

BRANDS AND MYTHOLOGY: SYMBOLIC SIGNIFICANCE AND DIFFERENTIATION

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ABSTRACT

The evolving landscape of consumerism, marked by an expansive array of products and services, has heightened the necessity for brands to establish distinctive identities in an increasingly competitive marketplace. In response, brands employ multifaceted strategies to stand out, seeking resonance with consumers' emotions and sensibilities. Among these strategies, the incorporation of mythological elements emerges as a potent avenue for differentiation and consumer engagement. This study aims to elucidate the intricate symbiosis between brands and mythology, unveiling how brands strategically harness mythological motifs to forge enduring connections with consumers. Through an exploration of this relationship, the study not only examines the nuanced dynamics at play but also presents illuminative examples of brands adeptly integrating mythological narratives and symbols within their identities, showcasing their effective utilization in contemporary brand differentiation strategies.

Keywords: *Myth, Mythology, Brand, Marketing.*

1. INTRODUCTION

In the contemporary landscape of the 21st century, there exists a discernible shift in brand strategies aimed at shaping consumer behavior. The establishment of an emotional connection between consumers and brands has emerged as a pivotal facet. In the realm of purchasing decisions, consumers now factor not only the utilitarian aspects of products or services but also their emotive resonance. Within the sphere of marketing endeavors, the brand has assumed primacy over the product or service, wielding significant influence over consumer perceptions (Yatağan, 2015).

Numerous brands derive inspiration from diverse sources in crafting their nomenclature, logos, advertising campaigns, and overall strategies. Mythology, a complex framework encompassing historical realities, legends, narratives, collective opinions, and societal beliefs embraced by a populace, serves as one such source (Yücel & Yozgat, 2018). Global brands frequently draw from mythological reservoirs, prominently featuring elements from Greek and Roman

mythologies (Demarcsek et al., 2018). Within the crucible of a fiercely competitive market milieu, the concept of branding assumes pivotal significance, serving as a linchpin for both establishing market positioning and cultivating distinctive brand personas (Karpal Aktuğlu, 2008).

Western culture, particularly anchored in the rich tapestry of Greek mythology, often employs these narratives to elucidate human identity and the genesis of our emotions and thoughts. Similarly, within the domain of brands, mythology offers a lens through which consumer motivations and the aspects of products or services with which consumers can forge connections are delineated (Bradford, 2021). Against this backdrop, this study presents a conceptual exploration delving into the deployment of mythological elements by brands. It aims to scrutinize the interplay between brands and mythology, while providing illustrative instances of brands leveraging mythological components within their constructs.

2. MYTH, MYTHOLOGY AND BRAND

Myth embodies folkloric narratives with allegorical dimensions, transmitted in traditional modes or evolving through societal imaginative influences (Encyclopedia Britannica, 2023). Conversely, mythology encompasses the collective repository of myths and legends, portraying ancient gods and reflecting the sentiments, cognitions, and aspirations of a given society (Cambridge Dictionary, 2023). Emergent from the fusion of "mythos," denoting 'story' in Greek, and "logos," connoting 'reason' and 'comprehension,' mythology constitutes the scholarly investigation and explication of myths. These narratives pervade global cultures, explicating human origins, natural phenomena, societal evolution, and historical trajectories (Mark, 2018).

A brand, as defined by the American Marketing Association [AMA] (2023), constitutes a distinct set of characteristics—a name, term, design, or symbol—that a seller employs to demarcate its offerings from those of competitors. Symbols, serving as nuanced and multifaceted representations of objects or concepts, hold a profound historical and sociocultural significance. They encapsulate complex layers of meaning, often intertwining with the fabric of identity formation for both individuals and societies. Across epochs, symbols have functioned as potent conduits for expressing and defining distinctive identities, drawing upon the tangible and intangible elements prevalent within the socio-cultural milieu (Gümüş, 2022). The selection and deployment of symbols in consumer behavior transcend mere functional or utilitarian considerations. Beyond the pragmatic attributes of products or services, consumers are inclined to imbue their choices with symbolic significance, seeking resonance with their personal identities, aspirations, and affiliations. This convergence between consumer choices and symbolic interpretations plays a pivotal role in brand construction.

In the realm of branding strategies, the strategic deployment of symbols emerges as a

fundamental aspect. Brands meticulously incorporate symbols within their visual identities, such as logos, packaging, and advertising materials, recognizing the potency of these symbols in shaping consumer perceptions and affinities (Torelli & Cheng, 2011). By leveraging symbols effectively, brands endeavor to craft and propagate distinct brand meanings, fostering a deliberate and recognizable image within the consumer consciousness. Furthermore, the utilization of symbols extends beyond mere visual representations; it permeates the very essence of brand experiences, encompassing store designs, service encounters, and narrative portrayals. Brands strategically integrate symbols, including mythological elements and narratives, harnessing their evocative power to infuse brand messages with deeper layers of meaning and resonance within the consumer psyche. This deliberate intertwining of symbols and narratives from mythology forms an integral part of brand storytelling, enabling brands to forge emotional connections and evoke aspirational sentiments among their target audience.

3. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MYTHOLOGY AND BRAND

Throughout history, humankind has sought to grapple with and elucidate phenomena beyond comprehension or laden with fear by ascribing them to concealed forces. To confront these enigmas, societies across epochs have orchestrated an array of rites, rituals, and ceremonies, bequeathing them as legacies to successive generations (Yalın, 2011). The enduring presence of age-old myths, steadfast and unchanged through centuries, serves as a repository guiding individuals in comprehending, scrutinizing, and navigating various stages of life (Nezarali, 2000). In an era characterized by rapid upheavals, emerging uncertainties, and escalating apprehensions, the allure and inclination toward mythological elements burgeon as people seek refuge in realms detached from the palpable (Altuntuğ, 2013).

Consumption, notably the act of acquiring goods or services, emerges as a salve to

assuage anxieties. The belief in the animate essence of every object resonates deeply; individuals with perturbed or fragmented identities often seek to approximate their ideal personas by procuring items associated with fearlessness or other desirable attributes (Duhm, 2002). Mythological elements encapsulate these fears or disparate characteristics, amplifying their significance in marketing strategies employed by brands.

The paradigm of needs has undergone a paradigm shift, elevating the symbolic import of consumables. Functional attributes, once paramount, have dwindled in significance. Instead, consumer expectations orbit around concepts of reputation, exclusivity, and virtues like authenticity and legendary status (Baudrillard, 2010). Recognizing the pivotal role of products or services that occupy a meaningful space in the consumer psyche, brands have honed in on the resonance of mythological elements. These elements, captivating in their appeal, present a potent avenue for brands to engage and resonate with consumers effectively (Demarcsek et al., 2018).

Moreover, mythological elements wield a considerable influence on the evolution and fabric of social and cultural existence. Functioning as reflective symbols, they not only mirror but also contribute to societal consciousness (Kozak & Çiçek, 2022). Within the realm of consumption culture, industries such as advertising and mass media harness mythical archetypes and narratives to craft compelling stories, characters, and promotional endeavors. The creation of brand myths, as emphasized by Thompson (2004), stands pivotal in establishing a competitive edge and fostering a positive brand image.

The nexus between mythology and brands is underscored by perceptual parallels. While brand names and logos encompass legally protected products or services, their visual elements mirror the archaic characters and narratives within mythological realms (Gümüş, 2022). Storytelling, an ancient tool of communication, finds widespread utility in capturing interest, persuading, and entertaining audiences within the marketing

domain (Aydınlioğlu & Akyıl, 2021). Brand personality, central to forging a bond between consumers and the brand, often utilizes myths and mythological elements as a conduit, creating compelling brand narratives.

Furthermore, the impact of mythological elements permeates modern production and consumption habits. Mythology's sway extends to the symbolism, nomenclature, and logos of certain brands, imbuing them with qualities such as wisdom and aesthetic prowess (Kızıldağ, 2019). Leveraging interest in mythology, brands integrate symbols into their offerings, positioning mythological elements strategically in advertising campaigns to embed them in consumer consciousness (Tan, 2014). The digital landscape witnesses a surge in the utilization of myths to harness historical, psychological, and sociological effects, thereby enhancing the enduring impact through storytelling—a phenomenon prominently observed in content marketing (Toptancı, 2019).

Myths, an integral part of the cultural communication fabric, impart meaning and definition to objects through culture. Cultural branding emerges as a linchpin for brand longevity. Mythological elements serve as pivotal conduits, allowing brands to resonate with their target audiences, conveying desired messages and crafting compelling brand images (Manlow, 2011). Numerous brands aptly demonstrate the strategic integration of mythological elements within their frameworks as exemplars of this phenomenon.

4. BRANDS USING MYTHOLOGICAL ELEMENTS

Brands intricately weave various elements and symbols into their logos, names, strategies, and narratives, drawing upon diverse sources, including mythology. Several notable brands integrate mythological motifs into their identities, evoking historical, cultural, or symbolic associations (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Brand Logos

One such instance is the renowned luxury consumer brand "Versace," where the iconic logo features the mythological figure of "Medusa." Founded in 1978 by Gianni and Donatella Versace, the brand adopted the image of "Medusa" owing to the siblings' childhood amidst ancient ruins, encapsulating a sense of heritage and classical allure (URL-1).

Similarly, the soap brand "Dove" derives its name from Aphrodite, the Greek goddess symbolizing beauty and love. The name "Dove," representative of Aphrodite's emblem, signifies a pursuit of youthful and smoother skin, intertwining with the goddess's attributes (URL-2).

The globally recognized sportswear brand "Nike" draws inspiration from Greek mythology's winged goddess of victory, reflected in the emblematic "Swoosh." This symbol, endowed with the narrative of conferring great power upon warriors in Greek mythology, aligns with "Nike's" message of triumph and personal progress through sporting endeavors (URL-3).

Moreover, the "Vestel" brand strategically employs Greek mythological elements in its advertisements, incorporating thunder and lightning, symbolic of "Zeus," to emphasize notions of power and sovereignty. Semiotic analysis of these adverts reveals a rich tapestry of Greek mythological motifs (Özkantar, 2019).

Another prominent example is the global coffee chain "Starbucks," whose logo prominently features the mythological "Siren," a maritime symbol harking back to the historical association between sea voyages and coffee trade (Başbuğ, 2023).

Furthermore, "Maserati," an esteemed automotive brand specializing in racing and sports cars, draws from Roman and Greek mythology, portraying the logo as the "Tridente," symbolizing the trident of the Roman god Neptune and its Greek counterpart, "Poseidon" (URL-1). These instances epitomize brands integrating mythological elements into their identities, underlining the burgeoning significance of mythology in consumer attraction and brand identity construction.

5. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the symbiotic relationship between mythology and the brand concept emerges as a compelling avenue for brand development. This study illuminates the pivotal role of mythological elements in fostering profound and enduring connections between consumers and brands. The strategic integration of mythological narratives, symbols, and archetypes serves as a catalyst in augmenting brand communication, facilitating emotional resonance, and engendering a sense of identification among consumers.

The contemporary landscape of consumption, characterized by an emphasis on symbolic and emotional attributes, underscores the escalating influence wielded by brand-embedded symbols. This shift not only signifies the evolving nature of consumer preferences but also highlights the indispensable role of mythological elements in sculpting brand identities that transcend mere functional utility.

Echoing Campbell's timeless assertion regarding the guiding function of myths in human lives, the parallels drawn between mythological narratives and brand narratives underscore the potential for brands to steer consumers towards fulfillment, satisfaction, and a deeper sense of connection (Tait, 2012). Brands cognizant of this profound impact stand better poised for success in the ever-evolving market landscape.

Moreover, within the digital realm, the increasing prevalence of streaming services

and the burgeoning popularity of mythological-themed entertainment open new vistas for brands. Leveraging these narratives in brand storytelling within the digital marketing sphere presents an unparalleled opportunity to captivate and engage consumers on a deeper level, tapping into their fascination with mythological stories and heroes.

While this study offers a conceptual foundation delineating the intertwining realms of mythology and brand development, further exploration through qualitative and quantitative research avenues holds promise for deeper insights. Detailed investigations into consumer perceptions, emotional responses, and behavioral patterns in response to mythologically infused brand narratives would enrich our understanding of the intricate dynamics at play.

Ultimately, as the realm of branding continues to evolve, the strategic integration of mythological elements stands as an enduring and potent tool for brands, capable of forging lasting emotional connections and resonating with consumers on a profound level in an ever-changing marketplace.

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