

1

BRANDS AND BRANDING

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

When you finish reading this chapter, you will be able to answer these questions:

1. What are brands? What value do brands provide to users?
2. How has our understanding of building brand value changed over time? What role does the customer play in creating brand meaning?
3. What is co-creating brand meaning? Who shapes brand meaning and what role do marketers play in managing this meaning?
4. What are the guiding principles of co-creating meaningful brands?
5. Where is branding used? What contexts are amenable to a branded strategy?

WELCOME TO A BRANDED WORLD

Look around you—how many brands do you see? You’ve probably become so used to brands that identifying them takes some effort. Nonetheless, there are very few places left that are brand free (even outer space is being branded thanks to SpaceX). Take a look again. How many brands evoke a knowing smile, calling up memories from previous use, important life events, friendships, successes and disasters, and moments of joy? How many evoke the opposite, disgust, hatred, or an eyeroll. What sets these two apart? Why do we like some brands and not others? Why do a few become truly loved? Why do some transcend their category and become identified with a certain “type” of user, or even resonate culturally? Have some brands lost relevance, and if so, why? When you looked at those brands, how much information did you really need to identify them? Was a quick glance enough? Is the brand’s design language so obvious that it can be logo free, or understated? How many did you have to look at a few times? Did you struggle to recall the name, or attribute anything meaningful to the logo? How many more brands do you see that mean almost nothing to you? Why is this so?

Think about how many brands you’ve used since waking? Like many of us, you no doubt instinctively grabbed for your phone (which brand?), checked various social media feeds (brands such as Facebook, Instagram, TikTok, Twitter, WhatsApp), scrolled past advertisements, and possibly stopped to look at which brands your favorite influencers were loving in their latest post. Think also of all the brands you may take for granted. Your bed for example. Is the place (street/town/city/region/nation) you wake in a branded place? It would be rare if it was not. By the time you start your day, you’ve undoubtedly encountered numerous brands. Some are what we call invisible brands—brands that we are never without (toothpaste, soap) but that fade into the background. How did we come to choose these? Possibly they were handed down by our parents, who likewise received them from theirs. What brands are you never without? A favorite bag? Lipstick and makeup palette? Laptop? Mode of transport? Phone? Item of clothing? And, how many are in fact liquid, existing solely or partially (as in the case of sharing services such as Uber) in app form? Are you, in fact, a brand?

What do these various brands mean to you, and how was that meaning shaped? You may believe you acted alone, choosing only the best brand on offer (or that you could afford), but this is to ignore all the commercial decisions that have gone into shaping the brand’s meaning, and all the various actors, from marketers and designers, to users, influencers, friends and family that have shaped the brand’s identity. Some may just seem to have always carried certain associations and, truth be told, you’re not quite sure why. You just know what they mean. These brands may be cultural icons, carriers of national identity, markers of community membership, or taken for granted within specific sectors. How did they reach this status? These, and other questions are the subject for this text.

In this book, the meaning of brands is co-created. What does this mean? Put simply, brands are **co-authored**. While marketers may project a specific identity for the brand, that identity, and what comes afterwards are shaped by ongoing marketing decisions, your own identity goals and life themes, and the broader sociocultural context in which you live. Yet, the majority of textbooks fail to account for this interplay between user, identity, and social goals, the networks they’re embedded in,

the social forces that influence them, and the actions of marketers in co-authoring brand meaning. This book addresses this gap, focusing on why brands mean what they do to users, how brands come to carry such meanings, and the ways in which aspiring brand managers can influence all of this. As such, this book pushes off from all that we *now* know about brands and attempts to synthesize the vast amount of academic research and management practice that has emerged over the past three decades in particular, into a set of strategic principles.

Brands are ubiquitous. Be it work or play, we are immersed in a branded world from the day we are born to the day we die. So much of our lives involves brands that accusations of staying “on brand” have come to define a lack of sincerity on the part of political or business leaders facing a crisis. Critics write books against the ubiquity of brands featuring covers of babies covered with logos, while consumers often tattoo themselves with the very same logos for a range of surprisingly complex reasons. In many ways, known and unrecognized, they define who we are or who we long to be. This book (brought to you by the good people at Sage) identifies how brands gain meaning and how they can be co-managed for the long-term, providing value to customers, marketers, and other relevant stakeholders.

WHAT IS A BRAND?

The word “brand” is derived from the proto-German *brandr* (pronounced “brundt”), which literally means to “burn your mark into or stigmatize” and usually referred to the practice of marking ownership of captured peoples (slaves) or animals (where “branding” is still in use today) (Jones 2017). Although brands say something about the user, the stigmatizing half of *brandr* is mostly forgotten. Putting aside moral concerns, it’s worth thinking about the benefits resulting from such a practice:

1. Brands identify the wearer: In the case of slaves, brands mark out their status, their house identity, and therefore confer status on the branded and brander.
2. Brands signal membership: The practice of pillaging and warfare meant tribes would quickly absorb conquered peoples. Brands enabled tribal members to absorb others in spite of the range of different dialects, physiques, and markings that could cause confusion.
3. Signal information against a background of noise: In the case of animals, at round-up time, often-illiterate farmhands could quickly and immediately identify which animal belonged to which rancher—critically useful in a context defined by noise, dust, and frightened and dangerous animals.
4. Protection: This form of branding is difficult to get rid of, and at the time, most certainly attempts to do so would have resulted in infection and possibly death. Thus, branded slaves are unlikely to attempt escape, while branded animals are difficult to steal and sell.

All of these ancient aspects of branding are still relevant today, although thankfully in the majority of cases concerning human animals, burning the flesh with marks usually now takes the form of deliberate tattooing. The reasons why consumers might choose to do this are the subject of Chapter 2.

Many people fail to understand that the meaning of *brandr* still has much relevance for branding today. Typically, *brandr* is dismissed as a narrow logo-centric view of branding. However, this ignores the fact that burning into and stigmatizing explain much about the emotional intensity of many consumer–brand relationships, the ways in which consumers construct their identity through brands, the ways in which particular brands mark people out from others, the notion that the “wrong user” can harm a brand’s image, the ways in which employees are required to “live the brand,” and finally the critical role founders play in establishing brand values. Although much has changed, the origins of the term “brand” still have relevance today.

So far, we know a little of the process of branding and what some benefits were, but just what is a brand? Table 1.1 provides a range of examples from past and present, and sources, including academics and practitioners engaged in various aspects of brand management. Defining the meaning of the term “brand” remains tricky and subject to much debate. The classic definition by the American Marketing Association listed first in Table 1.1 remains the one preferred by many (but not all) academics and practitioners.

This definition emphasizes the material markers of a brand and is reflective of a historic view that brands are equivalent to legal trademarks (Conejo and Wooliscroft 2015). This definition has some useful aspects: it places a stress on competing symbolically (rather than through functional innovation or pricing) and taking a distinct position in the marketplace as a means to compete. This suggests that a brand’s identity and intent can be the basis of competitive advantage.

However, although widely used, it is not without many limitations. First, although focusing on the material markers of a brand (Holt 2003), it is the meaning of these markers that truly defines the brand. Second, there is no mention of an external user in this definition. Although unintended, this definition reflects the average “person in the street” view of branding (and understandably but regrettably, many managers) as largely consisting of a cleverly designed logo aimed at extracting higher prices from gullible consumers. Third, it implies that there is but one author of the brand—the firm—a view that is not only empirically false, but in this day and age, also practically questionable.

There have been many other attempts at defining brands over the years. A few examples, drawn from a range of different perspectives, are presented in Table 1.1. In interpreting these different views it is important to keep in mind that each author has worked with the material they had available at the time and each person brings a particular professional frame to their view of brands and branding. For example, pioneering brand writer David Aaker was primarily advising senior management on competitive strategy. Not surprisingly, his definition emphasizes competitive differentiation. John Philip Jones is an advertising specialist with a focus on fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG). Unsurprisingly his definition reflects the fact that consumers buying these items often make quick decisions (less than two seconds) and look for clear, eye-catching promises on the shelf. Marty Neumeier’s definition reflects his background as an interaction designer, and thus he places an emphasis on the subjective experience of the user and intuitive reactions. Former Nike and Starbucks marketer Scott Bedbury unsurprisingly provides a more detailed, messy view of the brand, focusing on all the moments of truth in product and services experienced by users that create meaning for the brand, good and bad.

TABLE 1.1 Definitions of brands and branding

Author	Definition
American Marketing Association Mark I	A name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller's good or service as distinct from those of other sellers. The legal term for brand is trademark. A brand may identify one item, a family of items, or all items of that seller. If used for the firm as a whole, the preferred term is trade name (AMA MKI).
American Marketing Association Update Mark II	A brand is a customer experience represented by a collection of images and ideas; often, it refers to a symbol such as a name, logo, slogan, and design scheme. Brand recognition and other reactions are created by the accumulation of experiences with the specific product or service, both directly relating to its use, and through the influence of advertising, design, and media commentary. (https://www.ama.org/resources/pages/dictionary.aspx?dLetter=B)
<i>Oxford English Dictionary</i>	A piece of burning, smouldering or charred wood; a stigma, a mark of disgrace; a torch, a sword; a kind of blight, leaving leaves with a burnt appearance; a special characteristic (brand of humor); an identifying mark burned on livestock or (formerly) criminals etc. with a hot iron; an iron used for this; a particular make of goods, an identifying trademark, label etc. to designate ownership.
David Aaker, Vice Chairman of Prophet and Professor Emeritus, Hass Business School, University of California, Berkeley. Author of over 100 articles and 14 books on branding including classics such as <i>Managing Brand Equity</i> and <i>Building Strong Brands</i> .	A Brand is a distinguishing name and/or symbol intended to identify the goods and services of one seller and to differentiate those goods and services from those of competitors.
John Philip Jones, Emeritus Professor of Advertising, Syracuse University, and author of numerous works on the effectiveness of advertising.	A brand is a product that provides functional benefits plus added values that some customers value enough to buy.
Jay Baer, founder of <i>convincenandconvert.com</i> , one of the most popular online marketing resources for business people.	Branding is the art of aligning what you want people to think about your company with what people actually do think about your company. And vice-versa.
David Ogilvy (1911–1999), hailed as “Father of Advertising,” founder of Ogilvy & Mather, inspiration for the Don Draper character in TV show <i>Mad Men</i> and author of <i>Confessions of an Advertising Man</i> . Focus was on the BIG IDEA. Clients included Dove, Hathaway, Rolls-Royce, Schweppes, Shell, and many others.	The intangible sum of a product's attributes: its name, packaging, and price, its history, its reputation, and the way it's advertised.

(Continued)

TABLE 1.1 (Continued)

Author	Definition
Marty Neumeier, Director of Transformation for Liquid Agency, brand consultancy San Jose, CA. Author of <i>Brand Gap</i> , <i>Zag: The #1 Strategy of High Performance Brands</i> , and <i>The Brand Flip: Why Customers Now Run Companies and How You Can Profit from It</i> . Clients include Adobe, Apple, Hewlett Packard, Microsoft, and Symantec.	A brand is a person's gut feel about a product, service, or company. It's a GUT FEELING because we're all emotional, intuitive beings, despite our best efforts to be rational. It's a PERSON'S gut feeling, because in the end the brand is defined by individuals, not by companies, markets, or the so-called general public. Each person creates his or her own version of it.
Alvin "Al" Achenbaum (1925–2016), held senior positions (1951–1974) with major New York advertising agencies McCann Erickson, JWT, Grey Advertising, and Ted Bates. Clients included Procter & Gamble, GE, Nestlé, Kraft, Honda, US Department of Defense. Regular contributor to <i>Ad Age</i> and <i>Marketing Week</i> .	What distinguishes a brand from an unbranded commodity counterpart and gives it its equity is the sum total of consumers' perceptions and feelings about the product's attributes, about how it performs, about the brand name, and about the company associated with producing it.
Scott Bedbury, CEO Brandstream, former Nike Advertising Director (1987–1994, including "Just Do It" campaign) and Starbucks Chief Marketing Officer (1995–1998).	A brand is the sum of the good, bad, the ugly, and the off-strategy. It is defined by your best product as well as your worst product. It is defined by award-winning advertising as well as by god-awful ads that somehow slipped through the cracks, got approved, and, not surprisingly, sank into oblivion. It is defined by the accomplishments of your best employee as well as by the mishaps of your worst hire you ever made. It is also defined by your receptionist and the music your customers are subjected to when they are put on hold. For every grand and finely worded public statement by the CEO, the brand is also defined by derisive consumer comments overheard in the hallway or in a chat room on the Internet. Brands are sponges for content, for images, for fleeting feelings. They become psychological concepts held in the minds of the public, where they may stay forever. As such you can't entirely control a brand. At best you can only guide and influence it. (Bedbury 2002, p. 15)
Sir John Hegarty, founder of Bartle, Bogle, Hegarty and author of <i>Hegarty on Advertising</i> and <i>Hegarty on Creativity</i> .	The most valuable piece of real estate in the world, a corner of someone's mind.
Helen Edwards, author of <i>Passionbrand</i> and co-owner of the consultancy of the same name. Award-winning <i>Marketing Week</i> columnist.	Brand = Product and/or service + values + associations. This combination creates "meaning" that people can connect with at the level of identity and therefore the relationship is beyond commercial. In theory the values are 'forever' and embrace the ideology, the product and/or service and associations can change over time. (personal communication, February 5, 2017)
Roland van der Vorst, Professor, TU Delft, Netherlands and Managing Director FreedomLab.	A more practical definition is "all operations executed by a brander to develop his/her brand in a positive way." A brand is a concept that regulates the behavior of both brander and user. (personal communication, February 5, 2017)

Author	Definition
Erminio Putignano (RMIT Adjunct Professor and co-founder of the PUSH Collective, Melbourne).	Branding is an exercise in world-making. It's about shaping a worldview anchored in values, beliefs and promises and bringing it to life through symbols, stories and experiences. It is an act of narration and a conversation and it implies a very active contribution from all parties involved—everybody is involved in its generation and interpretation (organizations, agencies, customers and the community at large). If the worldview is convincing and relevant, then it is able to change opinions and behaviors. (personal communication, February 4, 2017)
Brian Richards, founding partner, Richards Partners, leading brand and design consultancy, Auckland.	The brand is what brings together and articulates company values, both internally and externally, which is why one of the most important tasks of the manager is to ensure that everyone delivers the brand, it's no longer just a marketing function. (http://richards.partners/thoughts/spiritual-intelligence)
Marie-Agnes Parmentier, consumer researcher and academic.	[A brand is] a repository of meanings fueled by a combination of marketers' intentions, consumers' interpretations, and numerous sociocultural networks' associations. (2011)
Cleopatra Veloutsou and Elena Delgado-Ballester (Editor of <i>Journal of Product & Brand Management</i> ; academics).	An evolving mental collection of actual (offer related) and emotional (human-like) characteristics and associations which convey benefits of an offer identified through a symbol, or collection of symbols, and differentiates this offer from the rest of the marketplace. (2018, p. 256)
Nicholas Ind and Holger Schmidt, academics, authors of <i>Co-creating Brands</i> .	Every brand is a relatively robust web of meaning in episodic memory, which is confirmed or modified by the combination of many observed details, the comparison of repetitive brand experiences with one's own life experience and ultimately in social and societal discourses. (Ind and Schmidt 2019, p. 25)
Alfie Spencer (Partner at Office of Ideologies, UK).	A narrative, an environment, a symbolic patterning ... a brand is the production of a discourse that reformats social practice / behavior. Which makes it sound like a kind of artwork ... a gesamtkunstwerk [a complete world], that must be very very simple, but do a lot of work. (personal communication, November 5, 2019)
Jeff Bezos (founder and CEO of Amazon.com).	What people say about you when you aren't in the room.

Source: Definitions either sourced directly or from Brown (2016) and Cohen (2011)

Despite these differences, we can build up a clear picture of what characterizes a strong brand:

1. Identification: The purpose of a brand is to clearly identify a particular set of marketplace offers. The brand's various markers indicate authenticity and provide the user with confidence. Trappist monasteries such as Chimay, for example, use a number of cues including religious symbols, stylized gothic font, terms such as "dubbel" and "tripel" to indicate alcoholic strength, and overt claims of "Authentic Trappist Product" to differentiate

themselves from those beers brewed by large conglomerates that attempt to trade on an imagined religious heritage (e.g., Leffe) (Beverland et al. 2008).

2. **Distinction:** Those managing brands have always been concerned with uniqueness. Harley Davidson went as far as to petition American courts to legally protect their motorcycle's distinctive sound. Likewise, users' brand relationships are often built around the unique benefits that the brand provides. Measures of **brand equity** (or brand value) place much emphasis on uniqueness when attempting to understand the strength of a brand relationship and its financial value.
3. **Differentiation:** Clearly, there is little point in simply copying a brand (unless you're in the counterfeit business). Show an image of Volvo to anyone and they will immediately say "safety." Every car arguably meets strict safety criteria but only Volvo stresses this as a USP or unique selling point. (In contrast, BMW equals "driver experience," while Mazda is "play and innovation.") Users may use brands to differentiate themselves from others. For example, consumers might use brand tattoos to signify their membership of different groups; a Fender tattoo for example would signify to the general public that the wearer is a musician, although to more knowledgeable insiders Fender identifies them as a guitar player of early rock 'n' roll.
4. **Meaning:** Strong brands are rich with meaning. This meaning can include a wide array of associations, personalities, personas or archetypes, and cultural codes and myths. Some brands become so rich with meaning they become cultural icons. For example, Levi's had a rich heritage initially with working-class men, before gaining associations with the 1960s "Summer of Love," rock 'n' roll, LGBT communities, and so on. Today, blue jeans have become a global uniform for almost everyone.
5. **Value:** Brands must provide value, to firms and to users. This value can include functional performance, emotional resonance, identity reinforcement, linking value, and financial return. Collectively these are forms of brand equity (defined differently by various stakeholders) and can represent in excess of 70 percent of a firm's share value.
6. **Experienced:** Brands represent promises to users. The true test of that promise, however, lies in use (broadly defined). For this reason, practitioners often claim that "brands are built from the inside out" (the implications of which we'll return to later). In fact, for some brands, there may be nothing more than an experience and a bundle of sensations. For example, the value of the annual Glastonbury Festival lies entirely with the experience of the music, being part of a temporary community of festival-goers, fleeting romance, camping, getting soaked and muddy, and partying all weekend.
7. **Authored:** Despite Marty Neumeier's (Table 1.1) claim that only consumers define the brand, this is no truer than the managerial view that the firm is the sole author of brand meaning. Brand meaning is generated or shaped by multiple authors, especially today through social media. For example, ask consumers why they buy Apple and typically they will respond with claims about "being different" or "creative." This may well define their

relationship with the brand but it is unlikely they woke up one morning and decided Apple was defined that way. Instead, the brand's campaigns have highlighted these associations over time, their specialist music and film software ensures Apple products have been adopted by creative industries and feature as part of almost any band's stage set-up, and media influencers have lauded the brand's return to form as part of a wave of "design thinking" while the Apple-owned Pixar often features not so subtle links to the brand, including the signature start-up sound on robot Wall-E in the movie of the same name.

Given these seven points, recent definitions have begun to shift away from viewing a brand as little more than a logo generated by marketers aimed at differentiating products or services from one another. Drawing this together, we can define a brand as follows:

An intangible, symbolic marketplace resource, imbued with meaning by stakeholders and the broader context in which it is embedded that enables users to project their identity goal(s) to one or more audiences.

WHO CO-CREATES BRAND MEANING?

When we say brand meaning is co-created what do we mean? Strategy scholars Prahalad and Ramaswamy (2004, p. 8) define **co-creation** as follows: "The joint creation of value by the company and the customer; allowing the customer to co-construct the service experience to suit their context." This definition has a number of implications, many of which will be identified throughout the rest of the book. Essentially, this approach to value means that value is not exchanged, but experienced in use. As such, the motives of users are critical to understanding meaning co-creation and managing brands. Co-creation involves viewing brand development as an evolutionary and social process that takes place through numerous interactions involving various stakeholders (Ind and Schmidt 2019).

Today, co-creation lies very much at the heart of marketing, innovation, and many other business practices relevant to brand management. This begs the question: who co-creates meaning? Creator of the cultural brand model, Douglas Holt identifies four "authors" of brand meaning. Figure 1.1 identifies these four authors. Essentially, the stories told by users (including consumers), the firm (including brand managers), influencers (such as bloggers), and how the brand is represented in popular culture shape its meaning over time. For brand managers, the identification of these four authors changes how one approaches meaning creation. Previously, brand managers were believed to be solely responsible for creating the meaning of the brand. Now, while they certainly influence, often heavily, the shared meaning of the brand, they must also constantly adjust and align their desired meaning to that of other authors. This is demonstrated in the shifting metaphors around brand management. Classic texts, such as Aaker's (1991) *Managing Brand Equity* and Keller's (2003) *Strategic Brand Management*, display an emphasis on "creation," "control," and "management" and the shifting practitioner-focused approach is framed in terms of "jams," "crowds," "conversations," and "highjacks" (as shown in *Brand Jam* by Marc Gobé (2007) and Joseph Jaffe's *Join the Conversation* (2007)).

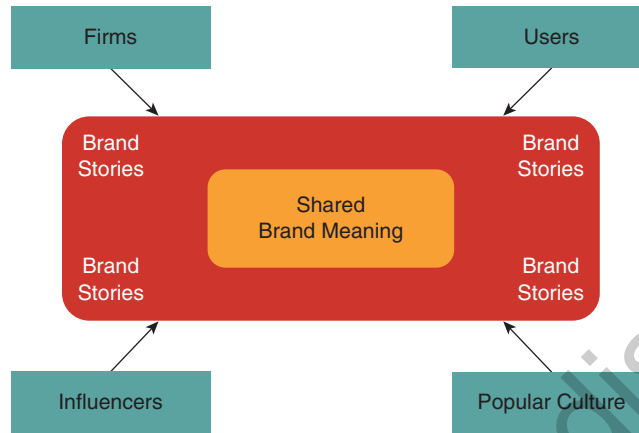


FIGURE 1.1 Authors shaping brand meaning

Source: “Brands and Branding” [product# 9-503-045] by Douglas B. Holt © 2002 President and Fellows of Harvard College. Republished by permission

Sometimes brand meaning can be controlled or strongly shaped, such as through sponsorship, product placement, the creation of official brand communities, and the recruitment of bloggers. In other cases, new meanings may emerge in an unpredictable fashion, which if unrecognized can change the brand’s meaning for good or ill. For example, lesbian riders of Harley Davidson, self-identified as “Dykes on Bikes,” co-opt the brand because of its overt masculinity. In this sense, these riders are disrupting the brand’s historic image, while Harley Davidson’s respectful response reinforces the core brand association of “freedom” (Martin et al. 2006).

Each author also has different, albeit not necessarily inconsistent goals. Marketers desire to build brand value by creating a desired brand identity supported with defensible associations. Customers may view the brand in ways that are different from those of marketers, and use it to achieve their desired identity, connect with others, or make sense of an ever-changing social landscape. Influencers, such as fashion bloggers, have their own identity to reinforce and are particularly aware of not damaging their relationship with their followers. For them a brand must fit their needs and be newsworthy. How a brand is represented in popular culture can be an outcome of activist critiques, wider scandals, appropriation by artists (rapper Kanye West, for example, when he used to wear Polo Ralph Lauren, a seemingly curious choice of brand for a hip-hop artist, until one realizes such a choice is a form of reverse co-optation of preppy upper-class Anglo-Saxon culture), and more positive associations, including its role in representing collective identity. Chapter 3 discusses a framework that brings these competing goals and values of branding together.

The challenge for brand managers today is to balance the desire for a consistent brand identity (which is still crucial for brand equity) with the pressure to adapt in line with shifting customer needs and changes in the broader sociocultural context in which the brand is embedded (which also remain crucial for building brand equity). Staying “on brand” all of the time is increasingly difficult, paradoxical (“on brand” may in fact require one to go “off brand”—see Chapter 8), unnecessary, potentially dangerous, and ultimately too limiting from the point of view of enhancing brand equity.

A SHORT HISTORY OF BRAND MANAGEMENT

It's commonly stated that brands have been with us for centuries, while the formal management of brands is a much more recent affair. There is much truth to this. Despite archaeological evidence suggesting proto-brands or brand marks have been used to guarantee source authenticity and quality since ancient times (India, Iran, China, and Greece). Table 1.2 has details on proto-brands vs. modern brands while Figure 1.2 contains images of the earliest known proto-brands. In contrast, formalized frameworks for managing brands only began to be published in the 1990s. Despite this, many of the practices that define brand management to this day were in use for much of the twentieth century and, in some cases, well before that. Describing the evolution of branding, business historians Bastos and Levy (2012, p. 347) state:

A general theme ... is the evolution of the brand from a simple entity with limited application and whose creation, interpretation, and control are mostly enacted by one actor (i.e., its creator), to the brand as a complex entity that is multi-dimensional and multi-functional, and that receives influences from a variety of actors (e.g. the brand manager, the consumer, the media, the marketing researcher, technology).

TABLE 1.2 Brand characteristics in the ancient and modern worlds

Period	Brand Characteristics					
	Information: logistics	Information: origin	Information: quality	Image: power	Image: value	Image: personality
Early Bronze IV 2250–2000 BCE The Indus Valley	X	X	X	X		
The Middle Bronze Age 2000–1500 BCE Shang China		X	X			
The Late Bronze Age 1500–1000 BCE Cyprus		X	X	X	X	
The Iron Age Revolution 1000–500 BCE Tyre		X	X	X	X	
The Iron Age 825–336 BCE Greece		X	X	X	X	
Modern		X	X	X	X	X

Source: Moore, Karl and Susan Reid (2008), "The birth of the brand: 4000 years of branding" *Business History*, 50(4), 419–432. Reprinted by permission of Taylor and Francis

For a long time brands were largely logos or pre-trademarks used by merchants and guilds of craftspeople to signal authenticity and quality. Ancient empires and organized religions also used the iconography of branding, including logos. For example, the Roman Empire reminded its citizens of their rights and responsibilities through the overt use of statues and architecture emblazoned with the imperial eagle on top of a tagline (SPQR—*Senātus Populusque Rōmānus*) while the French Empire made regular use of the *fleur-de-lis*. In medieval times, craftspeople such as silversmiths were forced to mark

their work with a logo to indicate that the product was indeed made by skilled craftspeople and that the buyer could trust it was made from pure silver. In essence these early brands provided a degree of certainty to buyers, enabled one to trace a product back to its origins, as well as added values that came from higher status workshops or particular artisans.



FIGURE 1.2 Earliest known proto-brands

However, mass branding of goods really only began in earnest during the Industrial Revolution, as supply outstripped demand and manufacturers were forced to compete for buyers' attention through mass advertising (prior to this it was not uncommon for manufacturers to sell goods unbranded to distributors and retailers). For the most part however, brand names did little more than *denote* or designate origin or relationship to a product class (i.e., brands were signs rather than **symbols**). For example, Folgers named their coffee in 1872, Kraft identified their cheese in 1903, and even Coca-Cola was originally simply a sign rather than the powerful symbol it became. Despite this, branding rarely featured in the marketing textbooks of the early twentieth century (and in some cases right up until 1988!), which were mainly concerned with sales, advertising, and managing distribution channels. The strongest brand names during this time often became generic descriptions of the category, such as Sunkist Oranges (Bastos and Levy 2012).

This approach continued until the late 1950s when academic Sid Levy wrote two influential *Harvard Business Review* articles, “The Product and the Brand” (with Burleigh Gardner, 1955) and “Symbols for Sale” (1959), suggesting brands could *connote* or imply some deeper meaning. As Levy (1959, p. 118) stated, “people buy things not only for what they do, but also for what they mean.” This meant that brands could “incorporate intangibles such as identity, associations, and personality” (Bastos and Levy 2012, p. 349). Brands became **signifiers of meaning**, communicated via symbols (Jones 2017). These articles in many ways captured what leading advertising agencies (such as JWT—John Walter Thompson) had been doing since the 1920s and influenced the so-called “father of advertising” David Ogilvy in his brand-building efforts after World War II.

Brands also gained more attention during this time because of the emergence of a mass consumer society whereby consumers faced a dizzying array of choices, often between products that made competing performance claims. As Gardner and Levy (1955) noted, detergents all promised

to make clothes whiter, while an early famous scene in the award-winning TV series *Mad Men* (set in Madison Avenue, New York City, during the 1960s) focused on how cigarette brand Lucky Strike could differentiate cigarettes after the government banned tobacco manufacturers' health claims (which believe it or not were how brands were differentiated then). Automotive brands such as those owned by General Motors during this time were also caught in a never-ending war of feature creep, leading to an explosion of aesthetic design features such as the use of chrome and large tail wings that more often than not hampered performance and safety. At the same time, established brands started to face competition; for example, Pepsi aggressively attacked Coca-Cola's claims with its famous taste test. Since there was often little difference between these products' functional performance, the battle became symbolic.

Other practices that eventually became standard brand management tools also emerged throughout the twentieth century. When Alfred Sloan offered a car for "every purse and purpose," market segmentation was born. Drawing on new psychological theories in the 1930s research on segmentation expanded beyond demographics in the post-war period to include values, a practice that heavily influenced advertising agencies at the time. Segmentation would eventually become a key practice in branding, as it underpinned the **segmentation-targeting-positioning** model of brand equity (Keller 1993). Further advances in consumer research led to an emphasis on **brand personality** (although this was largely viewed in terms of the personality of the user and not the brand) by JWT in the 1950s. Studies on brand loyalty emerged as manufacturers became increasingly concerned at the rise of generic retailer brands. And, advertisers began studying the consumer image of particular brands in an attempt to generate more returns for their clients.

One of the first signs of the rising importance of brands (as opposed to products) was an emphasis on logo design. During the 1950s onwards, many iconic logo designs emerged including IBM, Mercedes Benz, Penguin, and Shell, as well as the use of mascots including the Michelin Man, Ronald McDonald, and the Playboy Bunny (Bastos and Levy 2012). In 1978 Wally Olins (founder of Wolff Olins—the agency responsible for repositioning BP with the now infamous "Beyond Petroleum" and producing the 2012 London Olympic Games logo) wrote *The Corporate Personality*, viewed by many within the branding world as the founding text on corporate identity, where he laid out a blueprint for organizations to holistically embody a set of values.

Organizations also started to pay more attention to the value of branding. In 1930, Procter & Gamble introduced their brand-management system, which resulted in the firm being reorganized around brands as opposed to product groupings. This saw each brand have separate managers, assistants, and budgets, and meant all marketing activities were to be driven by brand considerations (Low and Fullerton 1994). This system initially had little impact outside of Procter & Gamble, although historians noted that from the 1950s onwards the position (and eventually the power) of brand manager became more important, so much so that JWT's internal training materials bemoaned their impact on creative ideas. The systematic organization of marketing activities around brands eventually became commonplace in upper-middle to high income countries.

As the power of brands started to become clearer, questions began to be raised about their financial value. Although there had long been concern about brand value, for the most part the focus had been on demonstrating to brand managers how their advertising budgets resulted in increased loyalty and/or sales. However, the deregulation of product and capital markets in the

1980s led to a wave of acquisitions and concern that the prices paid were far in excess of classic market valuations. In 1990, these questions led the Marketing Science Institute (MSI) in the USA to commission a number of examinations into brand equity. David Aaker, a thought leader in branding (to this day) published his best-selling *Building Brand Equity* in 1991. Building on the psychological turn in marketing scholarship and popular practice (such as Ries and Trout's 1981 *Positioning: The Battle for Your Mind*), academic Kevin Lane Keller published his seminal article in the *Journal of Marketing* in 1993 titled "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity" (which will be explored further in Chapters 2 and 3).

Keller's article synthesized much of the research and practice into branding over the past fifty years. The **Customer-Based Brand Equity** approach (often referred to as the CBBE or "**mindshare model**") defined academic research into branding and diffused widely into practice. Even critics of this model admit it is *the* model of brand management (Holt 2004a). Subsequently research on branding has expanded dramatically to cover how organizations build, grow, and refresh brands, how they manage large portfolios of brands, how they deal with brand crises, how brands contribute to financial performance, how consumers relate to brands, the communal nature of brand consumption, experiential branding, the production of brand myths, ethical issues raised by branding, managing brands online, and global branding issues (among many others) (Lee et al. 2017).

However, the practice of brand management and our understanding of it have changed remarkably since 1993. To see this, one only needs to look at how the dominant metaphors used to capture branding have changed (see co-creation). From the 1990s to 2000, the primary focus was on how marketers *managed* brands. The focus of most of these writers was on clearly defining the brand's identity and communicating that to consumers via advertising, design, experiential strategies, and service personnel. In these models, consumers were viewed as rather passive recipients of brand information and were assumed to view the brand exactly as marketers intended with any gaps between identity and image attributed to poor positioning and/or marketing execution.

From 2000, this began to change, with titles such as "citizen brands," "brand jam," "brand hijack," and "building brand authenticity" filling the shelves. These titles drew on a new stream of consumer research emerging in the 1990s that viewed consumers as active creators of meaning who may view and use brands in ways unintended by marketers, and often in contradiction to the intended identity or position of the brand. As the titles suggested, brands could be hijacked by tribal groups of consumers who were increasingly networked via the Internet. An empathetic approach to this hijack often leads to brand revitalization, or as in the case of the Canterbury Crusaders at the end of this chapter, avoiding negative associations. In this situation, brand managers were viewed as just one session player in a jam, trying to forever align themselves with other players in order to keep the brand in time (Gobé 2007).

The first two decades of the 2000s saw the idea that a brand was co-created take shape. The emergence of the **service-dominant logic of marketing** (Vargo and Lusch 2004) triggered a discussion about how brands represent resources to consumers, shifting the balance of power away from marketers. Susan Fournier's seminal work on brand relationships began to diffuse more widely into academia and practice. Earlier work by John Schouten and James McAlexander (1995) on the communal nature of brands became formalized as "**brand community**." Douglas Holt (2004a; 2004b) published his seminal work on the **cultural model of branding**, arguing that iconic, or long-lived brands with cultural power, regularly changed their position (driven by any one of the four brand

authors in Figure 1.1). Consumer culture theory (Arnould and Thompson 2005) was instrumental in highlighting the role of brands as devices for helping consumers construct their identity. Interest in **brand authenticity** emerged and expanded with the arrival of social media influencers. Critics of many received brand practices also had impact (particularly with practitioners), most notably the work of Ehrenberg-Bass Institute at the University of South Australia. Byron Sharp (2010) and his colleagues reminded brand managers that loyalty was not as valuable as they believed, and that their job involved building distinctive **brand assets** and keeping them relevant.

Despite these changes, brand texts continue to present brand meaning as largely unchanging and created and controlled by marketers. This book takes a different approach, which is outlined below.

FIVE KEY PRINCIPLES OF CO-CREATING MEANINGFUL BRANDS

1. **Co-creation:** As identified in Figure 1.1, how consumers view a brand is shaped by four authors—the firm, users, influencers, and popular culture. Although the intentions of brand managers still matter, once launched, the meaning of a brand is shaped by a range of stakeholders, changes in societal expectations, category norms, competitor behavior, and consumer desires. However, users do expect marketers to offer creative solutions to any challenges arising due to the aforementioned shifts, to allow them to continue their brand relationship (Giesler 2012).
2. **Brands are assets:** In branding theory and practice we refer to this as “the brands-as-assets” view. For firms, brands represent intangible assets. This class of assets is the most important in terms of a firm’s market value (and share price). For publicly listed firms, intangible assets can account for more than 70 percent of a stock price, while for influencers, their brand is all they have. For non-commercial entities, the brand is a trust mark, or marker of reputation, and is fundamental to attracting donations, support, staff, celebrities, and so on. We call this financial brand equity. However, don’t forget that brands are also assets for users. Brands help users achieve their identity goals, reflecting their real and desired selves, and/or collective goals of belonging. We call this, customer-based brand equity (CBBE).
3. **Authenticity is the measure of a brand’s equity:** Brand authenticity will be covered in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3 and will frame each chapter in the text, but for now, the extent to which a brand delivers, conforms, and enables connections is the measure of a brand’s equity for users. This is largely because brands in this day and age are consumed primarily for identity purposes. For users, who we are (the authentic self), who we would like to be (the imagined self), and who we have to be (the collective self) drive our brand choices. The more authentic the brand, the stronger the relationship. However, since our goals and the context in which they are enacted can change, brands must move with the times without forgetting their roots.
4. **Ambidexterity:** creating and sustaining authenticity and equity involves balancing two competing forces—consistency and relevance. Since the value of loyalty is more limited

than many marketers assume, brands must constantly make themselves relevant to less loyal and new buyers. Co-creation also demands paying attention to relevance. Ambidexterity is historically associated with people who are adept at using both their right and left hands—however, even with ambidextrous people, one hand is favored. Much the same applies to branding. In this text we cover both consistency (Chapter 6) and relevance (Chapter 8) in detail. Brand managers must address both since brand value is built through remaining seemingly forever the same while always being relevant for the times.

5. Brands are strategic: brands help firms achieve their broad strategic goals and it is the brand that drives the marketing mix, not the other way around. We will first address this in Chapter 5 on brand building before expanding on the point in Chapters 6–8 which deal with brand consistency, brand growth, and brand relevance.

The five themes that drive this text have emerged from various streams of research in brand management, all of which are driven by different theoretical bases (considered next). Although influenced by a cultural approach to co-creation, this book takes the view that much of what has been generated by other disciplines still has much to offer brand managers if used in the right context.

THEORETICAL INFLUENCES ON BRANDING THEORY AND PRACTICE

There are many disciplines and communities of practice that have influenced (and continue to influence) our understanding of brands and the management of them. Below I briefly outline some of the main influences. Many of these ideas will be explored in more detail in subsequent chapters.

Economics

Economics' emphasis on rational choice, utility maximization, and exchange value has long influenced theory and practice in marketing. Brands in this approach are viewed as a way to minimize consumer confusion and search and thus aid decision-making (Heding et al. 2016). Since brands provide consumers with certainty, managers should focus on maintaining a consistent brand image and use the marketing mix (the four Ps of price, promotion, product, and place) to reinforce the brand. In this model, marketers largely communicate *to* consumers, rather than interact *with* them, and no attention is paid to sociocultural influences. Instead, brands should focus on offering clear functional performance advantages, a strategy largely regarded as unsustainable over the long-term today.

More recently, different approaches to economics have had some influence on our understanding of branding. Vargo and Lusch's (2004) seminal article "The Service Dominant Logic of Marketing" drew on the writings of nineteenth-century French economic journalist Frédéric Bastiat and the early Austrian School of Economics (including Carl Menger and Ludwig von Mises) to stress the subjective nature of value and argue instead for **value-in-use** (rather than value-in-exchange). This article emphasized that marketers do not provide goods, they only make offers. And value in this context is not provided by a good but by the services it delivers to users (in this sense, all goods are

services). That is, consumers do not buy a drill but buy the hole it produces. The service-dominant logic (SDL) view has had some influence on our understanding of brand management, often raising theoretical challenges to classical models.

Law

As noted earlier, the AMA definition of a brand reflects a heritage of trademark law. Ross Petty (2011) provides a thorough review of how trademark law in the United States influenced marketers, and was eventually influenced by them (others have noted similar influences elsewhere). In essence, as sellers started to label their products and sell them nationally, they faced the very real problem of counterfeits. Thus, the US government expanded tort laws to provide some protection for sellers as well as for consumers. In particular, the early tort was called “passing or palming off” and was aimed at preventing fraud. Throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, trademark law and legislation developed to provide further protection to sellers.

Since this protection had economic value (called “goodwill”) it was not long before marketers began to realize that brands had economic value and started to lobby for further protections of brands and their associations (including logos, taglines, colors, font). Today this practice continues with Apple unsuccessfully attempting to assert control over the use of “i.”

One of course needs to be careful, as overzealous lawsuits can build resentment in local communities when large global brands try and shut down small traders using their own name. McDonald’s, for example, has a long history of challenging the rights of others to use the word “McDonald” (or equivalents such as MacDonald’s) in relation to the food service. For example, in 1994 the company successfully sued Elizabeth McCaughey, owner of McCoffee (which had operated in San Francisco for 17 years) (see Wikipedia, “McDonald’s Legal Cases”).

Psychology

Ever since practitioners began to explore how consumers viewed brands, they have drawn on psychology to understand consumer segments, brand and user personalities, and brand image. In more recent times, cognitive psychology has become the dominant influence on our understanding of brand management. Kevin Keller’s customer-based brand equity model (and the many variants of this approach that followed) framed the consumer as an information processor and thus stressed the role of brand knowledge in creating brand equity. This approach treats consumers as largely rational agentic (free will) actors who are looking for clearly positioned brands with distinct advantages. Thus, this approach stresses the importance of maintaining brand consistency over time and also coherent messaging across the entire marketing program.

This type of research draws heavily on the quantitative tradition in psychology and focuses on how consumers react to particular brand related message cues, or tactics such as brand extensions or co-branded innovations (usually through the use of experimental scenarios). These models represent the dominant approach to brand management in terms of both academic research and practice, with books such as *Creating Passionbrands* by award-winning columnist and brand consultant Dr Helen Edwards (Edwards and Day 2005) as one example (see Table 1.1). This approach also

underpins the two most influential brand valuation models of Interbrand (*Best Global Brands*) and Millward Brown (*Brandz*).

Not all work in this area has drawn on quantitative methods to generate important insights. Susan Fournier's seminal 1998 *Journal of Consumer Research* article drew on relationship theory to understand consumer–brand relationships. In essence, this research noted that as managers drew on personality types to position their brands (Aaker 1997), then consumers could be expected to form relationships with them. Unlike previous research, the relational approach assumes that the consumer is an active partner in creating brand meaning, and therefore seemingly mundane brands can be characterized by emotionally intense relationships. Critically, what Fournier identifies as consumer life goals and **identity projects** underpin a brand relationship and that therefore shifts in the consumer's world can lead to changes in the brand's status, sometimes leading to declining loyalty through no fault of the brand manager. Work in this area has explored a vast range of relationship-related topics, including anthropomorphism, brand love, brand attachment, and the dark side of brand relationships, and has played a role in practitioner theorizing such as former Saatchi & Saatchi CEO Kevin Roberts's (2004) *Lovemarks* that suggests the future of branding involves creating intimacy and sensuality through an emotional driven brand program.

Anthropology and Sociology

Anthropology and sociology have influenced the practice of branding (often indirectly), beginning with JWT advertising practitioners identifying ways in which to co-opt counterculture (with their metaphor of what is X-rated will soon be G-rated), Clotaire Rapielle's (in)famous use of collective subconscious archetypes (or cultural codes) to influence subconscious decision-making, and Grant McCracken's writings on consumer culture. Research in this tradition holds that consumers are active meaning makers and use material culture (including brands) to make sense of the world and achieve identity-related goals. Challenging the notion that consumers are rational, agentic individuals, this stream of research highlights the sociocultural forces that shape the actions of market actors.

During the 1980s academics began drawing more heavily on these disciplines and their qualitative methods to challenge conventional thinking about consumer decision-making and, before long, brand management. This research formed the basis of **consumer culture theory** (CCT) and gave rise to notions such as brand authenticity, brand community, consumer tribes, doppelgänger brands, brand legitimacy, brand mythologies, subcultures of consumption, and, cultural brand models (which will be covered in Chapter 8). While acknowledging that brands are assets for firms, these researchers emphasize that brands are also tools for consumers to achieve their identity and social identity goals, and therefore place much emphasis on how consumers use brands to achieve these outcomes.

Business Studies

This term is deliberately broad to identify the range of influences on brand-management practice flowing from finance, organization studies, marketing, operations, and strategy. Although late to the study of brands, financial concerns were responsible for the first formalization of a strategic brand-management model, and work between brand and finance researchers has crystallized into the

brand-as-asset model. In this model, researchers seek to examine the value of brands on a firm's balance sheet and in relation to return on investment (ROI) and share price, as well as seeking to understand how particular brand investments drive value. Operations management has also played a role, in particular with their focus on customer journeys and moments of truth (which are critical parts of a brand audit). Intriguingly operations researchers are only just beginning to explore the role certain types of production systems play in brand image.

Marketing academics were strangely latecomers to publishing on brand management. As late as 1988, core textbooks often barely mentioned brands at all (Bastos and Levy 2012). That said, Philip Kotler in particular has played a key role in advancing marketing's appreciation of brand, so much so that in 2002 he partnered with Kevin Keller to rewrite his influential *Marketing Management* text, arguing that the marketing mix must serve the brand (this brand-driven approach is standard practice nowadays) Kotler and Keller (2004). Marketing researchers have also been instrumental in examining strategic marketing issues such as the relationship between branding and innovation, business-to-business (B2B) branding, global issues, how the marketing mix reinforces brand image, and ongoing debates regarding value co-creation and the customer experience.

Researchers in organization studies are relative newcomers to brand research (so much so that they often term it "reputation management" or "impression management"). Nonetheless, beginning in the 1990s, these scholars started to examine the organization-side of branding, identifying the need to align human resource practices and organizational cultures, systems, and processes with brand promises. Their most important insight was to identify that since brands were promises to users, the organization must be in a position to deliver those promises otherwise gaps between image and identity will emerge. In industry, this is often referred to as "brands are built from the inside out" and it is critical in ensuring brand authenticity. Much of the work of these scholars is grouped under the heading corporate branding and will be drawn on extensively in the later chapters of this book.

Media Studies

Since it involves communication, it is not surprising that branding has attracted the attention of media studies scholars. Drawing on an eclectic range of theories (and overlapping with many of the fields identified here), media studies focuses on semiotics and, in particular, signs. One critical area of influence involves the use of cultural brand codes. Codes often shape beliefs and help us find meaning, and are deployed by brand marketers in many ways, including in appeals to status, class, fear, envy, gender roles, and so on (Berger 2010). For example, Rowntree's Yorkie brand was advertised using subtle (humor) and not so subtle (clothing) codes to suggest it was a rugged, masculine, rural working-class brand. Over time the codes signaling masculinity had to change as manufacturing declined in the UK and notions of "male-ness" shifted. One can view these shifts on YouTube by examining the original Rowntree Yorkie advertisements from the 1970s and 1980s and comparing them with the brand's revitalizing "It's not for girls" campaign, and the current "man fuel for man stuff" online advertisements (ask yourself, "How did the brand change its approach to signaling masculinity throughout these campaigns?"). Codes are often used in other ways, especially at a category level where discount airlines and single malt whisky brands draw on cultural signs to reinforce notions of "cheap" and "authentic."

One of the most significant contributions of media studies (along with other fields) has been the recognition that brands are forms of communication and can therefore be “read” in the same way as literature and other art forms. Thus, many early studies of subcultures and consumer tribes (often co-opted by marketers to enhance their brand’s coolness or authenticity) focused on understanding how insiders communicated their status through fashion, and ultimately brands. Although practitioners focused on the connotative potential of brands, for media studies scholars, brands are signifiers and thus always suggestive (Berger 2010). Therefore, consumers will select certain brands (often unknowingly) because they reflect certain notions of taste, class, or status, and therefore say much about the user.

Creative Practice

Our understanding of brand management has been influenced heavily by practice. For example, when Keller developed his CBBE model in the early 1990s he noted that much of what he drew upon was common industry practice across advertising, marketing, and consumer research (the same could be said of Levy’s seminal work in the 1950s). The development of branding during the twentieth century was primarily driven by practitioners seeking to understand more about consumer behavior as a means of increasing brand loyalty. Key agencies such as Ogilvy and Mather and JWT (among others) were influential in projecting a consistent brand image and in shifting from brands as signs to brands as symbols. Likewise, firms such as Procter & Gamble have played a critical role managing brands, through the development of their brand-management system in the 1930s. Furthermore, influential academics have often had one foot in the practical world—David Aaker has his own brand consultancy firm, as does Gerald Zaltman (his ZMET technique will be covered in Chapter 4), Grant McCracken, Douglas Holt, and many others.

Other fields such as design have also had an important influence on brand management. Alina Wheeler’s *Designing Brand Identity* (2003) remains a go-to guide for all aspiring creatives dealing with brands. The Design Management Institute (USA) has sponsored numerous conferences on branding, with a particular focus on bringing the brand promise to life through innovative products, corporate communication systems, and the physical environment such as flagship stores, corporate headquarters, and workplace architecture. More recently much work has been done examining how to create brand-driven experiences online. Public relations practitioners have also played an important role in understanding how to manage public perception, deal with crises, and engage in impression and reputation management. There are undoubtedly many more fields including fashion, arts, and technology that have all had an impact on brand management and practice.

CAN EVERYTHING BE BRANDED?

The practice of branding has broadened significantly over the last two decades, to encompass goods and services, as well as people and places (Swaminathan et al. 2020). Brands are certainly ubiquitous. A common complaint among those disillusioned with capitalism, politics, religion, social movements, or aspects of social life (“Christmas is too commercial”) is that those in power too often put the

brand before everything. This is partly why authenticity has such currency today although, as we'll see, authenticity is no less deliberate as an impression management strategy. In his book *Branded Nation*, James Twitchell (2004) noted that just as institutions such as religion, museums, and schools and universities had discovered branding (although many would argue that organized religions have long been brands), marketers were erecting brand museums and brand cathedrals (themed flagship stores), and building brand cults.

As noted earlier, nations have long practiced branding or proto-branding, and Steven Heller's (2008) *Iron Fists: Branding the 20th Century Totalitarian State* identifies how repressive regimes created closed brand systems to instill fear and loyalty. Today, specialist agencies, such as the London-based Institute for Identity focus on finding a unique identity for nations, regions, and cities such as Belarus, Moscow, Minsk, and Lipetsk, as a means of attracting tourists and investors and selling exports (Subramaniam 2017). Tom Peters's (1997) *Fast Company* article, "The Brand Called You," at the height of the first dot-com era, inspired many executives to develop their own personal brands. While many commentators noted that Barack Obama successfully drew on branding principles in the run-up to his historic US presidential election win in 2008, his successor, Donald Trump was in fact a brand long before entering politics.

Celebrities have always been at the very least proto-brands, although now most are managed as carefully as the strongest product and service brands. For example, chefs such as Michel Roux Jr, Heston Blumenthal, Attila Hildman, and Jamie Oliver (among many others) have all expanded (and lately retracted) their brand franchises to include products, books, television shows, global pop-ups, and cookware. Reality television stars such as Kat von D (covered in the case study at the end of Chapter 2) have extended their recognition into fashion and cosmetic lines, while influencers such as Kylie Jenner are brands in their own right. Long-gone brands such as punk heroes the Ramones make more from licensing than they ever did from music sales. So called person-brands present benefits and challenges. The very unpredictability and personal touch of the person gives the brand authenticity, however when these brands are owned by shareholders, or become too closely aligned with a firm (such as Elon Musk and Tesla), inconsistency can also have a downside, as the case on Kat von D in Chapter 2 demonstrates. Furthermore, the very success of the person-brand can lead to feelings of omnipotence by the person, which is often experienced externally as hubris. Person-brands can also be embedded in a wider architecture of family-brands. Donald Trump's election to the presidency of the USA was fatal for his daughter Ivanka's fashion brand (Fournier and Eckhardt 2019).

Brands may have come of age in product and services marketing, and take on new meaning in the intangible world of web-based businesses, but not-for-profits have embraced branding with gusto. Among the most well-known are Greenpeace, Sea Shepard, the Red Crescent and Red Cross, the World Wildlife Foundation (WWF), Habitat for Humanity, and the Salvation Army. Charities often embrace branding as a means of appearing professional, which enables them to compete more effectively for influence and corporate donations, although such actions can trigger a backlash from activists who feel that criticism of certain activities is muted for fear of angering large donors (the 2014 documentary *Conspiracy* is one such example whereby organizations such as Greenpeace and the Sierra Club were alleged to have refrained from highlighting the impact of animal agriculture on the environment because of donor influence).

So what isn't branded? Commodities by definition are items with no strong point of difference and therefore branding is of little use. This may affect agricultural products and often means those transforming the commodity into a brand earn higher returns (Starbucks, for example, earns more margin than the growers of their coffee (Fottrell 2012)). Agricultural cooperatives face real difficulties in developing sustainable brands since farmers are disorganized, reluctant to invest in marketing programs, struggle with quality consistency, and still focus on increasing prices which undermines certainty for buyers (Beverland 2007). That said, much progress is being made in branding produce, developing ingredient brands (New Zealand's Merino NZ brand of cloth is one example), grower-friendly branding programs (such as Nordic Approach in coffee), and so on, and leveraging grower stories to enhance perceptions of brand authenticity. Finally, it is worth remembering that many commodities are in fact extremely valuable and robust brands—just think of Exxon and Marlboro.

So should everything be branded? The ethical issues in relation to this question will be covered in Chapter 11. However, it's worth bearing in mind some of the challenges faced by places, institutions, and people when branding. First, when branding a product or service, one can apply one identity across an entire organization. To do so, one conducts an audit, and removes all those unwanted elements that undermine brand image consistency. This is thankfully not possible in nation states, regions, cities, or neighborhoods. There are other difficulties too. Sometimes place branding can be too successful. Prior to the emergence of COVID-19, cities such as Amsterdam (explored in detail in Chapter 10), Copenhagen, and Venice were struggling to contain a resident-driven backlash against mass tourism, claiming that daily life has become unbearable thanks to large cruise ships, pedestrian gridlock, litter, environmental degradation, and thanks to brands such as Airbnb, unaffordable places to live in. In 2019, residents living in the official Hogmanay celebrations zone in Edinburgh were outraged when told they needed wrist bands and faced limits on the number of party goers they could host in their own homes (as they could freely view the fireworks and live music others had paid for). Detroit's recent revival through place branding has done little for the predominantly poor, African American, residents and seems to have perpetuated the racial divide that has long characterized Motor City. Thus, while places can draw on some practices of branding, place marketers should bear in mind that there are limits.

Similarly, in the case of institutions with a strong professional ethos such as law firms, hospitals, and universities, marketers must tread carefully when implementing a brand program since lawyers, doctors, and professors have multiple logics on which they operate. Although one might be tempted to remove these in favor of a branded one, not only will this be illegal in some cases, it would also be unwanted, and ultimately undermine business effectiveness (Naidoo et al. 2011). Although personal branding sounds alluring, the rise of authentic anti-establishment politicians is just one example of a backlash against branded centrist politics (even though anti-establishment remains a powerful brand identity). Likewise, staying on brand ultimately can make individuals less interesting and less effective, particularly when circumstances change.

CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter has explored the historical development of modern-day brand management, identified a range of approaches for defining brands and branding, explored the benefits of brands to different

users, identified why branding is essential to firm success, provided an up-to-date definition of brand that reflects the current state of academic research and marketing practice, identified the various contributions different disciplines have made to our understanding of branding and co-creation, and explored a range of contexts in which branding has been applied.

REVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Have a look around you. How many brands can you identify? Reflect on the previous day and write down all the brands you used. (Perhaps it might be easier to try to recall incidences where brands played no part in your day such as during a retreat.)
2. Pick a brand that says something about who you are, and one that says something about who you would like to be. Why did you choose these brands? How and where do you use these brands?
3. Pick five definitions of branding in Table 1.1 not discussed in the text and compare and contrast each. What, if anything, do you like about each, and why? Is there anything missing from each definition that you think is important?
4. Reflect on one favored and one hated brand. Which identity goals help account for each brand relationship?
5. In relation to each brand relationship above, identify how each of the four meaning makers in Figure 1.1 has influenced your perception of each brand.

CASE EXAMPLE: THE CANTERBURY CRUSADERS

The Canterbury Crusaders are New Zealand's most successful rugby team, and as such, regarded as one of the world's strongest clubs. Formed in 1996 the Crusaders have so far won ten Super Rugby titles (including 2019), were named team of the decade in 2005 (by an admittedly local panel of New Zealand rugby experts), and have built up a fearsome reputation for athleticism and the sort of tough play that New Zealand teams have long been known for. As a result of their local dominance, many of the Crusaders' best players have also represented New Zealand in the national side, the All Blacks (one of the most formidable brands in team sports).

The team is based in Christchurch, the largest city in New Zealand's South Island. While rugby is often seen as a religion in New Zealand, devotion in Christchurch is particularly fervent, with Crusader players being treated with godlike reverence, wins celebrated, and losses triggering a city-wide sense of grief. For many, the Crusaders are more than just a team, they are an expression of the ethos of the wider Canterbury region, and reflect the masculine, man-alone identity so long associated with "true" New Zealand.

Christchurch is often called the most English of New Zealand's cities (the population is almost 90 percent Pākeha, or New Zealanders of Anglo European descent), and this identity lay behind the choice

(Continued)

of the name “Crusader” (as opposed to “Plainsmen,” which references the vast Canterbury plains that surround Christchurch). The name also captured the religious nature of rugby in the region. The team’s colors are black and red, and the logo was unsurprisingly, a stylized English Knight Templar with his sword drawn and a distinctly Christian cross on his shield—actual Knights in similar uniform even ride around the stadium on horseback before games (see Figure 1.3). The city suffered a devastating earthquake in 2011, forcing the Crusaders to seek alternate venues to their 36,000–capacity home ground, AMI Stadium. In 2019, it was the brand name and logo that were to become subject of a heated debate, following a tragedy within the Garden City.



FIGURE 1.3 Knights at games

Source: Image courtesy of Maree Reveley (aka Somerslea) via wikicommons, shared under the CC BY-SA 2.5 license

On March 15, 2019, an Australian gunman (who shall remain unnamed, in line with the desire of New Zealanders to deny him notoriety) entered two mosques during Friday prayers and executed 51 Muslims, wounding a further 40. The murders were livestreamed via social media, before Facebook and YouTube quickly removed the content when it was deemed “objectionable” under New Zealand law and therefore illegal to download. This was New Zealand’s largest terrorist act and mass shooting, and left the nation deeply shocked, triggering a review of the nation’s gun ownership laws and resulting in a ban on semi-automatic weapons.

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern made it clear that the shooting was an attack on all New Zealanders and adopted the hijab as a sign of solidarity, with many women nation-wide following suit. Flags were flown at half-mast around the country, while fearsome street gangs Black Power and the Mongrel Mob conducted a Māori Haka dance of respect outside the mosques. There was an outpouring of public grief; fundraisers for the victims were held, memorial concerts staged, and thousands of bouquets were laid at sites across the country.

The massacre caused much soul searching within New Zealand, with several right-leaning newspaper columnists reacting with embarrassment at articles they had once written with a distinctly anti-Muslim slant. Despite its liberalism, casual racism remains common within New Zealand and especially within Christchurch, which has a history of anti-immigrant sentiment, home to the white supremacist National Front and known as NZ's most racist city (Taonui 2019). Reports noted many examples of people breaking norms of reticence in public and made it clear such attitudes were no longer acceptable. Others noted that Christchurch had for too long tolerated an underground of white supremacist gangs, and that the NZ Police had failed to keep an eye on homegrown terrorism.

Unfortunately for the brand, the gunman had written "Crusader" on his magazines and used the term a number of times in his manifesto (which was published online). In this atmosphere, attention was turned to the Crusaders. Was their name and identity appropriate any longer? (The Crusades involved holy wars or invasions of Muslim lands by Christian Knights between 1096 and 1271.) Calls quickly went out for a change of logo and name. Many were not enthusiastic, with conservative media commentators lambasting it as "political correctness gone mad" and many fans repeating the common "sport and politics shouldn't mix" refrain. However, with the Al Noor mosque not far from Crusader headquarters, the marketers behind the champion team knew they could not dismiss such concerns so easily. Head coach Scott Robertson promised to consult the local Muslim community, stating:

"If you make a call now, with the way everyone's feeling, is that the right thing? We don't think so," he said. "We will do the right thing at the right time. Do you understand and respect that?" (Guardian Sport 2019)

The club reiterated that the name was "a reflection of the crusading spirit of this community," stating:

"What we stand for is the opposite of what happened in Christchurch on Friday; our crusade is one for peace, unity, inclusiveness and community spirit." (Guardian Sport 2019)

With feelings running high, the Crusaders brand team commissioned a series of studies as part of a wider review of the brand. The use of the Knights on horseback at games was stopped in April 2019, as they were deemed no longer appropriate. Any changes to the name would not be able to occur until the 2021 season due to contractual commitments, and a planned streamlining of the Super Rugby competition. CEO Colin Mansbridge stated:

"We will go into the brand review with open minds, but no matter what the outcome of that exercise is, one thing we will never seek to change or erase is our history." (BBC 2019)

However, for the 2020 season, the brand's logo had changed. The Knight was removed and replaced with a new Māori inspired logo in red and black that was stylized to the shape of a "C," to reflect the entire Canterbury region (the new logo met a decidedly mixed response), with the brand team working with local Māori tribe Ngāi Tahu to avoid the all too common charge of cultural appropriation. The review concluded that no change to the Crusaders name would be made, however. An official club statement outlined the reasons:

"Ultimately, it was decided that no name better represented the club's commitment to living its values – crusading for social improvement and inclusiveness, and crusading with heart for our community and for each other – than Crusaders did." (Telegraph 2019)

(Continued)

Behind the scenes, the Crusaders' brand team admitted the name had *always* been problematic, but until the tragic events of March 15, there had been little pressure to change. Is this the case now?

Case written by Michael Beverland and Ekant Veer (University of Canterbury)

Case Questions

1. Using Figure 1.1, analyze how each of the four authors of brand meaning has caused perceptions of the Crusaders' brand to shift over time. Assess the positives and negatives of the brand team's response.
2. How should the brand team respond to calls for a name change? Although public sentiment is overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the name, this is an overwhelmingly Anglo European demographic with little knowledge of the Crusades. Is aligning with public sentiment the right decision for the brand in the long-term?
3. The brand team has made some changes to the Crusaders' assets, dropping the imagery of the Knights Templar and the live Knights on horseback at games. Do these changes go far enough in shifting the brand towards its historic desired identity?
4. Would a less successful club in the same circumstances have attracted as much criticism for similar brand assets?

KEY TERMS

Brand

Brandr

Brand as asset

Brand authors

Brand equity

Brand meaning

Co-authored

Co-creation

Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE)

Identity projects

Signifiers of meaning

Symbols

GO ONLINE

Visit <https://study.sagepub.com/beverland2e> to access:

- exclusive videos from a real-life creative agency
- free journal articles
- links to interesting web articles and videos related to this chapter.

FURTHER READING

Aaker, David (2014), *Aaker on Branding: 20 Principles that Drive Success*, Morgan James Publishing, Virginia.

Edwards, Helen (2018), “Is There Any Such Thing as Brand Love?” in Wiemer Snijders (ed.), *Eat Your Greens*, Matador, Leicestershire, pp. 190–201.

Fournier, Susan and Giana M. Eckhardt (2019), “Putting the Person back into Person-brands: Understanding and Managing the Two-Bodied Brand,” *Journal of Marketing Research*, 56(4), 602–619.

Holt, Douglas B. (2003), “Brands and Branding,” *Harvard Business School Teaching Note* 9-503-045.

Swaminathan, Vanitha, Alina Sorescu, Jan-Benedict E.M. Steenkamp, Thomas Clayton Gibson O’Guinn, and Bernd Schmitt (2020), “Branding in a Hyperconnected World: Refocusing Theories and Rethinking Boundaries,” *Journal of Marketing*, 84(2), 24–46.