



DANIEL BÔ

Building Brand Culture

Unlock your Brand's Cultural Potential

In collaboration with Matthieu Guével

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

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Building Brand Culture: **Unlock your Brand's Cultural Potential**

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Post-face interview, with Raphael Lellouche

« Towards Brand Theory »

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

« Culture is the missing link in strategic brand analysis »

Jean-Noël Kapferer

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

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

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

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This research has enabled us to gradually construct our methods and practices to truly analyze brand culture.

PREFACE

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Jean-Marie Dru, Chairman of TBWA\Worldwide.

INTRODUCTION: Cultural Potential

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

Table 1: From brand content to brand culture

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

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

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

Culture: interactivity, collective identity and the daily experience

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Table 2: Culture and Brands

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

Consumers looking for meaning and uniqueness

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

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

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

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

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

Table 3: Culture as value creator

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

Content is a means, culture is the end

Consumers need to identify the symbols, ideologies, practices, and the social and psychological recommendations of the brands they frequent. Through content, brands can take on the advantages usually reserved for media, such as influence, audience, leading a community, long-term relationships and partnerships with the many stakeholders. Creating and disseminating content provides brands¹ the opportunity to illustrate their rich culture and to reveal their history, know-how, craftsmanship and story. It is a privileged way to build culture, express a world view and take on the role of cultural agent.

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

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

Table 4: From commercial brand to cultural brand

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

Book Outline

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

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

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

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

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

We hope you enjoy the book!

PART 1

Revealing Brands' Cultural Foundation

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

CHAPTER 1

BRANDS ARE CULTURAL CONCENTRATES

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

CASE STUDY

Oasis and the land of plenty

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

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

Leveraging culture

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

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

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

CASE STUDY

Nike's ancient Greek athlete mythology

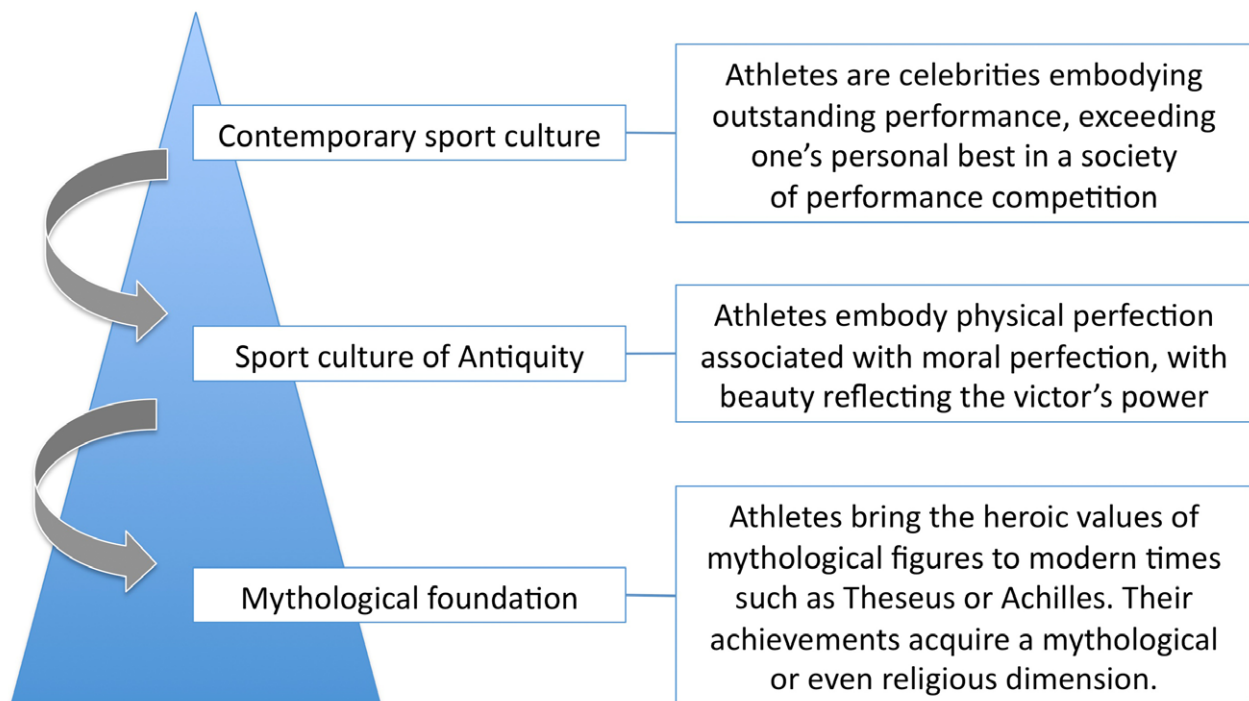
« *Wear it with pride* », « *Be unstoppable* » « *If you have a body, you are an athlete* », « *Victory is yours* »... These phrases in bold letters address visitors in the stores on the Champs-Élysées in Paris and Niketown in London. These calls to heroics and to exceed one's personal best turn the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

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

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

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

Figure 1.1: Nike's cultural layers



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

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

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

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

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

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

No culture, no brand

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

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

This refusal of frills corresponds to deliberate neutrality, making products real, bulk and tangible. Customers don't buy Uncle Ben's rice, but rice by the kilo. The brand's involvement is minimal, its relationship with customers, only neutral professionalism, with no form

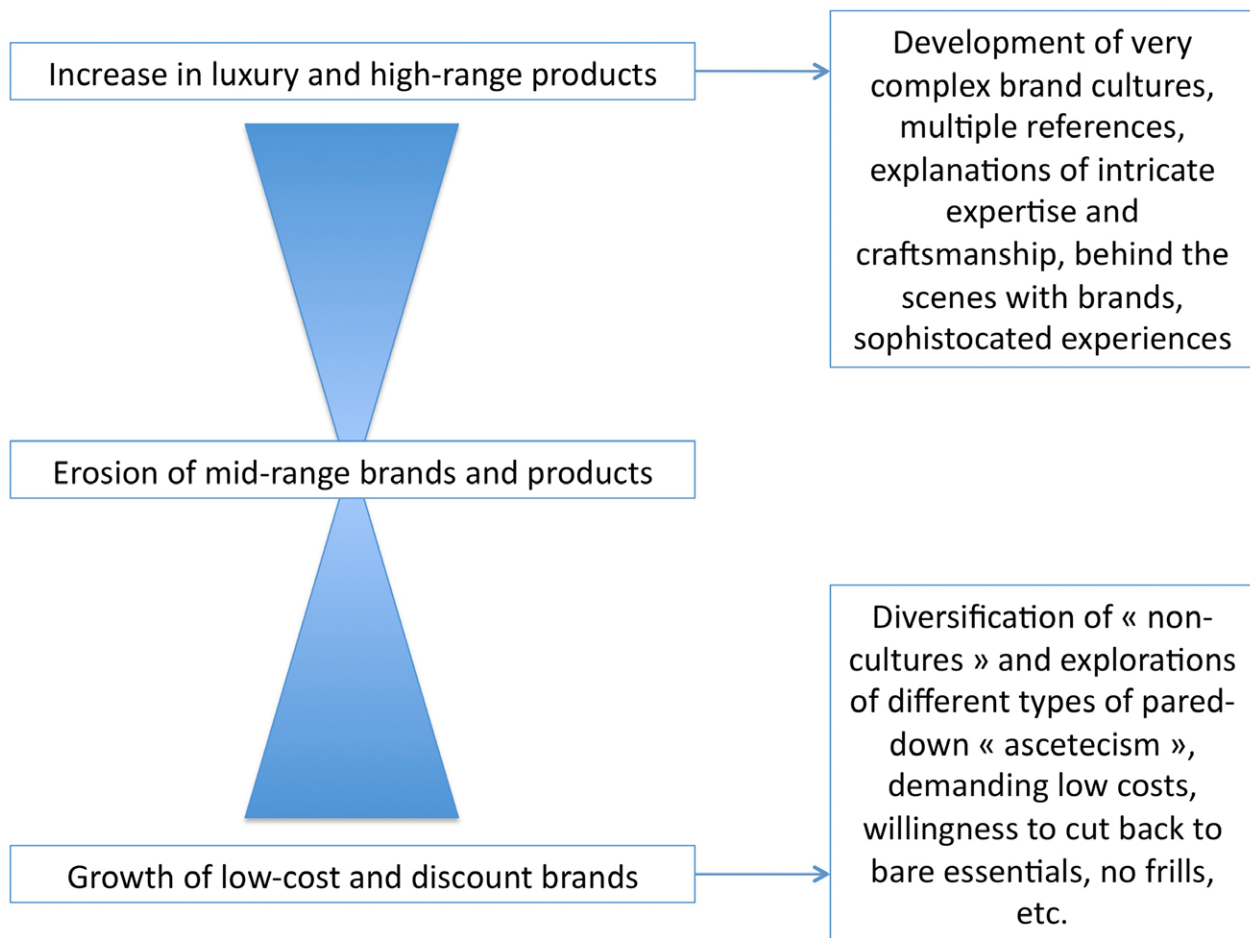
of seduction or « marketing ». This transparency is a posture having meaning and being justified by indicating the discount price: standardization and the lack of imaginary value correspond to low prices and minimal functions. On a second level, as semiologist Raphaël Lellouche explains in his studies on luxury and art, this strategy focuses on the depiction of the scarcity of money, which is a cultural articulation of a specific context: shortages, crisis, drop in purchasing power, corollary to the development of the smart consumer mythology. This is the depiction of a cultural representation of money, completely different from the luxury world (which represents consumers as being able to spend) that nevertheless applies codes and traditions.

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

The structuring of many markets in « X » formation, with an offer rich in entry-level and upmarket products, and the disappearance of mid-range products, encourages the polarization of brand culture, with cultures that are deliberately minimal², built on deliberate asceticism, and dense cultures which target projection in a fertile imaginary realm.

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

Figure 1.2: Market polarization



Luxury: the culture of distinction

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

From product producer to cultural agent

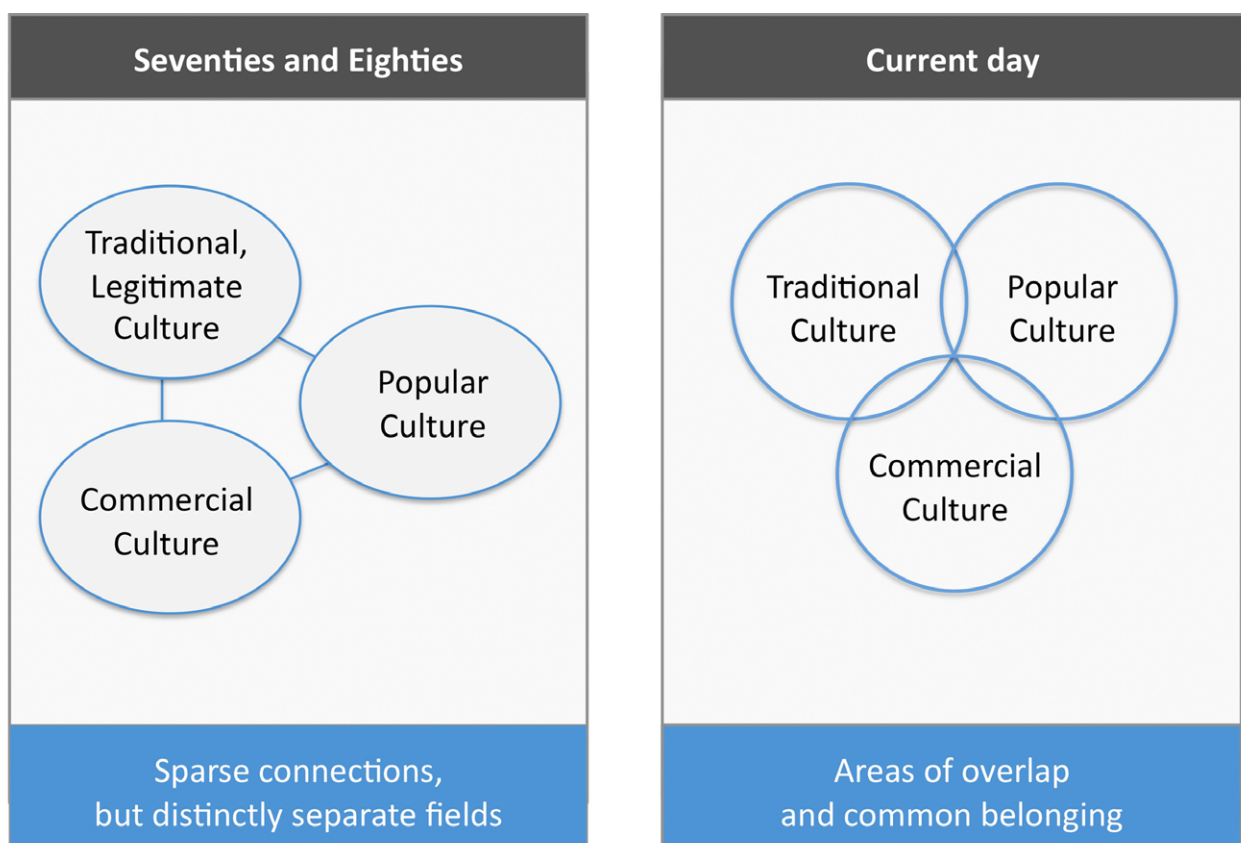
Generally speaking, all brands are cultural agents since their products and/or services fall within the general scope of existence. A brand becomes a true cultural agent when it rethinks its object in a broader frame of representations as living and changing.

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

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

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

Figure 1.3: « Educated » culture and popular cultures



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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Brands have innate culture

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

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

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

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

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

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

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

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

Patrick Mathieu « Identifying brands' uniqueness ».

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

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

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

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

- *Technical evolution* (without Internet, it would have been impossible to launch Google or Facebook).
- *Moral/ethical evolution*: exposing the elements of one's personal life in the public space becomes an issue of social existence and openness to the world, making it possible to create social services and tools for sharing one's private life.

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

Technical culture, ethical culture and philosophical culture

Table 1.1: Degrees of brand culture

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

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

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER 2

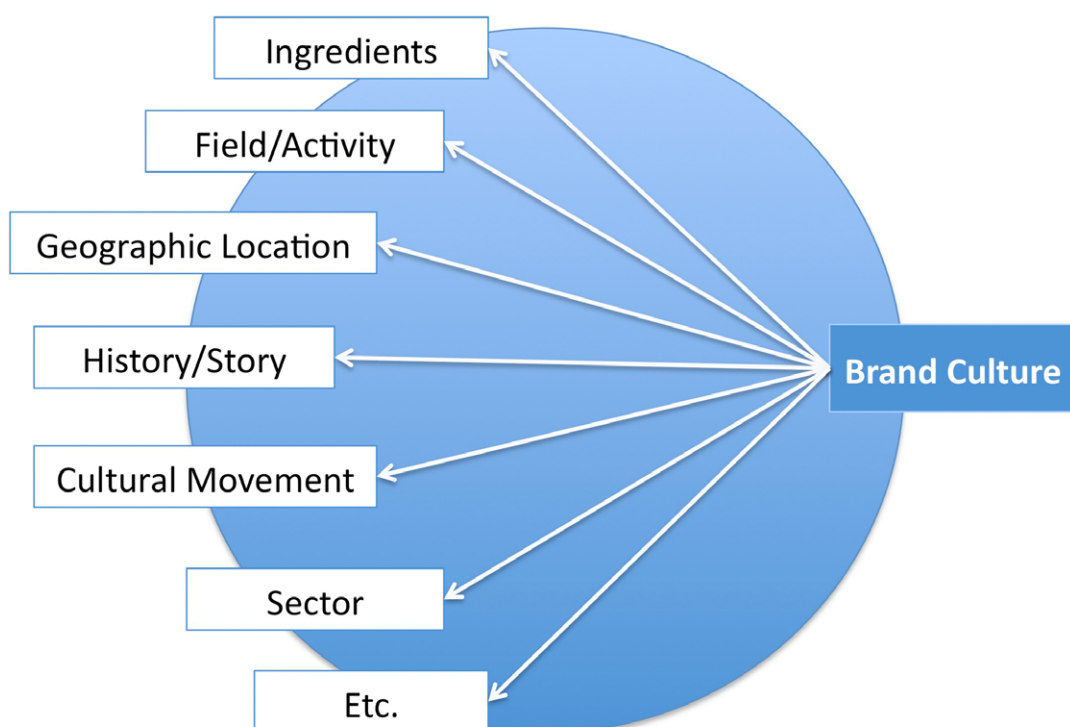
BRANDS' CULTURAL SOURCES

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

Brands and their Cultural Foundations

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

Figure 2.1: Brands Cultural Foundations



The following pages feature illustrations detailing the diversity of cultural foundations.

Ingredients

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

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

CASE STUDY

Chocolate sculptures by Patrick Roger

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

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

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

The field of activity or profession

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

CASE STUDY

Repetto and dance

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

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

off, imitating stars' dressing rooms and practice bars.

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

Geography: topography and national cultures

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

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

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

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

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

History

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

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

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

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

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

Nature

Nature is the cultural grounds used by many cosmetic brands.

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

Cultural movements

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

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

EXPERT VIEWPOINT

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Science

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

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

CHAPTER 3

BRAND CULTURE CHANNELS OF EXPRESSION

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

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

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

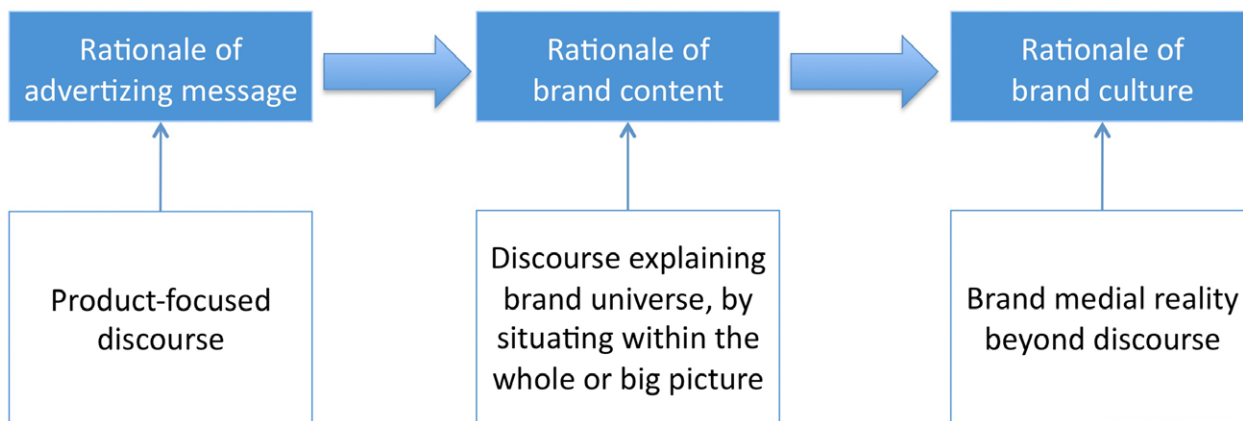
Beyond discourse towards physiological involvement

Over the past decades, brand identity analysis in France has been largely focused on brand discourse including words and documents issued by the brand, such as advertising. However, brands do not only issue discourse. Their cultures are expressed and forged through other means such as signs, icons, graphical elements, techniques, practices, acts, achievements, performance, etc. As demonstrated by several like-minded philosophers including Jacques Derrida and Michel Foucault, electronic media has further accelerated this movement to enable brands to go beyond « logo-centrism » and to communicate beyond just words. Culture is conveyed via the body and machines (telegraphs, telephones, radios, etc.) connected to our physiological and cognitive parts. There is a new current of cultural analysis developing (American universities' *Cultural Studies*, and German universities' *Medienphilosophie* according to Friedrich Kittler³) which consists in moving away from the « discursive » component of culture to understand its strength and scope.

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

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

Figure 3.1: Gradual expansion of brands' focus



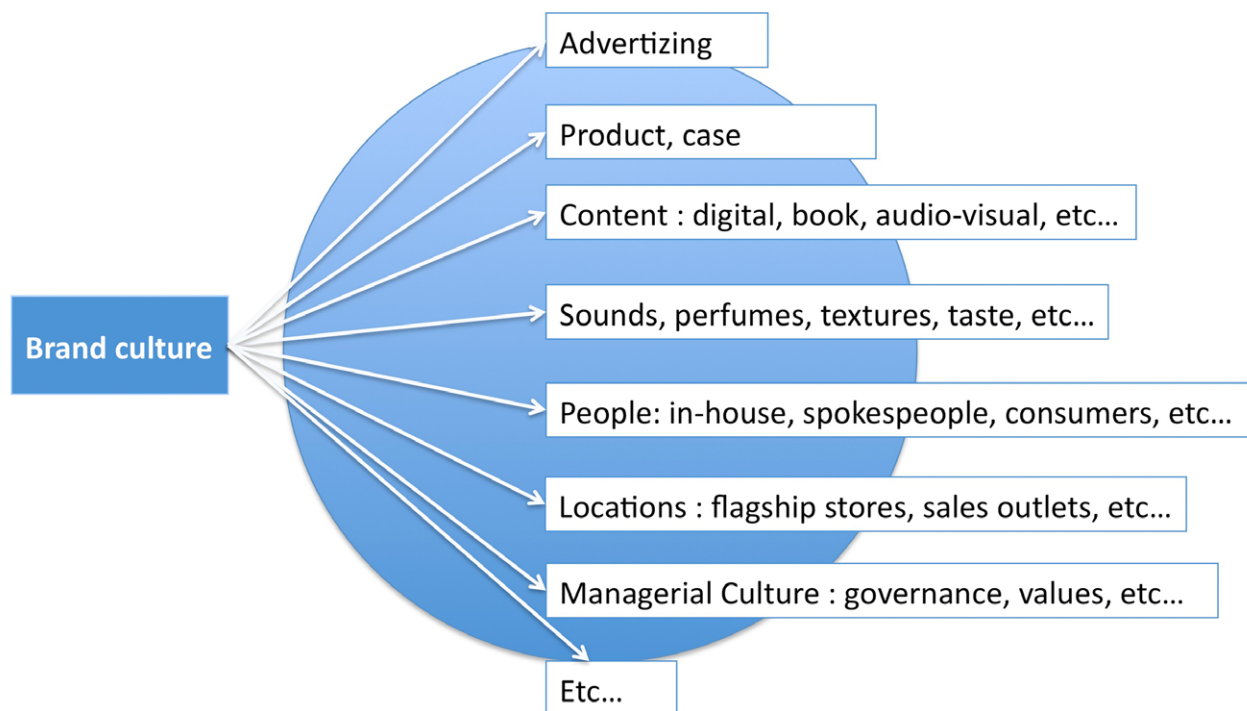
EXPERT VIEWPOINT

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

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

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

Figure 3.2: Brand culture's channels of expression



Advertising: Culture in 30 seconds

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

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

Content: view on brand culture

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

Table 3.1: Different types of content

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

Digital: brand culture's unlimited, interactive space

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

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

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

Audio-visual: bringing a cultural universe to life

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

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

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

Books: explaining culture

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

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

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

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

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

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

Products: culture's multi-sensorial incarnation

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

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

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

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

Building Brand Culture:

Unlock your Brand's Cultural Potential

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

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

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

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

- Identify cultural sources and modes of expression;
- Leverage powerful brands' cultural strengths;
- Reinforce cultural resonance to bolster customer uptake;
- Manage brands and cultural diversity in today's global economy.

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

Translation by: Tamara McGinnis