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Storytelling-Case Archetype Decoding and Assignment Manual (SCADAM)

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ADVANCES IN CULTURE, TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY RESEARCH

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. BACKGROUND TO RESEARCH

This research is an existential phenomenological study focusing on stories of lived human experiences (Manen, 2003) rather than intentional behavior. The research describes how consumers interact with brands to experience primal forces (i.e., archetypes). The consumer brand stories under study are first-person viewpoints that protagonists write (main characters − usually the authors of the stories) and represent phenomenological value. These self-report stories appear on Weblogs (blogs), a form of electronic diary or journal (Fig. 1.1) "usually displayed in a reverse chronological order, accessible by the general public" (IOC, 2009) "… in such personal memoirs as diaries and journals, a person seeks unconsciously and partly self-consciously a narrative frame for life …" (McAdam, 2001).

"When people punctuate their own living into stories, they impose a formal coherence on what is otherwise a flowing soup" (Weick, 1995, p. 128). This process of focusing on words reflecting lived experiences helps the consumer identify or construct a consistent view of self. Consumer blog entries are the emic interpretations of self rather than researcher etic interpretations of consumers' interpretations of use of brands and products. In analyzing consumer blogs, consumer researchers do not ask what, when and where intentionality questions to solicit necessary information. This side stepping of the bias of the researcher framing issues with achieving consumer own-framing is the elegance of this research approach, the self-report stories are an explanation of the consumer's behavior including the roles brands and products play in these stories.

"The ways in which people typically explain and predict social behaviour have a great deal in common with how people understand and tell stories" (Read, 1987). The motivations for explaining behavior are to find meaning and social interaction (Malle, 2004). "Stories provide simplified cause-effect accounts of puzzling, unexpected, dramatic, problematic, or exemplary events" (Tilly, 2006). To make sense of extended sequences of behavior people use sequences of actions with inferences about the actor plans and goals to achieve a coherent scenario (Read, 1987).

Fig. 1.1. Long Coat, No Knickers ... (Versace). *Source:* Pollee (2001).

1. Pollee

2. Fur Coat

3. Designer Shop

4. "I have discovered a lovely second hand ladies wear shop in Beachamp Place near Harrods in Knightsbri\sge which has designer wear at vastly reduced prices."

5. I bought a Valentino short leather skirt (and the leather is baby soft, ok I know I said I wouldn't wear fur - so I'm inconsistent!) which would cost £600 new for £110 and it it relly as new - you would never have guessed it's second hand.

6. "I spied [English for spied] a beautiful cream coloured cashmere coat .- Versace no less for 150 pounds .... No way would I be able to afford one of these at the real price of nearly £1,000."

7. "The fit of the coat was wonderful and I felt like I was one of those film stars sweeping into the room wearing the most wonderful outfit."

8. "Versace is available at so many stores now, almost always tied up by anti theft devices so this was the first time I had ever been able to try Versace on."

9. "This coat was less than 6 months old and had been sent in by a lady who gets her clothes for nothing and wears them once or twice and then sends them in for resale."

10. "Having worn Versace I would definitely look to buy something else from their 'stable' as the finish on this coat is the best. It has been hand stitched and reeks of quality."

11. "Proud of my purchase and having just been into Rigby and Pellar for my six month refit of lingerie I started my journey ...."

12. "On speaking to the man of the moment I found he was at home ...... We agreed I would get a takeaway on the way back.".

13. "into a garage and use the loo"

14. "It didn't take long to change into the lingerie and on a whim I didn't redress but just put on my coat."

15. "The local constabulary [two police officers] wanted to discuss me using a mobile phone while driving."

16. "Versace did not let me down. The coat, all encompassing, only using two of the buttons provided kept my chastity covered. This coat has quality and after several dry cleanings because of the colour still looks as good as new!"

17. "The problem I had was that the evening was very warm and they asked why I was wearing a coat when it was so hot."

18. "Quick as a flash I told them I was going to a fancy dress 'vicars and tarts party'." ...... "I pulled up my coat to show the top of a leg and told them that was all they were getting!"

19. "I arrived at my mans house, 'nice coat' he said...."

20. "I resorted to standing in front of the TV and slowly unbuttoning my two buttons"

21. Would I buy Versace again? Best coat I ever bought!

The consumer emic story found online and visualized (Fig. 1.1) reflects a narrative story, "Long Coat, no knickers" by Pollee (an alias for Tracey Dell) about a Versace coat purchase. The story opens with Pollee buying a Versace coat at a second hand shop with a price about 15% off the retail price of the new coat. She also buys lingerie at Rigby and Pellar (retail store) and she decides to pull "into a garage to use the loo." She decides to surprise her "man of the moment" by removing her dress and knickers in the loo to wear only her coat and lingerie (likely a slip and stockings) home to "my man." She is stopped by two police officers after the garage stop for using a cell phone while driving (illegal in Britain) and the officers also ask why she was wearing a coat on such a warm (August) evening. "Quick as a flash I told them I was going to a fancy dress vicars and tarts party." Such a party requires guests to arrive dressed as a vicar or a prostitute; such parties are an English tradition.

This story expresses characteristics of the Versace coat assisting in a courtship relationship and participating directly in a secret affair (see Fournier, 1998). Courtships refer to an interim relationship state possibly on the road to a committed partnership contract with the man of the moment morphing into "my man" with no hindrances apparent to a possible committed relationship. Brand Versace is a co-conspirator with Pollee in a secret affair when she wears the coat without knickers — a highly emotive, private bonding that leads to a risky exposure to police officers. In the story's ending Pollee includes a happy face symbol (;-)) in suggesting her secret affair drama with Versace leads to a final emotional high point. Her man achieves an erection ("only the Nan bread went soft") and the happy face follows this development.

While not consciously stated, the actions of Pollee throughout the story including her comments, "The fit of the coat was wonderful and I felt like I was one of those film stars sweeping into the room wearing the most wonderful outfit" reflect a classic transforming siren myth enactment of seduction dating back some 3,000 years (Lao, 1999).

Jung (1959) defines archetypes as "forms or images of a collective nature which occur practically all over the earth as constituents of myth and at the same time as autochthonous [biologically based unconscious thinking] individual products of unconscious origin." Campbell (1968, 1974) argues most archetypal forms originate in Sumer and Akkad around 2500 BC. Hirschman (2000a) reports ample evidence of archetypal thought among consumers in the stories they tell.

Holt (2004) considers consumers as living-out myths without referencing any of the works by Jung (1959), Campbell (1968), and Hirschman (2000a), or Mark and Pearson's (2001) book, *The Hero and the Outlaw: Building Extraordinary Brands through the Power of Archetypes*. Holt interprets storytelling in television commercials as manifestations of archetypes without acknowledgment of the term or phenomena. He views myth

enactments by iconic brands as helping overcome contradictions in society. For example, Holt (2003, p. 48) provides the following interpretation for the "Do the Dew" ad campaign for Mountain Dew soft drink brand.

> With the "Do the Dew" campaign, Mountain Dew reinvented the wild man [prior campaign focus for the brand] as a slacker. In these spoofs of extreme sports, all presented as do-it-yourself quests, the brand asserted that the real men of America's free-agent frontier weren't the most buff or competitive athletes but the creative guys who pursued their stunts as whimsical art. Slackers did not just face downright dangerous situations that came their way. They sought out insane life-threatening risks. The Dew guys upped the ante on masculine risk taking to absurd levels, which, in the end, made fun of the idea that manhood has anything to do with such feats. The people with real power, in Mountain Dew's worldview, were people with extreme and very particular tastes. Slackers had no power as workers, but they could assert their will in the corporate world by asserting their opinions.

1.2. RESEARCH PROBLEM

Blogs help drive the explosive growth of the Internet with over 126 million websites (Nielsen, 2010) and growing at a rate of over 42,000 blogs per day (ibid). Brand managers are increasingly excluded or worse still oblivious about the consumer conversations taking place on the Internet about their brands. A growing schism is emerging with brand storytelling advertising creatives develop for broadcasting and mass consumption diverging from the individualistic storytelling created by consumers found on blogs. Whilst the consumer stories may appropriate elements of the advertising messages they are not the same as the messages intended by the brand managers.

The unconscious collaboration between knowledgeable consumers and brand owners has "the purpose of the post-consumer to produce life experiences and meaning" (Firat & Dholakia, 2006). This "co-creation" (Prahalad & Ramaswamy, 2004) branding is made possible not only by the marketing savvy consumer but attributable to the technology of blogs available to consumers. "Research attention is needed on these collaborative formats as they evolve" (Firat & Dholakia, 2006).

1.3. RESEARCH ISSUES AND CONTRIBUTIONS

Research on consumer self-storytelling is scarce when comparing with consumer attitude research. A "consumer storytelling" search via Google reveals 531 sites versus 41,900 sites for "consumer attitude." A focus on consumer self-report stories can avoid issues of researcher or experimenter

biases that normally arise from asking a consumer brand intentionality questions.

This research contributes theory, managerial, and marketing practice. First, the research extends the work of Holt (2004) contributing theory by demonstrating brands reflect archetype enabling behavior of consumers. This model helps describe how consumers use brands as props or anthropomorphic actors in stories they report about themselves found on the Web. The stories are drama enactments enabling storytellers experience powerful myths. Additional theory insights include an understanding of the type of brands associating with specific myths and arche types. The research method analyzing online consumer self-report stories and experience with brands enables future researchers in developing further theory.

From a managerial perspective this research gains insights into the value created by brand stories especially those found on blogs. The brand stories can help provide inputs for a new product or service not yet positioned in the marketplace. The potential exists to develop a new type of brand story audit.

The marketing practice contribution allows marketers and advertising executives an explicit understanding first hand of the brand conversations taking place between consumers as well as consumers and brands rather than only thinking about what buyers and users say to the brand and what the brand says first and back in such conversations. Further, a corpus generated by this research of self-report consumer stories creates realistic advertising strategies rather than a sole reliance on storytelling by creative agencies and marketers. More broadly, the research persists guidelines on mining blogs of consumer brand stories. Once brand stories are collected a mechanism to classify open-ended feedback from the consumer stories or reports helps to provide deep insights into consumer marketing processes not readily accessible through questionnaires and associated techniques for eliciting consumer attitudes and preferences resulting in marketing action. The research delivers prototype archetype software allowing advertising executives, marketers, and researchers to detect archetypes within brand stories using psychological content analysis techniques.

1.4. RESEARCH METHOD

A critical success factor of the overall research is the procurement of consumer stories from the enormous volume of blogs available on the Web. Wiki software technology advances make collecting stories effective by putting the "messiness" of multimedia stories at the heart of the research conversation (Bonser, 2010) through providing a workbench and special purpose

brand dashboards for real time sampling of stories and their subsequent archival.

A story assessment stage checks story fitness with the consumer storytelling paradigm/theory. Psychological content analysis (Martindale, 1975; Pennebaker, 2002) provides both a window into the psychological states of the bloggers and furnishes a measure of deception as an indicator to exposing stories cleverly crafted for advertising purposes.

The brand stories under study generate a corpus derived from the voices of nearly 600 consumers online reporting about well-known fashion, luxury, and travel brands. The corpus integrates socialgraphics (online behavior: Dougherty, 2010; Li & Owyang, 2010) of story protagonists (bloggers), portrait images of real people and rich psychographic data alongside consumer stories about fashion, travel, and luxury goods. Additional consumer insights are obtainable from the story gist, brand relationship (Fournier, 1998; Sweeney & Chew, 2000), story myth types (Matthews & Wacker, 2007), and cognitive style (Urban, Hauser, Guilherme, Michael, & Fareena, 2009) of the storyteller.

Systematic analysis of the corpus is undertaken by considering stories as cases and using a combination of fuzzy set scoring (Ragin & Benoit, 2004; Woodside, 2010) and social network analysis (Wasserman & Faust, 1994) to explore the alignment of stories with the proposed theory of archetype enactment within brand stories.

1.5. OUTLINE OF THE THESIS

This book covers a range of topics. The first topic is the overall thesis. Topic two is the corpus of unsolicited consumer brand stories central to the research activity. Chapters 1 to 4 set the contextual framework of the research inclusive of the theory of brand enabling archetype enactment by consumers, exploration of the existing literature informed by theory development on the convergence of storytelling and branding and detailing execution of the research method. The proposed theory model Chapter 2 incorporates a range of hypotheses for testing using consumer stories found naturally on consumer blogs. Chapter 3 encapsulates a literature review focusing on key theory elements centering on archetypes and archetypal analysis of stories. Chapter 4 walks through the method of capturing suitable consumer stories and an exploration of the corpus holding these stories. Chapter 5 elaborates the analysis to elicit archetypes from the stories. Chapters 6−18 apply the archetype elicitation technique illustrating each archetype with the analysis of a story. Chapter 19 covers the testing of the hypotheses along with a discussion of the results, potential areas of generalization, as well as proposing areas for future research.