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I, Christopher J Oliveri , hereby submit this original work as part of the requirements for the degree of Master of Design in Design.

It is entitled:

The Untethered Myth

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The Untethered Myth

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In the Department of Design of the

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BY

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is an inquiry into the relationship of branding as a form of mythology in which consumers are educated and influenced using the practices of myth (initiation and association). This precedent has been created as our access to information has grown exponentially and branding has capitalized on our predisposition to storytelling and hero emulation.

With information, we are afforded more choices to help use define ourselves. There is no longer a gatekeeper or initiator to information, we have become "Untethered." Wherein past models of transmitting information were maintained and dispensed by initiators such as priests, elders, clerics, master craftsmen, we are now inundated with all information at all times.

This information has been given out using the format of mythology. The purpose of myth is to help us explain the irrational and educate. We look to understand how branding now mirrors mythology and strives to relate to consumers through story and association, becoming highly reflective to our identities. We buy what we aspire towards or empathize with in our own story. Branding speaks both *to* and *for* us.

We will define this process of how consumers interact with brand as an initiation process into a full state of initiation, in which we incorporate the myth/brand into our own identities. This is the ultimate goal for a brand, to convert a consumer into a "Brand Hero" who will serve as an ambassador to their cause.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

PROBLEM STATEMENT

How do consumers associate with story?

HISTORY

1. A Crowd of Individuals

Every day, we have an increasing number of choices to make that build our personal identity. Some choices are more important than others: I don't really care what socks I wear but I am invest in my choice of shoes. Why is that? We all work within a hierarchy of purposeful selections. With all these choices, we are adrift in a sea of people figuring out the very same problem. Who am I and what do I stand for and how do I represent my aspirational self?

This question has never been so hard. The tools and information we have at hand give us great advantages but at a cost. History has provided us centuries of knowledge with instant access and now we need to distinguish ourselves within it without necessarily doing the legwork to obtain it. As we filter and editorialize all that we adopt and associate, we learn more about what resonates with us.

We have gone from communal sources of knowledge and information (village elders, priests, libraries, the home computer) to a decentralized learning in isolation with smart phones, tablets, and social media. The keys to the kingdom have been

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replicated and there is no exclusive gatekeeper that is editing this information for us. In this personalized world, we must each find our own unique way.

This process of defining identity is usually synonymous with a coming of age for people. You can try on a certain style, profession, religion, significant other, pet, or diet fad to project outwards and instigate networking and communication. How is this affected when the choices we have has seemingly grown exponentially? And how does this change when your generation is the most plugged in and socially documented? Who and what do you stand for?

3. Thinking Outside the Brand

So how has this changed so much in just a few generations, hasn't each age had its growing pains? A major factor is that our dedication to a structured mythology has lessened. We turn to the authority of myth and hero, Joseph Campbell, who states that myth is the gatekeeper of entering adulthood and defines how to live one's life (Campbell 1949 / 2008). It would be crafted and structured with rituals and services that helped you along the way, usually found in religion or cultural systems.

Now that we can obtain all manner of information on our own, we are bypassing the gatekeepers, the priests, the elders, and the parents. We are in the age of choice. Our decisions are electrified with influencers and identifiers, one largely being BRAND. Within the last hundred years, this field has grown from the

unique to the ubiquitous. From the clothes we wear, the computers we control, the food we eat, and even the antibiotics we are prescribed, we are encountering branded experiences.

In the past, stories were entertainment and education. People learned morality and religion through spoken word stories, either in a temple or at their home. These stories helped comprise the myth of their times, helping them to bridge the gap from childhood to adulthood. They were a source of the rules of life, the heroes who embodied them, and the explanation of how the world and humans came into being.

One of the best tools that we as people learn from is that of story. We are given examples throughout time of people who have experienced similar problems and made unique solutions or dire mistakes, either way we learn from them. Story has been an emotionally charged path to information, just like Aesop's Fables and Grimm's Fairy Tales.   They are dramatic morality plays that entertain and it was only a matter of time before businesses realized that people would respond best to this format when selling a product, hence branding became a commercial tool charged with story!

Branding sets out to establish itself beyond it's unique "brand identifiers". The ultimate goal is to become synonymous as a symbol. Carl Jung's extensive work in symbolism, explains that a symbol "appears only when there is a need to express what thought cannot think or what is divined or felt," (Jung 1964). Symbols go where words cannot, they may do this much more efficiently than a written

description or explanation. The idea of branding is to manufacture that response and have it align with your brand's intentions, vision, and personality.

Whether we are aware or unaware of their symbolism, our choices with brands are expressive of individualism. This bond is strengthened by a brands' narrative, this "story" is paramount to connecting with consumers and informing them of your brand's intent. We react to the story that a brand tells.

4. The Myth

Through the lens of the psychoanalytical, we defer to C.G. Jung on the matter of how we interact with story and myth. Myth is the story of our subconscious self that we use to develop as people. Jung refers to this internal subconscious as the Anima/Animus, or "Bush Soul" (Jung 1964).

Campbell details how myth is a tool that helps us decode this subconscious. Throughout history, people have used story to understand the one human myth that permeates in all societies and stories of self-validation. Campbell describes this as the Monomyth, the cyclical stories and rituals that let us cope and understand our psychological motives behind a veil of religion (Campbell 1949 / 2008). The stories told through myth are with purpose, to educate.

In the past, this narrative was driven by a few factors: region, religion, family, and vocation. We have more freedoms now, thanks to information and technology becoming more accessible over the generations. We can now spend more time on introspection and defining ourselves but are forced to create our own story with

this freedom. The combination of time and accessible information has allowed us this choice to redefine our myth.

We look to Campbell's work with his extensive mapping of The Hero's Journey, which embodies myth in the form of story. The Hero is a universal character, Jesus, Buddha, Muhammad, and Moses: all religious figures stories serve a purpose: a tool to teach and overcome life's challenges (thresholds) to achieve an elevated state (Campbell 1949 / 2008). We use our heroes as role models to measure ourselves against. They embody the values of their myth, humanized for our edification and progress.

The characterization of this transformation is the hero. They are the radical change factor in the Cosmogonic Cycle: the overall cycle of creation to death (Campbell 1949 / 2008). Once a myth has built and established a world, a hero rises within it to fight adversity and bring a boon to their people. It is a never ending chain of the hero rising to fight a tyrant/ogre, defeating them, ruling and then becoming the ogre or sacrificing themselves in the process to begin the next cycle. This is a bare bones explanation of The Hero's Journey, one that works in conjunction with Jung's position on how we grow into adulthood.
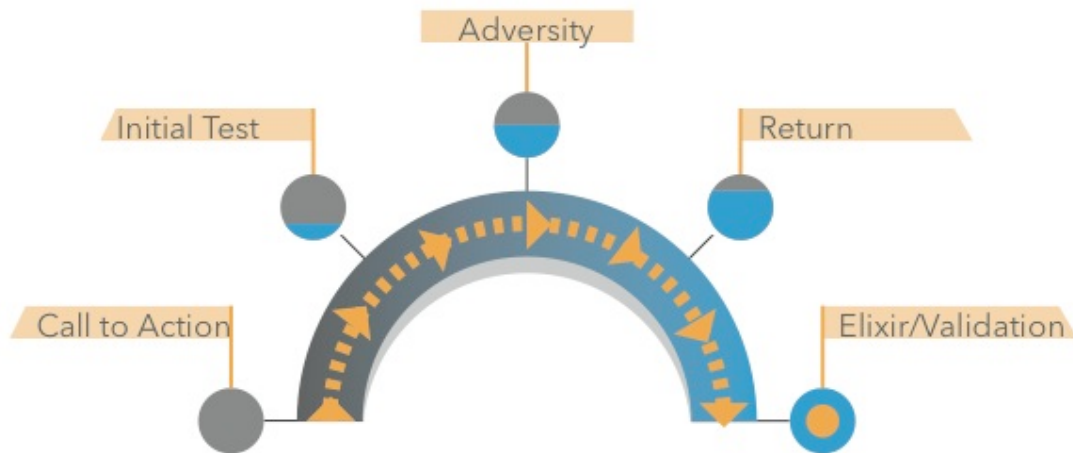
The Hero's Journey

Figure 1

We learn that Myth and the Hero are vehicles for humans to help them transition from childhood into adulthood. Campbell describes humans as, "born too soon; they are unfinished, unready as yet to meet the world," (Campbell 1949 / 2008) and this is where myth steps in as a tool to guide that transition. The Myth establishes the rules and gives a humanized example with the Hero as an empathetic vessel. The process that the hero undergoes is an INITIATION into the elevated or desired Second State. This state is the exclusive club, all those within it went through the same trials and you have shared experiences as a commonality. Myth helps to save us from our current state of unrealized potential.

These factors work on the subconscious level. If we think of our mind as an ocean, our conscious intent would be the visible waves that swell, recede, and break on the sand. Myth works on the subconscious level, it is the unseen undercurrent

and riptide that influences and drives the waves above. It creates an ecosystem that relies upon each other and affects us as and the decisions we make.

     While the myths of the past may have become outdated, Jung and Campbell both believe that we will always need myth as a rite of passage to grow into fulfilled individuals. This need is still valid even though the civilized mind is leaving the primitive behind, we are dissociating from the rituals of the past we once used to resolve myth. We can infer that we are living our lives guided by a contemporary myth that may need no religion or temple to help us bridge the gap between child and adulthood, we've lost the myth of the past and are now entering a new self defined myth disengaged from the past.

     Keep this in mind: we've established that Story/Hero describes Brand/Myth that defines Product/Self-Identity. This is the heart of the conversation.

Argument

5. Becoming Untethered

     The rising generation has become detached from the myth and hero model of the past. They no longer go to one source to receive their idealized role models and life structuring. Also, much of their thresholds into adulthood can be delayed and postponed, if not totally ignored compared to our forefathers. The impending need for decisive career decisions, marriage, education, and securing their genetic lines can take decades to nail down while other points are flexible. Career change is

always possible, divorce rates are up, you can freeze your eggs, the constraints have been foregone and the ticking clock has now slowed to a crawl. If there is always more time to be had, what happens to a sense of urgency?

This detachment is not a break in the chain. We have not grown out of the need for myth and the markers that lead us into adulthood. We are still "born too soon", this age just needs a new myth that is appropriate for the times (Jung 1964). The artist Kandinsky was familiar with the sense of timeliness and necessity: "Every epoch is given its own measure of artistic freedom, and even the most creative genius may not leap over the boundary of that freedom."

We have become untethered to the past formula for a successful life and now that the umbilical cord to that epoch has been snipped we need to navigate this vast expanse of choice. What will your personal journey be? There was a time when humanity had two choices for a career: do you want to hunt or gather? Maybe both? This process works mainly on the subconscious level and does not consist of sitting in your room and ruminating, "What do I stand for?" We live our lives and this identity forms with our decisions directly affecting our acquisitions.

In the past, our "initiation" into adulthood or the Second State went through a single portal, again, usually religion. We could look to a humanized deity in Jesus, Buddha, and Muhammad and see the religion exemplified. Now we have split Campbell's hero's journey and the myth as two separate opportunities that may not be mutually exclusive as Jesus or Moses is to Judeo Christianity.

Tethered Model

Initiator — The Gatekeeper to the Information, the source from where you learn

Hero/Myth — MYTH - The stories that inform and define
HERO - The humanized epitomy of MYTH

Identity/Path — PATH - The guidelines defined by MYTH
IDENTITY - The expectations set by HERO
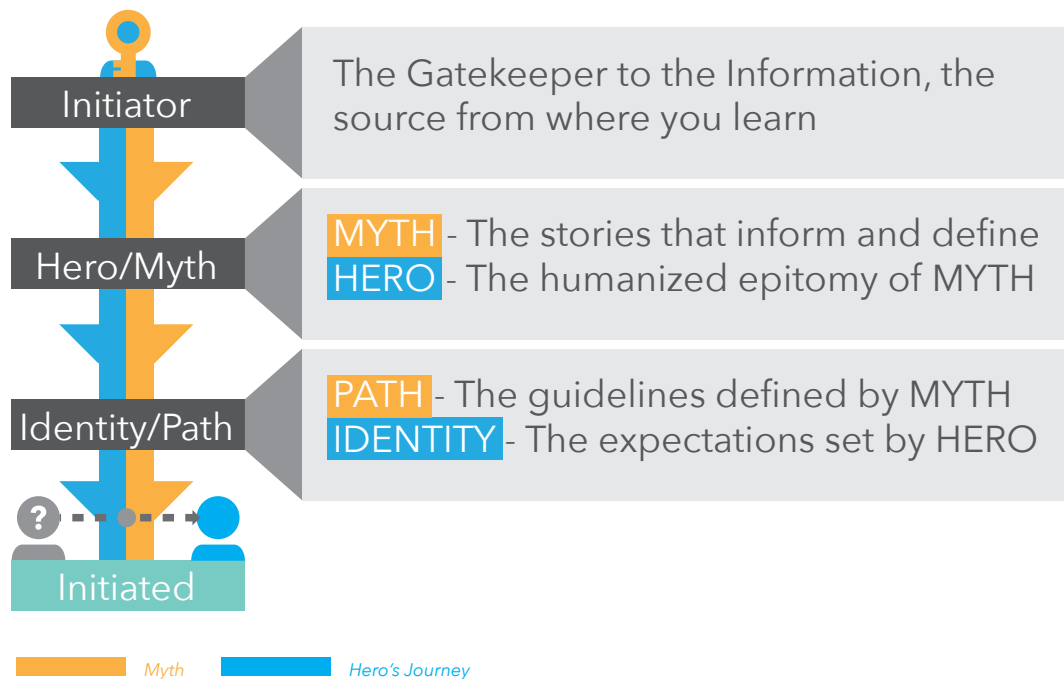
Initiated

Myth   Hero's Journey

Figure 2

The Untethered Journey (UJ) separates the hero from the methodology of myth. They are no longer synonymous with an institution of thought but they still fulfill the same need while working towards validation. The UJ is a more personal form that leaves behind the tribal nature of socially validating your views out loud, for an intimate collection of fragments that are collected into a unique whole.

This becomes an arrangement of BRAND (symbol) defining a story to a PRODUCT when purchased reflects our IDENTITY. This is a personal matter for everyone, so you may be thinking, "This is a leap, I am not the sum of my possessions." But, you are the gatekeeper to these projections, you control by

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selection! This process is symbiotic, you may see your current self or you may see
your aspirations embodied in a brand.

Untethered Model
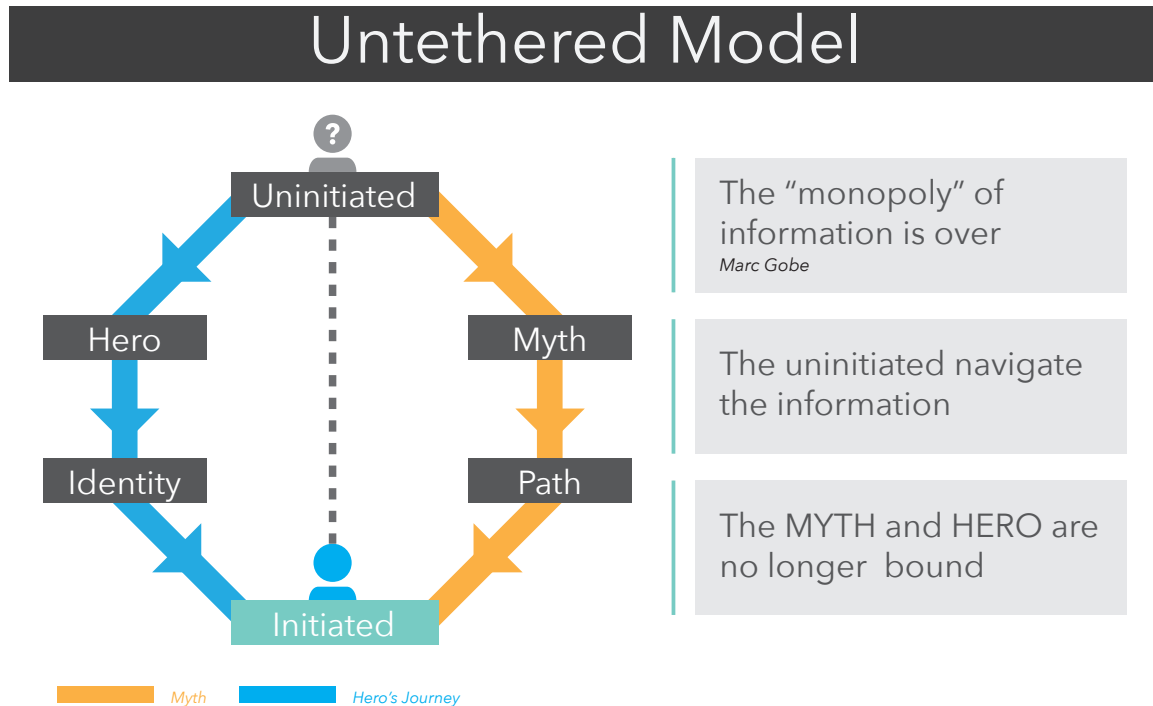
Figure 3

With the wealth of information at hand, people have begun to customize their
own journey and identity. The hero and the myth are no longer bound and
exclusive, you may now collect fragments and aspects from many sources that
resonate with your identity.

6. The Power of the Brand

Whether it is the corporate voice from the 1940's or 50's that entered the
newfound global market, the mark of a Wedgewood piece of porcelain, or the sword

smiths of Damascus who made the strongest blades, branding has been a factor in distinguishing goods from one another. This may have started as a maker's mark that separated the good from the bad but the contemporary brand is used to set goods and services apart from one another in a world where mass manufacturing has helped create largely consistent products.

When brands are successful at establishing a public narrative, consumers understand these connections just on sight. When you ask for a shot of Jack Daniels at a bar, there is an unspoken image associated with it: no frills, salt of the earth with classic taste and style. Companies are aware of all the opportunities for interactions with their product, if you just bought a $7 cup of coffee, it doesn't come in an unmarked Styrofoam cup, it's printed with an elegant wrap around design and has been personalized by hand to include your name! This is not a revelation. As we continue to live in a world with these products infused with story that grow in strength and recognition as generations go by, we can not be unaffected by it.

If you have ever owned a truck in your life in the USA, you may have heard or said something like, "I'm a Ford kind of guy," or, "I don't buy foreign." Connections like these are the kind that defines identity through brand interaction. We can infer that this person has pride in domestic goods, that they like ideal of "Built Ford Tough," they probably value hard work and manual labor. These are stories that we believe and are willing to tell others that shape their image of us.

How is it that the things we buy have influenced us so strongly that we relate to them? Companies have loaded their products' icons and signature elements with meaning and associations to influence us. They not only have crafted a story, but

they will also employ a "hero" to be the ambassador for it to show you how to interact with their brand. Just like the mythology of religion, they emulate the same structure but not always with the same content.

Have you ever stopped what you are doing in a convenience store mid-shopping and saw something so entertaining you had to take a picture and upload it to social media? This is a story of a branding titan, and my sister.

While looking for a soda at the gas station, my sister Kaitlin realized that the two Coca-Cola bottles at her eye level were emblazoned with the names "Chris" and "Mike", her two older brothers. Side by side and refrigerated, she had to take a quick picture and share it online where we had a little family fun talking about it and which bottle she picked, instigated by the clever branding by Coca-Cola. She could not choose between her brothers and instead chose another bottle all together! The connection was so strong to her loved ones names and bottles of sodas that it hit home.

Figure 4 The brotherly bottles in question.

The Share a Coke campaign had originated in Sydney, Australia. It centered on printing hundreds of names, titles, and monikers on bottles and cans of Coca-Cola for consumers to enjoy (Coca-Cola Company). It was so successful that it travelled the globe into most major markets. Lucie Austin was the Director of Marketing for the region and was interviewed about the success of this program in which she had this insight which spurred the campaign:

> *"Our research showed that while teens and young adults loved*
> *that Coca-Cola was big and iconic, many felt we were not talking to*
> *them at eye level. Australians are extremely egalitarian. There's a*
> *phrase called "tall poppy syndrome." If anyone gets too big for their*

boots, they get cut down like a tall poppy. By putting first names on

the packs, we were speaking to our fans at eye level."

LUCIE AUSTIN

This insight from Austin shows us how a successful brand that has achieved powerful recognition that separates itself beyond its competitors, has adapted to its consumers and personalized its experiences. When asked if they would have changed anything, creative lead Jeremy Ruger's responds:

"We'd probably spend a fraction of what we spent on TV. As I said,

there wasn't the confidence in social media then that there is now.

"Share a Coke" showed that this new landscape was here. There is

still a belief in the marketing world that you need to spend big on

media to make sure people see your ideas, but "Share a Coke"

proved that you can focus your resources on building ideas people

want."

JEREMY RUGER

I don't believe that this "Tall Poppy Syndrome" thinking is exclusive to Australia but I believe that the campaign has succeeded in creating personal experiences that caught consumer's attention like it did for my sister. I also don't

believe that this is a David and Goliath story, rather a great execution of self-expression and personalization that was well executed and in line to the zeitgeist of our times.

This was a well-framed campaign that leveraged the social aspect of a brand. But how do we look begin to understand and categorize our interactions with brand and story overall?

Famed cognitive scientist, Donald Norman, has categorized design into three aspects: visceral, behavioral, and reflective. As Norman breaks down design into three aspects, I believe that it is applicable to branding. While we react to a brand, much as we do a design, on the visceral level through aesthetics to open the door, the lasting relationship hinges on two main aspects: reflectivity and behavioral. The reflective quality of the brand is the promise of a desired result but the behavioral reality is where you must deliver on the reflective promise (Norman 2004).

If the reflective half of the brand is not informed by the behavioral, or vise versa, the disconnect will confuse the consumers and producers alike.

These aspects help to create what is called, the *Numen* of the brand, the intangible identity that shapes our response to the product (Jung). Jung had repurposed this term from the theological work of Rudolph Otto, who had sought to better define the relation of faith to worshiper without the use of rational morality.

An example of this is in the word "holy". This term has become blurred in its spiritual roots and is now synonymous with "good" rather than the divine. Jung was intrigued in how Otto described our dealings with the "wholly other", that which is beyond our rationality yet creates emotion and attachment (Otto).

So when we speak of the Numen of a brand, we are speaking to its intangible identity that we associate or project upon it. This humanizes and gives voice to a product that would otherwise be mundane and utilitarian.

This process crafts a story and a dialogue to deliver the meaning of the product and differentiate itself from competitors, it fills aisles with products that accomplish the same thing: toilet paper, toothbrushes, and shampoo. The numen of each brand is constructed as a signifying personality that not only embodies a personality and stance but also attracts those who share in its values. A successful brand should not only speak and relate to its consumers but also have the capability to respond!
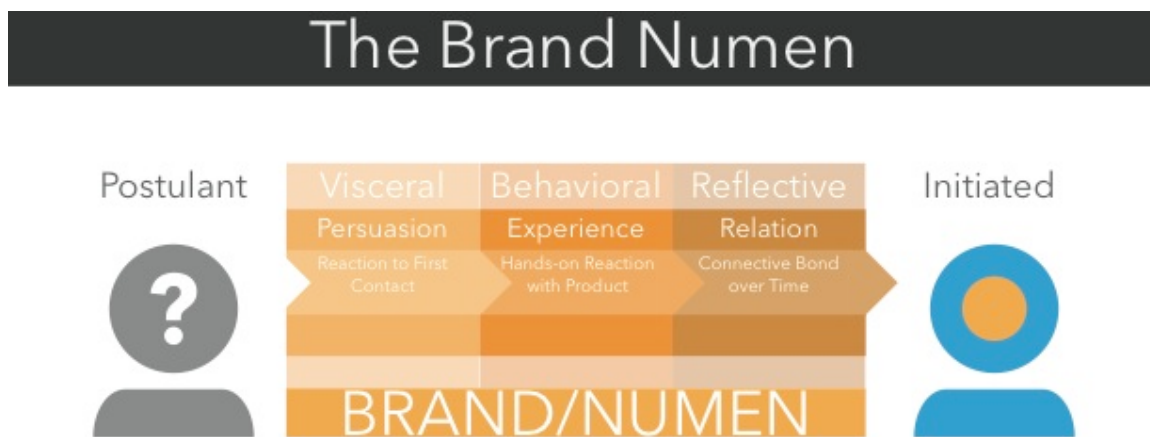

The Brand Numen

| Postulant | Visceral Persuasion Reaction to First Contact | Behavioral Experience Hands-on Reaction with Product | Reflective Relation Connective Bond over Time | Initiated |

BRAND/NUMEN

Figure 5

When design is in tune with the numen of a brand, it magnifies the product with a unified promise of what is to come. Even a commodity can find a personality in this form. We just have to look at Morton Salt. Morton ran the first ever ad campaign for salt in 1911. They were unveiling free flowing salt with a new

patented spout on their package. This was the first of its kind. Previously, consumers worried about salt caking up due to moisture.
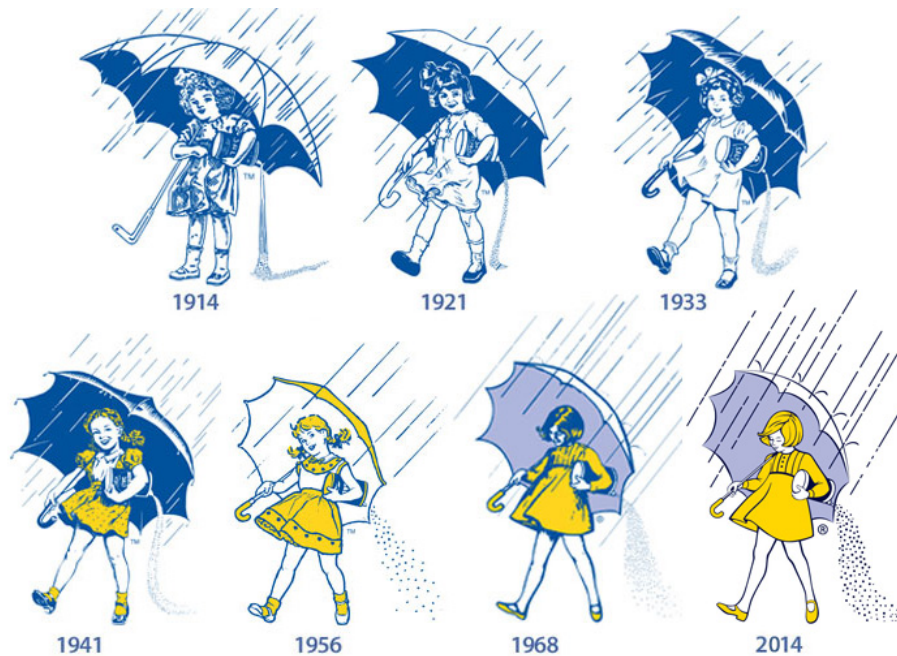

Figure 6

The famous girl with umbrella was one of many graphics that were developed but once they had crafted the slogan *"When it rains, it pours,"* the Morton Salt Girl was born. Sterling Morton, who championed the campaign, would go on to describe the branding:

"Here was the whole story in a picture – the message that the salt would run in damp weather was made beautifully evident."

Sterling Morton

They have used the same iconography ever since, even after the competition has caught up and added spouts of their own and clumping salt is no longer a problem we relate to. The heritage is now more important with few consumers knowing the reasoning.

We may see this case study as a situation where an innovation within the field partnered with good branding created a market success. Decade's later, Morton's success resonated through generations and created a heritage icon that no longer relies on its initial purpose, rather, it's accrued legacy.

7. The New Curators

We are curators who now pick and intermingle brand and story to represent ourselves. All of our acquisitions have a duality, the immediate conscious level and the unconscious level. How is it that our choices and purchases give information on our persons? Is your auto domestic or foreign? Is your SUV sporty or utilitarian? These are outward "curations" of our personal image that we construct for validation. We search for like-minded individuals using these objects that we project ourselves upon. A favored style or brand can influence us into an associated fraternity on the unconscious level. When we see someone with a similar outward projection we see our own choices reflected back. Depending on the scenario and the individual, this could be the spark of kindred spirits or it could reflect our own insecurities and self-image dissociation, inciting rancor and envy (this negative side

shows an internal struggle that one may be fighting with and projecting upon

another).

       This behavior has been displayed historically on a macro level with questions

such as, "What region are you from? What is your religion? ". Essentially, the

question is, "What do you represent?" and in the past, these fractures/distinctions

were fewer and better defined. Our times now offers a plethora of choices for one to

represent themselves, individuals are now crafting a semblance from loaded

"symbols" (Jung 1964) by using a buffet of brands and products which they pick,

choose, and overlap as a mouthpiece to their identity. Each projection helps pave

the way to self-hood by answering aspects of the question, "who am I?"

       This "CURATION OF SELF" is a direct projection of choice or non-choice for

which young people identify with. This has become a threshold that must be passed

to shed the infantile self and step into adulthood. No longer do we only commit

hero-worship, we choose pieces of our heroes in which we cobble together our own

identity. These heroes now go beyond organized religious figures and now include

branded experiences: NIKE, the Marlboro Man, a tailored suit, your car, your smart

phone, your digital personage, your Instagram followers, etc. These establish the

framework from which we want recognition, which is our reward, or "elixir" at the

end of the Hero's Journey (Campbell 1964).
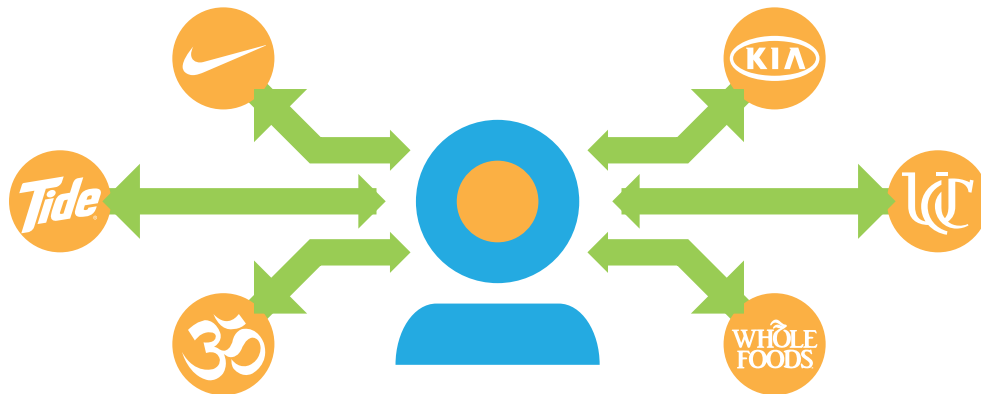
Power in Choice

Figure 7

This may be seen as the selfish ideals of the young Millenial Generation that is obsessed with vanity and self-importance but it may be that this behavior goes beyond that and is only exacerbated by survival. When there is no longer a "generic" expectation, how do you represent yourself? How do you self relate in a contemporary world where the largest question of your life comes after 18 years of living? After waiting to go off to college for 4+ years, then you may start your career and begin defining your life. If roughly the first quarter of your life is out of your control, what do you control? Your image: the representation that you project to the world.

This curation works to satisfy the personal myth and is the key to obtain a fully validated self, it can be ever changing but it is in essence a temporary prop to hold up identity before you have sufficient life experience (time). Upon building the pillars *-self generated supports-* of ones character with action, experience, character,

and social endorsement, the prop is then dismantled and the individual can then stand on their own. This emotional adaptation may not work in rhythm with biology and there is no guarantee that it can be completed.

So what do these brands represent? Beyond desired outcomes through product, what is the hook of story? The marketing point of view has five pillars: "to identify, to inform, to entertain, to persuade," and "differentiate" (Neumeier 2006). Now we are seeing a change in branding, from "what it does" to "what you feel" to "who you are" (Neumeier 2006). It makes sense that in a world that is "now dangerously over retailed," product positioning has grown introspective concerning the consumers (Underhill, 24).

8. Liking as a Lifestyle

In the Untethered world of today, we are sent on a journey to define "Self-Identity" by curating story fragments into a whole. We adopt them into our lives and that is filtered by the power of preference and "liking". What we "like" gives us authorship to who we are. These preferences do create a sum that is greater than the whole because they influence and inform our identity.

This adoption relies on brand's displaying values or aspects that their target audience is drawn towards. Story is the language used, as it is dynamic and more engaging than dry facts. The story serves two purposes: defining the brands numen and educational narration through hero emulation.

You want a brand to enhance your product with a story that users can relate with by speaking to their core values. Let them know, "*We make these products for you because we are like you, we share a bond.*"

What we like is based on four elements (Cialdini 1984/2007):

- *Physical Attraction*

- *Similarity*

- *Compliments*

- *Contact and Cooperation*

These four elements are helpful to keep in mind when designing and interacting with a brand. Identifying your areas of opportunity to do so requires knowledge of your users.

To begin associating ourselves with a brand's numen, we must "like" them. From there, we may become advocates to their cause and develop deep connections.

Once we have adopted the brand's numen, the depth of that relationship towards our identities depends on exposure. The more that we interact with a Brand reinforces positive or negative associations towards it. We root for what we like, these brands become representations of ourselves and we want to be associated with success in its "reflected glory" (Cialdini 1984/2007). This mirror image works both ways, we can share in its reflected success but also get burned by its failures.

This relation hinges on consistency for consumer's to know what to expect:

To understand why consistency is so powerful a motive, it is important

to recognize that in most circumstances consistency is valued and

adaptive. Inconsistency is commonly thought to be an undesirable

personality trait. The person whose beliefs, words and deeds don't

match may be seen as indecisive, confused, two faced, or mentally ill. On

the other side, a high degree of consistency is normally associated with

personal and intellectual strength. It is at the heart of logic, rationality,

stability, and honesty.

Robert B. Cialdini, Ph.D.

This excerpt displays our social expectations for others but it is not only relevant but telling when we apply it to our relationship to brands and products: they must play by the rules of social interactions. The story of brand has an identity, from which we project ourselves upon and there is a great deal of trust involved when you do so. When a brand becomes erratic, it reflects upon its users.

9. When Brands go Bad (or Do Not Use if Broken)

We have now discussed how brands want to be seen and enjoyed but this relationship can be soured. In the fall of 1982, seven inexplicable deaths had occurred throughout Chicago. Searching for the cause, two firefighters finally made the connection. All seven had ingested Tylenol Extra-Strength. Made by Johnson &

Johnson, the self proclaimed "family company", mass fear of the over the counter drug soon spread.

This is arguably a worst-case scenario: a trusted family brand with one of their leading products resulting in the death of seven. They would soon learn that this was not the result of wrongdoing from the company. Someone was purchasing Tylenol Extra-Strength and returning it with the capsules laced with cyanide.

Reports of sickness and nausea began to crop up, attributed to Tylenol Extra-Strength. This was due to both hysteria and 30 actual copycat cases. This should have ended Tylenol. Rather this has become one of the most famous public relations case studies in spite of those who would think this was the death knell for Tylenol.

"I don't think they can sell a product with that name ever again... There may be an advertising person who thinks he can solve this and if they find him, I want to hire him, because then I want him to turn our water cooler into a wine cooler."

JERRY FEMINA

J&J's subsidiary, Mcneil Consumer Products, which conducted their PR, had some serious choices to make that would either define or destroy the brand. Knowing that their manufacturing was not at all fault, they still decided to pull all Tylenol Extra-Strength off the market. This decision cost J&J over 100 million dollars (Kaplan 2005).

J&J spread the word to discontinue use of the drug until they could responsibly say there was no longer a threat. Public safety was the first priority, they spread the word, not to buy their own brand. Rather than spend time refuting the connection of the deaths and their product, they concentrated on finding the cause and offering a reward of $100,000 for the killer.

Only a few months later, Tylenol Extra-Strength returned to the market with a new triple-seal-tamper-resistant package. Having been gone, most Tylenol ES users had converted to the competition. J&J had opened a hotline to receive coupons and information on the new offering and give monetary incentive to win their customers back.

The company also employed a team of 2,250 salespeople to make presentations to the medical community, explaining the new Tylenol ES program. Within a few months, they had gained back 25% of the market, where they had previously had 37% before the poisonings (Kaplan 2005). The rest is self-apparent as Tylenol has endured and stayed a front runner in their category since.

When asked what the basis for this response to a dire situation, Lawrence G. Foster, corporate vice-president, explained that this extraordinary scenario was beyond scripted reference.

"It was the credo that prompted the decisions that enabled us to make the right early decisions that eventually led to the comeback phase,"

LAWRENCE G. FOSTER

This credo was written in the mid-1940's and was established to describe the company's responsibilities to: "consumers and medical professionals using its products, employees, the communities where its people work and live, and its stockholders." This credo is the story of the company.

This story defined the relationship that consumers had come to trust and when the pressure was at its highest, it did not crack. Tylenol ES survived by staying consistent to its brand, which customers had come to respect and was applauded for doing so. "More positive coverage of the Tylenol comeback was published in Advertising Age Magazine on November 15, 1982," just months within the incident (Kaplan 2005).

10. The Branding of Our Identity

When set to task to find an overt example of how a brand's numen can be incorporated into our identity, we don't have to look far. It is right at home. In fact, we are all familiar with branding en masse when it comes to nationality. This is separate from our genetic ethnicity and relies on what we all consider our "home".

Who could argue that some of the strongest symbols with secondary meanings are the images that represent our native countries? The stars and stripes of The United States, the Union Jack, the four yellow stars of China on a red field. Even the Confederate Flag is able to elicit a variety of strong feelings and opinions. No person alive today has lived through the Civil War and yet it still holds sway over us with symbolic energy.

Arguably, you could say that this differentiation is based on geography, yet thousands to millions of people are willing to lay down their lives for it. We fight and struggle over this identification daily on a global theater over the symbolism of these "brands".

I don't mean to trivialize these scenarios or diminish their worth, but how distant are these behaviors from our daily interactions? Both are based on preference and differentiation.

Can we determine the difference cognitively? The same reasoning that makes you proud and identify with your home, your school, and your favorite sports team is the same that makes you proud and identify with your running shoes, make-up, and truck. This is the power of the myth that they represent.

TESTING

1. Test Protocol

This test will look to have at least 40 individuals surveyed on the subject of Branding and Identity. The goal is to establish a basic foundation that brands can reflect identity and are meaningful to their users.

Part I of the test will consist of qualitative questions based around the participant's favorite brand and personal experience. Part II is a quantitative

section that will ask users to rate their connections with brands, only using their logo and Part III pertains to perception of brands in daily life.

The goal of Part I is to discern the participant's answers as either reflective or behaviorally related. With this percentage, we can see how often users retain this brand quality and to what kinds of brands is this more common with.

Part II will ask respondents how they identify with prominent brands using on a scale from *Not at All* to *Very Much*. The brands are mainly product related but at the end there is one entertainment brand: Disney. I hope to show that all of the product related brands will have a wide spread of answers as they rely more on behavioral elements whereas Disney is a brand built on story, making it reflective and easier to relate with.

The final part deals with how we view brands as a marketing tool and how aware we are to that. My hypothesis is that people will reactive negatively when brands are shown as a tool to sell but all throughout the survey they will be describing positive interactions. This displays a willing ignorance to the brands they enjoy and love.

The test is an online questionnaire that will be prompted with a consent form and will not store any personal information. Participants will not be asked for their name and will be identified by a number. No personal information is asked for or required.

2. Questionnaire

Here are the questions and structure of the survey:

PART I - Personal Qualitative

(Respondents answer in Essay Form.)

Q-2   What is your favorite brand?

Q-3   Please provide 3 reasons why this brand is your favorite.

Q-4   Does this brand you listed ever surprise you? If so, how?

Q-5   Please describe the average person who uses this brand.

Q-6   Would you describe yourself as the average user?

PART II - Personal Quantitative

Q-7-11 Please respond to the Brand Logo below (shown) by telling how this brand relates or speaks to you and if you identify with it. (Respondents answered in a multiple-choice fashion based on a Leikert Scale.)

The brands shown were Whole Foods Market, BMW, Tide, Walmart, and Walt Disney Pictures, in that order. Below, are the options that were given for answers:

Please respond to the Brand Logo below by telling how this brand relates or speaks to you and if you identify with it.

7. Please choose one answer from the chart below:

Not at all like me	Not much like me	Neutral	Somewhat like me	Very much like me	I do not know this brand.
○	○	○	○	○	○

Figure 8

Answers available:

❖ Not at all like me

❖ Not much like me

❖ Neutral

❖ Somewhat like me

❖ Very much like me

❖ I do not know this brand

PART III - Essay Summary

Q-12 Please list any brands that you may prefer over the ones shown (previously):

(Respondents answer in Essay Form.)

Q-13   Brands play an important part in my life:

(Respondents answer in Multiple-Choice Form.)

Q-14   Brands play an important part in my life:

(Respondents answer in Multiple-Choice Form.)

Answers available:

❖ Not at all like me

❖ Not much like me

❖ Neutral

❖ Somewhat like me

❖ Very much like me

❖ I do not know this brand

Quantitative Identity

This section shows a brand logo and asks participants: "Please respond to the Brand Logo Below by telling how this brand relates or speaks to you and if you identify with it."

Participants answer in a Liekert Scale format, below are there options:

I Do Not Know this Brand

Brand Logos

1. Whole Foods Market (Natural Food Grocery)

2. BMW (Luxury Automobile)

3. Tide (Laundry Detergent)

4. Walmart (Retail)

5. Walt Disney Pictures (Entertainment Production Company)

Qualitative Summary

1. Please list any brands that you may prefer over the ones shown.

2. Brands play an important part in my life.

   (Responses are Strongly Disagree, Disagree, Neutral, Agree, and Strongly Agree)

3. Hypothesized Results

This test will help give an initial understanding of how people react to brand and what in their mind a brand is. It also looks to see what brand is important to them and why.

The intent is to quantify the reasoning a brand is preferred by either its reflective story or its behavioral use. Product related descriptors may include: effective, efficient, easy to use, or useful, while story descriptors may include: masculine, prestigious, honorable, or friendly. If the test shows that they relate to a story more than the product itself we can see that branding identity is powerful when it comes to selection.

Foreseeably, most all participants will have a favored brand. Brand and preference has become ubiquitous, and we all subscribe to brand/story on some level.

The second part of the questionnaire will help relate these findings to the personal identity by tracking their preferences and showing the initial findings of personas. I believe that for most brands, there will be even distribution showing how a brand's relationship is reliant on each individual. The wild card brand is Disney, a story based media company. I posit that since they are in the business of story, there are more opportunities for consumers to endear themselves to the brand.
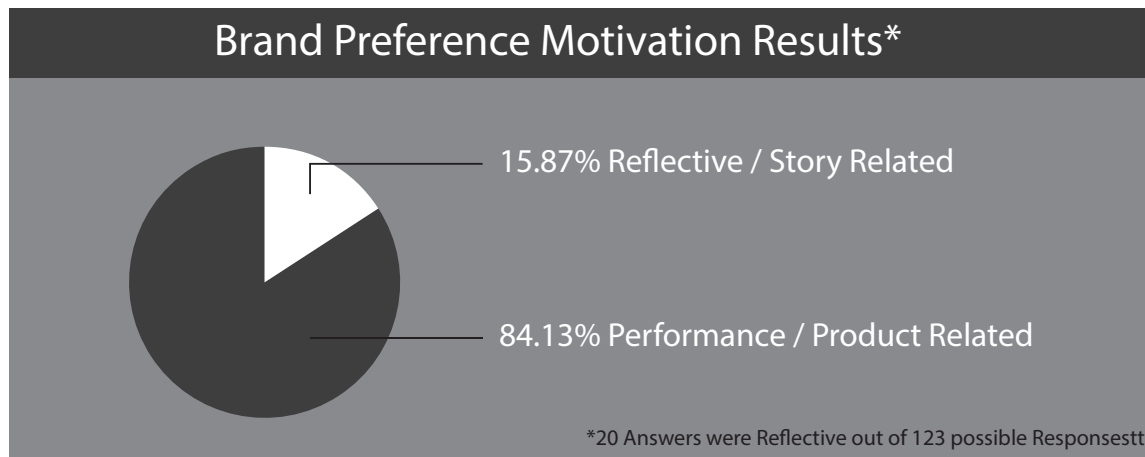
RESULTS

Figure 9

Figure X shows the results from the question regarding participant's favorite brands: "Please provide 3 reasons why this brand is your favorite."

This survey population's reaction shows us that reflective qualities are meaningful but not necessarily the lasting factor with a brand. The product's efficacy, aesthetics, price, and quality were the most frequent favorites. The test also showed more brands that facilitated outcomes, like cosmetics and detergents.

This may show that brand power is a tool that is best for distinguishing your product in the marketplace and that the actual performance creates the lasting bond for loyalty with costumers. We know that this data is in reaction to participant's favorite brand, so the brand has already persuaded them and earned their trust. More controlled testing would be necessary to try this with users experience at first blush but given how variable personal taste is, the constraints are unfeasible to make a control.

The issue with testing a brand is that each individual has different taste and history that influences their point of view. To make a baseline, I found the one

consistent factor that I could rely one: their *favorite* brand. Even though each person surveyed may have a different preferred brand, they have all consistently been portrayed as successful and positive with their interactions. Now we can safely say that we are testing against the optimal experience across the board.

Once the participant has listed their favorite brand, they supply three reasons that support their preference. I coded these response opportunities and categorized them as either Reflective or Behavioral. A non-answer would still count as an opportunity but it would count towards neither. 15.87% of the responses were reflective as seen in Figure X, the most common answers were: price/affordability, quality, and design, in that order. So it is safe to say that the use of the product is top of mind for most.

The product's efficacy and price are most prevalent in these favorite brands; these qualities sustain a brand and create that lasting bond. This is how trust is formed with product. Expectations are set with brand and delivered with behavior. Story alone cannot maintain this forever.

This still does not address many motivating factors. This study does not invalidate the power of story behind brand, rather it illustrates that the most successful scenarios of brand are complimentary to defining the use and expectations of the product. This validates that brand has reached a status of a seamless symbol, the story of brand differentiates then accentuates. Though most brands were unique in this test, their stories still sold the idea that they were quality and worth their price.
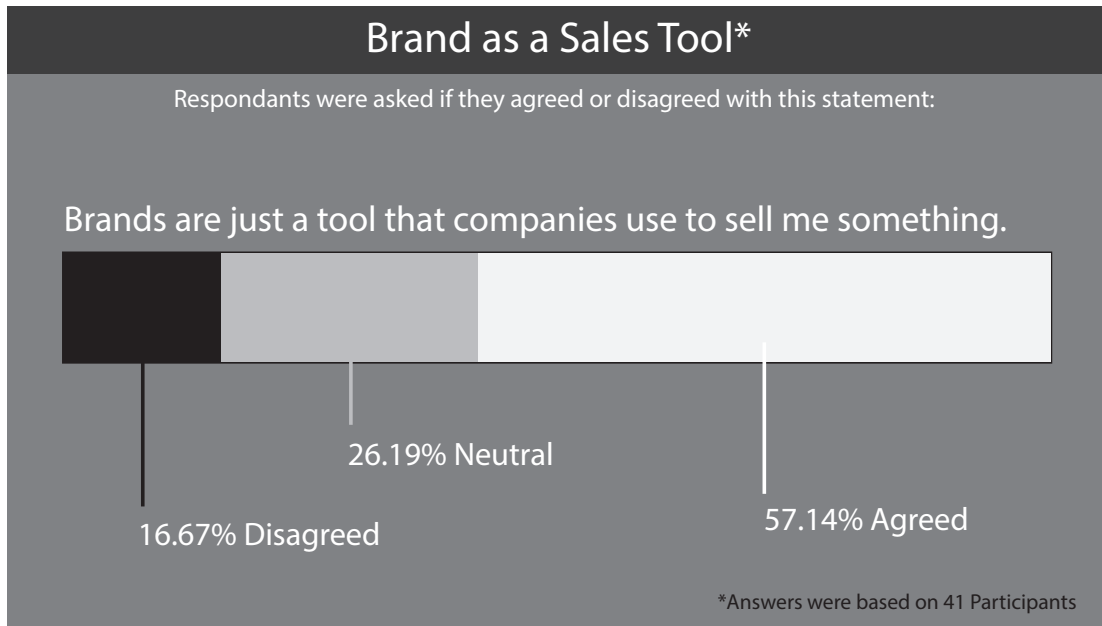
Brand as a Sales Tool*

Respondants were asked if they agreed or disagreed with this statement:

Brands are just a tool that companies use to sell me something.

26.19% Neutral

16.67% Disagreed

57.14% Agreed

*Answers were based on 41 Participants

Figure 10

The entire survey focused on individual's preference to brands and how they related towards them, yet at the very end of the survey 57.14% agreed that brand is just a tool to sell product and only 16.67% disagreed. In the meantime, they spent the past 5-10 minutes extolling how they are similar and relate to the brands they enjoy. How do we explain this dissonance? Are we that out of touch or are brands that effective?

This conflict is between our personal awareness and our "unconscious identity" (Jung 1964). This part of our identity is pervasive and instigates our behaviors without our knowing and Jung even goes as far as to call it a "psychological fact" that it is reactive to persons and even objects (Jung 1964). Even though we may be aware of branding as a tool, it does not mean that our decisions are unaffected by it.

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CONCLUSION

Through the social sciences, we can map out how brand as a tool works to create an identity through numen to attract consumers who associate best with the brand at hand. Through these aspirations, the brand educates these users to achieve validation through the brand.

In conclusion, we identify these interactions as well as define what this system represents.

I. Interaction with Brand

Through the convenience of our times, we have the opportunity of choice. Not only do we have virtually unlimited access to knowledge through technology, but we have a choice as to what source we can access. This is the age of the Untethered Myth. In this age, there is a cacophony of branded experiences vying for attention. So identifying and distinguishing oneself has become more important with little margin for error. That is why a well-defined Numen helps to create a consistent voice.

The Numen of a brand represents all the aspects that we interact with but its most persuasive language is that of story. We see that through the means of myth, story is the most entertaining educator. With this power, a brand can emulate the

myth of past and initiate postulants into its ranks through the power of purchase. This is how you become the truck owner, the visage of performance through Nike, or the conscientious Tom's Shoe's owner.

This story teaches the process of reflective validation through brand. Just as the hero was the bridge between the myth and mankind, the story of brand embodied in numen reaches out on behalf of the product.

Once initiated, our interactions with brand go beyond the identifier on shelf and become a badge that we associate with. We have become ambassadors to the brand as our adoption now reflects back us upon us. Through consistency and trust, branding has the capability of establishing itself as doctrine.

II. Brand as Doctrine

The doctrine of brand is not one that we would pray to but we do exercise ritual behaviors and learn from its example. We have incorporated the doctrine of our objects into our daily lives with an unknowing acceptance. This is an example of Jung's cryptomnesia* (Jung), when our awareness does not fully comprehend the motive or weight of our actions. We are subliminally subscribing to the brand doctrines of our purchases. As seen in the testing, consumers are aware that brands are a tool to sell to them yet they still have strong emotional attachments. They may be aware of the intent but it still affects them.

To a designer reading this, you may think that this is simply good advertising by a marketing partner. I would say that through this research we have learned that it goes beyond the act of a sale and into a personal association.

The marketing leads to the purchase but we as designers must be aware of the associations that bind afterwards to strengthen the numen, we must stay consistent to its identity. Branding enables us to say more with less.

III. Final Thoughts

Just like Otto, we are attempting to "rationalize" the a-rational (Otto 1936). This process of branded objects becoming associated with the consumer's owns identity is an important factor for designers to understand. The brands Numen must be consistent and apparent on all aspects, which include the internal research and development process.

We see that successful brands speak to their consumers at "eye-level", such as Coca-Cola's Share a Coke campaign and hold themselves to their own doctrine just as Johnson & Johnson did when faced with dire times. Through this, we see that many great brands hold the advantage through an awareness and acceptance of their defined doctrine.

In conclusion, we see that brands create a story to define themselves with symbolic associations. These stories represent similar goals and aspirations to consumers enabling them to become the hero (to overcome the adversity before them) through initiation. Thus brand creates a connective bond with the consumer,

enabling them to associate the brand with themselves through story. With a clearly defined numen of the brand that designer can recognize, the ability to create for your consumer becomes easier.

As this is an initial inquiry into this field of brand Numen, personal identity, and the doctrine of brand, a further area worthy of research would be the development process. How holistically does the numen of a new brand germinate before being released to the public? My initial hypothesis is that there are mutually connective bonds that rely upon consumer and producer but this subject requires more investigation.

IV. Application in Design

With this information, we can now better define the interactions of our consumers with our products and what those products represent as a "symbol." These products symbolize the brand's Numen made tangible. Creating a consistent experience is key for consumer's expectations are now crucial.

Figure 11

A worthwhile exercise would be to take the Untethered Model and Brand Numen diagram and write down your brand's behaviors and interactions with consumers. Putting pen to paper may surprise you as you begin to consciously recognize these relations.

You will be forced to ask questions such as, "when do consumers first interact with my product?" This process becomes more insightful when paired with consumer research and interviews. Consumers going through the three phases of the Brand Numen will have different issues and concerns as well. This understanding can help pinpoint potential obstacles, limiting your consumer to establishing a highly reflective relationship with your brand.

You want your consumer to not only associate positively with your brand, but also become empowered and act as a "hero" for its behalf. A consumer turned ambassador/hero for your product and brand is a powerful ally.
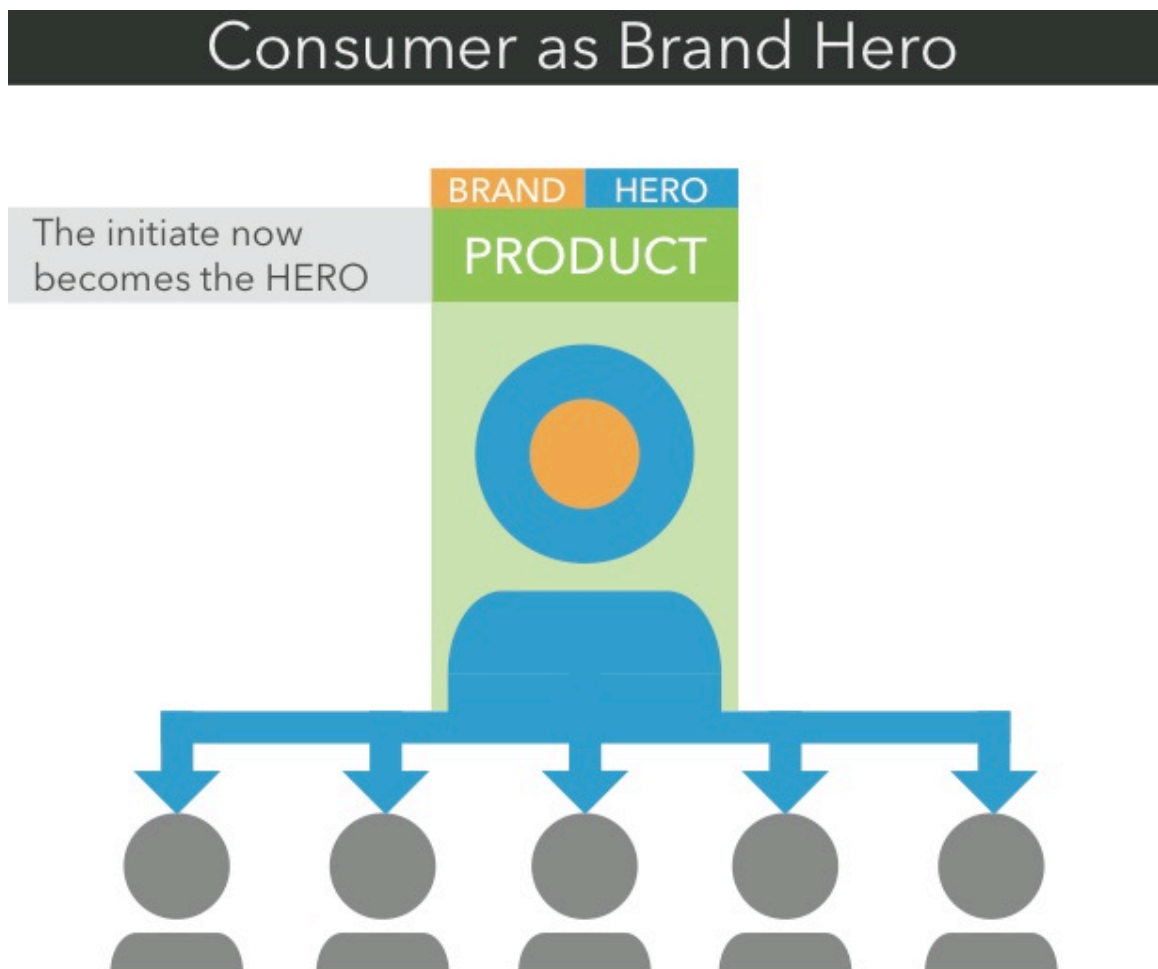

Figure 12

A well-defined consumer gives the designer the insight to serve the user's needs and gain knowledge of unexpected opportunities. The future of consumer goods relies on designers who not only execute the best physical products but also

possess the awareness and motivation to understand the intangible factors behind them.

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