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Research paperr

Modern Business Philosophy: the Brand as a Phenomenon of Culture

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Abstract

The concept of brand as a set of information about a company, product or service, legally protected by recognizable symbols, is well known. Significantly less studied brand as a phenomenon of the art market. In this context, the goal of the research was formulated – to identify the signs of the brand, which is not just a part of the business culture, but a cultural phenomenon in general. We had to discuss a number of other aspects. First, the influence of the historical roots of culture on the formation of the brand. Secondly, the receptivity of the brand's creators to the aesthetic ideals of culture of different eras. Third, the ability to maintain ethical and high standards of culture in the development of the brand. The practical value of the research can be attributed to the possibility of applying its results in real business practice in the luxury retail management.

Keywords: *service management; culture; values; aesthetics; ethics; true or false brand.*

1. Introduction

The term *brand* has a reputation as one of the most troublesome concepts of the modern vanity fair. According to scholars, a brand is a stable time range of information about a company, product or service legally protected by recognizable symbols[1]. It was once assumed that a brand's symbol was representative of the goods it produced or the services it provided. However, that assumption did not account for the fact that a brand's status can vary. There are brands that have not changed for one or even many decades, there are short-lived brands meant for temporary use, and there are trademarks positioned by their owners as brands[2].

For a long time, modern business philosophy has considered the above-mentioned peculiarities, though quite indirectly, as parts of the modern art market that suppress personality rather than give it spiritual freedom[3]. But this is not always the case. Certain brands have become part of history, not only because of successful commercial strategies, but also because the engines of these marketing resources, along with a utilitarian root, have preserved the ethical content as well[2]. In these cases, honesty, which can lead to a loss in profits, is more important than short-term gains.

A trademark might be considered a brand in the true sense of the word when it has long-term commercial success accompanied by susceptibility to deep foundations of culture, and therefore to human dignity[4]. This rule (which has not been made explicit anywhere) directs an individual either toward true values, which are based on an internal ethical constant, or toward false values, which ignore moral principles[5].

A false brand influences through hidden mechanisms of oppression. Appealing to the unconscious, it incites the passions of animal origin, and its stereotypes turn a personality into a stamp. Items collected from this kind of brand make people dependent on them. Items from the true brand, too, can have this effect, but the true brand will never impose itself as a means of actualization of the instincts[2]. Its inner motives, such as respect for human dignity and the aristocracy of the spirit, will never try to manipulate the individual's consciousness. A true brand and a false brand can be likened to a masterpiece and its replica – even a perfect copy.

2. Method

The methodological prerequisite for choosing this topic was a fundamental scientific position, according to which the dynamics of culture itself is associated with the changes of the business culture phenomena. The study was carried out using the basic methods of philosophical research of culture. First of all, we used comparative-historical[3] and phenomenological analysis. These methodological provisions provided an opportunity to comprehensively consider the concept of the brand.

Comparative-historical analysis as a scientific method allowed, by comparing historical data, to reveal the general and particular in the historical development of the brand. In turn, the phenomenological method as an interconnected unity of principles and procedures for the study of any phenomenon, brought universalism into the study. Thus it was possible to differentiate the concepts of true and false brand. In addition, the two jewelry brands Cartier and Faberge were compared through these two methods. This was possible in spite of the fact that the Faberge brand ceased to exist. Finally, using of this method allowed the idea that both brand traditions and brand innovations should be based on a historically unchanging basis.

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3. Results

History, and nothing else, establishes the truth of a brand, and not many brands meet the expectations of the authenticity of their origin[1] . The fashion designer Cristobel Balenciaga dressed one of Erich Remarque's female personages on Avenue George V. It took more than fifty years, but Balenciaga is now synonymous with literary characters of the post-war era, the romance of black-and-white photos of the Arc de Triumph, and Edith Piaf's voice. Now Balenciaga needs neither advertising hype nor products made to oppress personality; all that is required is professionalism, exquisite sense of one's own origins, and refined taste. In the case of Balenciaga's style, a person, even someone who is not familiar with the soul of Paris in the middle of the last century, will be instinctively attracted to the charm of the freedom of its spirit, expressed through both modern and traditional culturally authentic style.

The truth or falsity of a brand is more obvious in jewellery. The world of jewellers remains akin to that of a medieval caste craft. It takes immense effort to become a jeweller, but creating a new jewellery brand with a reputation equivalent to such names as Cartier, Boucheron and Fabergé is almost impossible (see Figure 1). As a new jeweller emerging on the market, you can capture the extravagance of design and thus attract the attention of the public (who is always ready to be shocked), or you can take risks and display large and well-cut diamonds in the window of a fashionable shop to draw the attention of the nouveau riche. You can combine both approaches and receive recognition and a position in the sales rankings. Finally, you can build an aggressive advertising campaign to make the audience remember the name of the new star brand. But none of these actions, now or in the future, can create that which cannot be copied: a historical connection with the spiritual roots of culture. Embodied in a modern piece of jewellery, these roots can give a sense of belonging and freedom of expression to the wearer.

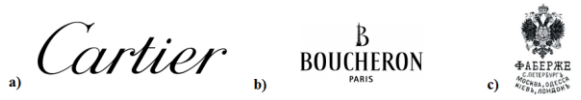


Figure 1. Famous brands

Cartier, Worth, Doucet and Guerlain would not be recognizable names, and Paris would not be known as the capital of the belle époque if, during the period of the Northern Renaissance, France did not occupy a leading position in what became known in the nineteenth century as *L'art de Vivre*. In the sixteenth century, Francis I did more for France's artistic reputation than any other ruler. He was a patron of art, and because of his support, both Leonardo da Vinci and Benvenuto Cellini worked in France. His passion for collecting and commitment to what was then a new idea of comfort led to the restructuring of the Louvre. He commissioned the building of Fontainebleau, a renaissance chateau that is still the model of an ideal country house.

The pursuit of luxury led by Francis I stimulated the development of decorative applied art, which, in turn, could be improved only through technology and assimilation of the achievements of high culture into the decorative arts craft. French silk, furniture, palace interiors and so on would not be so refined if they did not reflect the best trends assimilated from European art. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, it turned out a brilliant entourage for the ideas of Enlightenment and emancipation.

One of the peculiarities of France was the new role of women. The ideal of lovely medieval ladies was enriched by Cartesian rationalism, and as a result, aristocratic salons appeared around Paris and throughout the whole country and became an integral part of social life. In spite of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's rebuke, those salons kept the spirit of intellectual emancipation alive and indulged the cult of truth and beauty. The famous salon of Madame de Rambouillet inspired the need for exposure to literature and philosophy. Madame de Rambouillet had many followers, including Mademoiselle de Montpensier, Louis XIV's most famous cousin.

Therefore, when political changes enacted by Napoleon (who was then overthrown) brought France economic growth in the first half of the nineteenth century, it was not the nouveaux riches who dictated the new fashions, as Max Weber believed. The reason for the great brands' success lay not in the fact, for example, Louis-Francois Cartier's grandfather had the advantage of being the craftsman of metal works and the supplier of the courts of Louis XV and Louis XVI. Deep historical roots of the culture made it possible for the first geniuses of the great brands to create the unique challenge to the trivial bourgeois tastes – the answer to pioneers of capitalism era.

Is Cartier's prominence due only to the coincidence of commercial circumstances? The answer is self-evident. The Cartier firm, for example, never stopped creating what led to its first success. Also, an innovation generated by the firm combined threads connecting the past with advanced tendencies of modern times. Garland style, where diamonds were inserted into a platinum frame that did not disturb the perception of the stones, was an advanced technique that became a very essential addition to the brand. Diadems, necklaces, bracelets and earrings were designed in the style of eighteenth century ornaments studied by masters of the firm in great detail. Only the combination of modern technology and classical artistic traditions could produce the Cartier effect, which so impressed contemporaries and drew on inspiration from their descendants.

The experience of Western Europe was not the only source of the Cartier creative imagination. The guilloché enamel, introduced by Peter Carl Fabergé, also became an important feature of the whole Cartier style. Sergei Pavlovich Diaghilev's seasons brought to the style of the firm the motives of Léon Bakst's fairy world scenery, made by Bakst into costumes for the ballets *Cleopatra* and *Scheherazade*. In contemporary times, the exciting world of rethought art from the Russian Middle Ages and the Arabian East became a new impetus for Cartier Art Deco style. Egrets, in the form of curled feathers and curved branches; Baignoire, Tonneau and Tortue watches; and a pattern of onyx and diamonds forming the spots of a panther became the forerunners of the unique high jewellery Art Deco direction.

Geometric and white Art Deco is closely intertwined with creative inspirations from different geographical areas. Art motifs from Egypt, Persia, India and China were reimagined by the brand in a new vision during the 1920s and became part of the Art Deco style. Under India's art influence, the Tutti Frutti style appeared. This palette of red, blue and green, created from rubies, sapphires and emeralds and decorated in "fruit" ornament, has become one of the distinguishing features of Cartier. As well, Chinese motifs are unmistakable in the special geometry of lines of watches and accessories. Authentic artefacts of Ancient Egypt also found their place in the Cartier tradition. Decorative jewellery items created by the firm during the 1920s became desirable pieces on exhibition in all the leading museums in the world.

The tradition and innovations of Cartier have attracted a range of clients with unique destinies to the brand. Notable clients include pioneering pilot Alberto Santos-Dumont, writer and filmmaker Jean Cocteau, Pasha of Marrakech Thami El Glaoui, legendary correspondent for *Harper's Bazaar* Daisy Fellowes, such eccentric socialites as Barbara Hutton, Jackie Kennedy, the Duke of Windsor, the Princess of Monaco, Grace Kelly, Elizabeth Taylor and Elton John. Towards the end of the twentieth century, thanks to Robert Hawk, Cartier became a brand in the modern sense of the word. Alain-Dominique Perrin has created a network of Cartier shops and boutiques in more than twenty countries, and new collections and ideologies have appeared, including "Les Must de Cartier."

Cartier, once bought by kings, cultural figures, millionaires and scions of aristocratic families, is now a brand among other brands and driven by the same rules as everyone else. Big names from its past are now good stories best used to promote sales. In the eyes of those who are willing to spend money, and at the same time want to join the illusory circle of the elite, the given list of products is an embodiment of the dream. However, the truth of the

brand is not based on its list of clients from the top ranks of the modern VIPs.

Beautiful creations of the brand cannot get lost in realities of the market. They can and do have an impact on its vitality, but they never change its true nature. Cartier is among those who do not lose the true nature – continuity of traditions protects the authenticity of the brand's creations, and, in turn, preserves its identity. In handling modern Pelage de Panthere or Panthere Pompom, we deal with the current version of Art Deco and, as a century ago, it maintains details of Diaghilev's seasons; an agrafe clasp on a necklace from the latest collection is a reminder of the belle époque. All Cartier's designs send us back to the classicism of the Enlightenment, to intellectual forms of salons of the seventeenth century, to the standards of the Renaissance and ever further. The personality can project these feelings of recognition with the past into another illusion – "assignment to eternity." But this is a mistake made by individuals and is not inherent in the brand. A true brand offers another kind of "assignment": to establish a connection with inherited memory of the genuine culture.

This quality of the true brand does not allow it to turn the names of its famous clients into unfair advertising pictures. Feelings of being immersed in culture do not give the owner of a Cartier creation the thought that he or she was once aware of other people's purchases. When creations contain symbols of cultural achievements, manipulations through stories become meaningless. Holding to this line is as difficult as maintaining purity of style throughout centuries while also feeling the pulse of life's renewal. To offer exclusive creations in the luxury market, and to do so without invading personal freedom and its dignity and right of self-expression, is a task that can be completed only by the brand with an authentic background.

Any brand, even the true one, exists in constant fear of losing its entity. This danger threatens all brands, not only those whose life has been artificially interrupted. The paradox is that the pioneers of true brands live and die while their creations last forever, like Fabergé masters who have been gone for years while the brand embodied in their artwork is still alive. Twentieth-century English philosopher Bertrand Russell once said that to take into the inmost shrine of the soul the irresistible forces whose puppets we seem to be – Death and change, the irrevocableness of the past, and the powerlessness of Man before the blind hurry of the universe from vanity to vanity – to feel these things and know them is to conquer them. The beauty of motionless and silent pictures of the past is like the enchanted purity of late autumn. We would be tempted to add to this only that the beauty of the past is the moral core without which no true brand can be created. All innovations, and the most daring creative experiments, are meaningful only if they are able to maintain balance between the nature of things and the nature of the human spirit. Spirit despising things is destructive to life, and things turned into a sense of life – fatal to the spirit. But things created by a brand can uphold that balance if they are created with respect to the ethical constant in each of us.

4. Discussions

The differentiation between true or false brand the basic concepts given in this article. In scientific articles that fall into our field of vision, the question is not raised in this way. Therefore, the obtained results are difficult to compare with the data given in similar publications. However, it should be noted that this issue is indirectly affected. First of all, it should be said the research of the problem of maintaining the brand standards in the luxury retail sphere[9]. In addition, the origins of the highest brand standards are also explored[10]. The theme of ethical relations in the luxury brand segment was also reflected[11]. Comparison of similar results with the data of our research indirectly confirm the correctness of the methodology we have chosen.

Aesthetics of the brand also discussed in the literature. This is one of the most problematic phenomena. It is necessary to distinguish the aesthetics problem of the produced goods or the provided services by the brand, and the aesthetics problem of the brands advertising campaign. Moreover, both are perceived differently from "outside" and from "within" the brand. The latter aspect is raised in Phillips, McQuarrie and Griffin article. Visual brand identity is the most important phenomenon in the aesthetic perception of the brand. It will be much more effective if the identity includes an ethical component as well. This idea brings us back to the thesis on the relationship of ethics and aesthetics in promoting the brand on the market. So indirectly, the idea of a relationship between the foundations of culture and the rules of the true brand is confirmed.

The further perspective of the problem considered in the article is predetermined by the practical tasks of doing business in the luxury sector. From the formulated provisions it is possible to deduce a number of practical proposals for the personnel management in the specific conditions of luxury brands.

5. Conclusions

The article compares such concepts as culture and brand. As a result of the research, it is concluded that there is a clear relationship between such phenomena as ethical principles, aesthetic preferences and brand success. The historical and comparative observation of brands that are defined as true shows that their success is due to clear ethical rules and an exceptionally professional attitude toward aesthetics. Ethical principles always the first. This is what makes it possible to treat clients honestly and respectfully. This attitude, confirmed by decades, creates a positive image of the brand. Its main components are trust, a sense of existential safety and psychological comfort. These qualities ensure the longevity of the brand in the art-market.

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