Just Do It: The Brand As New Media Object

CHAPTER OVERVIEW

The argument presented in this chapter will be that brands mediate the supply and demand of products and services through the organisation, coordination and integration of market information. The chapter therefore puts forward five reasons for arguing that brands resemble 'new media objects'.

- Brands are multi-layered: they involve a mode of production; a technical or physical support for their activities (a platform); and a set of conventions that articulate or give expression to that support or platform.
- Brands mediate between two spaces: the world of the producer or brand owner and the world of the consumer, where the brand is like an interface.
- Brands operate as an open-ended production loop, in that the brand is never a finished product (unlike the products it releases to the consumer market). Instead, the existence of the brand 'as a brand' is enough to alert the consumer to expect it to express itself periodically in a new or different form—as perhaps a new product range; a new advertising campaign; a new set of consumption options.
- Brands provide interactivity between two realms (production and consumption) but take absolute control of any interaction associated with the product. They appropriate information about their customers and integrate that information into planning for new products and new information campaigns.
- Their market position allows brands to control the time and place of their market interventions to take best advantage of the flows of the global economy.

As the Internet matures as a medium its role in supporting and elaborating this process becomes clearer. Cyberculture is emerging as an environment where commerce is organised through the online management of branded consumer communities.
Brand In this chapter, the terms 'the brand' or 'branding', are not meant to imply a single thing, or even a single set of processes. To assume that 'the brand' is a single thing would be to mistake the multiple and sometimes divergent layers of activity that have gone into producing the brand. The assumption here instead is that because the brand is a happening fact (Whitehead, 1978), there is a demand—a sociological imperative—for something else to happen yet.

A media theory of the economy

In a series of publications (Callon, 1998; Barry and Slater, 2002; Callon and Law, 2003), Michel Callon has addressed the operation of markets. It is of course economic theory that has traditionally been concerned with the economy and its major components, markets. But the anthropologist Callon’s aim is to open up the market to multiple forms of knowledge, not simply the economic. What follows is an attempt to develop a media theory of the economy, that is, an account of how the economy is organised as if it were a medium. And the brand will be seen as an important driver in the organisation of the economy in this way. The argument will be that brands mediate the supply and demand of products and services through the organisation, coordination and integration of market information, and in doing so contribute to a change in the operation and culture of markets.

In classical economic theory, price is seen as the mechanism that is able to calibrate the market by coordinating supply and demand through the circulation of information. Put simply, in a market buyers oppose sellers, and the prices that resolve this conflict are the input but also, in a sense, the output or outcome of the agents’ economic calculation (Callon, 1998). Another way of saying this is that price is a mechanism by which the equivalence—the substitutability—of goods is established in quantitative terms. In one of the most well known sociological discussions of price—*The Philosophy of Money* (1990 [1907]) by Georg Simmel—the role of money in privileging the quantitative as a mode of evaluation is understood in cultural terms. For Simmel, money is the representative of ‘a cognitive tendency in modern science as a whole: the reduction of qualitative determinations to quantitative ones’ (1990, p. 277). In short, money is responsible for the growth in significance of the category of quantity over that of quality. The quantitative tendency exemplified by money contributes, Simmel argues, to the loss of singularity and the acceptance of relativity, in which more and more things are not simply put in relation to one other, but are rendered comparable in value or made interchangeable.
Money, Simmel argues, underpins ‘the tendency to dissolve quality into quantity, to remove the elements more and more from quality, to grant them only specific forms of motion and interpret everything that is specifically, individually and qualitatively determined as the more or less, the bigger or smaller, the wider or narrower, the more or less frequent’ (1990, p. 278). This is what Simmel calls the ‘merciless objectivity’ (1990, p. 431) of money: ‘money takes the place of the manifoldness of things and expresses all qualitative distinctions between them in the distinction of “how much”’ (1990, p. 127). For Simmel, writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, money provides the conditions for the growth of calculative functions and the emergence of a blase attitude in people, that is, to the growth of indifference toward qualitative distinctions between objects (and subjects).

18.1
1. Do you think Simmel was correct to argue that money reduces the quality of things to quantity, to more or less, to bigger or smaller?
2. Think of some examples where you believe the emphasis on quantity or price has led to a decline in quality or a neglect of values other than value for money, or where the loss of skills in terms of quality workmanship has resulted from an emphasis on ‘good enough’ production.
3. Can you think of examples where this is not the case—where the introduction of markets and money as the measure of value has improved the quality of production?

The brand is presented here as an alternative device for the calibration of the market; the suggestion is that the brand is not so much a means, as is argued of money by Simmel, but a medium. This claim can be broken down into a series of inter-linked points. The attributes of products able to function as elements of a mechanism of exchange in the case of the brand are multiplied, that is, price is only one of a number of attributes of the brand. The other attributes typically include the place (of purchasing a branded product or service, or entering into a brand experience), packaging, promotion and product qualities. In marketing discourse, these are known as the ‘four Ps’. Like price, these product attributes are not fixed, but variable, and are able to act as multiple dimensions of judgment. Thus the brand—like price—is able to act as a mechanism for coordinating the activities of the market, of framing the exchange between producers and consumers, but this mechanism is comprised of multiple dimensions, not simply one, price. It is
these multiple dimensions that provide the basis for the controlled reintroduction of quality into the means of exchange. That the brand acts as a medium in the coordination of markets is perhaps one of the most important reasons that Callon (2002) is able to describe the contemporary economy as an economy of qualities.

The writer Gertrude Stein seems to agree with Simmel when she writes, 'Whether you like it or whether you do not money is money and that is all there is about it' (1936, quoted in Zelizer, 1998, p. 59). But contemporary sociologist Zelizer argues that modern consumer society has turned the spending of money not only into a central economic practice, but a dynamic, cultural and social activity. … This is the irony: while the state and the law worked to obtain a single national currency, people actively created all sorts of monetary distinctions. Outside the world of printing and minting, people spent less energy on the adoption of different objects as currencies than on the creation of distinctions among the uses and meanings of existing currencies—that is, on earmarking' (1998, p. 59). In this perspective, money is not only a means but also a medium. And, so this chapter suggests, are brands; that is, they too are dynamic social and cultural activities, a way of making meaning. But, crucially, brands may be seen as a form of corporate earmarking: while not controlled by the state, brands are usually privately owned currencies. They are attempts by firms—not people in their everyday lives—to create their own worlds of distinction, and they have more power to introduce these mediums into our lives and so organise exchanges, not only economic transactions but also social and cultural interaction. Other examples of this tendency include electronically mediated forms of money being developed by banks, universities, transport companies, commercial firms, utilities and even Club Med (Zelizer, 1998, p. 65). In this way, brands can be seen to produce a media economy.

**18.2**

**Brands online—some examples**

Adam Ardivsson has suggested that:

'The brand … corresponds to the condition of a 'network culture' where the media-
tisation of the social has progressed to the point that it is no longer meaningful to maintain a distinction between media and reality, where information is no longer something that represents reality, but something that provides an ambience in which reality can unfold' (Ardivsson, 2006, p. 126).
Part 4: Participation

Visit each of the sites listed below and explore the sites as thoroughly as possible. Do not forget to visit the additional links they supply to their affiliated sites. Identify the range of products offered by each site and describe how the organisation of the site corresponds to a 'network culture'.

- Eddie Bauer Department Store: <http://eddiebauer.com>
- Friends Reunited: <http://friendsreunited.co.uk>

These sites have been chosen for the ways they demonstrate how the internet is expanding the range of 'real world objects' that can be 'mediatised' and transformed into online commodities. The sites include a conventional department store that references the domestic lives of its users; a design group that explicitly prioritises 'quality' through workmanship, design and exclusiveness; and a social networking site that aims to reunite long-lost friends by making use of user-generated content.

- How would you describe the 'ambience' created by each of these sites?
- What real world objects have been 'mediatised' and transformed into online commodities by these sites?
- In what ways does each of these brands construct a relationship with its online community—what links between site users/customers are implied by the nature of the information available at the site?
- What objects, commodities or information flows are used to bind users to the sites?
- How does each of these brands address the issue of money?

The rest of this chapter seeks to explain how the brand may be seen as a medium, and with what implications, not just for the economy but also for culture more widely. In the approach that Callon adopts—sometimes called Actor Network Theory (or ANT)—technological devices or objects are seen as 'image instruments' or as 'media of translation' (Latour, 1987; Law, 1984). This chapter will make use of this approach in relation to the economy but intends to elaborate the notions of medium, frame and image. After all, the brand stands at the intersection of the diverse histories of computing, information technology and media as well as economics, marketing and design; as such, it may be described as a new media object (Manovich, 2001), an example of 'the “broadcast” distribution of commodities' (Rodowick, 1994).
Medium A casual glance at any dictionary draws attention to the multiple meanings of the word 'medium': as something in between or intermediate; a middle state or condition; a method or way of expressing something. The sense in which it is used in this chapter draws primarily on this last meaning. Just as money tells us how much a given commodity is worth, the brand tells us how much to value it. So, for example, vintage clothing stores trade primarily in second-hand goods with designer labels—a particular item may no longer command its original price, but the brand continues to communicate information about the cultural significance of the object.

In the new media environment, brands are able to actively engage their customers and potential customers using email newsletters, product promotions, online forums, games and competitions to push consumption. Brands are colonising the online environment and borrowing characteristic forms of online communication to achieve their ends.

The multi-layered character of the brand

A first way in which media theory is helpful in understanding branding is that it draws attention to the multi-layered character of the brand's ontological existence. Frederic Jameson describes a medium as consisting in a specific form of aesthetic production, a technology, and a social institution (1991, p. 67). Rosalind Krauss, in a discussion of fine art (1999), suggests that a medium involves a relationship between a technical or physical support and the recursive conventions with which a particular genre articulates or works on that support. Put simply, for Krauss, the medium is a dynamic support for practice. Lev Manovich describes a new media object in terms of an operating system, an interface, software applications or operations, and forms or commonly used conventions for recursively organising the new media object as a whole (2001, p. 11). And the brand or branding may similarly be seen to comprise a mode of production, a technical or physical support, and a set of conventions that articulate or work on that support. It too is a dynamic platform or support for practice.

Brands and communication media—two-way mirrors

Secondly, the notion of medium makes it possible to think of branding in terms of communication, and in particular of communication as the framing of temporal
reciprocity across disunified or disparate spaces (Rodowick, 1994). This makes it possible to consider the brand in relation to the metaphors of frame, window and mirror as used in discussions of architecture, painting and cinema (see Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, pp. 186--99; and Manovich, 2001, pp. 95--103 for useful discussions). The most basic definition of the frame is ‘a window that opens onto a larger space that is assumed to extend beyond the frame’ (Manovich, 2001, p. 80), but it can also be described as that which ‘separates two absolutely different spaces that somehow coexist’ (Manovich, 2001, p. 95). As such, the frame organises two-way communication between different spaces—in the case of the brand, between the spaces of production and consumption. One of the key developments in the work of Deleuze (1986, 1989) and others on cinema is to consider the frame as itself dynamic: ‘Frames or sections are not co-ordinates; they belong to compounds of sensations whose faces, interfaces, they constitute’ (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994, p. 187). The suggestion here is that the brand organises the activities of the market as if it were an interface. As an interface, the brand is a frame that organises a two-way exchange of information between the inner and outer environments of the market, informing how consumers relate to producers and how producers relate to consumers, along the dimensions mentioned earlier—place, packaging, price and product qualities.

**Frame** This term is used here to refer to the ways the brand is able to limit what is seen, like a window, and what is represented, like a mirror or a screen. The frame determines where we look and what we are likely to see. As a frame, the brand is much more active in communicating with its customers than was the screen in the era of broadcasting. Brands are active frames, like interfaces that present certain information and change what we are able to see in reaction to the button we click and the questions we ask.

The ‘loop’ as control structure for both media and brands

Central to the performativity of the brand as an interface are certain practices in marketing that function in an analogous way to programming techniques in both broadcasting and computing. The most significant example of these practices is the loop, a central control structure of many new media objects. This is then a third respect in which it may be helpful to consider the brand as a new media object. As
Manovich notes, ‘Programming involves altering the flow of data through control structures, such as “if/then” and “repeat/while”; the loop is the most elementary of these control structures’ (2001, p. xxxiii). From this perspective, the marketing practices developed in the advertising industry in the second half of the twentieth century—including the adoption of the four Ps—incorporate the activities of consumers in the processes and products of production and distribution. This incorporation—or looping—typically involves the marketer adopting the position of the consumer, that is, of imagining the consumer (Lury and Warde, 1996). However, as the practice of computer programming illustrates, the loop and the sequential progression are not necessarily mutually exclusive (Manovich, 2001). Just as a computer program progresses from start to end by executing a series of loops, so the marketing knowledge or information produced in the market research is used in a sequential process of product differentiation. As new products or services are developed, they themselves become marketing tools, generating further information, and so, the brand progresses or emerges in a series of loops. It is an open-ended object.

Interfaces for interactivity—but not interaction

Although the exchanges organised by the brand are dynamic and two-way, they are not direct, symmetrical or reversible. Or to put this another way, the brand as interface is a site—or diagram—of interactivity (not of interaction). The interface of the brand connects the producer and consumer and removes or separates them from each other; it ‘is revealing of some relationships, but it keeps others very well hidden’ (Pavitt, 2000, p. 175). From this point of view the brand may be seen as both promoting and inhibiting ‘exchange’ between producers and consumers, and informing this asymmetrical exchange through a range of performances of its own. In particular, it is important to bear in mind that the temporality that informs the communication of a brand is defined not by instantaneity, but by managing the temporal delay between receiving a request and responding to it (Rodowick, 1994). That is, the interface of a brand manages the ‘response time’ of interactivity, the interval in time between (qualitatively differentiated) products. These intervals may be organised—in the practices of brand positioning—to produce the relations between branded products (and branded places, packaging and promotion) as constancy or sameness, or as difference, as fashion, as novelty or as event.

In this way, the brand—whether its products are always the same like Coca-Cola or always changing like Nike—may be seen as an open, dynamic object. Yet
while brands may be described as open this should not be taken to imply that this openness is either total or unregulated or that it contributes to freedom in any simple sense. Indeed, it does not even necessarily lead to more open competition between firms. On the one hand, brands may be distinguished from each other as more or less open; so, for example, Nike may be seen as slightly more open than Coca-Cola in the sense that it is organised so as to be more responsive to shifts in consumer use that are to do with lifestyle although it has been notoriously unresponsive to consumer criticism in relation to production practices. Paradoxically, its openness is one source of Nike’s economic and cultural power as a brand: that is, responsiveness is one of the factors that has aided its domination of the sports apparel market, limiting the terms of entry for other firms.

In this sense, the ‘openness’ of brands is frequently more apparent than real in relation to many brands, including Nike. While brands have the potential to bring ‘an understanding of the outside, of society, economy and customer, to the inside of the organisation and to make it the foundation for strategy and policy’ (Drucker, quoted in Mitchell, 2001, p. 77), this potential is not often realised. In practice, the situation remains much as it did when marketing expert Theodor Levitt called for a marketing revolution in 1960:

When it comes to the marketing concept today, a solid stone wall often seems to separate word and deed. In spite of the best intentions and energetic efforts of many highly able people, the effective implementation of the marketing concept has generally eluded them (quoted in Mitchell, 2001, p. 77).

The flow of brand culture

If the framing of the market by a brand is successful as is the case with Nike, the brand owner is able not simply to dominate a given market at a given moment in time, but to organise its spatial and temporal activities in the flows that characterise the global economy (Appadurai, 1996; Shields, 1997). And in this fourth respect too, the notion of the medium is helpful in the attempt to describe the role of the brand insofar as media have been widely understood in terms of flow, notably by Raymond Williams in his discussion of television (1974). Simmel had at the beginning of the twentieth century described the liquidity of money, drawing attention to the importance of the rhythm of its movements—of private saving, corporate investment, buying and selling, credit and debt—for the wider culture. As he puts it, ‘Money is nothing but the vehicle for a movement in which everything else that is not in motion is completely extinguished’ (1990, p. 511).
Editor's comment  In analogy with the brand, it is possible to describe television as a machine designed, not to sell products to people, but sell a market, the 'commodity audience', to advertisers.

But Williams provides an elaboration of the notion of flow. In his account of the experience of watching television (1974), flow is a sequence or serial assembly of units characterised by speed, variability and the miscellaneous. In developing this account, Williams notes the historical decline of the use of intervals between programs in broadcasting. Or rather, he draws attention to a re-evaluation of the interval. In the early days of broadcasting on radio, for example, there would be intervals of complete silence between programs. But now, no longer dividing discrete programmes, no longer an interruption or silence, the interval is productive; as with the management of the response gap of interactivity, it is what makes a sequence of programs into a flow. Think here of the role of idents, that is the logos of broadcasting companies, which fill the previous gaps or silences, making possible multiple associations within and between programs. The true sequence or flow in broadcasting in such cases is now not the published sequence of program items, but a series of differently associated units, some larger and some smaller than the individual program. These associations are punctuated—or marked—by a logo. And in the case of branding, the use of a logo similarly enables the making of one link after another, and, in the process of making associations, makes brands—as hyperlinked objects—not only visible and identifiable, but also gives them a dynamic unity. In this respect, to draw a fifth parallel with media, brands may be seen as the effects of hyperlinking, the activity that forms the basis of interactive media (Manovich, 2001: 61).

Let me describe how this is organised in the practices of brand management. To begin with, in marketing practices, the logo—which may be a name (Nike), a graphic image (the Swoosh), or a slogan (Just Do It)—is able to secure the recognition of a brand through a process of repetition. That is, the insistent repetition of a logo in marketing means that when people are asked for examples of brands most of them are able to give a list of examples, displaying what marketers call 'brand awareness'. Marketers further argue, however, that 'awareness' must be supported, if a brand is successful, by a second aspect, 'image' (Keller, 1998). Brand image includes the associations that a consumer has of a brand. So, for example, for Nike, brand image is designed to include the desired associations of sports, determination and competitiveness. What marketers call 'image' is produced in the practices of brand positioning, which include product design, promotion and positioning.
products in the media as well as the management of the logo itself. In so far as they are successful, the logo comes to function as a specular or speculative device for magnifying one set of associations and then another. Through the management of brand image a brand owner may thus come to make and mark relations between a flow of products so as to produce a recognisable brand. Alternatively put, the brand is a device for the management of flow, providing some kind of security for the brand owner in highly dynamic, distributed markets.

**Image** This term, as used here, refers to the way brand logos operate like computer desktop icons or 'short cuts'. The brand represents itself by its logo. The logo in turn immediately brings to mind a reservoir of cultural knowledge about the brand that has been cultivated through the marketing of its previous products. Sometimes an imagined history is invented and 'sold' to audiences through an advertising campaign. This set of associations is then used to promote new products and to drive new sales.

Very often, the brand is able to be presented by its logo as having a personality or face, whether the logo is of a person or more abstract values. This process of personalisation is not so unusual in the economy; it has a long and complex history in the organisation of exchange. Simmel explains the significance of personalisation in relation to money as capital by suggesting that the significance of a sum of money, such as one million marks, is more than a mere aggregate of unconnected units. He argues that qualitative significance arises because an aggregate sum of money forms 'a comprehensive unit in the same way as the value of a living creature, acting as a unit, [and] differs from the sum total of its individual organs' (Simmel, 1990, p. 272). In other words, he suggests that capital as quantity, as units of land, of money is capable of being realised as quality in certain circumstances. Similarly, the point being made here is that a brand is capable of being related to in terms of both quantity (how much is it worth?) and quality (what does it mean?). Indeed, this second dimension is of vital importance in a brand's relation to consumers, since it is what underpins the affective relations between brands and consumers, which typically include—for a successful brand—some degree of trust, respect and loyalty but may also include playfulness, scepticism and dislike.

But it is also worth pointing out that consumers' relations with brands are often hard to put into words. They may operate at a subconscious level. Indeed, the reliance of marketing on the use of highly repetitive practices tends to mean that brands are not only so ubiquitous as to be obscene (Baudrillard, 1994) but might
also be described as obsequious, at least in the sense in which the sociologist Bourdieu (1977) uses the term. As Bourdieu notes, the term obsequium was used by Spinoza to denote the 'constant will' produced by the conditioning through which 'the State fashions us for its own use and which enables it to survive'. Bourdieu adopts the term to designate the public testimonies of recognition that are set up in every group between individuals and the group. Here the term may be seen to apply to the 'constant will' called into being by the taken-for-granted ubiquity provided by brands in consumer societies.

As a medium of exchange the brand is not simply a matter of the communication of private individuals however: it is coordinated by organisations, including small- and medium-sized firms and multinational corporations as well as voluntary organisations, charities and public bodies. And at the same time that it is a social currency (Zelizer, 1998)—a way in which people bring meaning to various exchanges—it may be protected in law in the form of trademark as private property (see below). It is thus a kind of currency by fiat. Put more strongly, it is an example not only of the mediation of the economy and the marketisation of everyday life but also of the privatisation of the activities of the state, linked to the growing power of multilateral agencies such as the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund.

Editor's comment The IMF has itself commissioned a series of promotional advertisements broadcast on CNN and other cross-national channels, perhaps the first stages of establishing itself as a brand.

In so far as a brand is protected as private property in the laws of trademark and passing off, it is not only potentially exploitable as the site of product innovation, but also as a means of corporate growth, both through brand extension, in diffusion lines and franchises, and regeneration as when companies such as Virgin are able to use the brand as a form of venture capital. Indeed, as an image instrument, the brand is an object by which capital may not only extract rent from (intellectual) property through for example licensing or merchandising arrangements, but also build monopolies, dominate markets and secure investments in the ownership of innovation (Strathern, 1999). Alternatively put, as John Berger says of the perspectival window in painting, the market frame of the brand is 'a safe let into the wall, a safe into which the visible has been deposited' (quoted in Manovich, 2001, p. 105).
Think about it

Mostly this chapter has talked about commodity branding, using Nike as the primary example. But in what ways might the brand power of digital media companies like Google and Microsoft add new dimensions to the promise and threat of their dominance of Web culture?

Conclusion

The argument put forward here is that the brand is an image instrument, and as such contributes to the mediatisation of the economy, that is, it contributes to the organisation of the contemporary economy as a medium. It is both a mechanism of relativity, as is price, and of relationality, as is jewellery (Simmel, 1990). In other words, the brand is both a means of establishing the relativity or the abstract equivalence of products in space and time and a medium of relationality, designed to support qualitative differentiation. On the one hand then, the brand subsumes the calculation of symbolic capital within the calculation of economic capital (to use the terms developed by Pierre Bourdieu (1984)). On the other, in the practices of branding the calculation of economic capital is not only quantitative, but is also qualitative.

Simmel notes that salt, cattle, tobacco and grain have all been simple means of exchange; their use typically being determined by individual or group interest. The use of jewellery as a medium of exchange, however, marks a new development for Simmel in so far as 'it indicates a relation between individuals: people adorn themselves for others' (1990, p. 176).

Exchange, as the purest sociological occurrence, the most complete form of interaction, finds its appropriate representation in the material of jewellery, the significance of which for its owner is only indirect, namely as a relation to other people (1990, p. 177).

He notes that adornment is a social need for relationality, and that certain kinds of ornament are reserved for particular social positions; so, for example in medieval France, gold was not permitted below a certain rank. He goes on to suggest, however, that money is better able to serve as an absolute intermediary or means of exchange between products, although only, he says, if coinage is raised above its qualitative characteristics as a metal (such as gold).

An implication of the argument being put forward here is that branding contributes to what philosopher Brian Massumi calls a cultural condition of transitivity (2002). Let me expand on this a little. The condition of transitivity is one
that is characterised by transition, that is, by being in movement. But, if you are familiar with what is meant by a transitive verb, you will know that this is a verb that requires an object. So, for example, 'to buy' is a transitive verb; we don't just buy, we buy something. By analogy, a condition of transitivity may be understood as a condition in which social agency—being and doing—is made to require or need an object. A transitive verb is incomplete without an object: in a condition of transitivity, we are always wanting. As has been described here, the brand is not total and complete but totalising and incomplete. It is this incompleteness—its openness, its ongoingness, its doingness—that defines the transitivity of brand power. The openness of the brand invites our participation and organises that participation in terms of interactivity. However, while it operates in terms of an injunction not that you should, but that you may (Barry, 2001), the invitation to participate is one which is increasingly difficult to refuse. Just Do It.

Beyond the level of inclusion through the act of purchase, there is another level of compulsory inclusiveness of subjects in the practices of branding. What is being referred to are the ways in which the incorporation of information about the everyday activities of subjects—which may be collected with or without their knowledge or permission—is an essential part of brand-making (Barry, 2001; Poster, 2001; Lyon, 2001). One example of this is the use of consumer profiling techniques in the collection of marketing data (Elmer, 2000). Here it is worth remembering the roots of many developments in computing (and indirectly the brand) in military and state surveillance, and the development of a vision of a 'mechanized circuit of detection, decision and response' (Manovich, 2001, p. 101). It is also important to note that compulsory inclusiveness at this level is designed to make the brand selective in its uptake, that is, to enforce exclusiveness at the other level, that of purchase.

Brands—among other complex objects—are what those of us living in the (post-) industrialised world have come to require in order to do many, if not most, things in everyday life. On the one hand it is important to recognise that this requirement is organised in terms of possibility not constraint; on the other, it should not be forgotten that because something is possible does not mean that it is desirable, or even sustainable. Possibilities may distend and distort as well as enable the many everyday activities that have conventionally been organised according to the everyday calculus of the probable (Heller, 1984); they may be anti-inventive as well as inventive (Barry, 2001). To sum up: brands are not simply a matter of pouvoir but also of puissance (Deleuze and Guattari, 1994: 174–191); they operate both as 'an instituted and reproducible relation of force, a selective concretization of potential' (the actual) and as potential, that is, as a scale of intensity or fullness of existence (the virtual) (Massumi, 2002, p. xvii). As such they add colour to the uniform colourlessness of money as described by Simmel, but they are no less merciless for that.
• This chapter challenges conventional assumptions about the media by examining the ways the brand can be considered to be a new media object.
• It has introduced the idea that media technologies can be social and cultural rather than electronic and digital, and it has argued that the brand serves the economy in much the same ways that media platforms serve the communication system.
• Increasingly brands are used to mediate the world and contribute to the ways it is represented because they are a way of reintroducing issues of 'quality' into a system otherwise dominated by quantitative measures of value or worth—a system where how many apples or watches or newspapers are sold for how much is considered more important than how good they are.
• Brands are capable of 'hyperlinking'—they are capable of acting like a desktop 'short cut' in the economy—if a new product is branded it automatically inherits, in the mind of the consumer, qualities previously associated with the brand and its products.
• The chapter also shows how closely money and media, the economy and the communication system, are intertwined. In order to fully appreciate the nature of the emerging media world it is important to recognise the diversity and complexity of mediation, the role brands currently play in the management of the economy, and that they are coming to play in the management of the information economy.

Tutorial questions

• What is the relationship between brands and money?
• In what ways is it argued in this chapter that brands 'drive the economy'?
• Would you describe Google as a brand? If so, what are its products?

Recommended reading

Chapter 8: The Brand as New Media Object

Websites

Eddie Bauer Department Store: http://eddiebauer.com
Friends Reunited: http://friendsreunited.co.uk
Porsche Design Group:

References

Lury, C., & Warde, A., 1996, ‘Investments in the imaginary consumer: conjectures regarding power, knowledge and advertising’, in Nava, M., Blake, A., MacRury,


