANDS' CULTURAL SOURCES

Nearly every *universe* can be potentially mobilized to develop a brand culture strategy: nature, spirituality, science, healthcare, the arts, sport, local traditions, childhood, gastronomy, politics, the street, etc. This book could never draw an exhaustive list nor reveal the creative force of all the possible combinations. In fact, most often the cultural intersection of several *universes* gives rise to the richest brand cultures. For this reason, we simultaneously publish a series of articles on cases of outstanding cultural strategy since 2012 in the « Brand Culture » section of the *Influencia* newsletter. The following illustrated examples are available on-line: Sushi Shop, Happy Pills, Repetto, Petit Bateau, Perrier, Red Bull, Oasis, Michel & Augustin, Citadium, Nike, chocolate maker Patrick Roger, Ladurée, Mariage Frères, JenniPie, La Cure Gourmande, Desigual, Lush, Joia, Monoprix, etc. This collection of examples demonstrates the strength of brand culture and their leveraging of *universes* and reference points.

Brands and their Cultural Foundations

Brands' cultural foundations are initially related to their sector, business line, corporate history, origin, place of origin (Havana for Havana Club), founding myth, charismatic person (Gabrielle Chanel, Christian Dior, Marc Jacobs and Karl Lagerfeld), interaction with a time period (La Belle Epoque for Perrier Jouet), customs, expertise, etc.

Figure 2.1: Brands Cultural Foundations
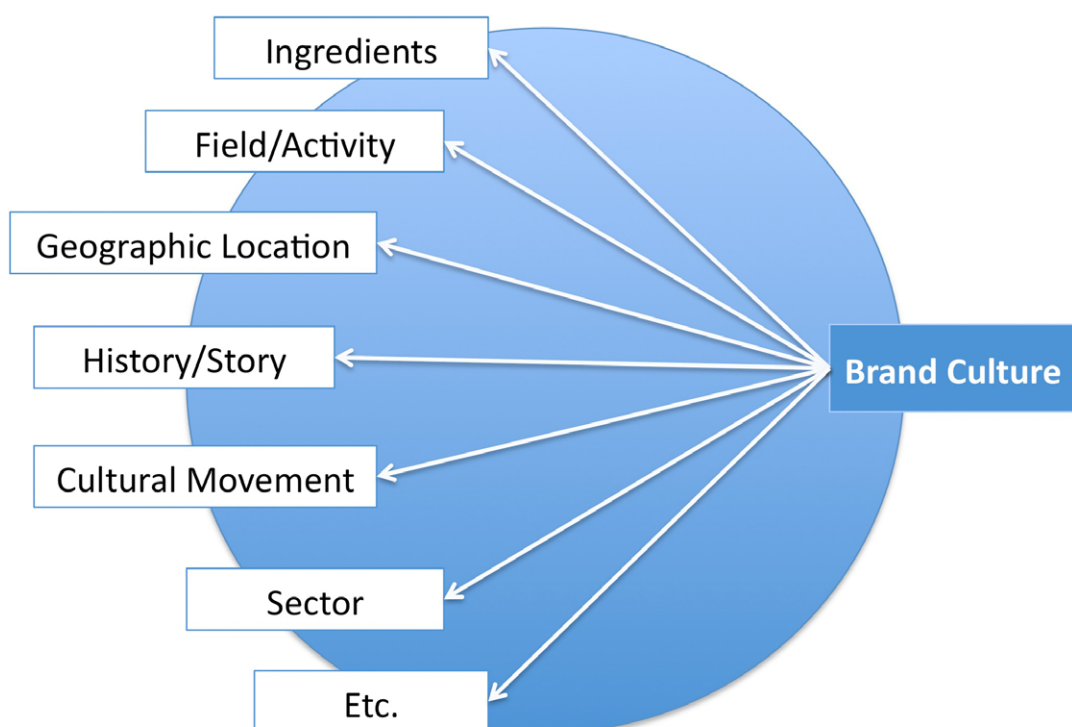
The following pages feature illustrations detailing the diversity of cultural foundations.

Ingredients

Based on ingredients, brands leverage an available authentic *universe*. Some brands focus entirely on ingredients as essential to their make up: Caudalie and grapevines, Dior's « life » gold, Yquem wine's vine shoot, Mamma Oliva's olive oil, Yves Rocher's plants and herbals, Innocent or Oasis and fruits, Nutella and hazelnuts, etc.

An ingredient such as chocolate has intrinsic characteristics which determine the cultural *universe* of chocolate makers. In terms of form, chocolate is a paste to be sculpted at will, similar to visual arts, allowing craftsmen to give free reign to their wildest creative imagination.

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CASE STUDY

Chocolate sculptures by Patrick Roger

Chocolate is the perfect example of a product steeped in powerful symbolic and intellectual associations which brands must acknowledge. As such, chocolate maker and sculptor Patrick Roger has likened it to the clay of mythical times in creating monumental sculptures of crocodiles, orangutans and buffalo horns. Chocolate also features a range of colors many brands can and do leverage: Chocolate Italiani uses the cocoa color in store decor, menus and chef uniforms. Patrick Roger plays on the contrast and complementary colors such as chocolate's red ochre, rust and iron, Mars' metal and mineral green for packaging and decor, neighboring Malachite green, copper carbonate and Venus metal.

Anthropologically, chocolate can be considered a taboo substance for adults. Firstly, its matter is metamorphic, and can take different shapes that correspond to different stages in childhood and the creative imagination; secondly, it melts and through analogy gives rise to the idea of dissolution of life; finally, its appearance is fecal, also confirmed by the phonetic association « cocoa » (« *cacao* » in French) and the existence of « chocolate drops ». To legitimize partaking of this forbidden substance, brands use various means: associating chocolate with festivities, a moment of transgression where adults return to childhood (especially at Easter and Christmas) making it acceptable as a gift, presenting chocolates like jewels in a gift box; finally by confining it to shapes that prevent dissolution (bunnies, chickens, eggs, etc.). In creating monumental works of art, Patrick Roger legitimizes chocolate and removes all the guilt for adults.

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Each ingredient has its culture. Nutella's culture lies in hazelnuts, but not just any hazelnut. They come exclusively from a special harvest and the recipe is a guarded secret. In all this, Nutella expresses the fact that the ingredient is much more than a simple part of a recipe for a hazelnut spread, but it is the true medium expressing a culture that is a reservoir of meaning, bearing a collection of behaviors and values.

The field of activity or profession

The field or profession is also a foundation for the development of brand culture: a profession means expertise, recipes, instruments, functions, people (specialists or users) all of which are surfaces on which a brand can imprint to develop culture or construct its *universe*.

CASE STUDY

Repetto and dance

Initially designed for classical ballet, facing impending bankruptcy in 2004, Repetto rebounded with improved product lines and communication to become one of the cornerstones of French fashion. Helmed by Jean-Marc Gaucher, Repetto's talent lies in understanding that ballet is much more than an athletic activity or a prestigious hobby, but a true culture, and a total world with specific lifestyle, codes, practices and esthetic environment reaching far beyond theatres and concert halls. Ballet dancers represent a strict, disciplined lifestyle, exuding artistic beauty in their walk, posture and even the way they sit, etc. Classical dance is a rich *universe*, with the coexistence of grace and fierce competition (especially amongst the aspiring Opera ballet dancers). The Repetto brand is positioned to pass the culture of ballet down through generations, rather than a simple purveyor of ballet accessories - thereby taking on another dimension.

Repetto was founded in 1947 by Rose Repetto at the behest of her son Roland Petit, then a young dancer whose feet were sore and blistered from his ballet classes. A master shoemaker, Rose Repetto designed a slipper providing the utmost comfort and performance in ballet. The brand began producing products for professionals, then expanded its reach by offering upscale ready-to-wear fashion: ballerina slippers, clothing, shoes and leather goods. And all models are inspired by ballet and feature ribbons and pastel color schemes. This osmosis extends to product names: *Arabesque* and *Splits* tote bags, *Gisèle* and *Norma* ballerina slippers, after the famous heroines of the eponymous ballets, *Michael* loafers pay tribute to Michael Jackson or *Zizi* oxfords, to Roland Petit's wife… The entire product line transposes the imaginary realm of ballet and shows into the real world. Communication and advertising materials feature this *universe* as well: Star ballerina, Dorothée Gilbert became spokesperson after Marie-Agnès Gillot. The shops are veritable shrines to ballet, with spot-lighting, and spaces curtained

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off, imitating stars' dressing rooms and practice bars.

While maintaining a strong foundation in the classical dance world, the brand features associations with French fashion icons: Serge Gainsbourg made white, sockless *Zizi* oxfords a must for anyone with style, and Brigitte Bardot stepped right into her red ballerina *BB* slippers, specially designed for Roger Vadim's film, *Et Dieu… créa la femme (And God… Created Woman)*.

Geography: topography and national cultures

Many brands have cultural richness from their geographic origin: Rolex is the ultimate in Swiss watch-making, Apple is endowed with California's leading edge industries, Ferrarelle, with Italian gastronomy, L'Occitane, with the iconic scents of Provence, Alfa Roméo, with Italian seduction, Triumph motorcycles has the British flag draping their dealerships, etc. Through their association with their geographical origin, brands gain deeper meaning and reflect a host of cultural associations related to a place, albeit governed by its topographical constraints and customs, compliant with its values, etc.

Petit Bateau promotes French upper-class family values. French short breeches arose from a turn-of-the century bed-time story (*Maman les p'tits bateaux*), with sailing styles evoking the attire of affluent families in the early Twentieth Century. Since then, Petit Bateau has weathered the years, soul intact, producing inter-generational, good-quality basics.

On another register, Havana Club has been hugely successful in imbuing its brand with Cuba's iconic Havana. Thanks to Havana Cultura, a cultural program spotlighting Cuba, and more recently the film *7 Days in Havana* released in cinemas, rum has been enriched with all the colors of this enigmatic civilization. The association was enhanced by the recent edition of *collector* glasses and bottles, featuring the images of the various scenes comprising the film.

In a globalized economy, geographical origins can be competitive advantages, with each brand becoming the ambassador and promoter of its land of origin. In the luxury industry, the idea of product origin is particularly prevalent: Gucci, Dolce Gabanna, Armani, Prada are closely connected with Italian culture, and enter into competition with Dior, Chanel and Yves Saint-Laurent, all steeped in French culture, particularly Parisian. During an HEC alumni conference, Jean-Noël Kapferer pointed out the extent to which brands steeped in their cultural heritage and origin could leverage their assets: « *A country is an even more powerful representation if one has never visited it. From abroad, France is perceived as **the** country of elegant lifestyles, make-up, perfume, fashion, gastronomic food*

and luxury, though not at all appreciated for its technological prowess. Therefore, French businesses must promote their French origin in just the right way. **»** The French are very proud of their technological image exemplified by Airbus, Areva, Dassault, etc. However Jean-Noël Kapferer considers **«** *Outside France, this image is not associated with the French, since French technology is traded essentially through government contracts, without impacting public opinion***».** Industrially, the fact that goods are produced in France provides no value in comparison to countries like Germany. Jean-Noël Kapferer also mentions **«** *The American brand Grey Goose produces vodka from special French wheat, processed in Cognac, France, successfully displaying the French flag on all its bottles. Many protected designations of origin leverage the magic associated with their production locations such as Champagne and Roquefort* **».** Along the same lines, Fauchon, with its signature « made in F », has staked claim to an identity of French gastronomy, imbuing its brand with a new and light subtlety.

History

History affords brands rich territories to draw upon to develop their culture: Perrier Jouët owes a great deal to *la Belle Epoque* and cultivates its connections to decorative arts. Lacoste is inseparable from the musketeers' story, like Dior, from the Newlook, and Dim, from women's liberation. Ladurée, the fine pastry maker founded in Paris in 1862, perpetuates the atmosphere of the Nineteenth Century *salons* and the period's taste for historicism and artistic syncretism in revisiting the Marie-Antoinette style (pastel colors and white cameo decor).

Brands increasingly communicate on their cultural foundations, by mentioning their inception dates in their logos, publishing their biographies and celebrating anniversaries, such as Coca-Cola recently celebrating 125 years. Some Levi's stores feature a sort of totem or column, recounting the company's story. As the site of its inception, the New York Kiehl's shop resembles a museum honoring the brand, while other stores recount brand history through old posters and intentionally dated images.

More specifically, luxury brands have a Heritage department which compiles a repository of products, photos and films to illustrate their story and produce books, exhibitions and documentaries. Examples include the Bulgari exhibition at Paris' Grand Palais (2010) a retrospective with each decade featuring a wealth of archives and documents. In addition to external communication opportunities, the preservation of techniques and expertise provides an interesting base to develop training and ensure employees are aligned with brand culture.

Brands don't just settle for promoting their historic foundation, they can also invent legends or partner with myths. In selecting BB (Brigitte Bardot) as their spokesperson in 2010, Lancel is endowed with the spirit of the Sixties along with the demands of the time for freedom and women's liberation. On another register, La Cure Gourmande invites us « *to indulge in products of days gone by* » with lollipops, taffies, nougats, diamond-shaped

almond paste chews, soft caramels, etc. whose names and ingredients transport us to candy vendors from a century ago. The old-fashioned packaging in metal boxes, previously housing toys or sewing kits, contribute to the atmosphere of yore. This « *candy-maker* » capitalizes on an idealized France (similar to *la Belle Epoque),* depicted in a fun and humorous way through children's bed-time stories. As such, the brand hinges on dual nostalgia by referring to days gone by and lost childhood. The parody establishes distance, facilitating the acceptance of an « old-fashioned brand » established as recently as 1989.

Nature

Nature is the cultural grounds used by many cosmetic brands.

The Yves Rocher brand whose motto is « *beauty through plants* », is France's leading skin-care company with over 550 stores in France and 1600 across the world. Over the years, the brand has made its founder's village of La Gacilly popular through initiatives consistent with the brand's values promoting natural plants. Herbal Cosmetic Workshop is an attractive and educational showcase for the brand's latest news. The Végétarium Café is an organic restaurant; the botanical garden is the brand's plant conservatory of over 1000 species, with fields of over 4 hectares, to supply a third of Yves Rocher's needs. Finally, la Grée des Landes, the brand's hotel spa promotes its eco-citizen philosophy with bio-climatic architecture and subtle design, combining natural materials and plants, reduced energy consumption and programs to protect biodiversity. Comparatively stores seem to be slightly behind in promoting the plant culture that is so dear to the brand.

Cultural movements

Certain brands base their culture on specific movements or emerging contemporary cultural currents.

Luxury brands have always maintained very close ties with contemporary art, readily borrowing shapes and stage designs to display and depict their products as would a museum curator. La Maison du Chocolat epitomizes the art connection in their chocolate reproductions of objects inspired by exquisite jewelry, furniture design and contemporary art including the *Ghost* chair by Philippe Starck, the Serpent necklace by Boucheron, etc. Further still, Louis Vuitton organizes contemporary art exhibitions in the art gallery located in their flagship store on the Champs Elysées and invites trendy artists to design their handbags. In so doing, the brand acquires values in artistic appreciation and modernity, all the while attracting collectors!

EXPERT VIEWPOINT
Citadium, embodies *street culture* by Raphaël Lellouche, semiologist

Citadium opened in Paris in the year 2000. Initially positioned as a sports department store, the brand gradually shifted its concept to become the reference in *street wear*. This success is based on their intuitive cultural strategy bringing together all aspects of urban life, to the extent that the store has practically become a hang-out place.

The name Citadium is a combination of « city » and « stadium », expressing the social dimension of the store striving to be « *the meeting place of cool people* ». In ringing with institutions of old, Citadium is endowed with civil, civic and ritual functions: bringing the people together around a common objective. The logo calls to mind different, more contemporary urban living; its colors suggest an industrial city (soot, smoke, asphalt, metal, etc.); its graphics evoke tagging and graffiti covering city streets amid the hustle and bustle of rush-hour traffic.

The architecture also contributes to making the store a hang-out place. The Caumartin Street's entry hall, flanked by two columns, makes the storefront look like an ancient temple. Citadium becomes a sort of shrine or meeting place for a generation. Inside, the circular architecture around the glass atrium and superimposed galleries, is designed to ensure mutual visibility for all visitors. Customers can enjoy product displays and designs as well as partake in the parade of others. The large, central escalator functions as a sort of giant catwalk whose pageantry is for all to see!

Inside the store, Citadium's federating theme is in fact cultural diversity, made up of a true « *multiverse* » featuring a multitude of graphic cultures: Pop Art, graffiti, punk esthetics, minimalism, Kustom Kulture, etc. These cultures have a common, constant reference to the city in motion. Breaking the mold of other brands, Citadium takes on the role of an authentic trend maker and precursor to urban performances.

Through its three functions – meeting place, mirror for community use, and the street trends' enshrinement - Citadium attains the status of a public place, belonging to and existing through the community that occupies it. Citadium also functions as visitors' home away from home due to its facilities (restaurants, sofas with headsets *to chill out*, photo booths, etc.) and events (games, competitions, concerts, video gaming stands, etc.). Citadium also promotes family spirit through its social network.

The most original facet of Citadium's identity is certainly its promotion of participation: customers « belong » and leave their mark in the store, placing tags and stickers on the walls and in the fitting rooms. Without necessarily encouraging this type of behavior, the store condones it as part of the atmosphere that is « disheveled », unfinished, a sort of mix of construction site, factory and abandoned industrial site,

allowing visitors to fit in and belong. The store pushes identity fusion further by creating a continuum between customers and brand events. Sales associates are selected for their authentic styles and personalities – only distinguishable from customers by their store name tags. The store also selects spokespeople from normal customers by organizing casting operations over the web or in the store. The result is that customers are so integrated in the store, contributing to the atmosphere through their attitudes and behavior, they become emanations of the Citadium culture.

Science

Science is also a source of inspiration for brands. Naturally as a brand epitomizing performance, Nike uses scientific research to improve product technology. In a recent collaboration with visual artist Tom Sachs, Nike had a go at space exploration and materials research: Products are all designed with unprecedented, recycled materials such as airbags, sails, modern spacesuits and still others. The result is a fun collection called Nike-Craft, which includes several facets: science, contemporary art and ecology. In Brussels, Y-Dress considers clothing as a mathematical equation. Using supple, color-reversible viscose and clip systems, the brand offers multi-functional, graphical elements that are convertible at will from dresses to tops to skirts!

Brands' sources for developing their culture can be internal (ingredients, historical or geographical origin) or external (nature, cultural movements, traditions, spirituality, etc.). These are just a few examples, but in fact these sources are boundless.

CHAPTER 3
BRAND CULTURE CHANNELS OF EXPRESSION

Brand culture is founded on diverse sources which can be reinterpreted or recycled. Culture does not intrinsically separate form from substance, immaterial from material. As cultural phenomena, brands must make themselves tangible, be embodied through various, eclectic media, whether material or not immaterial (colors, behavior, places, etc.).

Raphaël Lellouche asserts that this means brands are both *medial* in their actual constitution or make-up, since they infuse material, forms, objects, etc. with symbol(s). Brands are also a *medium* in their functions in the marketplace as a vector of information.

Brands deploy their culture through various channels. From products to advertising, to stores and content production, each element is potentially a cultural vector. These cultural vectors and channels are elective and do not simply communicate messages or ideas. It is indeed a challenge to determine the particular way each channel expresses brand culture.

Beyond discourse towards physiological involvement

Over the past decades, brand identity analysis in France has been largely focused on brand discourse including words and documents issued by the brand, such as advertising. However, brands do not only issue discourse. Their cultures are expressed and forged through other means such as signs, icons, graphical elements, techniques, practices, acts, achievements, performance, etc. As demonstrated by several like-minded philosophers including Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, electronic media has further accelerated this movement to enable brands to go beyond « logo-centrism » and to communicate beyond just words. Culture is conveyed via the body and machines (telegraphs, telephones, radios, etc.) connected to our physiological and cognitive parts. There is a new current of cultural analysis developing (American universities' *Cultural Studies*, and German universities' *Medienphilosophie* according to Friedrich Kittler[3]) which consists in moving away from the « discursive » component of culture to understand its strength and scope.

Editorial content creation allows a brand to expand with the intent to go beyond disseminating messages to content proposition which is similar to a body of work. Brand culture affords even greater expansion by opening up a brand's multi-sensorial reality, surpassing discourse to contain images, signs, objects, techniques, sounds, sensoriality and consumers' physiological involvement. This enables brands to reach a collective image and solidified collective intent due to shared social composition. Cultural analysis of a brand must not only be discursive, it must also take into account the sensorial, cognitive, corporal and physiological dimensions.

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3   Freidrich Kittler, *Grammophon, Film, Typewriter*, Berlin, Brinkman & Bose, 1986.

Figure 3.1: Gradual expansion of brands' focus
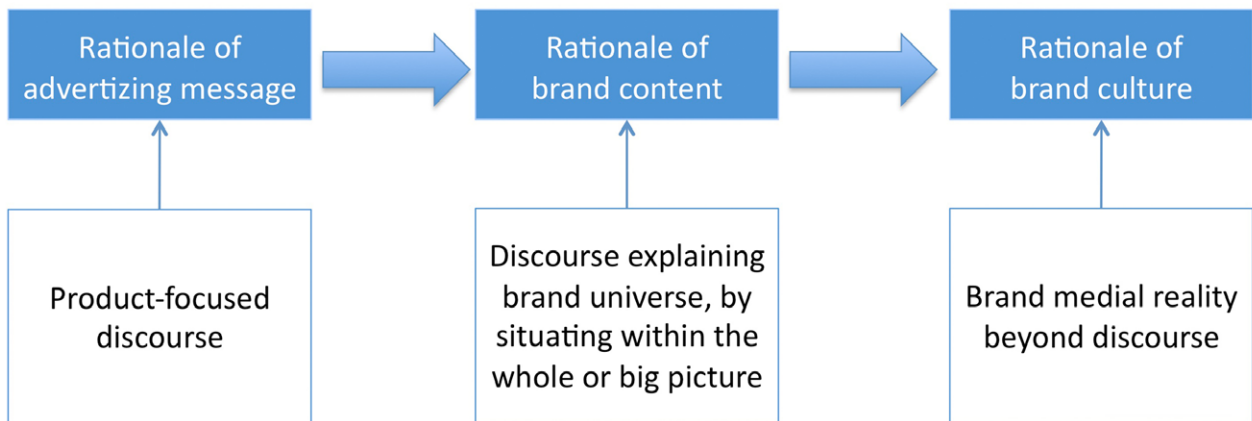
EXPERT VIEWPOINT

The technical revolution allows for the passage from the symbolic to the real, by Raphaël Lellouche, semiologist

Referring back to MacLuhan, one can develop his theory on media in the digital era. Sound recording media completely changed our relationship to sound. Prior to Thomas Edison's inventing the phonograph, there was only the spoken and written word. As a young man, Edison was steeped in the written word, selling newspapers on a train. When he invented the phonograph, it was the first time words were recorded, with the phonograph spool reproducing the recorded sound, and not its written, notational code.

This invention represents a considerable revolution, because in the Gutenberg era, media was strictly symbolic. A music score is symbolic writing, which can only be transformed into its sound reality when played by an orchestra. Rather than reproducing sound through its symbolic code, the phonograph truly records and reproduces the actual sound. Technical media enables the passage from symbolic to real in the Twentieth Century. And revolutionary changes keep occurring.
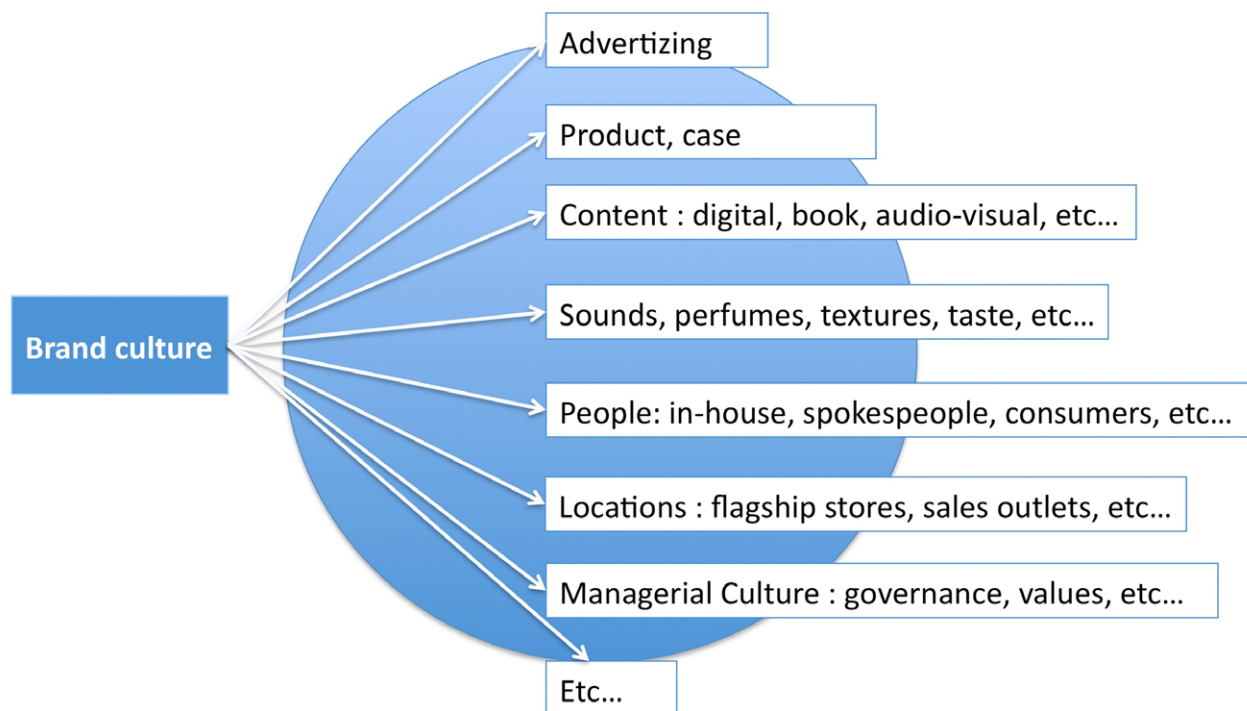
Advertising: Culture in 30 seconds

Advertising is an allusion or evocation of a brand's universe, the expression of brand's cultural quintessence. Its concentrated format (visuals, short films, etc.) is in fact a « trailer or preview » of a brand's culture. In this way, Sushi Shop and their Ad agency *Les gens de l'atelier* have made their ad campaign a complete synthesis of the brand's culture : The brand's fairy-like and creative universe is represented by posters featuring butterflies, horses and crabs represented using sushi, in the Arcimboldo portrait style.

Advertising functions to provide information on brand offers, use, new products and services, benefits, symbolic reference points, etc. Advertising helps consumers find their bearings in the brand galaxy. Advertising can also establish timeless myths which go beyond products' materials and functions. This aspect is accentuated by campaigns' sensorial form which impacts emotions and enables brands to convey cultural information beyond the rational to the emotional.

Content: view on brand culture

Brand content is an essential means for brands to disseminate brand culture. Content provides a panoramic vision of brand culture, tells its story and puts it into perspective. Content can be of three types.

Table 3.1: Different types of content

Specialized content, focused on usages	Universal content, general purpose	Imaginary content, brand issued
Content dedicated to brand's universe or based on brand intervention	Exploration of general interest topics, handled by brand or brand expertise	Creation of an independent, proprietary universe: web-series, short films, etc.

Digital: brand culture's unlimited, interactive space

The digital era provides increasing possibilities for brands to disseminate rich cultural messages. The web provides brands with opportunities to organize meetings with customers – with no time or space constraints whatsoever – and provides hosting and deployment of their cultural universe.

With great potential to immerse customers, brands' websites allow customers to see and explore their cultural universe. Hermès' website offers an interview with nose and perfumer Jean-Claude Ellena, on the origins behind the *Calèche* perfume: He recounts personal memories of stables which inspired his creation. Through this « confiding, » customers develop an intimate and privileged relationship with the Hermès universe.

Brands can either enrich their websites with content or set up dedicated content websites. Brands can also develop apps (tablets, smartphones, etc.), WebTV, interactive TV (iTunes or Youtube or on-line TV). Content can be quite diverse, including advice, tips, coaching, expertise, (making the brand a reference in a particular field), fun and entertaining content, humanitarian, social and community-based initiatives, using interactive software and apps, etc.

Audio-visual: bringing a cultural universe to life

Audio-visual media (videos, slideshows, etc.) is an intuitive and sensorial way to express a brand's universe and spirit. Audio-visual is extensive and immersive, including archives, contextual elements, key words and images, movements, colors, sensations, etc.

Cartier's Odyssee expresses the fine jeweler's cultural universe for all eyes and ears, while telling its story poetically. This short film features all Cartier's iconic products (the Panther, the Trinity ring, the Love bracelet, etc.) and Louis Cartier's travels in Russia and India as well as his friendship with aviator Santos-Dumont, which gave rise to the famous *Santos* bracelet.

There is a reason there are increasing numbers of video screens in stores: while generating extensive savings, screens enable brands to display a complex and sophisticated universe. The screens feature visual atmospheres, fashion shows, product demonstrations, videos on the brand's universe, sports events, etc. In some stores such as the main H&M store in Barcelona, the entire facade is lit up with multi-color screens.

Books: explaining culture

Books are very direct ways to signify culture. They can be selected by a brand and can be signs scattered throughout the brand's universe. In this way, Sonia Rykiel always put a few of her favorite books in her display windows, expressing her love of literature and sharing her tastes. Similarly, the Ralph Lauren store in London or Citadium in Paris both include library sections connected with their respected universes.

Some brands invest substantially, mobilize resources and expertise to publish books which are also a way of deepening and expressing their culture over the long-term. Like exhibitions, books can encapsulate a brand's heritage and legacy. This is an excellent medium to expose a brand's technical culture and expertise, or explore a particular skill (Nestle's chocolate recipes, DIY home repair by Black & Decker). Also *Art, mode et architecture* brings together all sources and forms of expression of Vuitton's culture, featuring artists' contributions and products, showcases and display windows, installations, store decor, films and photographs. In *Skin Secrets*, Liz Earle explains her philosophy on beauty through nature.

Publishing books, brands can address universal topics from their own viewpoint. For their 100th anniversary, L'Oréal published a pyramid-shaped book (Gallimard Publishing House) entitled « *100,000 Years of Beauty* » which recounts mankind's quest for beauty from prehistoric times to the 21st Century. Initiated by the L'Oréal Foundation, this collective book features 400 authors of 35 different nationalities and the best experts in body sculpting, hair-care and colors, hair styles and ornaments, nudity, clothing, and even psychological issues in the quest for embellishment. On another register, over the past ten years, Louis Vuitton has published city guides to travel differently in the Vuitton spirit. The brand shares its « *city and travel attitude* » and provides « *a different view on fashion design, visual arts and indulgence* ». By following these guides, which resemble travel currency, readers adopt the Vuitton way of traveling.

Branded book dissemination has clearly taken off with tablets and mobile apps. Whether free or at a cost, these books are just a click away!

Content (books, films, applications, events, etc.) represents a preferred vehicle for brand culture, as indicated in the extension to our book *Brand Content*[4].

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4   To learn more about brand content, please visit www.brandcontent.fr featuring over 2,000 examples listed by brand, topic, format and industry. We feature production-related content, bu-

Products: culture's multi-sensorial incarnation

Products are pieces, talismans and traces of their brand culture, concentrated and embodied through name, design, label, crest, material, rules and uses, etc. Products solicit several senses simultaneously - sight, touch, hearing smelling, tasting – to provide a direct access to culture. The Mariage Frères tin tea containers evoke the lacquers from China and Japan – two essential stops on the tea import journey. Their names (*Havana*, *Marco Polo*, *Thé du Sahara*, *Casablanca*, *Gold Himalaya*…) are also invitations to travel, and the labels recall the old-fashioned counters of the *Compagnie des Indes* colonial trading companies. They not only provide the brand's history, but also preparation tips and instructions. As you open the tin, the scents revive an olfactory memory; the nearly ritualistic gestures evoke Asian tea ceremonies. Tea is much more than a beverage, it allows one to achieve spiritual peace and to touch beauty. The Evian bottle directly connotes the mountains and their purity, as well as featuring ergonomic benefits in its concave shape. In addition to the elegant object, Zippo lighter owners appreciate the sensation of the flint igniter and the smell of lighter fluid. This type of decoding holds for all types of products. Driving a Harley Davidson is about building one's own bike from a multitude of accessories, adopting a unique attitude fitting with the bike's morphology and appreciating the unmistakable engine sound. Motorcycles are a medium of Harley Davidson culture. The Harley example illustrates the extent to which a product contributes to brand culture, from the machine's use to the users' hang-outs. The relationship to machines (computers, devices, etc.) make up an essential part of culture through the physiological impact, produced practices and « addiction » to use.

Beyond intrinsic multi-sensorial nature, products do not exist solely based on their context. Their packaging is inscribed with a place and atmosphere that are additional indications of their brand culture and further enhancements of the consumer experience. For instance when purchasing perfume, products are associated with their in-store shelf depiction, advertising, commercials, sales associate's smiles, the time of purchase, gift wrapping, etc. It becomes the memory of an experience, thereby enhancing it. Even in mail-order or Internet purchases, products are contextualized. Lush customers receive their purchases wrapped in multi-colored, environmentally-friendly corn flakes, along with the brand's feature magazine. This attention is an integral part of the Lush brand culture, and contributes to the fun aspects of their environmental commitment.

These initiatives are part of a brand's objective to create a strong and consistent ensemble that is immediately visible and understandable by direct intuitive intelligence. Marketing consultant Inès Thoze considers there are special ways to express a brand's cultural universe. One of these is by developing the vibration potential (especially considering how

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siness-related content, product-related content (recipes, guides, user's manuals, instructions, etc.), and themes from the public sphere to autonomous creative universe authored by brands (short-films, commercials, sketches, music, artwork, etc.).

objects resonate with their context) to affect spectators or users. One need simply consider holy sites such as the Cathedral of Chartres which was designed to take into account all the human body's vibrations.

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
Creating a universe that is immediately perceptible by the rational and intuitive brain, a universe in resonance

Inès Thoze is a trained architect, working with luxury brands to create harmonious and powerful universes. Working on the architecture of holy sites led her to research the vibrations of color and sound, along with creative images. Inès Thoze constantly seeks to discover what makes a product or place vibrate and how harmonious vibratory states are achieved. Inès Thoze strives to cultivate vibrations that we all perceive – more or less consciously.

« *All human beings vibrate, along with everything around them. Today, we know that fundamental reality is not matter, but its vibration and ondulatory resonance. Each being, place and object has its own resonance.*
Our brains are electrical, chemical and magnetic systems, and likely quantic as well. They are an open system that functions as a transmitter and receiver. The activity of our neurons produces measurable magnetic fields, which produce resonance by pulsating at the same frequency. Additionally neuron synchronization, or brain waves allow for optimizing information processing.
When we vibrate in unison, our ability to react is optimal. The brain can adjust to frequencies received from outside sources – visual or audio stimulation produced by a place or object – having an immediate effect on the synchronization of sensorial perceptions. We have all seen "sound and light" shows. The idea is that through resonance, an object can unify both hemispheres of the brain - the rational and the intuitive. »

« *For a marketed product, vibration comes from the relationship to and balance between its form, function and the space it occupies. The equilibrium between its purpose and form will endow it with a higher or lower vibratory rate. Colors, materials, lights, sounds and the product's environment are all critical.*
Details are paramount as they provide all the momentum. In architecture, for instance, a door would be useless without its handle. It is very important to include works of art which can provide momentum to a product purchase. However, it is a delicate task to select the right artists to fit the right spaces. It is a very meticulous task in assuring alignment. »

« *When moving about in a shop, customers are looking for a product in a gift case. The vibration between product and environment must be optimized to achieve a harmonious resonance which will position the client in "hyper-purchasing" mode*».

Physiological manifestations:
sounds, colors, scents, textures, tastes…

We transmit more than just intelligible sounds and information. Brand cultures are rich with a diversity of sounds and noises contributing to the unique experience they offer. The *Easy Rider* soundtrack features the sound of a motorcycle engine amongst the musical instruments – not a musical note, but a recognizable sound, which conjures up a physiological experience, rather than a mental representation.

The same holds for colors – Hermès' orange immediately comes to mind along with the perfumes which profoundly establish the brand's physiological cultural foundation.

Manifestos and schools: transmission of culture

Brands can also express their culture more directly and responsibly by publishing manifestos and charters.

On their website, South Korean cosmetic group AmorePacific details its philosophy which features harmony between the spirit of the Orient and the beauty of the West. Their logo, comprised of two shades of blue is described as follows: « *Amore blue is soft and subtle like the moon's shadow. Pacific blue is bright and distinct, evoking pristine places, a freezing night in a wild desert, or the ocean depths. These two shades of blue blend together harmoniously to make the AmorePacific logo, and are a perfect metaphor for both inspirations in the name AmorePacific, which make up the brand's essence*. » Many brands express their culture through phrases or texts : Danone proposes to « *bring health to the masses through food products* »; while the home page of Mariage Frères offers a quote by Henri Mariage : « *A scent of adventure and poetry infinitely wafts from each cup of tea…* ».

In another method of disseminating culture, brands open training schools, either reserved for their staff or a selected public. In this vein, in 2011, Pernod Ricard opened the University Pernod Ricard to disseminate leadership values and the international alcohol and spirits group's culture to staff among their various acquired organizations. Launching the Van Cleef & Arpels Jewelry School, the *Place Vendôme* jeweler set a clear objective, illustrating their ambition extending beyond internal staff to generally increase the culture of jewelry. The brand establishes a cultural education mission, considering that the purchase of a luxury jewelry item is equal parts knowledge and culture for customers, and that they must be able to appreciate the craftsmanship and esthetic influences required to produce a ring or necklace. The brand bears material culture and a vast array of manual craftsmanship fields worthy of dissemination, as they represent a source of interest and attachment to the brand's universe.

People: culture embodied

People are the essential vectors of brand culture. Spokespersons, staff and consumers can embody culture in a lively and modular way. They can also enrich brand culture by their interpretation and unique vantage points.

Spokespersons

Spokespeople have a particularly important role as they embody brand culture in a way that lends itself most to identification. Their role is increasingly active. Far from being simple « clothes hangers », they are handpicked for their own universe to resonate with the brands. As such Nike athletes are not represented in action, but interact with the public through direct eye contact and an invitation to enter their world. Since Lancel signed with Brigitte Bardot, their elegant brand is laced with the insolence of the Sixties from store layout to advertising.

Sales associates

The sales staff is an integral part of brand culture. It must be consistent with the brand's location, product and universe. Dress, behavior and information must all mix closely with the offer and location. The fact that Décathlon sales associates are athletes endows their stores with greater value, making them more than just a store, but a place of expertise. At Abercrombie, the sales staff's youth, good looks and attire contribute substantially to the atmosphere.

In the new Apple stores, sales associates in blue tee-shirts handle various terminals with great dexterity (an iPhone easily turns into an input device). The Genius Bar, where technicians solve all types of problems, perfectly illustrates Apple's focus on ergonomy, customers and user enjoyment.

Sales staff must be adapted to the culture of each country location. As the first clothing retailer to enter Japan without a Japanese partner, Gap needed to pay particular attention to greeting customers. According to Gap's former marketing Vice President, Pascal Somarriba : « *Being American and casual, therefore not « strat*ified *», allows for a universal greeting that puts everyone on the same level – for better or for worse. This is the complete opposite of the extremely codified Japanese culture (between the sexes, ranks, etc.), which imposes strict rituals in greetings (such as the reverent Japanese bows, the subject of entire books). Following lengthy reflection and studies, Gap decided to create a unique greeting in Japan, which created surprise and controversy as it was profoundly unusual, even revolutionary. This dimension was greatly appreciated by young generations, especially girls, and all members of open-minded society. What's most interesting in this case is that something as simple as a greeting warranted such reflection as it was such a bearer of culture, values and relations.* »

Consumers

Consumers are also drivers of brand culture, through their relationship to products (collections, practices, uses, etc.), they become ambassadors or living showcases of brand culture.

These manifestations exist on their own, but brands need to stimulate customers to form communities and to take initiatives towards inventing new cultural expressions of the brand on their own. Consumers can create genuine and abundant content, enabling the brand to increase media and overall presence: idea boxes, dialogue forums, testimonials, word of mouth recommendations (Nicorette, for example, launched its own WebTV Smo-berup.activestop.ca, featuring former smoker testimonials), tips and advice, collective designs (Streetartview.com by Red Bull lists graffiti from around the world), creative contests on their website Redbull.com, etc. These contributing objective consumers are practically « volunteer employees » as they know the brand better than anyone else and guarantee a certain cultural authenticity.

Locations

Location is the foundation in building brand culture and the privileged vector in diffusing brand culture. Location affords feeling and experiencing total immersion in the brand's universe, due to its intrinsic physical dimensions. In fact, time and space constitute the fundamental reference points of an individual's experience. Real spaces give rise to a body experience and corporal and sensorial interaction which have a greater long-term impact than only mental interaction (such as facing a screen). To counter growing digital competition, brands must leverage their specificities to organize memorable spaces.

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
Re-enchanting consumers on brand premises: challenges for *shopping culture*

On his strolls, Walter Benjamin discusses store windows as more than the central point of information in the purchasing process, but as a place to meet wonder and enchantment in the city. Today's multitudes of stores, cookie-cutter shops and mass consumption make the purchasing experience a routine, repetitive and mechanical act, incapable of capturing dimension and doomed to be forgotten. Brands must circumvent the entropy of commoditization and generalization of boring places without any life, history or soul.

The way to do this is to recreate an interest that goes beyond products' functional aspects to surprise and enchant customers. They need elements of surprise and

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emotion to produce unique and memorable experiences. People walking by or entering stores must be wooed out of their passive state, drawn in, incited to react or interact, to have an experience. Turning the store into an event is the best way for visitors to get involved mentally and physically and to truly « perform » the brand.

Table 3.2: Boutiques/shops and brand culture

Boutique/store as sales outlet	Boutique/store as a place of cultural experience
Uniform, single-function space, point-of-sale only	Segmented, multi-function space, offering a host of activities related to brand, including museums, bars, galleries, restaurants, beauty bars, etc…
Single product	Product is an integral part of a culture expressed through a network of heterogeneous, signifying objects, including location, decor, materials, sound atmosphere, sales associates, art exhibitions, etc…
Builds brand/customer relationship similar to a supplier/buyer relationship	Customers relate to and perform brand

Brand locations can have different forms:

Stores or sales outlets

Locations include stores to distribute goods or services (such as banking or insurance) or permanent open production spaces (Côte d'or chocolate in Bruxelles, Dove or Guerlain spas) or temporary open production spaces (Haribo *pop-up store* or the Perrier Mixology or Danone pop-up bars in train stations or malls). Locations also include brand

flagship stores as prestigious brand symbols.

Sales outlets and flagship stores are the symbolic temples for brands and enable visual and physical contact with the brand's quintessence. Brands « nest » by accumulating various elements to make a unique ensemble. In decorating, brands can assemble emblematic representatives of their universe: colors, objects, accessories, materials, executions, achievements, photos, books, paintings, natural elements, etc. In a single location, they bring together products, sales force, advertising, brand content, etc. to form a coherent ensemble. Inside the boutique, displays provide a concentrated shortcut to brand culture.

Creating this universe is the basis for concept stores, but should not be the exceptional store. In an era of little faith in words, brands' places and events are tangible proof of who and what they are. *A contrario*, pared-down display windows, without any cultural universe, would be considered unacceptably poor and dépassé.

Other locations

To display the richness of their culture, brands exhibit beyond their flagship stores in places of high cultural density such as the Louvre, MoMA and Paris' Grand Palais. Examples include: « Culture Chanel » at the museum of contemporary art in Shanghai, « Orient-Hermès » at the Arab World Institute, SNCF (French Railways) and « Art in Train Stations » at the Grand Palais, etc. Exhibit visitors can get their fill of a brand's culture by getting to know its history and achievements, getting a vision of the brand as a whole. They are invited to situate the brand in its context and make connections with its era and its various forms of expression, as well as to experience the brand as a cultural agent. .

To offer a fuller experience than just trying to increase sales, some brands even open museums (Mercedes museum in Stuttgart), restaurants (Café Armani, Gold restaurant by Dolce & Gabbana), hotels (Bulgari, Missoni or the Barbie suite at the Plazza Athénée), play areas (Playmobil Funparks), temporary spaces (125 Coca-Cola space). MotorVillage, for instance is a unique and original concept developed by the Fiat Group on Paris' lower Champs Elysées. Visitors from across the world experience a new Italy in this space which is a technological, *fashion*, gastronomic and design village featuring Fiat Group car models exhibited next to works of contemporary art.

PART 2
Criteria for strong brand culture

As illustrated in part 1, when brands are based on cultural sources and function as such, identifying their cultural universe's main characteristics is key for management.

Savvy consumers quickly perceive smoke and mirror attempts or cosmetic and opportunistic wangling. It is paramount to determine which features produce strong and effective culture and an authentic universe that can be grasped intuitively. Though an exhaustive list would be impossible, these examples will establish the basic criteria for brands to decipher.

Three central features of cultural universes will be defined. Firstly, culture must be experienced by the entire organization at all levels (chapter 4). Secondly, authentic culture is creative and abundant (chapter 5). Thirdly, culture is enriched by the admixture with other cultures, and is constantly renewed by interactions and influences (chapter 6).

Table 1: Fundamental features of a cultural universe

	Culture is experienced	Culture is creative	Culture is relational
Brand target objective	Demonstrate how culture is experienced and fits with a lifestyle choice and overall life ethic	Spotlight the abundance of brand events and the brand's rich cultural universe	Focus on brand's contributions to its cultural environment
Potential risk	Culture is not sincere or not experienced inside the organization, the brand provides no opportunities to experience culture	Brand culture may be too weak (lacking sufficient elements) or too dispersed (lacking coherence)	Constructing brand in a confined way

CHAPTER 4
CULTURE IS TO BE EXPERIENCED

Part 1 indicated the importance for brands to go beyond a discursive approach. A central aspect of all culture is that culture is experienced both mentally and physically. Before being a symbolic system, a brand is often a solution to a real-life issue, an experience or a deep-rooted attitude, belief or behavior.

Google's teams allegedly celebrated the day they managed to bring search times below the symbolic hundredth of a second. This anecdote means that working to improve an algorithm represents much more than a technical and functional achievement, but is experienced as an epic quest to be rightfully celebrated by those involved and affected.

Founders, culture in its purest state?

In the beginning, every organization has a founder/creator who intuitively and spontaneously imbues the brand with his or her own culture and world vision. For these entrepreneurs, starting a company is often part of their adventure and their personal and financial dedication to a passion. Their work and private lives are often inseparable, their company, an extension of themselves. In this way, Citroën, Virgin, Benetton, Michelin and Red Bull developed rich cultural universes based on their founders' determination.

Founders' individual ambitions often resonate with collective aspirations to provide a solution to cultural or even existential ponderings. Unbeknownst to founders, they become the vehicle for an historical and geographical context which surpasses them and which must be analyzed to understand the issues at stake. Brands take on the culture of their ambient environment, as seen through their creators' prism. In line with the times, Kodak invented film at the end of the Nineteenth Century, allowing people to immortalize their memories and transport photography equipment easily for the wildly popular bourgeois portraits; and Bill Gates launched Microsoft with the ambition to give everyone the tools for personal expression in an increasingly individualistic world.

Some of these founders' visions have such great reach that they can take on the world's issues, act as precursors and contribute to changing perception. As early as 1931, to illustrate the technical superiority of his vehicles, André Citroën organized raids in difficult conditions. With the *Croisière jaune*, his goal was to « *break down geographical, cultural and political barriers in the world* », and to open up new pathways. This enabled him to project cars beyond their typical function to being an integral part of exploring the world. Similarly when Luciano Benetton and Oliviero Toscani launched the revue *Colors* in 1991, it was to publish their firm conviction that tolerance and diversity were society's key values. A designer's personality is readily perceived in fashion. Paul Smith takes inspiration for designing his clothes from walks and his favorite rock bands. It is ironic that the new punctuation created by Agnès b., is nothing more than the expression of the founder's light-heartedness and cheeky personality.

A penchant for details indicates a culture's sincerity

The consequence of this vision of culture as an end, is that brands illustrate their authentic culture in the minute product details – even those invisible to customers. Back in 1795, to guarantee authenticity, Breguet introduced a secret signature on the watch face, only visible under close scrutiny and intense lighting. The brand works for its own satisfaction first, without others realizing or even seeing the depth of their commitment.

When culture is strong and authentic, it is deeply rooted in the brand at all levels. Each of the brand's elements vehicles culture and can mobilize the entire brand universe. In fact, for the informed observer, a single element is enough to evoke the entire network, where all the other elements fit.

Corollary: unifying the internal and external

Patrick Mathieu, an expert consultant analyzes the concept of brand culture as follows: « *Brand culture requires brands and companies to align internal and external. Thinking in terms of* « marketing », *is focusing on the exterior to project onto a market. However there may be a dichotomy between discourse to consumers and markets and what managers and brand professionals think and experience in-house. Addressing culture is particularly sensitive. If "culture" is merely a sales pitch and not experienced in-house by teams, etc., it would be but a facade. Culture necessarily creates a connection between the external and internal, as it becomes a sort of internal signature.* »

If inconsistent with internal brand culture, culture expressed to the public would be "outed" as an imposter, or a phony « mask marketing » attempt. This is an essential point, as currently consumers are overwhelmed and our market economy increasingly values intangible principals. With today's widespread digital access, information and knowledge sharing and dynamic innovations, the new economy is based on ideas and not just products. In this context, a fraudulent concept or idea can be as damaging as the release of a flawed product.

Culture as a driver of diversification

The ultimate test for brand culture is to succeed in projecting a brand into a new universe. Culture provides a diversification force as it is not connected to a specific sector or industry, but associated with a lifestyle or way of being, and can be expressed in other sectors. A business that establishes a strong culture can readily diversify. Though the term is only slightly negative, *stretching* a brand to its utmost is considered pejorative. When a brand's cultural foundation is strong, diversification is natural. From his native Jura region (France's central, eastern mountains) Louis Vuitton came to Paris to learn the trade of « layetier-emballeur-malletier » (box-maker, packer and luggage-maker) which consisted of packing the belongings of wealthy customers setting out on their travels. He learned

how to laminate and coat cloth used in covering and water-proofing trunks. This luxury brand whose visual identity was founded on a monogram - its initials on fabric - goes on to sell watches! It would seem impossible, as these are two distinctly different skill areas. However, the cultural wealth of Vuitton allows for a legitimate shift from the luggage business to selling watches or clothing. Vuitton embodies a traditional, luxury craft which requires precision and workmanship in pieces, just like the characteristics of watch-making.

Stretching brand culture includes creating a lasting field of expression which is unrelated to the original business. Creating a space such as the Hotel Bulgari, unrelated to their original business, Bulgari's projective exercise extends to an "unrelated" product. Nevertheless, when so doing, this universe must reflect the brand's essence beyond its products.

Figure 4.1: Brand culture channels of expression
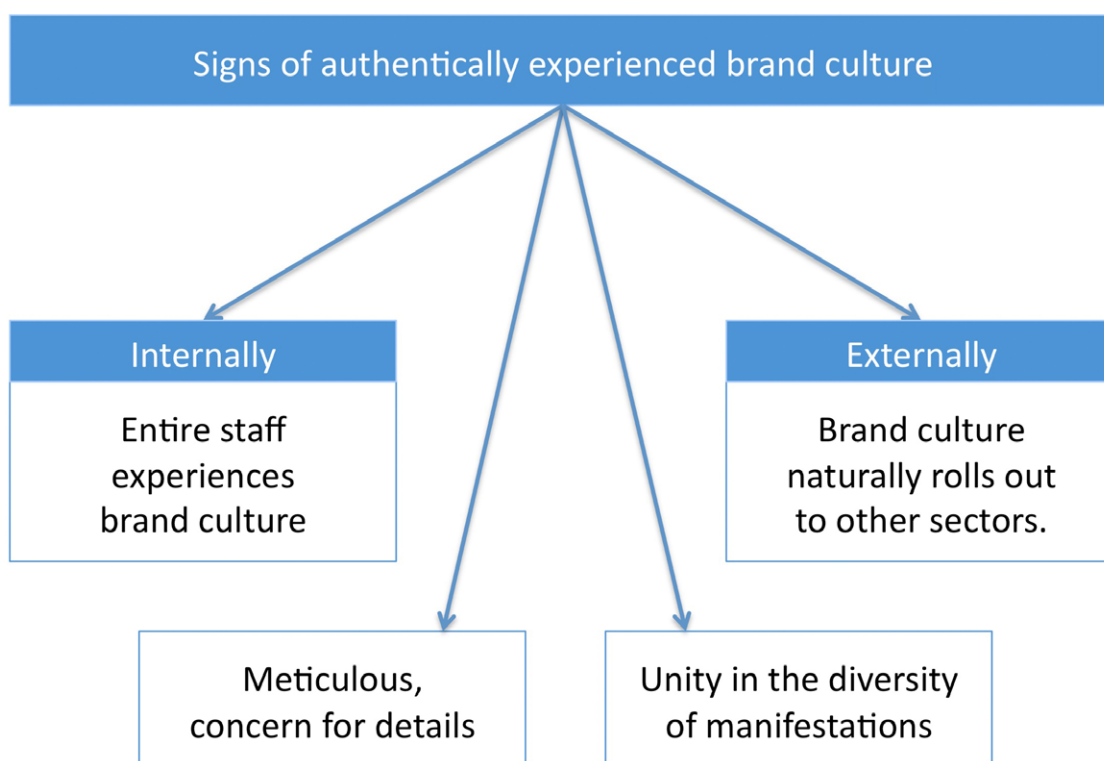
In resisting confusion whilst taking on other objects, brands demonstrate their strong culture and ability to extend. In selling products outside their typical business area, brands create the element of surprise and produce meaning. When Benetton features various colored musical head-phones, they are both innovative and legitimate. They step outside their direct business area, but maintain their general spirit, thereby naturally drawing attention to their fresh initiatives. A women's hat boutique offers argan oil, clearly complementing its floral inspirations. A hair salon sells mirrors or offers tea during hair-styling, expressing the salon's spirit.

Featuring food

More specifically, increasingly brands are developing a food offer, like selling snacks (Gucci biscuits at the Florence Museum tea salon) or more obviously opening restaurants in their sales outlets, such as IKEA and their family cafeteria whose motto « *Great Food at a Great Price…*» features Swedish tradition products such as smoked salmon, beef and pork meatballs, children's meals at 2.95 euros. These are all opportunities for visitors to get a "taste" of the brand.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT
Partaking of brands' offering, by Odilon Cabat, semiologist

As demonstrated in mythology (the myth of Hades and Persephone's pomegranate seeds), we belong to the world whence we have eaten. Partaking of brands' offering is a way of partaking of or experiencing their world, especially non-food brands. The expression « *I will not partake of that offering…* » *a contrario* illustrates distrust towards an establishment.

Milan features Armani's restaurant, and chocolate boutique Dolce & Gabbana Gold, Trussardi's and Marc Jacobs' cafés (both extensions of their boutiques). In London the Rose Bakery restaurant adorns the top floor of the Comme des garçons store, and a café-restaurant resides in the National Geographic store, as well as an excellent salad bar at Donna Karan. On Paris' Champs-Elysées Avenue, the Mauboussin store enhances the jewelry viewing experience with a chocolate-themed bar to tickle taste buds. And since everything is metaphorical, food excellence is required in these places. If the food is questionable, the entire brand can be tainted.

Seeing is experiencing

Culture is experienced, and customers must be given the opportunity to experience brands to their utmost intensity. In-store events, training workshops and demonstrations allow customers to live, experience and take on a brand's culture.

Table 4.1: Internal and external culture

Experiencing culture internally	Experiencing culture externally
Guaranteeing brand culture sincerity by demonstrating not only the concept, but the lifestyle	Enabling customers' physical involvement, ensuring they experience brand culture to the fullest

Beyond simply displaying products, many cognitive and/or emotionally-stimulating initiatives can create a unique and memorable experience: Brands can take a stand, make an ecological improvement, show interest in contemporary art and museum-style display, establish particular ambiance or theatrical depiction, stage surprise events, etc. Flagship stores feature spaces that are completely disconnected from their commercial functions and become temples or museums, expressing and detailing the brand's various cultural dimensions through installations, activities or exhibitions. As such, stores shift from sales outlets to cultural locations. Below are some examples.

Boutiques become places for spending time and socializing

Businesses combine their conventional activity with cultural activity: dry-cleaners/library, restaurant/flea-market, hair salon/art gallery, stores/concert stage. When the Dunhill flagship store offers a *barber shop* with massage and shave, this hybridization makes perfect sense as it vehicles the brand's British Dandyism, deploying full-on "English gentleman" culture. The in-store experience is ever richer, offering shoppers multiple services in a single location.

Brands' museography

Many brands today depict their history as a differentiating factor: Long-term presence, genealogical origins, etc. remind customers of the history and culture behind the brands. In so doing, brands use items from another era, such as old tennis racquets (The English introduced tennis to the French as a « courteous » sport) used by Tommy Hilfiger and Ralph Lauren to connote the 1960s. Ralph Lauren uses multiple references to the past, covering store walls with black and white photos of America's elite, whilst Tommy Hilfiger evokes the Kennedys and other outstanding Americans of the times. In their pop-up store at Paris' Bon Marché department store, Guerlain tells the brand's story through sophisticated museography. Product stories are told by bubbles which become poetic price rings; and

fragrance ingredients are presented under glass domes; the perfume *Habit rouge* is illustrated by an equestrian sculpture, similar to the conceptual juxtapositions by Kosuth (*One and three chairs*) with neon shapes lighting the space, etc.

Geography or brands' country or place of origin are also cultural pillars leveraged in stores. Fiat Group's flagship Motor Village, features Italian culture and how the Fiat Group's cars fit into this culture, with its most recent Gucci Fiat 500 dually expressing Italian culture. Italian elegance is expressed at every level, including the lounge design, and the Italian restaurant heralding the location.

Recreating a place

Some boutiques take visitors into a familiar place at the outset, opting to express their universes rather literally. Nike flagship stores are outstanding in their use of materials: hard-wood floors, looking exactly like gymnasiums and basketball courts, with bleachers and benches built out of piles of work-out mats, etc. L'Occitane features France's southern Provence, reproducing a « mas » or an old stone villa, with the red, octagonal tiles, ochre walls and lavender bouquets.

Featuring art, from product to decor

As early as product design, brands are increasingly opting for artistic shapes. In pastry for instance, Bubô in Barcelona as well as Pâtisserie des rêves in Paris view themselves as edible art galleries, adding gustative value to their products, offering customers the fulfillment of "eating" an artistic object.

Additionally, photographs and artwork are increasingly featured in stores, as they are an immediate and space-saving means of creating a universe. Abercrombie features paintings of athletes and war heroes, consistent with the brand's appreciation of the body beautiful. Quicksilver displays huge photos of surfers throughout the store. Lacoste spotlights the glory of numerous athletes who adorned the famous alligator. Paul Smith exhibits his own photos in his store, often to reveal his own tastes. London's National Geographic store has a Heroes Wall in the entrance, honoring the world's greatest explorers, in addition to their exhibition space. Photography, paintings and installations are important assets. Among the most sophisticated is Comme des garçons who entrusted contemporary artists to design fitting rooms, clothing racks and hangers. At London's Dover Street Market, clothing racks consist of two sculptures representing two Japanese men in black and traditional shoes, carrying the bar on their shoulders, as well as many other items designed by artists. Finally other stores such as Louis Vuitton provide exhibition space for special artists, who occasionally design limited-edition Vuitton scarves and other items, thereby reinforcing their connections.

Establishing ambiance

Light, scents and sounds all contribute to the experience and to getting visitors into a particular emotional state. Abercrombie does this well: shadows and spot-lights create seeming motion around clothes, which contributes to establishing a night-club ambience. Also sales associates constantly spray perfume on the clothes. Sound-wise, increasing numbers of stores call on companies to provide play-lists which reflect the brand's culture. In Ferrari stores, engine sounds fill the airwaves, attesting to the brand's technical culture.

Quotations and aphorisms

Text represents the fundamental link, the simplest way to establish the foundation of cultural strategy. Be it phrases, quotations, testimonials, stories or educational content, text can be the signature illustrating a brand's philosophy. Some stores such as Tossed use stickers to draw customers in. Phrases located at eye level seemingly dialogue with passers-by…: « W*hat are you looking at?* » or « *I used to think healthy food was boring… then I found Tossed and turned over a new leaf!* ». Nike flagship stores feature constant invitations challenging visitors beyond « *Just do it* ». Bold phrases like « *there is no finish line* », « *you are your own limit* », « *kiss my airs* », « *be true* », « *always on the run* ». These phrases constantly call out, stimulate, and encourage people to control their own destiny: « *write the future* », « *victory is yours* », « *wear it with pride* » etc.

These phrases play a dual role: They draw people in by their attractiveness as well as their messages which are as meaningful as images. They are orders that can be galvanizing to produce particular moods (faith, exaltation…), or they have a meditative function similar to the Koran verses in mosques or the philosophical maxims in the Duke of Urbino's *studiolo*. Using text this way requires visitors to get involved, making them read and delve into the brand's universe – This is a performance in and of itself.

Organize events

Getting visitors involved physically in events promises a memorable experience.

London's Niketown is exemplary with at store-entrance: *The Pool*, a sports area where athletes conduct demonstrations on roller-blades, skate-boards, BMX bikes, etc., with a DJ spinning upbeat music throughout the store. A giant football game, featuring Nike-sponsored team colors is available for public use. Benneton's Barcelona store projects a giant 10-meter image close-up of store visitors for a few seconds. More generally, new technologies offer customers memorable experiences. At the Champs-Elysées Adidas store, the label Micoach offers various physical exercises. At Fortnum & Mason, you can taste and compare seven different types of honey and sample different flavors of tea from

plant carafes. Citroën's flagship store spotlights its sport culture on the basement floor, offering a rally simulator for visitors to experience high speed by visualizing Sébastien Loeb's race.

Giving shopping bags and « gifts with purchase »

The shopping bag, box or wrapping at time of purchase are key supports in the shopping experience, often neglected in the *shopping culture*. The shopping bag is first and foremost a functional object. But it is also an experience, an object which plays a ritualistic role in the ceremony. It is also the medium for a message of editorial content simultaneously addressing the person carrying the bag and people looking at it. The bags communicate when carried, re-used or given as a gift. Puma developed a re-usable bag to replace the traditional cardboard boxes typically used for shoes. Developing this original packaging demonstrates Puma's commitment to sustainable development and constant innovation. During purchases of watches, jewelry or purses, some brands give gifts such as books or special edition magazines, providing information about brand culture and endowing the purchase with more meaning.

PagesJaunes.fr with their blog IdeesLocales.fr constantly lists innovative examples of store events. This observatory is a constant reflection on what could be called *retail renaissance* or *shopping culture*.

CHAPTER 5
CULTURE IS A CREATED UNIVERSE

Culture is not only a field of representations, but a field of experiences. Authentic culture is also characterized by the endless diversity of its events: ever-changing and in response to creative dynamics. Brand culture is also expressed through various elements that are connected by a sort of family resemblance. In addition to brands' products and advertising campaigns, shops have specific decors and designs, sales associates' uniforms and decorum represent a brand's deliberate manner in conducting customer relations, and so on. Living culture is constantly embodied in the production of new objects, practices and initiatives. A living culture grows deeper by diversifying.

Culture constantly growing

All true culture complies with the principles of profusion and density. This aggregate forms a cloud of disparate elements without pre-determined uniformity, order or hierarchical classification, strict deductive logic, where each element prevents dispersion by connecting with the others through a common thread of varying densities.

CASE STUDY
Red Bull's omnipresent communication

In less than 20 years Red Bull has succeeded in occupying the sports and arts landscape, by producing and disseminating hundreds even thousands of filmed events and editorial content across the media spectrum. Gradually, Red Bull launched dozens of events in numerous fields, even including new extreme sports. Each new test is an event with potential global reach, and even local stunts (for instance jumping from the first floor of the Eiffel Tower) resound across the globe. Event venues are open throughout the event, ensuring additional massive presence. Red Bull of course goes beyond extreme sports (skiing, ice-skating, diving, skydiving, etc.) though they offer mountain bike lessons in subway corridors, and parachute jumps from space (Red Bull Stratos). Every event is an opportunity to promote other events in the brands' enormous data bank, called « Red Bull Content Pool » the brand's dedicated website. Each sport can be featured in various and sundry ways: virtual simulation with *The Secret Half Pipe*, car games (*Flugtag Flight Lab*) or poetic and aesthetic depiction such as in the magnificent musical video on a mountain-bike champion.
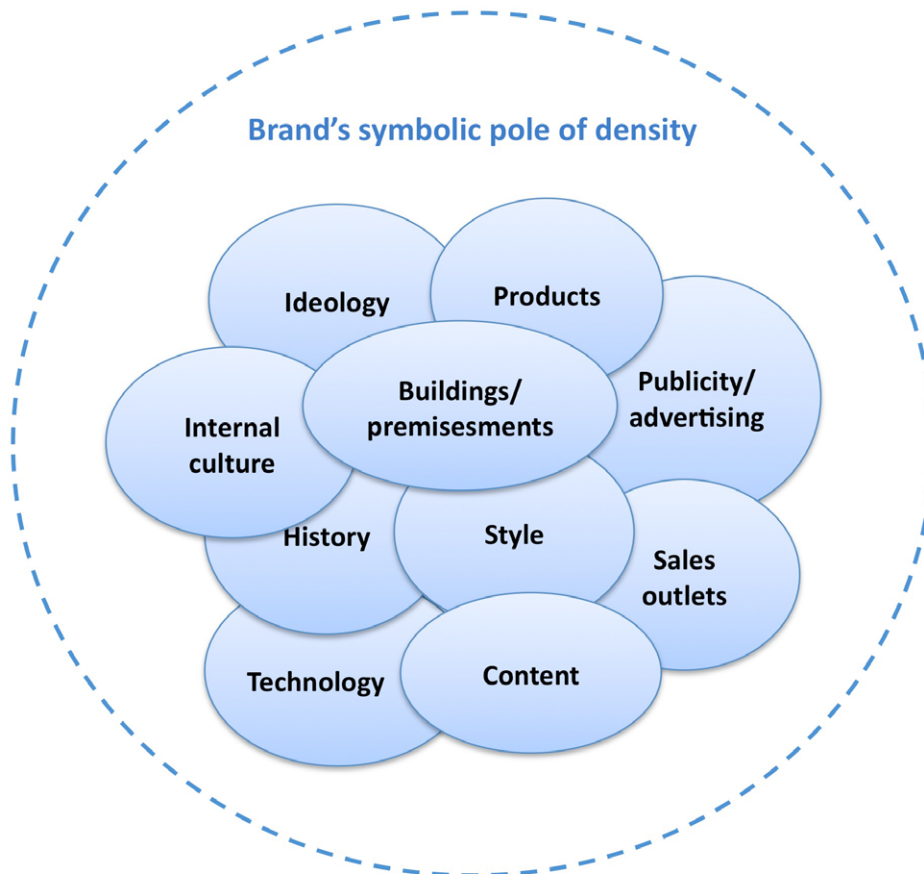
Red Bull further extends its presence by selling programs on TV markets, launching their de-linearized channel and widely-distributed print magazine (sharing hosts with other titles such as *L'Equipe*). Red Bull's content critical mass is achieved

through the following equation: multitude of events X diversity in treatment X long-term presence X international growth X multiple media (*print*, dedicated websites, web TV, TV, *live events*, POS advertising, etc.) X expansion through audience mobilization (events in big cities, wiki, reporters).

Brands are poles of symbolic density

Social fields are saturated with cultural expressions. The vast semantic stage is comprised of clusters or cores where symbolic issuances and reflected images are more powerful, dense and meaningful, so as to produce semantic and symbolic poles where people love to gather and imagine themselves in this framework of reference.

Figure 5.1: Brands are poles of symbolic density

Brand's symbolic pole of density

Ideology · Products · Buildings/premisesments · Publicity/advertising · Internal culture · History · Style · Sales outlets · Technology · Content

Cultural poles are mental reference points that structure our living in society. Individuals are drawn to them as if by some gravitational force. These densely symbolic places are widespread in social communication and include institutions, political parties, religious chapels, NGOs, and sports clubs and federations. According to Raphaël Lellouche, as co-

herent, symbolic universes, brands are poles simultaneously capable of issuing creativity and technology, inventing new objects, catalyzing new practices, and more recently publishing programs. This is all part of their attraction base through semantic density (meaning), semiotics (signs) and symbolism (symbols). This density enables them to compete with other institutions to structure life for collective groups or identity for certain individuals. Brands knowing how to cultivate their culture build extremely dense symbolic poles able to structure social life in a collective group. They become mental reference points, not only in the marketplace, but in the cultural life of all or part of a society.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT
Brands' semantic density, by Raphaël Lellouche, semiologist

The definition of a brand as a pole of semantic density is swiftly becoming institutionally accepted in pace with the definition of semantic density.

A plain object is able to produce a feeling of aesthetics, thereby becoming a work of art when it complies with certain criteria on density, relative saturation, symbolization, and under the condition that it signifies strongly, deeply and irresistibly. Let's consider that according to aesthetics specialist Nelson Goodman, the example of Hokusai's Mount Fuji Yama represented by a single line. In this artist's drawing, the minute variations in form, shape, color or thickness are charged with meaning - each of the drawing's areas interacting with the whole – and even the slightest modulation acts as a symbol (tenderness, robustness, calm, wisdom, etc.). Each time one looks at the drawing, one can project new meaning onto it. In another example, a stock index line functions very differently, neither symbolizing nor exemplifying anything at all. It simply indicates a result, and one quickly tires of it.

The same holds for brands. Brands' purpose and communication are governed by the same principles of density and saturation: (i) «the closer you look, the more you see» and (ii) « *the more you're interested, the more you discover*». Brands are like treasure chests you keep discovering, never-ending surprises in a multitude of expressions. Producing content specifically allows brands to express their level of intangible density, as publicity and advertising express visual density. Brands can now easily impress upon consumers « *that the more they seek, the more they will discover*».

Critical mass

The media universe has changed qualitatively over the past 10 years. In the past, media played an exceptional role in the daily life, today we observe extraordinary densification and presence in all facets, due to the web, de-linearization and amateur publications.

Brand presence in such a compact field necessitates going beyond isolated and occasional acts of communication. According to a study by Raphaël Lellouche and Louisa Taouk on « the convergence of media », the first step in a cultural expression strategy includes production which combines great quantities, great quality and a multitude of channels. Series content is one strategy to increase exposure to a brand's message and incite audiences to spend more time with the brand. And that is also one of the few ways for a brand to carve out its place in the increasingly vast media universe. In addition to content production, the brand's other manifestations (buildings/premises, events, experiences, etc.) must be diverse enough to testify to a system rich enough for the brand to be considered a potential cultural universe by the outside world.

Culture is generative

Cultural strategies should ideally develop and broaden sustainably with an intent to expand and construct assets or heritage. Noam Chomsky's concept of « generativity », as applied by Via Alternativa's brands and media consultant, Pascal Somarriba, portends that one can foresee potential development over time and in various forms. A strong and living culture's every new content, new event or new practice, must potentially be a new starting point for any new content, event or practice. Content must therefore be rolled out through a media and development plan, in combination with brand products, services and events. Brand content allows for multi-presence at all points of contact and more powerful brand reach than traditional marketing. As they are closely connected to the density of their cultural universe, strong brands are characterized by a sort of unique, organic, generative power which makes every element seem like a new cultural universe or creative direction emanating from the brand itself. Culture is subject to the principles of saturation, overflowing, and each participating object is a pole of diffusion.

With Smarter Planet, IBM initiated a far-reaching content policy on various topics (Smarter City, Retail Business Club, Genographic, etc.) and multiple media (print magazine, documentaries, conferences, theme-based sites, etc.).

The concept of generativity is also well illustrated in the animated short film *Yes Virginia*, produced by Macy's. It all started with the modern version of the Christmas story developed by Macy's and airing in 2009 on CBS: « *Is There a Santa Claus?* » alluding to the *New York Sun* article on September 21, 1897. To convince her father that Santa Claus is real, a little girl writes to the New York Sun, convinced that such a respectable newspaper could not lie. What is outstanding in this operation is that this high-quality film, with the very discreet on-screen Macy's signature, is the launch point for a multitude of events. From 2009, Macy's organizes a US bus tour, various interactive operations on Christmas wishes, a Christmas gift purchasing guide, a down-loadable letter for Santa to be dropped in the Macy's store mailboxes, etc. As of 2009, the Virginia campaign is helmed by JWT. The successful operation sees the Virginia character rolled out consistently during the Holidays (Macy's Thanksgiving Day parade, a book and DVD, sold at Macy's, Christmas display windows, an animated character granting interviews, etc.). This is a perfect illustration of content's generative capacity to endure: a special operation that could have been a one-

off, has become a classic. This is a great way to provide consumers with a bit of magic (« *Magic of Macy's* », just like their slogan says) in an industry oft wrought with discounting.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT
Brand's open hypertext, by Pascal Somarriba, brand media consultant

The technological revolution has brought about major changes in the « texts » expressed by brands.

Traditionally, businesses controlled the issuance of texts, driven by growth, consisting of explanatory texts (user's guides or articles touting technical or new-use achievements), message-based texts (advertising) and other aesthetic brand events (*design*, *visual merchandising*).

Presently controlled texts cohabitate with uncontrolled texts – those not produced by the brands themselves. The ensemble of these manifestations makes up « brand hypertext ».

The concept of « hypertext » generates interesting questions and solutions for the receivers and the businesses. How does this reality change the conception of business-issued texts? How can a brand manage hypertext that it has not totally chosen? Many brands persist in an historic obsession of control by promoting elements of their hypertexts that are aligned with their own text strategies. Others go further, by maintaining the illusion of control by producing texts that are deliberately « open », affording audiences greater freedom of interpretation and acceptance. In so doing, the brand expresses its ability to adapt, its willingness to collaborate and its openness to including creative/cultural contributions « from outside ». When managed this way, hypertext contributes to brand enrichment.

Corollary to generativity: establishing assets or heritage

Brands should gradually develop a *library*, a brand heritage collection in a modern museological rationale. Each production must stand the test of time, be re-usable and readily mobilized. Similar to a work of art, key aspects are multiplicity, developments and variations on the same topic, where various components discourse and create several levels of interpretation. Even the less successful executions are of interest in building cultural heritage, such as an incomplete project, an initial sketch of a finished product. Over the years, Coca-Cola has amassed such a content/heritage collection that they were able to open the World of Coca-Cola theme park, a must-see in Atlanta, as well as Christmas exhibitions in French shopping malls.

Brands without cultural or artistic heritage collections miss out on the potential validation offered by such initiatives (for example in museums, spaces, flagship stores, new store openings, brand events, multiple uses on the Internet, including exposure, collaborative and social contributions, etc.). Nevertheless, cultural heritage collection is all too often neglected when promoting brand content.

In the Fabrica example of Benneton's « idea box » it becomes clear that Benneton is building an extensive cultural heritage collection (Benetton, *Colors*, Fabrica) consisting of increasingly complex projects, going from a simple clothing brand, to artwork commissioned by outside clients (NGOs, museums, city governments, other brands, etc.). Fabrica filled two floors of Paris' Centre Pompidou and exhibited in many other large museums, legitimately without Benetton marketing or sponsoring the spaces. Its brand content policy is rather ambitious, but the retail leader steps easily into the role of cultural leader.

Many luxury brands have been engaged in this process for some time, selecting worthy and interesting cultural tangents, aligned with their brand history.

Maintaining consistency is a challenge

As means of expression, brand must ensure consistency in the brand's content and cultural components. To a certain extent, a brand's appeal is dependent on the consistency and strength of its expressions. Brand appeal is determined by the symbolic strength of these heteroclitic elements and the degree of density in their connections.

Brands are entering an era where consistency is no longer provided by discourse. Not even brand history can pull together the diversity of brand manifestations in a single story. In fact, brand consistency is achieved through culture management.

The mechanism of mutual reinforcement

These disparate elements that make up a brand necessarily include a high degree of overlapping: products are connected to advertising messages, advertising is connected to brand visual identity codes, etc. The connections of these elements of expression and signification establish a highly complex network of mutual reinforcement which contributes to densifying the brand universe.

Many brands provide good examples using expressive overlapping from their universe throughout all of their manifestations. Nike ensures that all brand expression is aligned with their leitmotif of exceeding one's personal best, be it their advertising, spokespeople, aphorisms displayed in the stores or video content… Conversely, the Adidas universe is characterized by diversity which connects in a series of signatures: « *be fast* », « *be part of the game* », « *impossible is nothing* », « *Adidas is all in* ».

The Jenni Pie brand intermingles universes of ice-cream and cakes with bikinis and lingerie. The Milan store is the culmination of these two universes in a Fifties atmosphere:

- The store sign immediately evokes a world of indulgence, representing an elegant woman pulling an ice-cream cart with dangling cupcake-packaged lingerie;

- The Sorbetteria space offers bikinis in ice-cream cones, with a spoon stuck in the bottom;

- Certain outfits are presented as boxed cakes, replete with ribbons.

Sushi Shop transforms an everyday product into something special by developing upmarket, Westernized Japanese style, featured on all brand media:

- Signature « Black Boxes », evoking Japanese lacquer,

- Stylish scenography on products, drawings of seahorses, butterflies, etc. similar to Japanese calligraphy and origami, whilst adverts recall Arcimboldo compositions

- Convocation of icons, arising from local culture similar to Kenzo

- Original sushi creations, combining Japanese technics with Western gastronomic cuisine.

Ultimately it all comes together in a meshing of brands and symbols, contributing to a trendy, upmarket, global universe.

CASE STUDY
« Liquid & linked » brand culture, as viewed by Coca-Cola

Coca-Cola hypothesized this concept of coherence in a prospective video by Jonathan Mildenhall on the evolution of Coca-Cola's strategy through 2020. The concept of generative content is clearly seen in the content idea *liquid & linked*.

In his creative video, Jonathan Mildenhall explains how Coca-Cola intends to shine in the content arena through *« liquid & linked »* ideas, playing a continued role in fans' lives, even becoming a partner on a daily basis.

Coca-Cola is poised to achieve *rock star* status that people choose because it offers a specific cultural experience. More than just a drink, Coca-Cola wishes to be an experience in creativity, a part of popular culture and exciting ideas …

The Coca-Cola brand excels creativity and aims to excel in content as well – content that is *liquid and linked.*

Coca-Cola Content must be *liquid*	Elements of Coca-Cola content must be *linked*
Brand stories must be created in various forms to be told through a maximum number of connections. Ideas featured in Coca-Cola content must be so powerful that they take on a life of their own, populating conversations and becoming autonomous, allowing to share and renew brand-related popular culture.	Elements of Coca-Cola content are linked, yet autonomous with their own strengths. These brand stories, told in various ways are linked and connected, building on and off each other. These ideas are an integral part of Coca-Cola content and impact all brand facets: image, revenues and consumers.

A common direction

Brand culture coherence depends on the organic link that connects all of a brand's manifestations. Experience has shown that it is not enough to just create a « common esthetic style», and that the unity of a brand's diversity is achieved through ideas. Brand culture elements are perceived as belonging to the same culture, not because they bear a « family resemblance" but because they seem to reflect the same world view. Therefore one must detect, amplify and converge these weak signals emitted by brands, and spotlight them as expressing brand culture by the following:

- expressing a purpose (an intent, quest for meaning)

- taking on an original topic, or by defining a cultural territory (mixology and cuisine fusion by Perrier, the art of travel by Vuitton, extreme sports by Red Bull, etc.)

- developing a research program (observatory, laboratory)

- creating a universe (cf. Oasis)

- following a mentor (creator, founder and artistic director, like Marc Jacobs and Karl Lagerfeld)

- leveraging a stylized universe (Corso Como, Monoprix)

- leveraging archetypes or symbols.

According to Patrick Mathieu, « *The spirit behind the initiatives makes the difference. All too often, advertising concepts stand in for corporate ideas. A company's uniqueness is in its authoritarian necessity to operate in a certain way. Businesses need to work towards creating things with meaning for people over the long term. They need to look at what their contribution could be to history, and what makes them unforgettable.* »

Ubimedia

Brands must operate in multiple channels, targeting optimal orchestration. Clearly, brands must be simultaneously present on as many fronts as possible, maintaining the utmost consistency throughout all variations. They must give priority to non-invasive channels which allow consumers to participate and engage at all times. Additionally they must leverage powerful media to ensure maximum visibility.

In B to B, the most frequent methods are publishing articles, white books or using social media (Twitter, Linkedin, etc.) blogs, electronic newsletters, case studies and PR events (trade fairs, shows, conferences). For wide audience brands, the sales outlet must be spotlighted, content disseminated, events organized as well as the promotion of the brands' websites (apps, e-commerce site, Facebook page, blog) media, public spaces, sales associates, etc.

During different focus groups on brand content, what stood out were physical channels (products, stores, events, etc.) as customers tend to grasp content through their physical

EXPERT VIEWPOINT
Raphael Lellouche: Brand idea as a regulating principle

Marketers often speak of brand ideas as the fundamental idea which structures and defines brand identity, uniqueness in a marketplace, making it recognizable amongst all others. However to understand exactly what brand ideas are, one must first understand the concept of idea.

In philosophy, the word « idea » has two meanings. For a philosopher such as Locke, ideas are mental content, psychological notions or concepts. Having an idea means having clearly defined content in mind: I have the idea to go on vacation to Club Med in Portugal, I have the idea to have my children play with play dough this afternoon, I have an idea for a specific gift for my wife. However, for Plato, an idea is an archetype, an ideal model that structures and guides our representations and actions, with the sentient beings which correspond to them being but imperfect realizations. For instance, a craftsman has in his mind the idea for a table, and he uses that idea to produce a table. Once built, the table is one possible manifestation of the idea, without corresponding perfectly to the idea. Similarly, the idea of "good" guides us in our actions, the idea of « beauty »

in our perceptions, but they do not signify any specific or definitive content. Kant develops a similar theory in *Critique of pure reason,* where regulating and essential ideas are always ideals which we strive towards without ever achieving them (the idea of justice, morals, etc.). Philosopher Gilles Deleuze suggests a conception that ideas can be an ideal focal point, which through unifying reality, provides individuality to a configuration of things.

Brands guided by another brand « idea », fall into the second category of archetypal ideas, that are difficult to capture or describe, but which exist in all the brand's manifestations, comprising their common focal point: brand idea is the direction a brand is striving towards, which orients the entire ontologically heterogeneous agglomerate that forms it, also cementing its density and forging its originality and disruptive potential. This idea can be some founding cultural innovation, discovered by the brand's founder. Such is the case of Apple, infinitely rolling out products based on the original concept of a personal computer with a *user-friendly*, icon-based interface. These ideas are very powerful and largely surpass simple consumer *insights* with which they are occasionally confused.

bodies and senses, leaving long-term traces in their memories and psyche. Conversely, the impact is more limited for small screens which mobilize essentially only the brain.
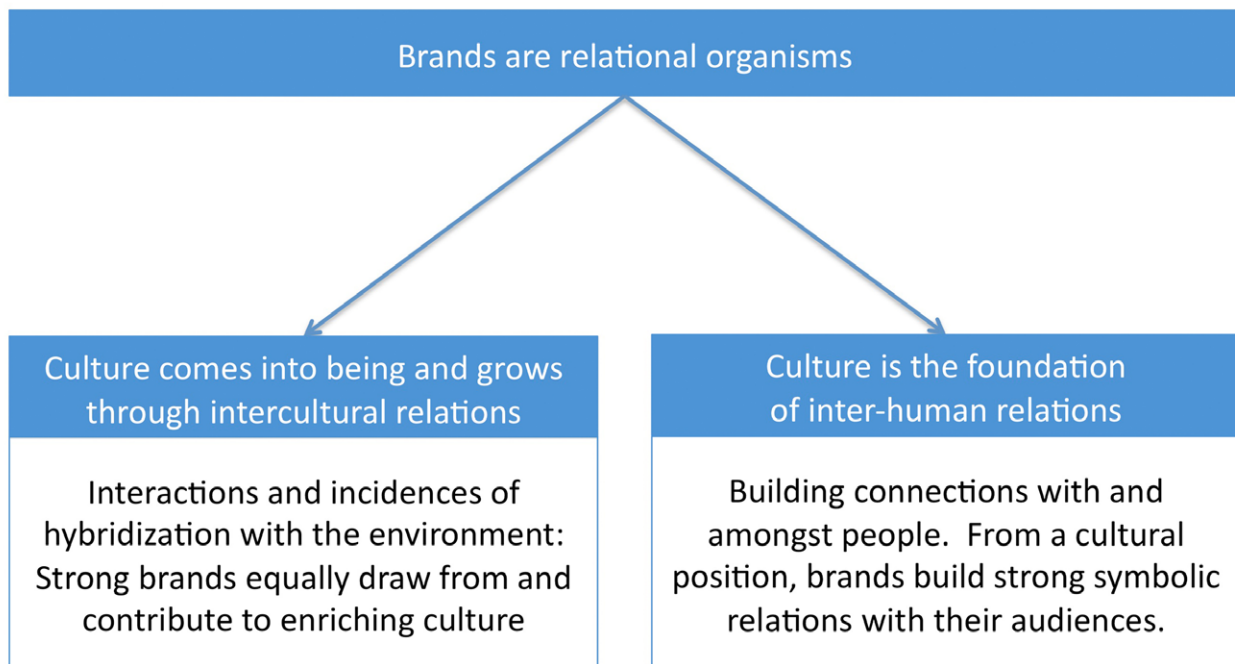
A brand's cultural identity is necessarily multifaceted. The brand must be flexible in developing facets in the various available media to legitimately express its authentic culture and pole of symbolic density, thereby enabling customers to project onto and bond with their brand.

CHAPTER 6
CULTURE IS AN ORGANISM IN CONSTANT INTERACTION WITH ITS ENVIRONMENT

Culture does not develop in isolation. This is also true for the great civilizations which grew and flourished by borrowing from various population movements and outside contributions. Cultures are living, complex organisms in constant interaction with their environment. They adapt, transform and gain from a mutual relation exchange. Brands are intrinsically relational organisms. This definition has a dual meaning: (i) culture is borne from a relation, gains enrichment from the (peaceful or violent) relation with other cultures and (ii) culture enables the relation, conducive to contact and the sense of community belonging.

Figure 6.1: Culture as a relational organism

Brands are relational organisms	
Culture comes into being and grows through intercultural relations	**Culture is the foundation of inter-human relations**
Interactions and incidences of hybridization with the environment: Strong brands equally draw from and contribute to enriching culture	Building connections with and amongst people. From a cultural position, brands build strong symbolic relations with their audiences.

Brands are constantly adapting to their environment

Brands' strength and appeal lie in the density and compactness of their system of expression and its various essential elements. Despite this, brands are not closed entities.

A brand-organism is not exclusively self-built. Nor does it create *ex cathedra* a fully controlled universe: on the contrary it lives in a competitive cultural environment, to which it is permeable and it experiences influence and contextual determinations. Consequently the brand organism must adapt strategically to outward stimuli and provocations. It must

anticipate competitors' threats, adjust positioning, and sometimes redefine its territory, all the while maintaining customer relations, advertising to seduce, optimizing use and appropriations that they cannot control (loyalty, retention, performance, etc...). Often though control is not purely deductive (exacted by their own means) but relative (through relations with others), and is a constant adaptation in a controlled-response form to ensure survival.

Table 6.1: Brand cultural environment

Historic Environment	Technical Environment	Competitive Environment
Brands must live with the times and customs of their era, neither too far ahead nor too far behind the times	Brands depend on contemporary development technologies	Brands are not alone, and competitors' behavior influences their behavior – They can expand, retract, diversify, etc…

Brands are inseparable from their cultural environment

As brands are relational, culture is their language. Inherent in culture is the impossibility to separate exterior from interior – there is no organism on one side, and culture on the other. The organism is determined by and steeped in its culture. Just like a person removed from his/her cultural milieu would bring his/her culture along and could reconstruct it elsewhere or recreate it using different tools.

Maalox bases its advertising on the dragon myth – largely predated by its iconography which has been abundantly illustrated, particularly in the myth of Saint George. Maalox perpetuates this iconography as the dragon is a part of the brand's identity, constructing it internally. As it is impossible to say that the dragon is « outside » the brand, future anthropologists in analyzing the dragon's imaginary realm, may one day investigate Maalox packages to determine how the product enriched the imaginary realm it inherited.
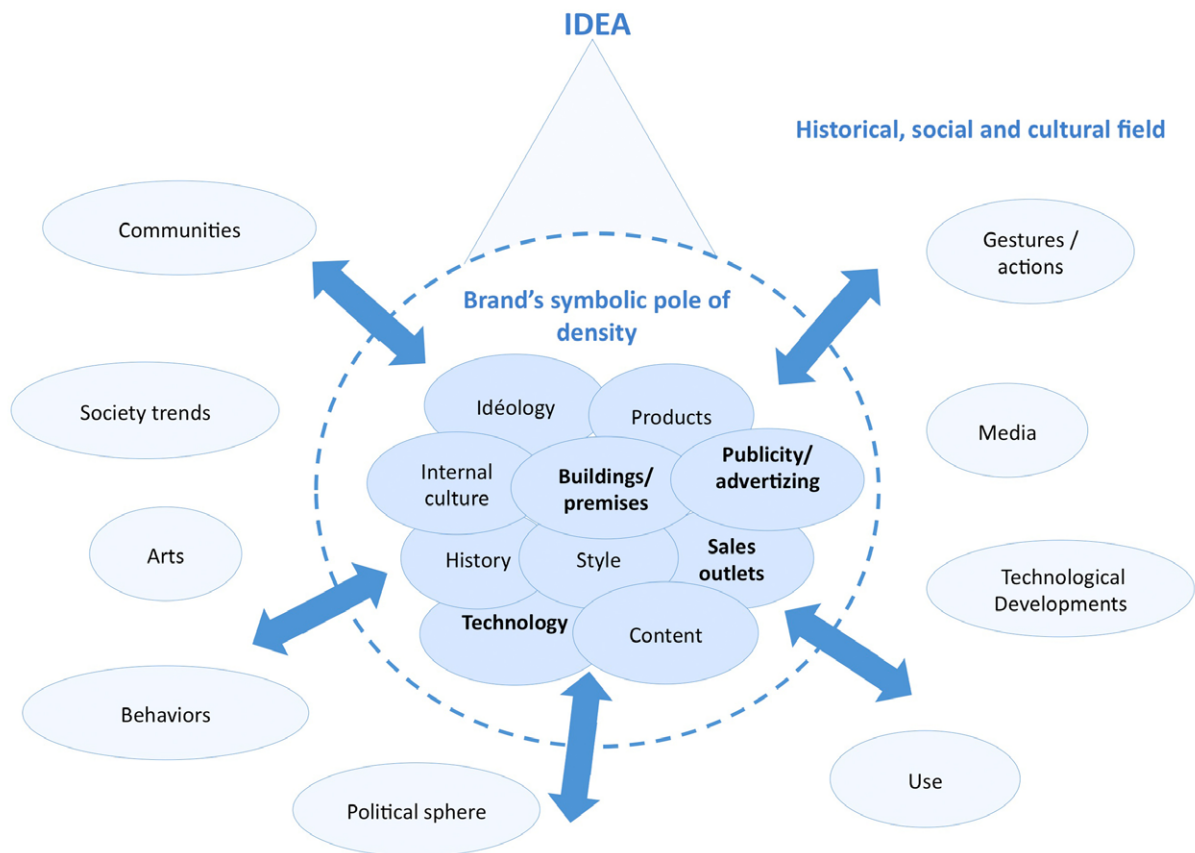
Brands are a product of culture, and they wear it well

Major brands contribute to enriching their culture through their inventions, imaginary universes and ideas. In some cases, their products and/or services are accepted as belonging to the culture's heritage, immediately adopted by social groups. Examples include French luxury brands and German chemical and automobile brands, achieving national treasure status.

Inventions are brands' contributions to society's material culture

Important inventions leave their marks on society. Major inventions are significant contributions, be it the wheel, stirrups, the printing press, steam engines, etc. In the Twentieth Century these types of inventions are patented, protected and often marketed by brands, whether toasters, micro-wave ovens or wristwatches. Many brands arise on the heels of their founders' invention: Kodak and film, Mercedes and the combustion engine, etc. The

challenge for these brands is to go beyond a single product – no matter how innovative that product may be. They must demonstrate that their prowess lying behind the inventions will enable them to produce others in the future.

Some inventions revolutionize behaviors and practices. They immediately permeate societies which perceive these brands' potential to impact the world through their products and services. The growth of new technologies is a perfect illustration, changing our lives radically in how we share information, listen to music and work. In fact, many brands have accompanied, supported and even made these changes possible. Objects such as the iPod or iPhone have revolutionized our relationships with music and telephones, enabling us to take along thousands of songs in our pockets, with multiple functions on the same device. Computers, personal computers and intuitive software have brought IT revolution to the masses. And it all started with individuals (Steve Jobs, Bill Gates) a brand (Apple, Microsoft) and society (the expansion of digital culture) all intertwined and inseparable. Ultimately, these inventions change the material cultural of a society, ushering in new ways of doing things with precise devices, gestures (double-clicking, touch screens, pinch-to-zoom), language and a totally new way of thinking and acting, etc.

Changing material culture means that these attitudes and viewpoints are embodied in the practices and techniques borne by these objects. Access to information is completely different when comparing the newspapers to the TV age, and greater still as regards the era of the internet and smart phones.

CASE STUDY

Rolex: inventing the modern watch

In 1926, Rolex' founder Hans Wilsdorf is the first watchmaker to produce a totally water-proof watch. At the time, his intention was to protect his watches from dust and water infiltrations which could damage the inner workings, thereby creating the O*yster*, the first fully water-resistant watch in the world. This was a major innovation at the time, which enriched the watchmaking culture and the use of watchbands that tend to be more fragile and less dependable. This innovation is followed by another in 1931 when perpetual movement makes daily winding superfluous. In fact, this invention « flows » literally from the advancements of the previous, as eliminating manual winding spares the watertight seals the friction of winding on the crown. More innovations follow to improve water resistance, thereby ensuring longevity and dependability. Inventions that arise from true culture, or an inventor's authentic and sincere determination, generally give rise to others.

Rolex quickly understands the need to depict their products « in situation », and partners sports achievements, which express the machine's performance on a human level. The first woman to swim across the English Channel, Mercedes Gleitze wore the first Rolex *Oyster,* making history for Rolex in 1927. The importance lies in anticipating the reaction years later when one realizes that, though Ms. Gleitze

could take precious little with her, that she absolutely wanted her watch. One can imagine that being able to watch time go by enabled her to structure her course, organizing her efforts and rests, and managing her second wind, etc. The brand is authorized to say that this was not only the ultimate test for the watch's water resistance, (the watch is a simple *object* of the experience), but that the watch was part of the achievement (*subject* of the experience), *a fortiori* in this context where the choice was extremely limited.

Rolex' history unfolds beyond watchmaking culture to acquire a role of companion to everyone aiming for excellence. *Oyster* reaches the summit of Mount Everest in 1953, and Rolex holds the record in deep-sea diving in 1960 by Jacques Piccard reaching 10,916 meters. Rolex also accompanied James Cameron on March 26, 2012 in the Mariana Trench. Sported on the Deepsea Challenge's remotely-controlled arm, the watch reached depths of 10,898 meters. These innovations and their athletic illustrations testify to the brand's culture of excellence and contribution to watchmaking technology, as well as permeating a part of the history and culture of the Twentieth Century.

The book *Brand content* revealed that brands at the fore of these discoveries, participating in human adventures and athletic achievements often rival the editorial content held by mainstream media. As a tribute to the only civil instrument authorized aboard the Challenger space shuttle, space exploration videos and moon-landing footage on the Omega website provide a different vantage point on this episode in our History. Brands are now appreciated for spotlighting their massive historical repositories.

Symbols and brands' contributions to society's material culture

Brands do not only offer products and material culture elements. They are reservoirs of meaning and symbols that they release amongst public images as discourse that borrows symbolic form from surrounding culture, only to change, just like artists adding their contributions and future generations' contributions to an existing theme.

To be taken seriously and play a significant cultural role, cosmetic, make-up and perfume brands must consider the cultural implications of beauty, vanity and aging. All major brands must make their contribution to these areas that transcend generations and make up the structural pillars of people's and societies' cultural history.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT
Chanel and melancholy, analysis by Raphaël Lellouche, semiologist

Chanel's cultural universe is populated by characters who are pensive, withdrawn or lost in their dreams. This atmosphere is part of the old and powerful tradition of the melancholic face, as prolonged by Chanel.

Consider the following examples in Chanel's communication and advertising over the past decades: the staircase, mirror and the woman sitting with her elbow on a table, head in her hand. These postures are profoundly associated with the brand's very history: Chanel's first large boutique on Cambon Street in Paris features a grand, curved staircase, flanked by mirrors where the designer observed her first models. The staircase motif is a way for Chanel to articulate an extremely powerful cultural ensemble, thereby leveraging the associated symbols in art and literary history. Staircases like ladders are conventional symbols of ascension to glory, virtue or even God. Similar symbols exist such as various drawings by Tablex and religious altarpieces, Jacob's ladder, etc. represent the connection between God and men, as well as the background of Albrecht Durer's *Melancholia I*, referring to the elevation of the spirit, far from the triviality of this earthly existence. The symbol is more profound considering the number of rungs or steps in classic iconography established at seven: seven rungs on Jacob's ladder, seven, on the alchemists' progression towards the philosophical stone, seven steps toward virtue, etc. Not likely incidental, several Karl Lagarfield Chanel ads feature melancholic models, posing with their heads in their hands, at the foot of a staircase (inside a villa, leaning back on a New York fire escape, etc.). The visuals generally feature seven or nine stairs.

This also holds for mirrors – the requisite advertising accessory for cosmetic companies, omnipresent in Chanel ads (Audrey Tautou's reflection in the train windows on the Orient-Express for Chanel N° 5, Keira Knightley lunging towards mirror-covered walls for Coco Mademoiselle…). This not only respects the industry codes, it evokes the brand's history and the mirror at the Cambon store. Even more profoundly this is a way to reveal the cultural foundation of the Chanel brand, associated with the melancholic figure, women and mirrors and vanities (*Marie-Madeleine* by Georges de la Tour, *Vénus au miroir* by Titien, etc.). Mirrors are not only a way to determine a product's effectiveness. They also provide deep reflection on time's passage on a being who is no longer the same as yesterday and will change again tomorrow.

In many ad campaigns for *Allure* perfume and the *Première* watch, actress Anna Mouglalis strikes Dürer's *Mélancolie* pose: head tilted, resting on her hand, looking very pensive. Add to these images, the sad and drab faces of models, drudging through the corridors of fashion shows and particularly Chanel's. These images are not just simple allusions to art history, but a deliberate decision by Chanel to perpetuate the melancholy tradition or to revive and/or extend its values. Melan-

choly has been the subject of study for philosophers, doctors, artists, visual representations, etc. Brands have a huge reservoir of concepts and values to draw from (particularly on the strong connections between the melancholic soul and genius, illness and higher intellects – which are of interest for Chanel which is the perfect example of an intellectual brand). Additionally, the brand can use the motif and enrich it, contributing its « own » staircase and « melancholic » people to this museum of the imagination.

Brands' influence on social representations is undeniable. Brands and their ad campaigns and editorial content released into the social spheres impact attitudes and representation - for better or for worse.

In the « better » category, Harley Davidson is a good example of cultural agents endowed with strong brand culture. According to Raphaël Lellouche's analyses, Harley Davidson simultaneously represents movie legends (*Wild Bunch*, *Easy Rider*) assemblies or communities such as bikers, gestures, and particular body stance, a clothing style, a slice of American history, army, American aviation, etc. This creates a dense, coherent critical mass whose resonance is part of history and social and cultural functions. This makes the brand a visible, cultural brand, not simply because it communicates or advertises, but because it is de facto inscribed in America's cultural heritage and woven into American culture.

Examples of the not-so-good include brands that promote outdated or discriminating practices. For instance the way women are portrayed in advertising can be either positive or degrading. Women's organizations are quick to whistle-blow on ads or content that is damaging to women's image. On these issues, brands have the same role as music videos, movies or concepts in general to launch or change social practices, perceptions or behavior. Most often, in order to reach the broadest audience, brands put forward existing social perceptions, potentially perpetuating stereotypes.

To establish a cultural strategy, one must identify the most conducive shifts, the strongest gravitational pulls and conducive foundations.

Every brand is a unique cultural combination

We previously defined brands as being a semantic reservoir, a powerful pole of interest of varying degrees of density. This pole cannot be disconnected from its surroundings, whence brands enrich themselves and, in proportion with strength and reach, gain influence in this historical, cultural and social field made up of heteroclitic elements outside the brand and which vehicle signs through the media. Each relation established within this environment creates a network of meaning, or a beam of resonance and connections which link brands to general culture. The network of cultural ramifications and unique assortment

of interactions with different cultural universes forge brands as an original configuration, making them unique.

Brands follow non-linear cycles, with highs and lows that often correspond to societal expectations and aspirations. Sleeping brands such as Carven or Lanvin have taken off again by remobilizing their dormant symbolic potential which was nearly lost. Brands' challenge is to ensure a long-term connection with its time and constantly renew the points of resonance with its environment.

Pastry-maker Ladurée leverages an emotional territory touching on two universes: childhood and yesteryear which establish a culture of nostalgia. There are numerous elements evoking childhood (pastel colors, the Ladurée signature « *Fabricant de douceurs* » (Maker of Tender Moments), the Perfume Table, a throwback to schoolroom desks and tables for learning the names of things, the *Ladurée Dreams* video featuring a frequently-used technique: a wide-eyed little girl in front of a store window, looking on with curiosity, fascinated by cakes being made, along with renderings of baby carriages and bassinets and balloons featured on the website. Additionally the brands' ads feature the nostalgia evoked by pre-industrial pastry-making which is synonymous with tradition and quality.

CASE STUDY
« Liquid & linked » brand culture, as viewed by Coca-Cola
Happy Pills, candy and pharmacy

The Happy Pills brand is an emblematic example of the condensation of two contradictory universes: candy, associated with enjoyment, and medication, associated with pain and illness. Creating candy inspired by medication, the brand uses symbols that are not specific to the medical universe but appropriates them to develop social and cultural connotations from them:

The container: The sweets are stashed in pharmaceutical vials, weekly pill cases or first-aid cases.

The logo: a pink cross, inspired by pharmacy crosses, first-aid crosses and the Red Cross humanitarian aid organization.

Gestures: using surgical gloves, an ordinary, common practice shared by pharmacists and candy vendors.

This strange, intriguing tension between two universes results from the conflagration of a sort of euphoria. The powerful associations with color, reinforced by special back-lighting of the candy shelves, arranged from the warmest to the coolest colors also suggests another level of interpretation: pop or neo-pop art, from a purely formal standpoint (Dan Flavin's colored neon lights) or by mixing form and substance (Philippe Huart, already having associated pills with candy).

The mechanisms of cultural development

In developing their brand culture, brands must interact with ambient cultures, adopt the mechanisms that allow their culture to thrive, expand and grow, borrow and combine related elements to build a universe that is rich in meaning. Like the mechanism of mutual reinforcement, the mechanisms of brand culture development must be defined as a fundamental principle in the construction of creative, coherent universes.

Table 6.2: Brand culture mechanisms

Brand as creative universe	Brand as relational organism
Creating a coherent universe	Creating a unique cultural combination
Mechanism of mutual reinforcement	Mechanism of cultural development: metaphor and metonymy

Two major cultural development mechanisms consist of either deploying culture through the progressive exploration of neighboring and contiguous universes **« from like to like »** (principle of metonymy), or by appropriating leaps in foreign universes (principle of metaphor).

Table 6.3: Brand cultural development

Two rationales behind cultural development	Metonymy = deployment	Metaphor = appropriating leap
Principle	Cultural deployment through neighbor emulation and contiguity (metonymy)	Appropriation of a cultural universe according to a rationale of resemblance (metaphor)
Effect on brand	Extension to and annexation of neighboring territory. Brand expands, grows and deploys in the real world by contamination. It takes elements from the real world allowing it to create a coherent universe.	Conquering and appropriation of a new territory. Brand transposes, takes over, and conquers an aspect of the outside world. It then imports this aspect into its universe. The transposition is justified through resemblance.
Examples	Transposition of an artistic activity to the street (Repetto), sports equipment in the temple of sport (Nike)	Candy/pharmacy (Happy Pills), lingerie/ pastry (JenniPie)

At the outset, we must point out that these mechanisms of deployment or cultural appropriation provide enjoyment for whoever detects and identifies with them. These cultural worlds thrill their audiences as they decode the language and identify the associations and correspondences. Roman Jakobson, along with other linguists, has described at length the enjoyment in being able to identify the regularities, symmetries and correspondences in discourse and cultural phenomena. This mobilization of our ability to identify coherence and correspondence gives us a sense of well-being. Consumers are thrilled to see the universe of dance transposed to Repetto's products, shops, display windows and advertising. They love strolling in the land of olives at Mama Oliva. They become Japanese aesthetics with Sushi Shop. Nhow hotel clients in Milan or Berlin feel like they're staying in a modern design museum. And clients adore considering cosmetic products as food at Lush.
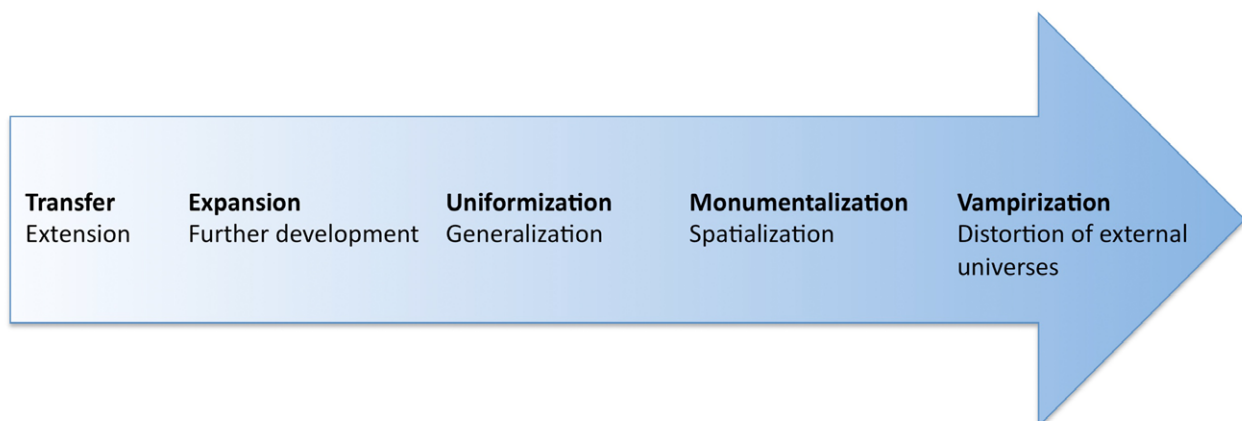
AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
The enjoyment in metaphors and metonymy

For language or images to produce effects or emotions, authors, artists and brands often use metaphors and metonymies. French philosopher and grammarian Du Marsais studied the particular enjoyment of such exercises in style. He considers that they stand out through their richness in meaning as suggested by their common etymology: *meta* which induces the concept of "beyond" or an extraction, whereas *phora* in metaphor means transport. Additionally, by definition, metaphors and metonymies rely on dense, intersubjective exchanges between the emitters and receivers, with the latter mentally filling in the missing parts to pull it all together.

Metaphors and metonymies are semantic intertwinings, sign and language interactions that virtually transport the receiver via a network of correspondences. For these effects to work, the audience must understand the issuer's intentions. When it all comes together, the receivers embrace this intersubjective complicity and enjoy their decoding skills which make them feel they are amongst the inner circle's select few.

Axis I: cultural deployment

Figure 6.3: Deploying brand culture

Transfer	Expansion	Uniformization	Monumentalization	Vampirization
Extension	Further development	Generalization	Spatialization	Distortion of external universes

Brands can go beyond their own universe, expanding to the outside world multi-dimensionally through various deployment procedures. Often overlapping, these procedures exist in varying degrees based on the strength and positioning of the base universe:

   - Transfer: the brand duplicates its base universe into another cultural universe without any hybridizing. This is an extension for instance passing from the professional sphere

to the general public.

Examples: Repetto, initially producing ballet slippers for professional dancers, transfers its products to the street without changing their models, and becomes a recognized French fashion brand. Dance is transposed or imported into daily living.

Aeronautica Militare transfers the army world to civilian life. Military universe is present in its boutiques, filled with models, flooring made from military aircraft wings, etc.

- **Expansion**: brands expand their cultural universe, growing through proximity through usage or moving into another element of its universe (geographical, historical origin).

Examples: Miele Gallery exhibits Miele products in situation in dedicated spaces, offers cooking classes to optimize Miele's cooking equipment and publishes creative cook books for Miele ovens, etc.

Havana Club takes inspiration from the rum bottle produced in Havana to create Havana Cultura, a cultural universe spotlighting Havana (videos and reports with local artists).

- **Uniformization**: the generalization of the product's basic principle and all the brand elements (boutiques, *leaflets*, sales associates' uniforms, clothing, etc.). The myth of the Midas touch where everything he touches turns to gold (contamination of the world).

Examples: In the Chocolatee Italiani boutique, everything is uniform, based on chocolate: menus and cook books are chocolate colored, a chocolate-colored pantry presents glass display cases full of chocolate ingots and bars. Chocolate esthetics reign throughout the boutique, etc.

Petit Bateau furthers uniformization of families through child-like units (sizes/age in months). Adults buy their clothes as if they were buying for (their) children.

- **Monumentalization:** brand universe embodiment in an architectural universe (brand's temple). This functions as a projective exercise in space: Dove as a spa, Bulgari as a hotel, Côte d'or, a shop, and Renault, a restaurant, etc. The scale is different, but analogous to the brand.

Examples: Bulgari features echoes of its designs in hotel decor: the spa pool resembles the green *Eau* perfume bottle and the garden gates evoke jewelry on a monumental scale. Armani attires its hotel and restaurant with the sober colors and straight lines in minimalism.

- **Vampirization**: most often in the distortion of cultural universes *a priori* external to the brand, though forged and compliant with the brand's style constraints and esthetics.

Examples: The Corso Como store uses an optical pattern that vampirizes marketed products (k-way) and store decor: All products can become Corso Como, leveraging optical effects and accumulation.

In the same spirit, all Monoprix products are presented using a hallucination game with stripes associated with verbal games. The expression Monop' underscores the mono-optical concept (a single viewpoint using both eyes), principle of visual consternation, determining the brand's universe.

Axis II: Appropriating a universe (leap of appropriation)

Figure 6.4: Appropriating a culture

Importation
Movement

Hybridization
Combination

Parody
Humorous
imitation
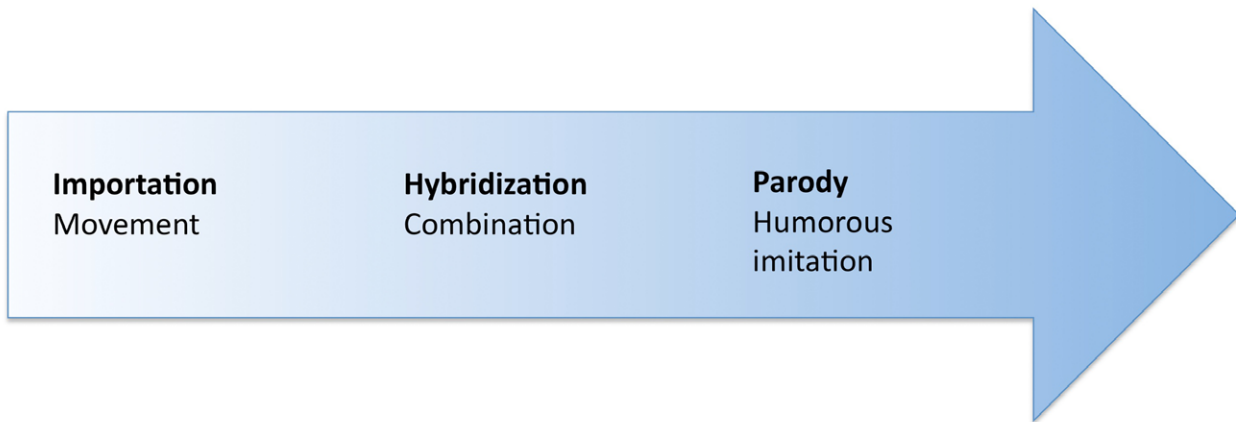
Brands can also borrow from the outside world, choose cultural universes, appropriate the codes and existing sign systems to be included in its own culture to better express its DNA and hone positioning.

A brand's interaction with an outside culture demonstrates a relationship with the outside world beyond self-centered, esthetic narcissism. Confronting another culture is significant in that it enables brands to test the soundness of their own universe and to enrich it through outside contributions that it will appropriate.

Appropriation of a cultural realm is always justified through the desire for resemblance. Brands would no longer deploy from their own territory, but through a leap of appropriation, according to the following appropriation processes:

- **Museographic or syncretic importation**: Importation of a stylistic universe, external to brands, welcomed in a quasi-museum logic.
Examples: The Nhow hotel features everything in the spirit of design, including various designers' original furniture on exhibit at all times, varying with the changing seasons.
Citadium draws from street art, captures street trends, gang culture and community life, importing them into their stores to later become the reflection.

- **Hybridization**: The combination of two parallel cultural universes which complete and nourish each other.
Examples: At Lush, cosmetic products are depicted through codes used in the food industry. Products are sold in slices, soap in the shape of "loukoums," fruits, etc.
Happy Pills assimilate candy with remedies to cure all ailments.
Perrier takes inspiration from fusion cuisine, developing mixology based on the proximity between Perrier's carbonated gas and food chemistry. Perrier now offers cocktails with new textures (solids, liquids, gaseous…) and new flavors (sweet, savory, floral…)

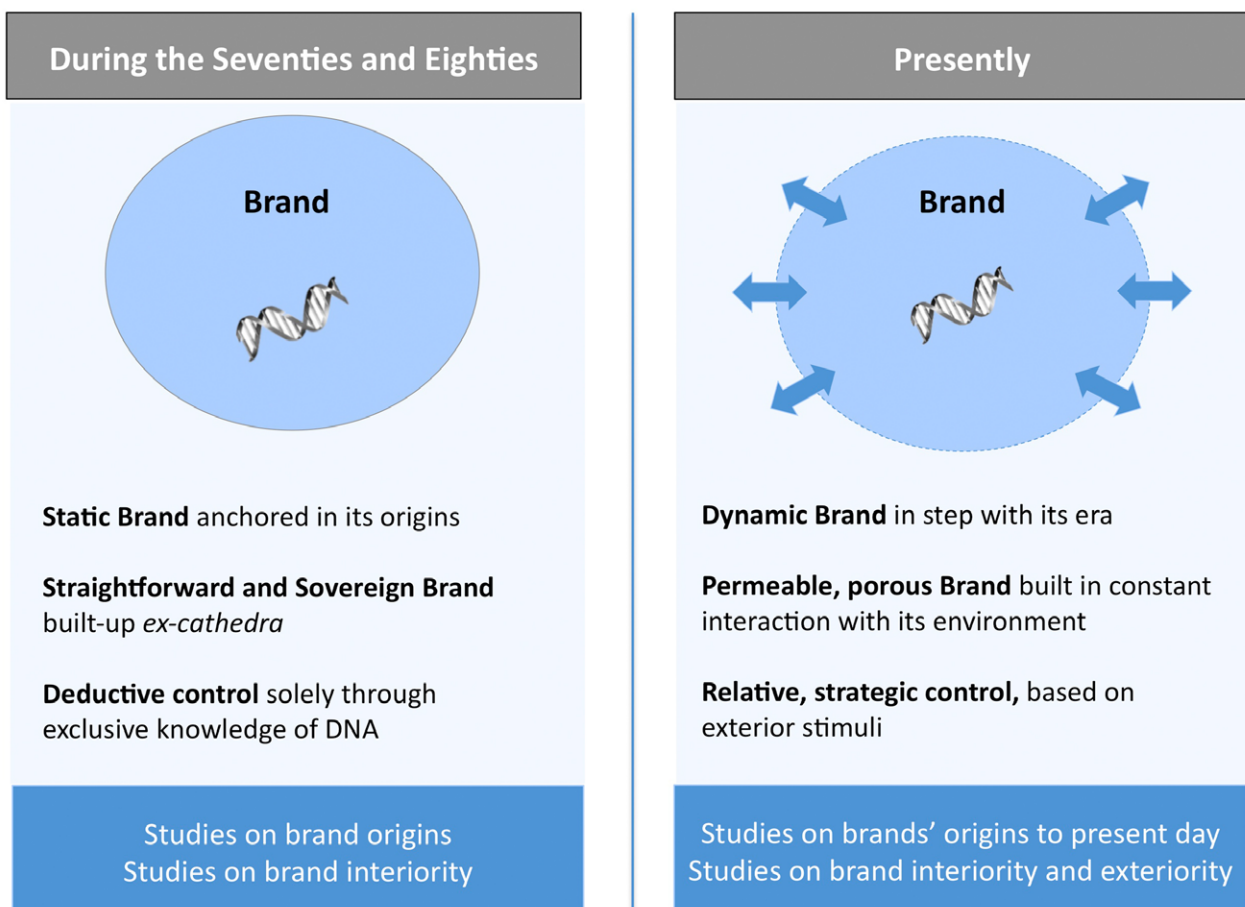- **Parody**: The humorous imitation of an outside universe to better situate and determine oneself.

Examples: Michel et Augustin parody marketing with their child-like language **(«** *This is good…* **»**, **«** *Drink me…* **»**) visuals (scale change, with giant cows) and depiction.

From DNA to culture

Omnipresent metaphors of DNA and cell nucleus bring the focus on the unilateral preservation of holdings, producing a frozen model of brand unity. DNA defines a brand's genetic code, determining its deepest irreducible features.

DNA is necessary but insufficient

The concept of DNA is positive as it includes the idea of an entity built on a unique heritage which coherently orients production, however it is limiting and incomplete. The DNA metaphor refutes the assumption that brands just arise from an opportunistic accumulation of ideas or products to empirically spread and contingently assemble. DNA expresses the concept of a brand « nucleus », without being able to fully express its complexity.

During the Seventies and Eighties	Presently
Brand	**Brand**
Static Brand anchored in its origins	**Dynamic Brand** in step with its era
Straightforward and Sovereign Brand built-up *ex-cathedra*	**Permeable, porous Brand** built in constant interaction with its environment
Deductive control solely through exclusive knowledge of DNA	**Relative, strategic control,** based on exterior stimuli
Studies on brand origins Studies on brand interiority	Studies on brands' origins to present day Studies on brand interiority and exteriority

The biological metaphor is an incomplete concept. Inside the nucleus, DNA is the program whose expression determines the organism's required functions. DNA is transmitted during cell or organism reproduction, as an identical program, with identical functions. This process allows DNA to perpetuate an organism within itself and its species with the same general characteristics. But an organism is not reduced to DNA chains, as it is also made up of organs and other systems enabling it to live and interact with others and within given contexts. The organism possesses a commanding central nervous system, a protective immunity system, a hormonal system, circulation, etc. The organism also possesses the means to adapt and interact with its environment: organs of perception (the 5 senses), organs and muscles to move about, etc. DNA is the guarantor of identity and a fundamental element in the coherence and continuity in the expressions of the brand/organism, but is not enough to account for the life of the brand/organism in its entirety. One must also take into consideration the influence of environment which contributes to brand construction, including its situation in time and space, position in culture and relation to competition and customers, etc.

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
Brands' ability to adapt

Biology has always vacillated between two determinisms: nature versus nurture.

On one hand, we have Lamarck theories regarding acquired characteristics, with the example of giraffes required to extend their necks to eat leaves in the high trees, subsequently seeing their necks grow longer; or horses increasingly required to stand in high savannah grass to eat and see their predators, subsequently seeing their feet harden and change into hooves over generations.

On the other hand, we have Darwinian theories on natural selection of determined genetic features: survival of the fittest organisms reproducing whilst the others disappear.

Modern biology posits arguments to accommodate both approaches, balancing the role of environment versus genetic make-up. Some examples show that by adapting to their environment, organisms can change the genetic make-up of future generations. Theories on brand culture attempt to reconcile and rebalance the fundamental role of DNA with the power of the environment and brands' constant interaction with organisms.

Brands' cultural relativity

Today's global economy gives rise to new issues on the relationship between brands and their environments. A French brand is forged by adapting to its original environment, which in no way predisposes it to resonate with equal force and relevance with foreign

consumers. In fact French automobile manufacturers struggle to impose their technology in Germany, whereas they succeed more readily in Italy or Spain.

A brand's local geographical dimension can be a hindrance to international development. As codes are inscribed in a given culture, even those considered universal can be in dissonance with the local culture in certain markets. Raphaël Lellouche explains that brands striving to conquer new markets must situate themselves on a fine line between imposing a universal model and adapting to fit into local culture. This problem predates modern brands as the Catholic Church had to manage the same issues when sending missionaries to new continents. There is no miraculous choice between the two options, but each brand has to opt for the most suitable solution.

Each brand must manage this pre-existing tension, remembering that whilst cultural differences can be problematic, they can also be the source of innovation, originality and strength. For instance, cultural origins can represent success factors for launching in China or Japan, as the Chinese and Japanese appreciate different codes. The French origin of some luxury brands contributes largely to their success in the Chinese market. Geographical and historical origins are brand culture dimensions that can be very conducive to resolving issues on international markets.

Table 6.4: Adapting brands to their environment

Universal strategy	Local strategy
Codes, products, discourse, sales outlets are identical in all countries	Adaptation of codes, products, discourse, sales outlets, etc… to local cultures
Strong brand culture coherence	Comprehension by consumers of local brand culture
Starbucks	McDonald's

Laurence Lim Dally, head of the Cherry Blossoms Market Research Institute in Hong Kong, specializes in Asian audience's acceptance of Western advertising and communication. She suggests a median solution allowing brands to adapt without introducing incoher-

ence to their own culture. For brands to export, they must examine their cultural assets to reveal the specific elements which can resonate with destinations' local culture.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

Resonating with the Chinese, by Laurence Lim Dally, Founder and CEO of Cherry Blossoms (Hong Kong)

The increasing scale of the Chinese market in international commerce, has triggered a Copernican revolution in brand perception. An example is Greek jeweler Folli Follie's recent world-wide ad campaign, featuring a popular Hong Kong model, with a Mediterranean backdrop. Additionally, many brands are forging or reworking their identity with an eye on China.

In fact, many brands struggle to export to China; though they consider themselves « universal », their footprints are overly Eurocentric or American-centric. At the outset, if they are unknown and without a Chinese name, they cannot be searched on-line or discussed locally. Conversely, brands that address the Chinese directly risk coming across as clichés – the obligatory car chase on China's Great Wall, dragon overkill in 2012, etc. Brands can also be perceived as condescending, even off-putting, especially when they wax exotic, considered by the Chinese as targeting Western lovers of Chinese trinkets and bobbles.

More subtly, some brands reach deep into their past to find a legitimate connection with China: for instance, a designer's authentic inspiration for the Far East to develop relevant, cross-storytelling.

As Western brands strive to "become" Chinese, Western *branding* is all the rage for Chinese brands who – despite total incoherence - unabashedly feature Western models with a preference for curly-headed blonds with a Château de Versailles backdrop.

*

These distorting mirrors do not necessarily mean identity tension or brands becoming Chinese. Categoric opposition between « universal strategy » (colonial imperialism of brands) and « local strategy » (mixing and acculturation), leading to the aporia « sell out or die », seems obsolete.

Today Sinologist and philosopher François Jullien considers the ideological posture of « universal » vs. « Western », where « Western » means « uniform » runs the risk of becoming a stereotype. With globalization and its inevitable acculturation, geographic and historic origin are critical components of *brand culture*'s source. It is essential for brands to cultivate their differences to the right degree.

The challenge brands face is resonating with Chinese acceptance, through an evolution, and not by what brands are or say they are (*signified*), but through the way they express what they are (*signifier*).

To achieve this, all signs issued by brands from product names to designs, publicity and advertising, boutique concept, etc. must undergo a cultural audit – on a rational level (understanding), esthetic level, as well as the spiritual morals and values – which identify and decode the possible resonance and dissonance with the Chinese. For instance, Cartier could take inspiration from the fact that its iconic red and gold boxes resemble the traditional Chinese precious, octagonal jewelry boxes believed to « hold the world ».

Resonating with China involves seeing beyond oneself, considering others' horizon of reception. More than adaptation, this exercise is a dialogue between cultures and an opportunity to enrich brands' territory of expression. From this standpoint, China is a fabulous challenge for brands' creativity and language renewal.

PART 3
Spurring desire to « perform » a brand

Once the main characteristics of a cultural universe have been identified, it is important to understand the brand's connection with people as a cultural phenomenon. Among semiologist Raphaël Lellouche's theories on brand is the concept of performativity (chapter 7), which particularly applies here. It takes us beyond the concept of consumption (consumer buying) to address the relationship between people and brands in all their complexity and richness (chapter 8).

Establishing brands relies on cultural resources which brands then feed back into - and as living, authentic cultures, they are to be managed differently. To assert and grow, brands must leverage culture as a fundamental, strategic driver (chapter 9).

CHAPTER 7
PERFORMATIVITY OR IDENTITY IN ACTION

There is ample justification for building strong and authentic brand culture, including reinforcing brand identity, innovation potential and especially, appeal and attachment in all cultures. The performance of a strong, dynamic culture, creates meaningful experiences, draws in various audiences and consumers who can then engage with a brand.

Consumers are symbolic animals

By nature, humans are symbolic animals, seeking meaning in all they do and all that surrounds them, expressing themselves through their choices. And in today's capitalistic societies, these daily choices tend to be commercial: asserting social identity, expressing differences, partially through consumption. In his recent book: *We Are All Weird: The Myth of Mass and The End of Compliance!* Seth Godin demonstrates that today, uniqueness is the norm, with the vast array of modes of creation and communication making people much more demanding. People will no longer settle for « average », or « like everyone else » (same type of rice, same color car, etc). In this context, brands must find a way to contribute to consumers « inventing themselves »…

The concept of performativity

The complex concept of performativity proves useful in understanding how brands contribute to people's identity and societal construction. As part of his three fields of brand theory (*self-binding*, performativity and mediality) Raphaël Lellouche developed the concept providing more in-depth analysis of consumer behavior and likely to replace simplistic notions such as « consumption » or « belief » in products/brands. Each individual in society plays a role and performs the social models with which he or she wishes to be identified.

Performativity was first discussed by linguists John Austin and John Searle, and was picked up by Judith Butler and applied to gender and sexual identity, which is a part of social identity. Judith Butler posits that we are not man or woman, but that we perform our gender, that we ultimately play "men" and "women." Raphaël Lellouche considers that our entire social identity is a play in performativity relative to brands as well. Before addressing the theory of performativity and its concrete application to brand-consumer relations, he has outlined the concept's three developmental stages.

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
John Austin, the origin of performative communication

The term is taken from works by philosopher of language John Austin in one of his best known works *How to Do Things with Words*, published in 1955. Austin posits that language not only serves to describe our reality, but it also creates a certain social reality. When a judge declares « …*Court is now in session…*» or a priest declares: « *I now pronounce you husband and wife…* », they bring this reality into being. By their pronouncements, the judge opens the court session, and the priest makes the marriage a new state of social affairs. By speaking, these people accomplish certain types of actions: naming, baptizing, bequeathing, etc. This holds for baptisms, weddings, contracts and all promises that « create » social realities. These actions require people holding certain functions (judge, priest/pastor, mayor, notary, etc.), an appropriate context (solemn, such as a courtroom, city hall, church, etc.) and an audience (attentive, listening and understanding the language). Austin calls these types of declarations *performative utterances* in opposition to constative utterances.

American philosopher of language, John Searle, in *The Construction of Social Reality*, published in 1995, asserts generally that speech acts produce social realities that are distinct from natural realities (physical, etc.), and those on which institutions (religious, civil, etc.) and conventions (games) are based.

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
John Searle, the performativity of social acts

For John Searle, performative is only a linguistic front for something deeper: the construction of social realities. Everything that exists as institutions, at all levels of social life, are constructions that are achieved through fundamental performative activities. Speech allows one to perform creations and to give them true social functions. A bank note exists because we say and believe that money exists. Similarly a political leader or university professor are only able to fulfill their functions by the collective oral recognition of their status. All social realities are based on performative acts and « shared beliefs».

Finally, American philosopher and feminist Judith Butler goes further than Searle (who stopped at major civil, religious, social and family institutions) to take on people's gender and sexual identity.

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
Judith Butler, gender performativity

In *Gender Trouble*, published in 1990, Judith Butler takes the concept of performativity further. Butler adopts an extreme position, asserting that sexual identity is a performative construction. She posits that beyond natural biological differences, gender identity (male or female) is a social construction, achieved by performativity, for the purpose of social recognition. She uses the example of drag queens to support her arguments. She asserts that drag queens pretend to be a gender that is different from their biological gender, this means that people of « natural » gender, perform this gender without knowing it. This radical theory based on a marginal case, informs the norm to expose subconscious practices.

Butler's performativity goes beyond language: it includes how language is expressed in addition to behavior, attitude and gestures through which a gender is performed (male or female) and conforms to the « female» or « male » model constructed by society. These models appear at very young ages: The « game » is created by education, constraints, identification. I become « boy » (independent of my biological gender) as soon as I start acting like a boy, playing like a boy, I fight, become a brat, a tough guy, I play with trucks, avoid all things pink. The rest of his life, the boy only repeats these gestures, postures and words of the male gender. According to the theory of role play, what makes one a boy, or the performance, is the fact of «playing» boy and the iteration or constant repetition until it becomes subconscious and spontaneous.

Butler's theories are based on the original performativity concepts by Austin and Searle. In open sessions, there is no being, but a speaker who is the being; the session is not something that is, but becomes it when the speaker says it. Butler generalizes the idea in asserting that the same holds for gender: She considers there are no men or women, only male, female ad transgender performances.

Could identity be only theatrical roles? For Judith Butler, performing is not only «pretending to be». When a role is performed, one becomes what the role entails. It affects our being, our reality in the dual meaning of « *playing a role, acting* » on stage and « *accomplishing* ». This means that it is not enough to dress up like a boy to be a boy; one must completely produce the social identity of a boy, and truly buy into it over the long term.

Raphaël Lellouche asserts that Searle's concepts of « *social construction* » and Butler's « *performation* » enable us to go beyond brand theories expressed to date and build a general theory on commercial brands to gain deeper understanding of this cultural essence. People's full cultural identity is constructed by performativity: Each individual in society plays a role and performs these identities in « responding » to social suggestions and that with which he/she would like to be identified. In this way, performativity is the fundamental cultural act of « consumers ». Therefore « consumption » of a product is the fiduciary or monetary relation to brands which are a part of this basic cultural act. The same goes for business and family, etc. People's social identity is cultural, and as such, constructed by performativity.

Brands therefore have a strategic role to play, and can only be strong if they offer people performative models. Brands must enable people to buy into, take ownership of and perform a brand experience and culture (including gestures, attitudes, world visions, behaviors, technical and material objects, ideological positions, etc.).

Consumption is a playing field for our identity

Individual identities are the fruit of a vast array of diverse elements. Our identities are multiple and made up of history and randomness. We are characterized by some of the following identity poles: birthplace, location, gender, age group, social setting, education, business field, leisure activities, religion, the brands we buy and use, etc. We « are » Mac or PC, Peugeot or Fiat, Nike or Adidas.

Figure 7.1: Multiple dimensions of identity
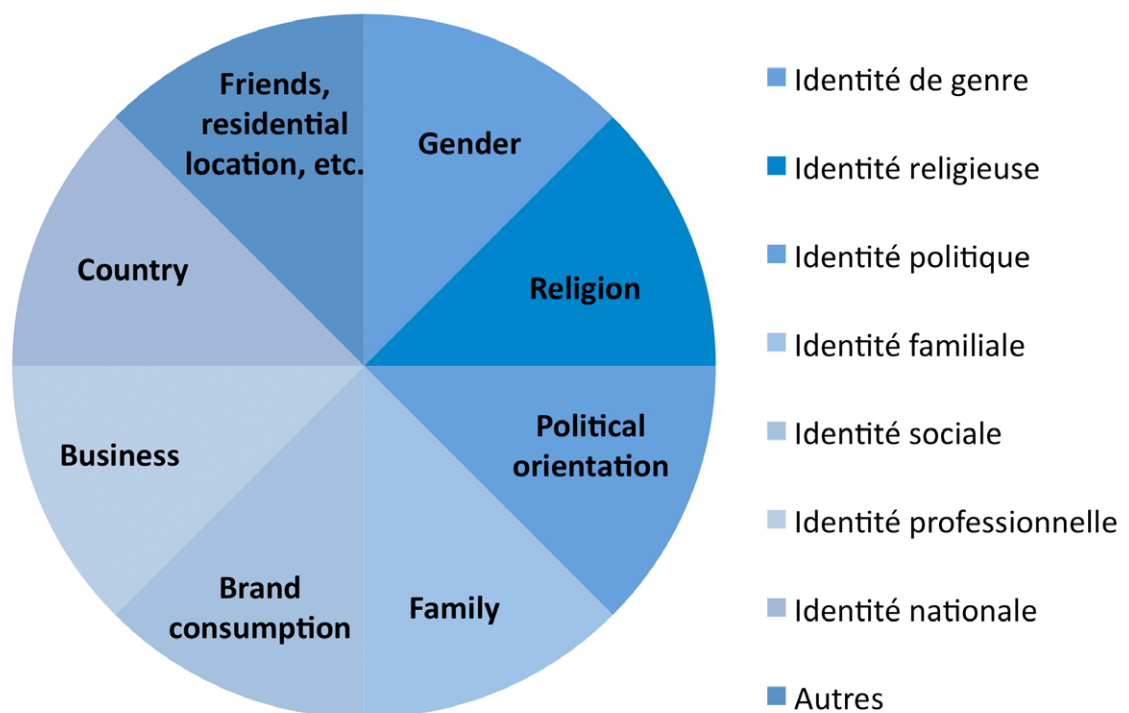
To answer the question « Who am I? », each individual must become aware of the identities he/she performs. These identities are simultaneously a situation we experience passively and part of a deliberate project. As free individuals, we transcend situations and construct our identity. This identity is multiple, so we can play at being different people. We can decide to change our age group by appearing younger or older; «change » our social origins by over-playing or under-playing, etc. In all of our facets (social, professional, religious, national, etc.), we are what we play, and as we continue to play, we eventually become that role.

Consumption (furniture, clothing, food, cars, etc.) is one of the fields or backdrops on which we construct our identity. Consumption is not purely material, but culturalized by identification with brands. Brands are the crystallization of ideas that offer cultural models just like all other cultural models (femininity, age group, etc.). Consciously or subconsciously preferring one brand over another is performing the brand in the same way one performs other cultural models, including consumption elements in the construction of self in the social world. Buying and using products means being involved and identifying with and buying into a strategy of cultural distinction (as posited by Bourdieu) not temporarily, but over the long term.

Choosing to buy or use a particular shirt, telephone or moisturizer is adhering to a certain identity. A man wearing sweats with the Nike RF insignia displays his masculine elegance in the style of Rodolphe Federer. A BB bag by Lancel enables a 45 year-old woman to express glamour (pink, the BB insignia looks like two hearts) whilst demonstrating a certain form of liberation (identification with Brigitte Bardot, the bag is rather heavy, requiring one to assert oneself). Brands are essential means to express how one is « man » or « woman».

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
Performativity in sports

Observing European vacationers playing tennis illustrates performativity on the sports field. The initial observation is that brands are a way of asserting one's nationality. Germans readily sport Adidas outfits, Italians, Fila. Nike has succeeded in becoming a universal brand, spreading American values that go beyond its geographical origin. There is no brand able to put forward its "Frenchness." Lacoste does however represent a certain French « panache » though less than in the eighties.

Tennis outfits reveal a game style. The fiercest players wear brands that express power such as Nike or Puma. Fans of Asics, which literally means « a *healthy mind in a healthy body* », have great appreciation for comfort and ergonomy.

Identification and internalization of brands' models can be explained as performativity in the integrated brand design model. This is not a matter of brand « loyalty » similar to religious faith. There is also the unclear concept of brand preference. Performing a brand

means including brands more generally in the relationship between people and identity models: one does not perform only brands, but all sorts of identities, including brands.

Expressing social identification models

People's multiple facets are in constant movement and always being performed. Therefore brands have a strategic role to play in proposing performation models to reach their audience. Consumers choose products or brands that stimulate one of the facets of their identity in a given context, or that validate their sense of economy or savings, intelligence, originality, etc. What is important is that consumers find meaning, authenticity and coherence in what transpires. All brands are susceptible to being performed, including discount and B to B brands. It could be said that brands are *agents of empowerment*, enabling individuals to thrive, go beyond their limits, assert, express or invent and reinvent themselves, etc.

These models' are firstly expressed through advertising and communication. Beyond *lifestyle* and experience, brands express a full culture (including gestures, attitudes, world visions, behaviors, technical and material objects, ideological positions, etc.) which people buy into and can reproduce or perform. As previously stated, advertising, editorial content and sales outlets are preferred means to offer product use and behavior models to convey cultural elements and social models which inspire consumers to perform.

Building a strong relation with consumers

By reaching a person's identity constitution, brands establish strong connections and build essential, more authentic relations, moving from "having" to "being." Brands must not cheat, but offer a model they adhere to themselves. In so doing, brands elicit consumers' attachment, which becomes a constituent of brand loyalty.

Beyond loyalty, when consumers implement behaviors associated with brands, they extend and become ambassadors for them – knowingly or not. One can consider that brands are constantly recreated by consumers through performativity. In this way, brands gain in size and stature, extending their social influence. They go beyond the material sphere to become the reference or cultural icon for tightly-knit communities. Practices generated by brands anchor them in reality.

The power of identity relationships between consumers and brands becomes obvious through fan testimonials below:

TESTIMONIALS

- Smart car fan: « When I'm in my Smart car, I identify with Smarters, a certain way of parking, being smarter than big SUVs and able to drive in and enjoy the city. I'm this driver who darts in and out of traffic, making the most of my time. I love it when another car can't fit into a small space, but I can! And I love that there are spaces so tiny that only Smart cars can fit into them (on the street and in parking garages). Smart drivers often park in half spaces on street corners, nearly touching other parked cars to keep from encroaching on crosswalks, also even perpendicular to sidewalks! Driving a Smart also means being free of time constraints because you won't have to drive around forever to find a parking space. And since there is no back seat, children are allowed to ride in the Smart car's front seat, contrary to other cars. They really love this privilege, which is another sign of distinction. »

- Sonia Rykiel fan: « It all starts with her display window, featuring some of my favorite books and endowing the clothes with a certain spirit. The black Sonia Rykiel V-neck sweater, with its overstitching, rhinestones and pearls makes you more attractive than all the mini-skirts and evening gowns. Where there is soul, there is style. It's a very simple item, yet a signature as well of a profoundly free woman, daughter of an affluent family, wife with character, loving mother, poetic lover, friend of Régine Desforges, as well, who risked prison for founding a publishing company for erotic books – back when women were supposed to know and stay in their place. Sonia Rykiel, so different with her flowing, fiery red mane, would become the face of an era, as recognized by Andy Warhol, who did her portrait as well. Even today, when I slip on one of her high-waist skirts, it is a very light, yet manifest event. The simplicity of style, distinguishable among thousands, makes your uniqueness stand out. She represents the Paris Left Bank female intellectual with a lust for life. She asks her models to smile during the catwalk shows. And she imbues her clothes with her way of thinking and her way of experiencing society…her clothes bear the unique style of the woman who makes them. »

- Lancel fan: « When I carry my Lancel bag, I really feel all woman – chic, sexy, trendy and attractive. My bag is deep and heavy, and it makes me stand up straight. When I don't have it, I have less self-confidence, as if I were a little girl again. When I have my Lancel, I feel grown up and like a real woman who gets things done! It's really become a part of me ».

In this context, where brand is everything, performativity extends to every dimension of the business: in buying a brand, consumers buy into manufacturing processes, production locations, company philosophy and environmental policies, company leaders' ethics, the company history and the other consumers' images, etc.

CHAPTER 8
HOW CONSUMERS PERFORM BRANDS

Raphaël Lellouche's performative brand theory has the advantage of seniority. It combines product experience and brand intuition, individual experience along with collective and social experiences. It foregoes the trend to dissociate the different channels, but allows for an integrated, overall approach. People have multiple ways to perform a brand, through its cultural, technical or material universe, through the practices expressed by the brand, or through the brands' distinctive signs, spokespeople, places and events. These will be examined below.

Brands can be performed based on the following two axes:

- Horizontal: from individual brand experience to outward social sphere;

- Vertical: behaviors and use to image.

Figure 8.1: Relationship to brands

Axis 2 « Relationship to brand »
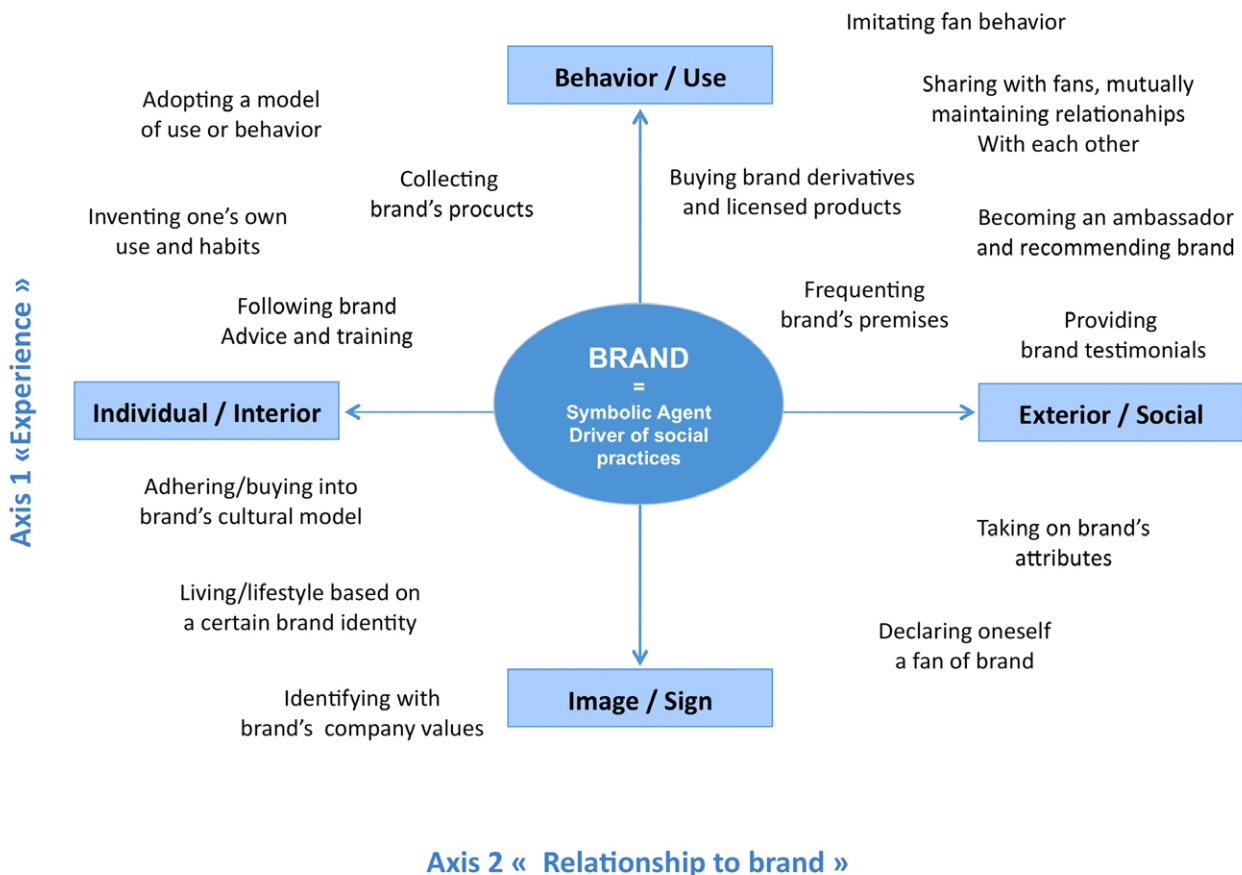
Enable everyone to invent his or her own brand practice

Below are various types of brand practice, behaviors and suggestions for behavior inventions.

Adopting behavior and practice models

The most obvious way to perform a brand is by appropriating all its prescribed practices, following recipes and advice, adopting the new techniques, etc.

For example, a taxi driver behind the wheel of his Toyota hybrid, explains how the specific engine technology has changed his driving, becoming an integral part of his professional identity and his favorite topic of conversation with his passengers. Using his screen, he shows how his electric engine keeps him aware of the 50 km/h speed limit, optimizing energy consumption. When he compares it to diesel, he points out how noisy the diesel engine is, causing unpleasant vibrations, whereas the hybrid allows for gentle driving. He explains how careful he needs to be when encountering pedestrians, oblivious to his totally silent car. Similarly Mac, iPod and iPhone users totally perform the Apple technology model. These devices induce intuitive and fluid ways of using computers, which completely govern the relationship between users and information technology. One need only see the expression of joy on an Apple fan's face in demonstrating a new function. These consumers don't only use Mac or iPhone, they *are* Mac or Apple.

By inspiring new practices, brands generate more loyalty and establish concrete relations/actions. This is not simple mental projection, but concrete anchoring in an authentic and emotional relationship.

Following brands' advice and training

Practices supported by brand expertise are powerful drivers. The more brands induce habits and practices of its products and services (training consumers for instance) the greater their « hold » on consumers who will ricochet the various suggested performation behaviors. When Hermès started their website « I love my scarf », the brand suggests many ways to sport their famous scarves. Knorr publishes a series of recipes with Knorr ingredients with the goal to initiate new habits to reinforce connection to the brand. A Weston customer who participates in a training session on the art of shining shoes, will end up more Weston than ever. Make Up For Ever opens Make Up School to assist estheticians in performing the brand by practicing make-up. Brands must develop and encourage material culture related to habits and uses.

Product customization and personalization

Personalization on the brand axis is performation. With their line of accessories, Harley Davidson enables motorcycle customization based on a profound bike culture and built on the technical machine "everyone can build to his/her liking." Converse enables customers to choose their color combinations and build their own shoes. Coca-Cola invents bottles to be labeled with customers' names.

Inventing habits and use

Customers get a thrill by diverting a product's purpose and inventing their own recipe or using a product in an unusual way. Consumers won't simply copycat the uses suggested by brands, but will invent their own codes based on their own personalities and creativity. Brands are not uniforms or molds, but they grow from their performers' specificities.

Post-its are products that lend themselves to innovation through use. There are thousands of ways to use Post-its, for example to indicate a wine-seller's price and info stuck on the bottles before storing them in his wine cellar, so he remembers years later. Or more recently, company employees decorated their premises with the famous little colored papers. Smart-phones also lend themselves to multiple uses *via* apps: camera becomes a scan, flash becomes a flashlight, etc.

> **EXPERT VIEWPOINT**
> **Invention is the mother of performativity, according to Raphaël Lellouche, semiologist**
>
> The very essence of performative behavior is that it's « invented » and a game of freedom. For Butler, who referenced a short text by Derrida, *Signature, Event, Context*, individuals do not define themselves as the passive result of structures and institutions. Identity construction is the fruit of these initiatives and one's own inventiveness. She demonstrates this in her book on insults. The insult by definition is a destructive performative act. When an individual is insulted, there is always a way to return the insult, by creatively turning it around and turning it into one's own glory. Avant-garde artistic movements such as Fauvism or Cubism, took their names from the initial, condescending names used by their critics. The key point is that the subject maintains the ability to act or take control.
>
> Applying this idea to brands shows that consumers' behavior is not only determined by brands' cultural construction, but that consumers maintain their own inventive latitude. The brand « performer » would not be culturally effective where its symbolic authority is only « delegated» (similar to institutions according to

Collecting brand expressions

Ralph Lauren and Play Mobil fans enjoy buying all product variations and testing and trying these different versions.

To increase the opportunities to be performed and extend their universe, brands must rec-ommend timeless experiences to use products and spread their spirit coherently beyond product in all of its embodiments, speaking engagements, POS advertising, etc.

Collector objects represent the first level. Coca-Cola invited artists, including Mika, to design special-event aluminum bottles called the *Happiness Bottle*. Consumers keep the bottles, refill them and reuse them. Keeping and reusing this symbolic packaging is a way of celebrating and performing the brand.

Derivative products are another example of extension beyond product. You can't eat M&Ms all the time, but you can wear an M&Ms tee-shirt or drink from an M&Ms mug, etc. For people who can't afford a Ferrari, a cap or keychain represent substitutes. For Triumph or Harley lovers, a range of accessories has been developed (clothes, purses, etc.) to per-form the brand on and off road. Further removed from product, Vuitton city-guides are key elements in the coherent universe as they compile a list of city spots that are « approved » by the brand. Traveling with a Vuitton guide is a way of living the Vuitton lifestyle.

Performing a cultural model

Brands cannot only offer products with original functions, even though they may be symbolic. They must be part of a cultural universe, a world vision, an ideological position, values, esthetics, etc. to which customers can adhere.

Adhering to a brand universe

Brands offer a universe to which people are more or less sensitive. Buying brands means adhering to a universe, particularly regarding clothes. Dressing in a given brand is adopting a culture or *lifestyle*, a certain way to be a man or woman, it's adhering to a uni-

verse that the designer expresses in his collections, discourse and history. These cultural resources must allow people to live their lives *via* the brand according to a certain identity.

As such the association of Red Bull with extreme sports and *street art* allows the brand to be much more than a simple energy drink. Drinking Red Bull is like jumping from the first floor of the Eiffel Tower in roller blades with Taïg Khris, flying a plane, participating in a stunt competition. This back-drop makes drinking Red Bull a cultural act.

Identifying with company values

Consumers are increasingly informed on the behavior of companies from which they buy products. Depending on context, corporate values can become an important criterion for consumers. In India, the Artyzan brand makes products by underprivileged populations, and some sales outlets are located near plants, bearing the signature « *Shopping for a cause* ». These products feature the tag indicating the *mini-price* (cost price direct from plant) and the *maxi-price* (recommended retail price), leaving it up to customers to express their support at the time of payment. In this example, production conditions become a key element in purchasing.

Identifying with brand icons

Being a fan of Steve Jobs, Ralph Lauren, Paul Smith, Brigitte Bardot, Jude Law or Roger Federer is a way of performing the brands they represent.

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
Spokespeople as performation media

Performing is acting in a particular role. Sports lovers identify with their heroes, worship them, wear their colors, buy and use their equipment. When consumers perform a brand, it means they identify with and play the brands' game, internalizing their models. Consumers sometimes perform brands by identifying with the celebrities brands endorse. If a brand operates in an athlete's universe, fans can perform the brand by identifying with the athlete. By identifying with one's hero, a fan performs the brand and the brand's *role models*.

Brands cannot settle for promoting products exclusively through stars and their fame. They must develop content that features their spokespeople. Vuitton features Keith Richards with his monogrammed luggage in a typical life situation. Nike dresses both Federer and Nadal, offering an array of choices and different ways to identify with Nike.

Finally, to provide the maximum value with celebrity partnerships, one must leverage the star's original star power. For instance, regarding actors, brands must

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> re-appropriate the density, universe and personality created over time through all the roles played, as is the case of Jude Law's gentleman character in the *Dior Homme* commercial.

Performation as self-affirmation in the social field

After detailing the axes of individual performativity, the social dimension will be examined. There are multiple ways to perform sociably.

Frequenting brands' premises

Visiting brands' locations and participating in events is a way of performing.

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
Brand events, celebratory occasions and collective performation

« Brand events » are specifically organized by brands (and not only sponsored). This category consists of a vast diversity of operations from shows, to rallies and gala events (Orangina Gliss & Mix) to sports contests (Hermès Jump) festivals, fashion shows and exhibitions. Events are generally held in highly symbolic locations which add a social and community dimension to the performation.

The event is not simple brand representation for the public to attend a show and be amazed, it is also a celebration where special guests can get up close to the brand's « sacred » numinous substance or DNA. This brand celebration is critical as it federates a community of « fans » who mutually maintain relationships with each other in brand performation by getting together for events in the physical world and communicating through the brands' community websites.

Being involved in a community of fans

Conventional communities (clubs 2CV, Tupperware groups, Weight Watchers, etc.) are completed by multiple social networks growing *online*: Nike Plus chip users, Beneteau owners, Marmaramis (Marmara Travel Friends), members of Pampers Village, etc. Members sign on and perform on these websites as they get additional enjoyment in sharing

and exchanging on their consumer experience. Nike +, presented as the largest running club in the world, enables runners to compare their performance, challenge each other and share motivating music.

Communities can take on the role of brands by becoming prescribers. A female customer tells of buying a black Harley, then deciding that blue is prettier, simply because it seemed easier to get into the biker circuits. This example illustrates society's impact on performation.

Becoming a brand ambassador

Brand proselytism is clearly a way of performing. People are performing brands when they post positive comments on Facebook, wear brand colors, tout benefits to friends and family, photograph or film brand events then post them on social networks. Some even cultivate knowledge more extensive than actual brand sales associates.

Performers will act as ambassadors when given the means to display their preferences and commitments. As such, the shopping bag at time of purchase is a good performation support. A brand like The Kooples gets it right with their fabric, reusable shopping bags.

Facebook *likes*, virtual tattooing, even actual tattoos of logos by Nintendo, Google or Apple, are extreme forms of fans appropriating brands and making them means for expressing their tastes and world vision, ultimately becoming a facet of their being.

Handing down across generations is a time-resistant and interesting performativity driver, as illustrated by the following testimonial: « *A few year and a few Rolex watches later, my appreciation grows for this discreet luxury watchmaker who makes beautiful watches tough enough to be worn every day. I will be able to leave watches to my sons and perpetuate the Rolex legend and emotional attachment.* »

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
Various degrees of performation: from simple amateurs to devotees or « evangelists »

Brands' premises must not solely provide a place for experience enrichment, but become the place where brand « faithful » or fans come to perform the brand in the way one performs one's religious devotion. Stepping into a brand's « temple » means visitors are a part of brand spirit. Just as there are several degrees of performation in Christianity (from the devout to tourists), there are several degrees of brand performation from the die-hard fans who attend all brand events, visit all symbolic brand locations and even mimic all the gestures and actions characterizing the brand community to the simple amateurs who settle for a few brand appearances. The difference lies in the degree of initiation. The more customers are « familiar » with and knowledgeable about a brand, the more naturally they

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merge their behavior with the brand's codes and style. There are also consumers who perform brands they do not purchase or use (Ferrari amateurs who wear jackets or shoes, etc.). Some consumers perform brands to the extreme, even caricaturizing by excessive use, whilst others discreetly include brands in their personal universe.

Counter-performation

A contrario, in some situations, consumers counter-perform brands. These attitudes can arise from a bad product experience, be it direct (a dysfunctional product, disappointment or convinced of being taken for a ride, or a bad experience with a brand representative, etc.) or indirect (through negative testimonials or damaging rumors about a company, brand or product). This can also occur in social contexts where a consumer isn't able to carry off his/her love of a brand, or the brand is disparaged by his/her friends or family. Finally, counter-performing can occur due to poor brand choices, association with negative profiles or a cultural universe considered phony, incoherent or inconsistent.

This clearly indicates the extreme importance for brands to watch over every aspect of their events to avoid giving consumers any reason to counter-perform or spread negative publicity.

Evaluating performativity

Consumers don't only « believe » or appreciate brands, they perform brands in an active identification relation. Conventional brand analysis tends to focus on the concept of preference or brand image. This is misleading as it « over-intellectualizes » brands by underestimating physical practices, and their « operational » nature and interaction with the public. To evaluate a brands' strength, one can study its performativity potential with its customers, through a vast array of indicators and considering all brand dimensions. This procedure provides the advantage of considering the interactive dynamics that connect brands to their customers.

Four criteria of a performative brand

To evaluate a brand's performativity, there are 4 criteria:

- **Use**: To what extent have consumers adopted the use model of the brand's products and services and developed personal and long-term practices?

- **Acceptance and buy-in of cultural universe**: Do consumers accept and buy into

the brand's values, symbols, styles, icons, universe, etc.? And does the brand enable brand experience according to a certain identity?

- **Exchanging with others**: Do consumers interact with other fans, and do they consider themselves brand ambassadors?

- **Sign value**: Are consumers motivated to display brand characteristics (colors, symbols, etc.)?

CHAPTER 9
MANAGING BRAND CULTURE:
MAKING CULTURE A STRATEGIC DRIVER

Optimizing brands' operational management requires the development of brands' cultural potential and the mobilization of their cultural force using organization and certain instruments.

Managing a cultural strategy poses operational challenges:

- Identifying and compiling the elements that make up brand culture;

- Selecting the right tools to assess and accompany brands' cultural potential;

- Determining the orchestration and management of brand culture.

Creative research to avoid brand bureaucracy

The lack of innovation in many companies is due to the excessive use of management called *brand bureaucracy*. The brand bureaucracy trap was first finger-pointed by authors Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron, based on the foundational analyses by Max Weber on cultural bureaucracy. It consists of the following:

- Using tools to simplify, quantify and diagram reality to make it more easily understood (statistics, abstract concepts, standardized procedures);

- Adopting a top-down management style, leaving no room for emotion or personal initiatives.

The rise of *brand bureaucracy* can be explained by the increase of science in marketing, even the construction of marketing as a pseudo-science. The authors call this parody of science *sciency marketing*, taking inspiration from American comedian Stephen Colbert, who coined the term *truthy,* satirizing G. W. Bush's decision to send troops to Irak (based on his "gut instinct without regard to evidence, intellectual examination or fact…"). Due to the legacy of the Taylorism of the 1920s, followed by the mind-conditioning methods during WWII, science in marketing exploded in the Sixties. Sciency abuses in marketing can lead to a limited brand approach by « *bureaucrats* », whose only aim is the standardization of minds and products, easy to compare and analyze, void of any uniqueness or attachment appeal.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

The errors of *brand bureaucracy*, according to Douglas Holt and Douglas Cameron

Though the bureaucratic system may be successful in managing a company like a well-oiled machine (FedEx, Toyota, Wal-Mart, etc.), when applied to marketing, the effects can be devastating, producing a tunnel vision on the marketplace, business and products. *Brand bureaucracy* does encourage the analysis of market trends superficially, as if consumers lived in the eternal present. However, it does not attempt to identify the underlying reasons behind change, nor cultural impacts or potential opportunities.

« *Brand bureaucrats*» farm out cultural and sociological research to consulting firms or market research institutes who decoct and simplify results. This leaves them to concentrate on their two main missions:

- Defining a concept, based on *mindshare marketing*, where a product's success lies in its ability to colonize consumers' cognitive functions (perception, memory…).

- Finding the perfect formula, through testing the product or concept using pseudo-scientific methods.

Table 9.1 : Bureaucratic vs. Entrepreneurial Marketing

	Bureaucratic Marketing	Entrepreneurial Marketing
Mode of organization	Top-down structure Skills specialization Subcontracting cultural research & studies (consultancy / studies)	Network structure Multi-skills Internal cultural research (*cultural studio*)
Design stage & creativity management (research, concept, test, design)	**Linear and systematic approach** (production/assembly line) 1) Superficial market analysis (main trends only at a given time T) 2) Concentration on the definition and testing of abstract concepts 3) Creative design agencies' intervention towards end of project	**Modular and integral approach** (joint-team effots, each project being different) 1) In-depth market analysis (causes behind societal developments, their cultural impact and opportunities arising) 2) Identification of cultural innovations, based on market analysis 3) Mobilization of creative-design agencies at project inception
Consumer Vision	Mobilization of consumers' cognitive functions (memory, perception) « *Emotioneering* »: appealing to consumer's emotions	Mobilization of consumers, delved in a common culture

Despite it all, brands are first and foremost cultural expressions. Therefore, though the marketing process arrives at a simplistic concept « *bureaucrats* » must re-inject cultural content into the last phase of creation, or *mix marketing*, design, packaging, communication… And since it was not considered in prior stages, this cultural injection is *a posteriori* and therefore systematic and artificial:

- Systematic because innovation in *brand bureaucracies* is organized like a production line, where research, concept, design, etc. are compartmentalized and linear. The concept gives rise to a set of rules the bureaucrat refers to for determining the relevance (or lack thereof) of any subsequent creative ideas;

- Artificial since the search for creative ideas (identical to prior cultural research) is entrusted to outside service providers. And though ad agencies may have proven talent and panache in this area, they are no substitute for true and deep strategic reflection on and by brands. Mobilizing agencies at project's inception would enable businesses to be properly supported in their cultural research and the identification of more relevant creative possibilities.

Sociologist Max Weber called *brand bureaucracy* a « *steel cage* » many companies lock themselves into, making them incapable of any true cultural innovation requiring a refined understanding of society and culture. It is critical to develop methods taking into account a brand's symbolic, cultural, relational and experience-related value, as well as reputation. It is necessary to decipher the stories, history, images and associations immediately connecting a brand with popular culture. A brand's tangible and intangible components must be analyzed to determine the best media and supports for culture. And unexploited cultural universes are potential growth drivers or innovation opportunities.

American ethnologist Paul Willis explains how research tools are naturally creative in response to people's creativity. The expression « *life as art* » reflects his vision on people's deeply imaginative behavior in life and in consumption.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT
Creative consumption and cultural ethnology, according to Paul Willis

For Paul Willis, author of *Moving Culture*, culture is omnipresent, and it constantly defines us. People do not only strive to survive economically and materially. They want to give meaning and a symbolic dimension to their existence. « *Creative consumption*» brings into play personal, cultural, social and gender identity, and

must be analyzed as a cultural performance.

In his book *The Ethnographic Imagination*, Paul Willis presents an eponymous method giving legitimacy and scientific ground to cultural ethnology, offering a multi-disciplinary approach where all the senses are stimulated.

He considers that the opposition between the rational and imaginary does not exist for ethnologists. He would analyze society in all that is tangible as well as its symbolic dimensions. Societal phenomena is not only the result of rational and calculated acts, but the fruit of collective imaginations and ambient symbolism. In this way, a salary is more than a sum of money, it has essential symbolic value: the promise of owning one's own home, signs of belonging to a group, etc. Losing one's job can be equated with losing one's identity.

Accepting the relativity of social sciences

According to Willis, to produce something truly new requires amazement. There is no point in striving to be faithful to a single school of thinking, but one must be willing to accept learnings from field experience, even if they are in opposition to our former beliefs. Theory is the result of research and not the starting point. This is an essential aspect, not to let one be dictated what is to be seen by the method, but to be open to receiving new learnings from the field. Ethnology « *includes a portion of surprise, as it respects the ability for action and creativity* ».

Also the author notes that questions in the field constantly change. Consequently answers must change as well. Ethnographic theory is not static but dynamic, and the definitions relied on constantly change as well.

The brand culture audit: rethinking brand studies

Beyond consumer surveys, focus groups or in-depth brand analyses, brands conduct « cultural research », « cultural explorations» of their concepts, products or projects to evaluate their cultural relevance in a given market. This dual concept consists of the following:

- Assisting brands in detecting potential content resources enabling them to best express their brand culture;

- Identifying points of cultural resonance between brands and people in the market-place (to provide the right elements of brand performation for the best fit with brand culture).

This « cultural research » is a cross analysis between the following:

- Brand identity elements (logo, name, signature, visual code, story, history, etc.), brand history and its body of communication;

- The brand's cultural environment, enabling brands to develop a rich and dense universe, capitalizing on its cultural heritage.

It is based on the following:

- Internal analysis of brand history as seen by those who experience the brand and evaluation of teams' potential buy-in;

- Cultural analysis of all communication media, central concept of brand's foundation, as well as the history of brand's cultural expressions in its competitive context;

- In-depth document research based on the brand's heritage and reference cultural universe (reading reference works, history, art history, product history, etc.)

The challenge of cultural exploration is always to move beyond brand discourse and its signs. Signs are to culture what surface is to depth – only the visible portion of the iceberg. This explains why semiological analysis (brand-issued signs and their coherence/pertinence) is not enough to observe the density of a culture and its authenticity beyond discourse. As stated earlier, in an economy dominated by a quest for meaning, cultural signs are not enough. It is not enough for a sports brand to display signs of an athletic culture, the brand must prove the reality of this culture in the brand's existence. Brands must prove their cultural reality in a myriad of ways. Any and all false or fraudulent claims by brands faking culture would be an unforgiveable mistake, equal to product flaws or manufacturing defects.

QualiQuanti Market Research Institute accompanied the Citadium brand in the field during its cultural development. Citadium had intuitively developed a powerful and coherent brand universe. The brand culture audit exposed the functioning and the mapping of Citadium's cultural universe. It also identified a few minor points of dissonance and allowed for the modeling of several cultural innovation drivers for the brand. This undertaking also afforded greater internal understanding and buy-in of brand culture for the teams.

AND NOW FOR A LITTLE OF THEORY
The brand culture audit action plan

A brand culture audit does not simply apply a traditional analysis to a brand's signs as they are emitted without taking into consideration the cultural context in which it exists and develops (this would be mutilating the brand's true existence). A brand culture audit is an extensive examination which correlatively studies *ad hoc* cultural fields of reference, deducing the clusters (connections, points of overlap) produced with the brand, both past and present. These clusters represent potential avenues and threads in developing a cultural strategy that is brand-specific, coherent and authentic.

1. Auditing brand's manifestations

The first stage of a brand culture audit consists of studying a brand's diverse, multi-dimensional manifestations, including texts and images, objects, people, gestures, stories, atmospheres, techniques and technology, shapes, sounds, noises, colors, etc. This can be done by applying semiology, or studying a universe of ontologically heterogeneous signs.

2. Identifying ad hoc cultural fields of reference

In addition to studying the brand's own manifestations, to properly situate a brand within its environment, one must identify the fields whence it draws or potentially draws its cultural references. Far from random, this analysis must focus on elements that are relevant to the brand. In addition to those specific to a brand, analysis of the brand's competition can help in determining philosophical conceptions and iconographical traditions of a sector or industry.

3. Exploration of these specific, plural territories, as a part of history

In essence, a brand is a part of history. A brand is defined by its past as it simultaneously projects into the future. To understand and enrich a brand's cultural universe over the long term, one must retrace its cultural chronology, including all contributions to brand identity at every moment in its history and in every ambient context.

4. Identifying clusters for brand optimization

Once brand manifestations have been audited and the cultural fields of reference established, one must go back and forth between these poles, exposing the connections and high-potential overlaps to be extrapolated to the contemporary context.

5. Developing a cultural strategy

These clusters and territories of potential projection are the result of the historical study of the brand's unique signs put into context. These findings provide the guidelines to develop an authentic, brand-specific cultural strategy.

Cultural Research laboratories

Brands provide a powerful force for the exploration, spawning and discovery of new pathways (themes, talents, practices). Brands are cultural leaders because they provoke and push beyond, and do not simply produce stereotypical content. Brands are in osmosis with what goes on around them, and must be on the leading edge of creativity, design and research. Brands must be able to identify and pursue buoyant/promising currents.

One solution consists in using a business-line based cultural research laboratory. HSBC compiles statistics on the lives of expatriates. Audi organized a conference called Urban Future and inviting attendees to think about the role of cars in the future. Coca-Cola launched the Happiness Barometer Survey. Axa organizes the Global Forum for Longevity through its foundation. Cetelem looks at Europeans' behaviors and choices through the Consumer Buying Observatory. Sodexo created the Fondation Sodexo on quality of life. Aufeminin.com has become the expert in marketing for women through their laboratory Womenology. These exploratory and experimental initiatives illustrate how brands can act as cultural agents.

Douglas Holt, quoted above, stresses the fact that brand cultures are shared and formed collectively. To become iconic, brands must be ahead of avant-garde trends. He suggests a six-step method to develop effective brand culture.

EXPERT VIEWPOINR
Douglas Holt's six-step framework for building a cultural strategy

1. Map the category's cultural orthodoxy

One must first study the cultural context or cultural orthodoxy that innovation must break through. Generally this is the competitor's dominant cultural expression (ideologies, myths and cultural codes).

2. Identify social disruption

Societal changes can occur at any time which disturb consumers' identification with conventional cultural categories. Whether provoked by technology, economy, the media or anything else, these changes will push consumers to thirst for a new ideology.

3. Unearth the ideological opportunity

The extent of the disruption on consumers must be evaluated, as well as the direction of desires for new cultural expressions. Towards which a new or emerging ideology will they now gravitate?

4. Cull appropriate source material

A cultural innovation is never *ex nihilo*: cultural expressions generally come from sub-cultures, social movements or even brand content. Source material will be used to seize an ideological opportunity.
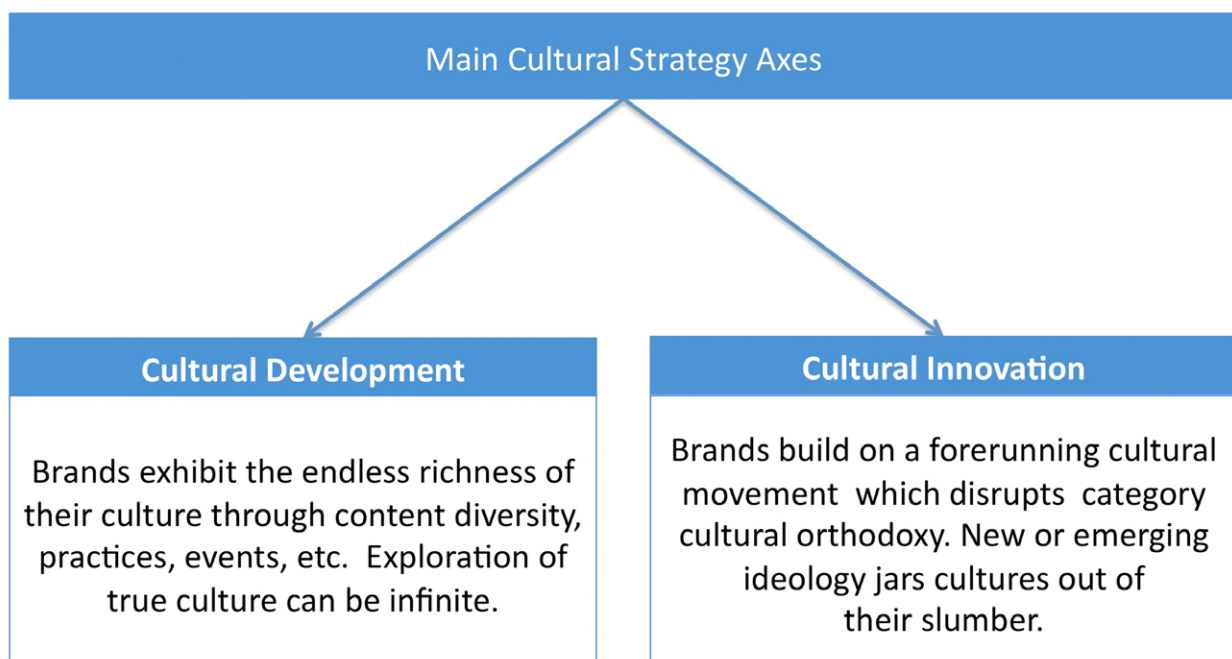
5. Apply cultural tactics

Many techniques can provide tactical improvements to cultural strategies. For instance, ideological debates can be spurred, brands mythologized, or dormant mythologies revived.

6. Craft cultural strategy

Cultural strategy requires the identification of a specific opportunity at a particularly opportune time, in a particular social context, and seizing the opportunity by a particular cultural expression.

A winning innovation and development strategy enables brands to be at the fore of avant-garde cultural developments. It must be pointed out that cultural orthodoxy is not necessarily a bad thing in the cultural field: a strong culture will not fade just because it is shared. On the contrary, cultures can be maintained and renewed by growing ever deeper. Along with strategies of cultural disruption, deepening or extending a culture is also a viable strategy.

Figure 9.2: Choosing a cultural strategy

Main Cultural Strategy Axes	
Cultural Development	**Cultural Innovation**
Brands exhibit the endless richness of their culture through content diversity, practices, events, etc. Exploration of true culture can be infinite.	Brands build on a forerunning cultural movement which disrupts category cultural orthodoxy. New or emerging ideology jars cultures out of their slumber.

Brand culture orchestration and management

Managing a cultural strategy requires organization. Various experts recommend the appointment of *chief culture officers* or *chief meaning officers* to culturally manage businesses.

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

A new profession to include culture in businesses, according to Grant Mc-Cracken

Culture is an ocean of opportunities for brands. The stakes are so high, that anthropologist Grant McCracken contends in his new book that a new position must be devised, i.e.: a *chief culture officer*. The CCO's role would be to keep a watchful eye on the outside world to help a business anticipate, adapt and communicate right.

According to McCracken, Levi's lost $1 billion by ignoring the hip-hop movement (marginal cum mass culture) and neglecting to redesign their jeans. Facebook drew criticism by claiming to have 7 billion photos… Examples are endless where many businesses misread «culture» only to regret it afterwards. The term «culture» is to be considered in its broadest sense as the ensemble of ideas, emotions and activities which make up consumers' lives.

A new stakeholder is necessary to understand culture: a *chief culture officer* (CCO). The CCO's function is to understand culture in all its facets and to support the CMO (*chief marketing officer*) in an area which requires full-time consideration. He must detect all emerging innovations and new creative practices and consumer buying.

Grant McCracken distinguishes the following:

- fast culture: trends and fads which constantly change and require us to change as well;

- slow culture: the culture we are so steeped in that we don't even see it any more.

McCracken considers that both must be considered by the CCO. One must understand culture that is established over the long term and resist the passion for novelty that governs today's marketing field.

These days culture spreads everywhere. Anyone can shoot films with very few constraints. There is no single electronic or rock music culture, but dozens. Cultures grow in number, separate and refine. «*The CCO's job is to find a path in the chaos*».

How can a CCO observe?

The CCO must take interest in what we undoubtedly know, what we don't know and what seems strange to us. He tackles murky areas where knowledge is lacking, interacting with people in the know and asking the right questions.

He must also observe publishers, the press, television, Facebook status and popular culture, leaving nothing to chance. Connections between observations must be made. And even the insignificant must be questioned. The CCO must be empathetic and able to feel what the observed people are feeling.

Mc Cracken believes one becomes a CCO by truly « *experiencing* » something which allows us to understand a brand's mechanisms. This is precisely the example of de Philip Knight, who was a runner and knew what athletes wanted and the meaning of « *a runner's culture* ». As a result, he launched Nike, and the rest is history.

The CCO does not use « *intuitions* » or an aura which help him « *sense* » things. He uses objective evidence that others do not see, but could see if they worked towards observing attentively. This is how he/she is able to reach the broadest audience.

This rationale must be applied to all brands without iconic designers, by placing a designer alongside the manager, and a cultural advisor in top management to *drive* the brand and define the brand's role as a cultural leader.

Burberry's creative director, Christopher Bailey embodies the global approach to culture. In Jérôme Bonnet's portrait of him in French daily *Libération* on December 8, 2011, it was clear how central culture is to his profession as illustrated below:

- As *creative director* in charge of brand, he is responsible for « *the design of all collections and products, as well as communication, corporate artistic direction, architectural design, multimedia content and brand image in its entirety* ».

- He views his work by developing a universe around products: « *Today, a brand is no longer simply a product. Context is critical, including the purchase experience as well as the experience wearing products. You can have the most beautiful coat in the world, but if it doesn't reflect any sign to you, it is meaningless* ».

- He is required to practice certain disciplines: « *Everything I love in life: music, fashion, design and architecture are the topics I'm working on at Burberry's. I have been so lucky in my career.* »

As suggested in the article culture is a « global field », which is not divided. Culture is a whole unit. By calling Christopher Bailey a « *global field guru* », the journalist clearly identifies the specificity of culture and its implications for business organizations. In the upcoming years, it is highly likely that these new managers in today's fashion businesses will make their way to other organizations which a *priori*, have no direct contact with artistic or creative universes. For clearly, all brands do have culture.

CONCLUSION

Culture is an infinitely renewable energy present in the core of all brands. Brands which decide to free their cultural potential must learn to consider their brand as a cultural leader. Brand culture is the aggregate of all the various brand manifestations, often structured around a powerful idea, borne out of the interaction of a brand with its environment.

Products take on meaning through this cultural construction. Therefore cultural strategy is of capital importance, and not an optional add-on to a company's marketing strategy. A brand's cultural strategy is the pillar in any long-term brand management.

Culture is a long-term source of innovation

Culture is a powerful value driver for brands. All future innovations are necessarily cultural. The difficult battle of technological innovation is waged and won by large, multi-national businesses. However, cultural innovation is within the reach of all brands. Sushi Shop is first and foremost a cultural success, owing to their creation of a trendy, premium universe.

Promoting diversification and expansion

Well-controlled brand culture facilitates the resolution of many issues encountered in company expansion. Growth is often viewed through *stretching*: Could a brand that produces sponges also make towels? When growth is considered from a cultural standpoint, diversification becomes natural. A hotel with an existing cultural universe, drawing from its roots in 1920s France, can easily sell any and all items that contribute to and become emanations of this cultural experience, from cakes, cookies and candles to carriage rides. In these cases, diversification enables brands to embody their profound culture and not simply seek diversification to increase sales.

Culture becomes a force of diversification and authentic innovation, without instrumentalization. This phenomena is perfectly natural since culture is a living organism. And strong, rich living organisms grow, multiply, sow seeds and penetrate infinite objects. Similarly a brand with strong culture will reach beyond to diversified sectors to inspire beyond its own productions, such as musical, or architectural currents, language or speaking styles, clothing styles, sports, athletic practices, etc.

Brand cultural imperialism

As a cultural phenomenon, a brand must strive to become addictive, to win over bodies and minds, and to expand globally. Brand cultural imperialism is to socio-culturally influence lifestyles to make them come to resemble the brands by offering the brand's own culture, mindset and consumption.

Brand culture's richness is ever more useful should a brand wish to expand beyond its own borders. To exist on an international scale, a brand must possess a universe rich in meaning from which to draw.

From a commercial standpoint, the most successful brand cultures succeed in being both universal and unique, transcending cultural specificities to impose their uniqueness on the market. This is exemplified by global brands existing across the world such as Apple and Coca-Cola, as analyzed by Raphaël Lellouche. Apple transcended the language barrier initially by emphasizing its logo on products, rather than the word "Apple" in English (the apple with a bite taken out of its icon is recognized worldwide). Apple's fore-running invention of the personal computer for everyone guaranteed the brand's universality: As part of the source that became the computer revolution, unleashing a technological tsunami across the world, the Apple brand and its culture and style reign uncontested. In a different approach, Coca-Cola leveraged two fundamental, universal benefits: positive attitudes and creative abilities, even drawing from the history of its ingredients.

These two examples demonstrate that beyond cultural richness, brands' strength and reach are determined by the relevance and force of their references in a given context. The challenge consists of ensuring that brand culture contribute positively to general culture and be a source of learning, enriching and/or embellishing consumption, making it more intelligent, more responsible and more aware of itself. The intent of this book is to contribute to the achievement of this formidable undertaking.

The Ten Commandments of Brand Culture

1. **Adhere to brand heritage**: historic, geographic and social origins and evolution of development… As such, brand heritage requires preservation and a full-time position devoted to its conservation.

2. **Express strong and original meaning**: brand is a semantic pole of varying density, a polyphonic myth of varying strength depending on the relevance of its message. This is best achieved by having a precursor position and originality in cultural research.

3. **Be authentic**: Brand culture must be anchored in real life experiences. Initially, the brand's founder, then relayed by his or her staff, then by consumers who will be increasingly involved if the brand culture experience is powerful.

4. **Produce a critical mass of manifestations and events**: a profusion of brand expressions - throughout all channels and over the long term - is essential to create a strong, sustained impact on the public.

5. **Promote coherence in expressions**: This must enable mutual reinforcement of the various brand expressions, by orchestrating cognitive and sensory points of overlap.

6. **Be generative**: brand culture is a perpetually renewing, creative process, and its content and ideas must be pollenating « blooming and flourishing », meaning rich in development potential over time and in various forms.

7. **Be attentive to environment**: brands are not self-sufficient organisms, they live in and interact with environments, contribute to and draw from these environments.

8. **Promote clear understanding of brand universe**: brands must be intuitively and immediately understandable. Therefore brands' universe and messages have to be focused and easy to comprehend.

9. **Strike the right balance between specificity and universality**: To stand out amongst competitors, brands must be unique, however, they must be able to transcend boundaries internationally and have universal foundations able to resonate in various cultures.

10. **Be « performable »**: For culture to be relayed by consumers, brands must offer models and specific practices, with which consumers can identify and project. Simply, brand culture must be presented as an agent of *empowerment*.

    For more ideas about brand culture, visit us at: www.brandculture.fr for new examples, expert contributions and additional research. Please join us! We welcome your comments and participation!

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Post-face: Developing a New Brand Theory, interview with Raphaël Lellouche[1]

Why develop a new brand theory today?

In my thirty years of consulting in brand semiology and theoretical reflection on the nature and function of brands, as existing theories have proved increasingly inadequate, the need for a new theory has become evident. Current brand « models » have two shortcomings: They are too often based on essentially political or religious anachronistic analogies and they fail to satisfy the epistemological requirement of all theories which is to demonstrate adequation with their object.

Most brand models retrace conceptions developed in the Seventeenth Century to reflect political obligation in the modern State, meaning the theory of sovereignty or the social contract (Hobbes or Rousseau), or schemes drawn from ancient religions or myths elevated to archetype status.

In my opinion, another flawed conception is to reduce brands to « an imaginary universe » or a simple « being of discourse » (ens rationis). These brand models isolate brands to a « purely semiotic » level, thereby disconnecting them from all market functions, whereas brands are fundamentally a central institution of modern markets. One should also eschew such idealism or nominalism potentially lurking under the heading of « cultural », where culture is superficially understood as an imaginary construction or an ensemble of literary or rhetorical figures. This would end up negating the strides of progress accomplished by the concept of « brand culture » by conceiving it as some mere triviality, widely accepted over the past decades. Simply replacing the word « imaginary » with the word « cultural » would be pointless should they be only imbued with equal meaning.

What are the main points of your brand theory?

I think a valid brand theory must be contemporaneous with its object, and especially be able to account for current mass markets' crucial reality which is that consumers are free, unfettered and unbound by any « contract » or « obligation » to brands. That is why we must ask the question anew: What is a commercial brand today?

Money and brand are the two fundamental institutions of the modern marketplace. Considering the double market mediation encompassing money and brand provides the benefit of countering the virulent brand-hostile critics of the « consumption society » and their cultural criticism of capitalism that has been ongoing since Adorno to present day, by Naomi Klein, including of course people like Guy Debord or Michel Clouscard.

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1   Raphaël Lellouche, philosopher and consultant in semiology, has been studying brands for over thirty years. He was initially Research Director at La Sorgem, then an independent semiologist. Presently he works with many market research institutes, including Kaliwatch International, Ipsos and QualiQuanti. He has authored several books and articles on philosophy and media theory.

The solution lies in the following three fundamental concepts: *self-binding, performativity, mediality.*

I must stress the coherence of all three integral parts of the theory. This book only covers the concept of consumer activity or performativity separately, despite all three being intricately connected. The other two critical components are firstly **Self-binding** referring to the mechanism by which brands emanate from firms, **binding** themselves unilaterally, committing before the « theatre » of social communication; and, secondly, their major mode of existence, or « **media** » condition, immanent in technical mass media (including press, graphic design, the Internet, radio, TV and other media) to which consumers are exposed.

Could you please explain what you mean by « double mediation » in the marketplace?

What is our object? It is not an anachronistic analogy with political doctrines on the sovereignty of mythological archetypes, but modern brands on the capitalist marketplace. The marketplace is the traditional place for producers to make contact with potential buyers. The markets have become an anonymous mass network, underpinned by technical media. As illustrated by Marx, a commodity is established there by effacing its use-value. To trade objects whose use is not comparable (cakes and textiles for instance), the first medium is money. This is the classic distinction that Marx makes between *use-value* (qualitative, but heterogeneous) and *exchange-value*, (homogenous, but abstract). His market criticism is based on his observation that money is a medium whose abstraction is dehumanizing. The Marxists call this process reification. Paradoxically, that is where its importance lies: It creates a neutralized space in which human relations become indifferent. As such, money establishes an initial, objective means of information on the marketplace. In expression through price, the exchange-value of merchandise is exposed to the initial informative sanction: *to pay or not to pay*, which is inescapable. But information does not stop at this sanction. Use-value comes back after having been equalized by exchange-value which it cannot completely eliminate. But just how does it come back?

This is precisely where the brand intervenes as *second medium* of the marketplace: It brings objects back into the fore by what Marx calls the use-value, through the construction of socio-cultural information on product which transcends price. This construction requires a second medium beyond money. The information is cognitively more complex than a simple discursive explanation of the product's use and functions, albeit accompanied by persuasive rhetoric. At this stage, brand mediation is the required second medium. As a necessary institutional structure of the marketplace, brands ensure the semantic-cultural construction of goods and communication of their social identity to consumers, thereby bringing about their economic existence. In the modern marketplace, brand mediation allows information to become a « constituent » part of the very existence of products and their « mix ». The brand is responsible for this second articulation.

This « double mediation » conception becomes fully conceivable in light of the technological and media revolution over the last century. The marketplace itself is clearly not a

new invention, but a very old institution, whose modern condition however is mainly due to the effects of the media revolution. The modern brand phenomenon is closely connected to the « media » condition of the modern marketplace, made coextensive to society at large by mass communication media. The media provides the vehicle for this information beyond price sanction. These vehicles are scarcely perceptible without our actual consciousness, due to the strange nature of our exposure to media's powerful reach.

What effect does this context have on the semiotic conception of brands?

This by no means invalidates it, on the contrary. Before considering brands as an institution, in my understanding, that is as the « second medium » of the markets along with money, « Brand » must first be considered literally as a sign or inscription attached to products. Only then can brands be considered as an institution for our purposes, and as the marketplace's « second medium » along with money. Most authors tend to agree that tracing brand's logical articulations, leads to the three following phases: stamping, signature and guarantee.

-        Brand on a primary level serves to « stamp » or mark a product like « branding » livestock. This indicates the product's possession. At this stage, the actual brand does not yet exist, as the stamping only indicates a private relationship between product and the work of its producer.

-        On a second level, as « signature, » it enables brand to develop an identity function or creative « origin » that makes brand distinct and recognizable amongst others on the marketplace. This function supposes already an « other », in face of which it stands. Here brand demands a « place » or « position » on the marketplace before potential consumers through public communication. Here brands are analogous to becoming a proper name (trademark).

-        In the third or « guarantee » level, brands develop the function of certification of their products' properties. These « guarantees » result from the brand's responsibility and commitment pertaining to certain properties of the object with regards to buyers. Guarantees ensure constancy, continued and repeated quality over time. The brand functions as an induction machine, taking properties from the past and projecting them identically into the future. Ultimately, the brand is the concentrated « memory » of a production tradition and a simple « sign » instantly revives all of this in consumers' minds. The brand plays the indispensable role of cognitive sparing, or freeing up short-term memory and reducing complexity for consumers.

These three phases represent the passage from the *for-self producer* to the existence of a *product for-another*, in full public visibility on the marketplace. Hegel clearly distinguished these three moments in *Elements of the Philosophy of Right*. Here I use these three moments as presuppositions of the brand as "sign". But this is only the starting point, because beyond being a signs, a brand is a marketplace « institution » whose key mechanism is *self-binding.* And like all social entities, its ontology results from a *collective intentionality*. As explained by John Searle in *The Construction of Social Reality*, like money, brand only exists and functions because everyone believes in it, and consumers recognize and place their trust in it. This is brand's fiduciary foundation.

Brand-Sign	Stamping	Signature	Guarantee
Product Moment	*Possession* Unit of will and the product through labor	*Use* Institution of product use-value: product intended for others	*Alienation* Products' entrance on marketplace as commodity
Semiotic Indication	Index	Proper name (trademark)	Institution
Territory of Expression	Private (product-producer)	Public (marketplace)	
Brand Function	Denaturalize the object in an appropriation process	Be recognized and distinguished by others in the marketplace	Induce long-term quality for the purpose of gaining trust

What makes people believe in a brand?

The modern industrial brand's true nature lies in the fact that it exists vis-a-vis a marketplace and consumers, which are not bound to brands, but fundamentally free. Any brand theory not taking this critical reality into account would completely miss its object. Brands represent a sort of guarantee which does not function as an explicit or implicit *contract*, binding the firm to attached customers. The « guarantee » is a unilateral commitment the firm constrains itself to make vis-a-vis an indeterminate mass of anonymous, potential clients. This is a form of self-assurance offered by the firm to customers against any risk of default: Firms commit themselves before the marketplace. Like Ulysses who ties himself to the mast of his ship in anticipation of his future weakness, firms signal to the marketplace that their self-constraints ensure they will not deceive the marketplace and its customers. In cognitive psychology and philosophy of mind, this is called *self-binding*.

This founding principle must be maintained daily by brands in all their actions and manifestations. The emanation of « brand » by a firm is the public security that the firm commits before the marketplace. The expression of this commitment, as explained by economist Henri Lepage in *La Nouvelle économie industrielle*, is brands' investments financial and other in advertising, production, innovation, etc. Henri Lepage writes: « *Industrial reputations, or strong commercial brand images, take years to achieve. Once achieved however, they are extremely perishable. As such all efforts in this direction (the cumulative sum invested in brands' inception and beyond) represent a sort of guarantee whose value comes from the high financial risk the business would incur should it not maintain the quality and*

dependability standards committed to in the original contract. Brands' investments are the cornerstones of the mechanisms by which market leaders act as their own policing organization »

How do consumers respond to brand commitments?

Brands' investments are passed on in product prices. And when consumers are willing to pay the extra cost, they are *already implicitly accepting a brand's commitment*. They accept to pay more for a branded product, because the brand's guarantee of consistency, quality and image are superior to other brands. The essence of brand is therefore not « manipulation », but risk.

The actual purchasing act is only a single moment in consumers' relationship to brands, with consumers' response to brands' commitment extending much further. And this necessarily occurs through the trust and faith consumers place in brands and their commitment. Consumers also express this in their choices of brands as vectors of their socio-cultural make-up beyond consumption as simple « use-value destruction » but actual *performative* acts. Consumers who « perform » brands are active subjects in relation to them: All their attitudes and behavior merge with and contribute to a collective intentionality to make brands exist. This is the consumer correlate to brand's *self-binding*.

Ultimately brands are at the cross-roads of two different wills: a company which « binds itself » before the marketplace and consumers who perform the brand.

Figure 1 : Modern Brand Functions
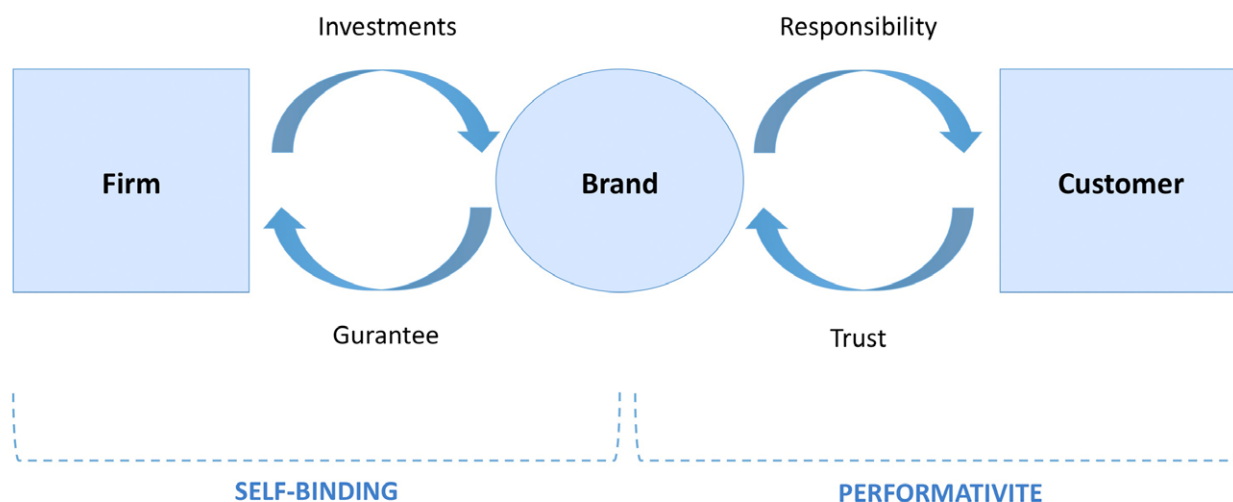
How is the connection between consumers and brand expressed?

This brings us to *mediality* — or the *mediology dimension* which is brand's third component. Mediality is the immanent material condition making possible the mutual symbolic acts between brands and individuals. Brands' creations and issuances and consumers'

performances are not purely mental acts, but exist also through diverse media channels at various degrees. To signify commitment, brands must express themselves on the marketplace, necessarily generating concrete manifestations: firstly products, followed by advertising, visual identity, buildings, technical support and devices, media expression, etc. This establishes the material and semiotic substrate through which performance occurs and is made visible to others.

Your conception of brands is cultural. How could we define the relationship between culture and brands?

Once brands' function is understood, it becomes obvious that they do not exist solely in an economic dimension, nor an ethereal « imaginary realm », but on equal footing with culture. Brands are simultaneously phenomena and drivers. Clearly, they are major cultural phenomena of modernity – which would be inconceivable without brands. As social media, they immerse all of contemporary society. As they are not part of « elitist » culture, no specific scientific or literary knowledge or skills are required. But they do take on and reproduce technical and practical « territories », customs and practices, modes of representation, symbolic references, etc. As media and culture go together, they must be considered as an integral part of a society's popular culture.

Let me now address the inevitable criticism of the « culture industry ». Considering brands as a cultural medium of the marketplace means reestablishing them to counter criticism, including the strongest and long-standing by Adorno (in *Kulturindustrie*). These critics consider that brands represent the most alienating phenomenon in a market-based society. They do not recognize brands as a cultural fact, but rather they radically exclude them from culture! This is a direct contradiction of brands' cultural nature and of our studies and claims. Let us consider what the critics of the « culture industry » and brand fetishism claim. In the Nineteenth Century, Marx was one of the first to criticize commodities centered on exchange-value, theorizing that in capitalism, use-value and human creative work became unfairly and inhumanely equal due to money and indifference to exchange-value. Mid-Twentieth Century, Adorno radicalizes and takes this theory further by adding an additional cultural layer. He denounces the mechanism by which commercial reification culminates in « fetishism ». In his opinion, capitalism in the society of consumption, becomes « seduction » when exchange-value is no longer confined to the monetary abstraction of all that is human, concrete and living, but goes so far as to driving emotions, desire or love to meet its own ends. By a sort of inversion, the autonomous subject disappears into a passive consumer seduced by the very occurrence of his/her own repression. The capitalism of seduction would bring about the total destruction of true culture, as Adorno claims: « *works of art become nothing but commodities* ». Pathological fixation on brands represents the most flagrant embodiment of this fetishism. They organize the frustration of desire, through systematic delusions of satisfaction, and constant and compulsive irritation with all that is « new », creating a perpetual *neomania.* According to Adorno, this is how domination occurs covertly, through euphoria and the « joyful » adoration of commodities. With seduction, commercial domination would be perfect, except that it occurs in « false totality » where subjects' autonomy is taken away which is in flagrant contradiction

with the aspiration of democratic individualism.

This criticism of the capitalism of seduction and brand fetishism is more or less astutely picked up by a gaggle of authors throughout the century, continuing to present day. A « cultural » rehabilitation of brands must face this criticism, which is actually based on the presupposition of the initial division between the enjoyment of art and simple consumption. It turns out this initial division is increasingly called into question by *cultural studies* a predominant, contemporary line of thinking on culture.

As cultural leaders, brands lay out their universe by attaching to historical and cultural structures that have stronger weaves than theirs. By the way, it should come as no surprise that brands create meaning at their own level, just like other social institutions.

Brands' own culture interacts with surrounding culture, making it difficult to determine where one ends and the other begins. How could we distinguish Levi's culture from American history, particularly during the gold rush era in the second half of the Nineteenth Century? How could we determine the exact role of blue jeans – the workers' uniform – in the wider, general success of the color blue in contemporary culture? This example shows that a brand's cultural foundation lies historically in an industrial and cultural innovation, drawing from and shaping broader contemporary trends, while maintaining a strong connection to its founder and his/her unique biography, distilling its historical, technical and social environment.

Like cultural production, can brands legitimately produce artistic content?

Brands' cultural legitimacy must stand up to the most virulent critics, especially the « *Kulturindustrie* » critics. Brands have attained the status of agents or leaders in today's cultural economy, even in the « elite » cultural realm. This is particularly prevalent in luxury, with brands becoming veritable sponsors of visual artists and contemporary musicians.

Brands are not necessarily illegitimate in this function. Despite our retrospective illusion, the connection between contemporary artists, technical media and brands is not new. Art would not exist without technical media, itself, being carried by brands. Today, music is a product of the music industry, which includes not only musical instruments, but studios that produce today's synthetic « *sound* », which is completely different from the « *sound* » produced by classical instruments. The music industry requires new media, investors and more. And certain artists like Jeff Koons or Takashi Murakami have practically become brands themselves in the art market.

Regarding the alleged « usurpation » of art's purpose, from the beginning of time, the (public) powers that be have always conditioned art's existence. Without the Medieval church and clergy, there would have been no religious paintings, nor pictorial tradition in the Western world; without the aristocratic families and Patrician patrons such as the Medecis in Florence, there would have been no Italian artistic Renaissance; without the Jesuits' Counter-Reformation propaganda, there would have been no Baroque art; and without Louis XIV's absolute monarchy, no Versailles, and no blossoming of French taste. The dominant power of the times, which formerly articulated politics and religion, has sim-

ply given way to today's economy which holds the power and naturally takes on the role of art patronage and sponsorship. The question of bias or manipulation is a non-issue. Pure art, or « art for art's sake » is a fantasy of the Nineteenth Century which culminated in the dissolution of the form. Art has always been linked to the power, even at times glorifying the power and powerful. Art has always been used for reasons of prestige and propaganda, and still is today. Aside from the fact that the majority of today's cultural production by brands is simply mediocre and even insignificant, this criticism of legitimacy is inadmissible.

Why is brand culture such a hot topic?

The dramatic transformation in the media and its current context explains why brands suddenly discovered their « cultural » nature. It is unfortunate that we have all but stopped reading the works of Sixties media theorist McLuhan who considers media hypnotizing and anesthetizing: One cannot escape it, receiving without realizing it, we cannot perceive anything without of it, yet we do not perceive the medium itself. Nevertheless up to the Nineties, brand perception was circumscribed to certain exclusive media such as press, radio and TV. These media conditioned the content expressed by brands, long confining them to simple sales promotion, then advertising. Brands were only thought about in the limits of these forms and messages, conditioned by the structure of these media. Whereas over the past decade, the media universe has been rocked by the technological revolution with digital technology and media convergence. We have gone from the Gutenberg era, to the Edison-Marconi era then to the Turing era. These innovations have offered brands new modes of expression, providing the awareness of their « trans-medial » condition, making it possible for them to breach the boundaries of classical media heretofore unquestioned, prior to entering the « Turing Galaxy ». Once in this new media galaxy, as shown by a series of writers, such as Derrida, Lacan, and Kittler, the transmission of meaning is no longer limited to a stream of speech, writing or a single « still image ». Meaning can now pass through other mediations such as new iconic modalities, the « atmosphere » and the emotional or even direct connection to our « actual » physiology. In this way, brands can go beyond exclusively discursive content, to express all their attributes and all that is coextensive to « culture », including human and technical interactions, semiotic practices, sensorial experiences, ambiences, etc.

In today's radically different context, brands have increased in depth and reach, beyond the *marketing mix* according to Kotler (*Product, Price, Place & Promotion*). Brands are now perceived as *trans-media cultural phenomena.*

Building Brand Culture:
Unlock your Brand's Cultural Potential

Preface by Jean-Marie Dru, Chairman, TBWA Worldwide
Post-face Interview with Raphaël Lellouche, Consultant in Semiology

Repetto, Ladurée, Nike, Oasis, Vuitton, Chanel, L'Oréal… Global brands are so much than economic institutions. Rooted in cultural environments, brands are cultural agents, continuously interacting and affecting change. The cultural dimensions of brands are clearly emerging as the pillars of sustainable value creation in today's economy, where producing meaning is *de rigueur*.

Our first book ***Brand Content*** (2009) sets the stage, ***Building Brand Culture*** shows you how !

Unlock your brand's cultural power to drive innovation and let our concrete examples and testimonials help you:

• Identify cultural sources and modes of expression;

• Leverage powerful brands' cultural strengths;

• Reinforce cultural resonance to bolster customer uptake;

• Manage brands and cultural diversity in today's global economy.

Featuring excerpts from philosopher and semiologist Raphael Lellouche's ***New Brand Theory***, as he applies the concepts of self-binding, performativity and mediality to the market-place, brands and their stakeholders.

Translation by: Tamara McGinnis

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