Everyday Social Practices as a Source of Design-Led Branding

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Abstract. Through the analysis of the epistemological assumptions of marketing-led branding models, this research investigates how these models aim to link brands with their audiences in terms of sense giving. Qualitative research has been done to explore three case studies, employing archive research, semiotics, and critical analysis. By relying on Plato's theory of knowledge, to theoretically support this approach, and mainly considering his metaphorical style, the research analyses how a design-led brand strategy expands the scope of a marketing-led one, by amplifying the extent of the epistemological realism that supports the latter. Findings reveal that through design-led strategies, the analysed brands seize into their audiences' everyday social practices realm and source their branding models with the creativity and imagination that is produced at that basic level of life: e.g. customising brand labels, with personal names, is an open way to connect brands with and to audiences through both recognition and the demand of being true to oneself. Hence, design-led branding can well be an approach to source brand authenticity.

Keywords: Authenticity · Branding · Design · Metaphor · Realism

1 Background and Purpose

There is evidence that the traditional *mindshare branding* model can fail drastically: the misstep of *Quaker Oats* marketing team when trying to bring the *Snapple* brand to its next level by *perfectly* applying the rules of a marketing mix model, meant US$ millions in losses for the company (Beverland 2009).

It is thought that a *cultural branding* model can be more effective: due to a rebirth of their use among Australian teenagers, *Pacific Brands* decided to revive *Dunlop* volley shoes from the late 1990's by reinforcing their presence in the Australian imaginary through strengthening their relevance in the local subcultures. Hence, reinforcing authentic Australian values (Beverland 2009).

A *mindshare branding* model, traditionally *marketing-oriented*, is framed by Keller's Customer-Based Brand Equity (CBBE) model which states that brands exist in the mind of the consumer (Keller 2013). It is also framed by the ideas of Ries and Trout (1981) regarding how to influence and position in audiences minds the values of a brand. They state that for positioning to happen, audiences' minds should absorb two or three ideas related to the brand. These ideas must fulfil customers' needs, competitors' gaps, and companies' capabilities.

Cultural branding model, also marketing-oriented, is defined by Holt's (2004; 2006) cultural meaning management model and identifies audiences' cultural schisms or crises that iconic brands then address through the delivery of cultural myths co-created with their audiences. When the market context is stable (or under conditions of incremental change) the *mindshare* model is the one to be used (Heding et al. 2016); in contrast, in time of big changes, crisis or social disruption, the *cultural* model seems to be more efficient (Holt 2003; Heding et al. 2016, Beverland 2018).

As has been shown, branding concepts and models are very marketing perspective attached. There are not workable models from a design perspective. If design aims to optimise and resolve everyday life by making it easier; there is still much more work to do to develop a *design-oriented* branding model that could work together and as an alternative to the well-established marketing-oriented models.

Besides the fact of analysing the effectiveness of both *marketing-oriented* branding models working complementarily (Beverland and Ewing 2005; Beverland 2009), this research has focused on the epistemological assumptions of both branding systems as being *marketing*-oriented. Such approaches tend to objectify their targets: individual minds or cultural developments. By doing so, it is difficult to find space for a different understanding beyond mind or culture. In fact, both systems are captive of a realist methodology which, by definition, tends to establish a dualism in its understanding of reality:

"this is the famous picture, the dualistic picture of the physical world and its primary qualities, on the one hand, and the mind and its sense data, on the other, that philosophers have been wrangling over since the time of Galileo" (Putnam 1987, pp. 6–7).

According to this, and following Hilary Putnam's ideas, this research will establish three kinds of realism:

- *scientific realism,* which states that real world is a physical entity outside and separated from human beings' minds. The real-world knowledge will depend, in this case, on the understanding of the scientific structure of the world. Therefore, anyone who knows the world would easily influence human minds;
- *commonsense realism,* which is the human beings' everyday belief that all the sense data received is real; so, there is no reason to doubt that there are chairs, tables, doors, cars, trees, etc.;
- *neo-pragmatic realism,* which states that the knowledge of the world depends on one's perspective: "for Earthians it may be a discarded cigarette that causes a forest fire, while for Martians it is the presence of oxygen" (Sosa 1993, p. 607). The perspective will always be fueled by social practices.

If this research supposition is right, the *mindshare* brand positioning system is attached to a *scientific realist* approach, and the cultural positioning system is bound by a *commonsense realist* approach. Therefore, the analysis of another way to get knowledge (a *neo-pragmatic realism*) can bring to the discussion a complementary system to the ones mentioned above.

To clarify its approach to realism, this research is also making use of Plato's thinking regarding knowledge and reality: if Plato's analogy of the segmented line (Plato 1997) (Republic, 509e-511e) is used, a *scientific realist* approach will belong to the top

	Human Mind	The World	The Truth
Scientific Realism	The mind understands the scientific structure of the world.	Physical entity separated from human mind.	There is one truth and it is universal.
Commonsense Realism	The mind receives sense data from the reality. ¡The mind is the mirror of the worldî.	The physical things perceived by the senses.	All the sense data is true.
Neo-pragmatic Realism	The mind understands reality according to its context. ¡The meaning depends on contextsî	The world is shaped by social practices.	Every context reaches its true.

Fig. 1. Different kinds of realism.

segment of the line (right side of Fig. 2). In this case, *scientific realists* will believe that their knowledge of reality will give them advantage over the commonsensical human being's mind, who blindly believes on any sensorial data that their minds receive.
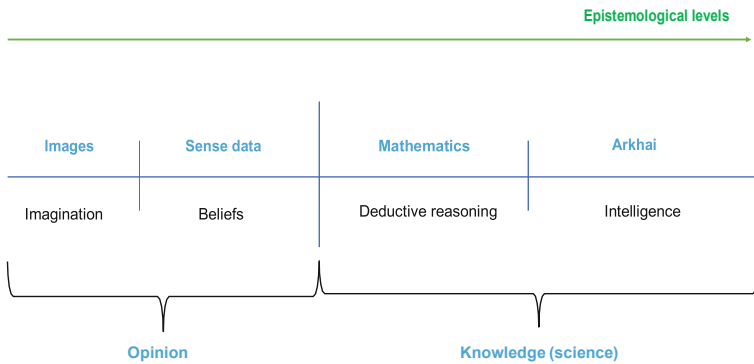
Epistemological levels

Images	Sense data	Mathematics	Arkhai
Imagination	Beliefs	Deductive reasoning	Intelligence

Opinion   Knowledge (science)

Fig. 2. Plato's analogy of the segmented line.

Commonsense realists will focus on the field of *opinion* (left side of Fig. 2), and inside this field on the scope of *sense data*. Despite of dealing with everyday beliefs, which do not include the category of knowledge or science, a *commonsense realist,* in opposition to a *scientific realist*, will state that the different systems of beliefs inside this field of understanding allow human beings to know the reality.

Finally, *neo-pragmatic realists* will build up their knowledge taking into account mainly *imagination*. The scope of *image/fantasy* will be a source of comprehension of the world. Differently from the other two realists, the latter will take into account the

whole range of human perceptions (sensorial and intellectual). If this is right, one might ask what kind of branding model can be grounded on a neo-pragmatic realist approach.

Neumeier's branding definition, in vigor both in academia and industry, may well help to answer this question. This author defines branding as the process that strictly connects good creativity with a good strategy in order to build a brand (Neumeier 2016). For Neumeier, one of the better-known designers in the industry and more influential *design-led* brand consultants, the origin of branding is in the scope of creativity, where anything is possible. Based on this, one research supposition is that, in the context of branding, the *neo-pragmatic realism* tends to be *design-led* rather than *marketing-led* (Fig. 3).
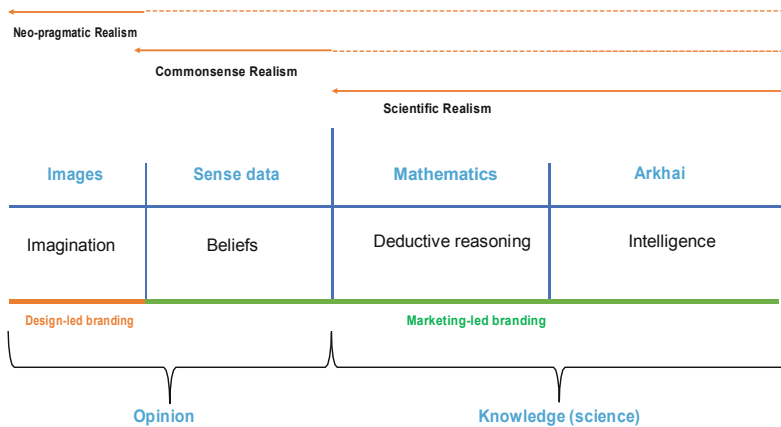

Fig. 3. Branding approaches adapted to Plato's analogy of the segmented line.

The present ongoing research aims at contributing to the branding research discussion by investigating in what ways a branding positioning system could be fueled by all sort of realisms. Therefore, the research question is:

How Can Branding Benefit from a Neo-Pragmatic Realist Approach?
The research supposition is that by embracing a *neo-pragmatic realist* branding approach, it will be possible to manage the shortcomings of a purely *marketing*-oriented approach when dealing with elements of reality which are in permanent change, such as very basic everyday social practices. Hence, *design-led* branding can contribute to expanding the scope of understanding branding based on the most basic field of human imagination, the most authentic personal experiences.

2   Methodology

This research will follow a constructivist-interpretivist paradigm (Schwandt 1998; Denzin and Lincoln 2013). Heidegger's phenomenology (Guignon 1983; 1990; Heidegger 2010; Sheehan 2015) and hermeneutic (Couzens 1999; Dreyfus 1991;

Heidegger 2010) of everydayness constitutes its methodological approach. Through phenomenology, the research will identify, using observation and description, the conditions of possibility of everyday branding practices. Hermeneutic is key to the understanding of what counts as real and meaningful for people in everyday life.

The theoretical framework is grounded on Beverland's (2018), Neumeier's (2006; 2016), Keller's (2013) and Holt's (2006) branding theories. The epistemological approach is rooted in Plato's truth theories, through the interpretation of Szlezak (1999) and Heidegger (2013): the research has made use of Plato's theory of the name (Cratylus, 383a–440e); Plato's analogy of the segmented line (Republic, 509e–511e); and Plato's cave allegory (Republic, 514a–517c). The research has also made used of Hilary Putnam's (1987) approach to realism.

Phenomenology and hermeneutic of everydayness are focused on analysing the basic structures of everyday life. Therefore, this research considers them the most valuable methodological approaches to start to work out new *design-oriented* branding models. Design is a discipline which aims to optimise people's everyday life and make it easier. Hence, the philosophical approach (through phenomenology and hermeneutics) is accurate and relevant to explore and develop new *design-led* models.

For practical reasons, the research has focused on the Food and Drink industry in the United Kingdom. The research has analysed brands that have developed *design-led* campaigns allowing the audiences to customise labels with their names. Three brands have been chosen for research: one international global; one British global; and one British local. Through archive research, all the data regarding Coca Cola, Johnnie Walker and Marmite's *design-led* communication campaigns of the last five years will be collected, focusing especially on the campaigns: "Customize A Bottle" (Coca Cola); "Design your own Johnnie Walker label" (Johnnie Walker); and "The personalised Marmite jar" (Marmite) (Fig. 4).
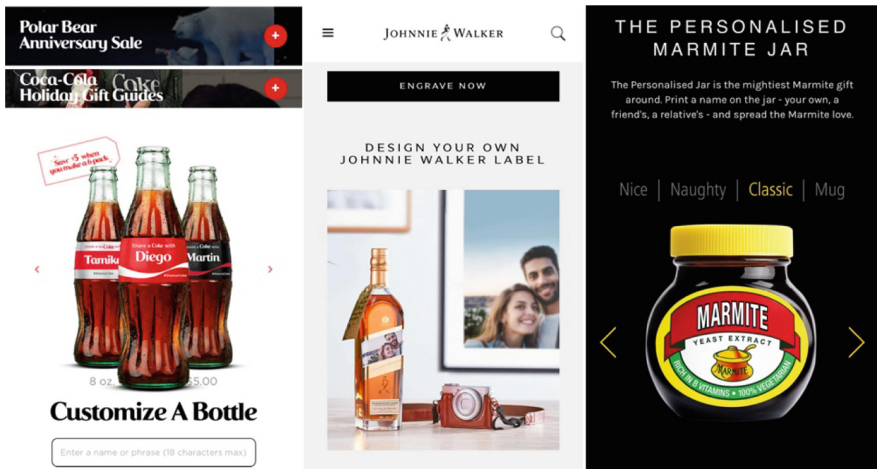

Fig. 4. Design-led communication campaigns based on customisation.

Through qualitative content analysis (Bauer 2006), employing semiotics (Barthes 1991; Kress and Van Leeuwen 2006) and critical analysis, the research will identify how their design-led branding approach has reinforced them to be positioned among the best brands in the United Kingdom Food and Drink industry.

3   Findings and Discussion

In trying to unveil how a *neo-pragmatic realist* approach can benefit the research about branding, the research has found out so far:

1. Plato's allegory of the cave anticipates an answer: it explains how a *neo-pragmatic realist* approach could underpin other kinds of *realist* ones (Fig. 5). In other words, how understanding basic social practices could be a source of knowledge.

	First stage: The shadows in the underground cave	Second stage: a liberation of man within the cave.	Third stage: genuine liberation of man to primordial light.
Scientific Realism	There is not truth nor knowledge.	There is not truth nor knowledge	Intellectual and universal knowledge. Deductive thinking. Sense makers for the men in the cave.
Commonsense Realism	There is not true knowledge. Second class sense data.	The knowledge proceeds from the sense data that arises from experience. Beliefs. Sense makers for themselves and the ones underground the cave.	This is an extension of the sensorial knowledge.
Neo-pragmatic Realism	A proper understanding of the world. The shadows are experienced by the prisoners and give sense to their life. Imagination. Personal Sphere. Social Practices	This is an extension of the sensorial knowledge.	This is an extension of the sensorial knowledge.

Fig. 5. Plato's cave allegory. Design approach projection: how do humans learn to understand the world?

2. Coca Cola is a brand that fulfils its promise: "Refresh the world". Its campaign "Taste the Feeling" shows a brand delivering a message of freshness; inspiring moments of optimism and happiness: Coca Cola is not just a drink but a feeling. In terms of a *commonsensical realist* approach, it revolves around the feeling of enjoying the moment whatever the audiences' circumstances could be: young people, men, women, gay community, older generations, etc.
Through design-led strategy, by customising labels, it seizes the personal sphere of their audiences, going beyond the common elements of a group, and getting the specific features of what *fresh and fun* can mean in the basic field of everyday social practices.

3. Johnnie Walker developed what is called, in words of Umberto Eco, an "Open Work" (Crow 2016). Its campaign "Keep Walking" is a journey which content is given by a walker. "Walker" who could be anyone. Through an open narrative, the brand embraces the scope of a *commonsense realism*: all beliefs revolve around and are rooted in one strong belief: keep walking, keep up, do not give up. Through *design-led* branding (design your label) the brand seizes the personal sphere of the customer and, therefore, a *neo-pragmatic realist* realm. Hence, the brand perception is co-created and shaped between company and audience.

4. Marmite Campaign "You love it or you hate it" is also an open work narrative that meaningfully position the brand among its audience by forcing a choice: love or hate. Its *commonsense realism* revolves around the alternance of two basic and strong feelings: love and hate, and the choice between them. This brand identity has allowed Marmite to identify itself with political (cultural) icons that had been central in periods of change and crisis, when people was divided and, therefore, revolved around opposite feelings of love and hate. That was the case of Marmite's label with Margaret Tatcher's face. Through *design-led branding* the brand appropriated a cultural icon. Moreover, deepen into its *design-led* strategy, Marmite has reached its audiences' personal dimension, where creativity and fantasy are more present and allowed (Fig. 6).
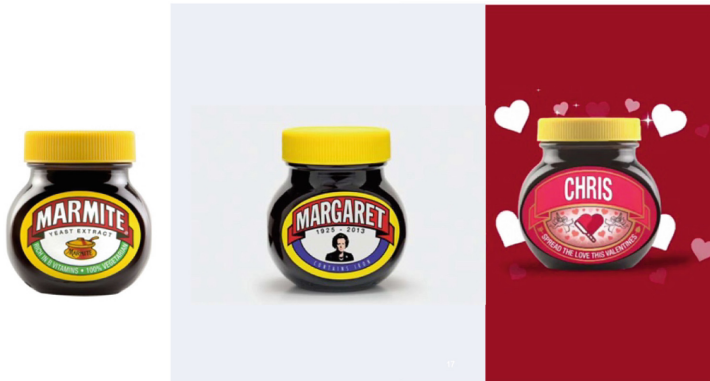

Fig. 6. On the left, Marmite's regular label; on the middle, a tribute to Margaret Thatcher, after her death in 2013; on the right a customised label.

4 Implications

Design-led branding (linked mainly to a *neo-pragmatic realist* approach) could be a reliable source of authentic knowledge. Therefore, it may be possible to say that design is at the base of a *human-centred* branding.

In a world where globalisation is struggling with local claims, a *neo-pragmatic realism*, which drives *design-led* branding, can be a source of innovation and a powerful tool to manage the specific contextual issues that companies and audiences could face nowadays. A *new-pragmatic realist* approach includes everyday human practices,

acknowledges human contexts' complexity, and avoids generalisations that can mislead communication campaigns.

In practical terms, a *new-pragmatic realist* approach, through *design-led* branding, could be the main access to branding for hundreds of new businesses and startups which do not have the financial power to develop massive campaigns or to become iconic brands. These new businesses will start targeting and getting their audiences from their more close and familiar communities.

5   Originality and Contribution

So far, the discussion among specialists has revolved around how to make *marketing-oriented* branding models more effective (Keller 2013; Kapferer 2015); or how to make them work complementarily (Calabretta et al. 2016; Beverland et al. 2016; Beverland et al. 2017). There are still very few developments regarding the epistemological assumptions of the branding positioning systems. Therefore, this research has focused on the analysis of these assumptions, being its contribution double: on the one hand, by trying to expand the scope of branding research and methodological approaches; on the other hand, by highlighting design as a relevant domain in branding practices which demands be developed further.

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