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From Marketing Ideology to Branding Ideology

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This special issue of the Journal is concerned with the globalization of marketing ideology. That topic raises the questions of what constitutes a marketing ideology and what might be its status on the global scene. The different approaches adopted in this special issue acknowledge the breadth of the topic and illuminate the intersection of marketing with the basic forces of cultures, politics, religion, conflicts, and a dismal financial debt crisis in the Western nations. To gain perspective, it seems relevant to observe the historical trajectory of marketing ideology and its likely continued path. To this end, we trace marketing ideology from a 19th century pre-marketing ideology, to its initial focus on production/distribution technology, to its early 20th century focus on customer orientation and branding, to its current focus on network conversations and the significance of modern brand ubiquity. Using these insights, we then discuss two perspectives on future development and raise some potentially relevant questions.

Introduction

The different approaches adopted in this special issue acknowledge the breadth of the topic “globalization of marketing ideology” and illuminate the many intersections of marketing with the basic forces of cultures, politics, religion, conflicts, and a dismal financial debt crisis in the Western nations that will not be quickly resolved. To gain a historical perspective, our commentary addresses three questions: What is a marketing ideology? How did it change over time? And what are its current and potential trajectories within the global economy?

Borrowing from Crockett and Wallendorf (2004, 512), we define a marketing ideology as a world-view found among marketing practitioners, researchers, and commentators, including ideas and values that cohere, that are used publicly to justify marketing action, and that shape and are shaped by market interactions and political regulations. Any marketing ideology defines objectives, strategies, and research topics, and often contains a causal narrative of how marketing helps to increase the wealth of the nation(s) (Crockett and Wallendorf 2004, 512). “Cognitively, ideology refers to what one ‘sees’ and responds to in the social world” (Dawson 2001, 4-5).

When marketing ideology is a particular world-view that prevails among marketing practitioners, researchers, and the general public at a particular time and context, it appears worthwhile to visit its historical path and try to imagine its future. Towards this end, we will distinguish four key historical eras including their predominant marketing world-views, sets of ideas and values, and academic research foci. Then we will use these insights to develop ideas about what may lie beyond the present day.

Marketing Ideology pre-1900: Mercantilism & Virtuous Tradesmen

Although writers such as Aristotle and Plato have commented (adversely) on the nature of trade

as early as 350 B.C., Renaissance and Enlightenment thinkers brought more specific attention to the way commerce ought to proceed. As E. H. Shaw (1995) notes, four key textbooks from the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries - i.e. “The Marchants Avizo” (Browne 1957 [1589]), “An Essay on Drapery” (Scott 1635), “The Complete Tradesman” (Merchant 1684), and “The Complete English Tradesman” (Defoe 1726) - mainly discuss facts, data, and practical actions that characterize good tradesmen. During that period, the commercial ideology was shaped by mercantilism (Smith 1977 [1776]), a system with strong government control, monopolies, high tariffs, search for exotic substances to serve elites, and exploitation of colonial resources.

As Mark Tadajewski (2009) points out, the practice of marketing served consumer needs well before doing so arose as the “marketing concept.” That is clearly manifest from the attention to customer preferences displayed on ancient Roman brothel walls in Pompei to the provision of coffee, tea, and sugar documented by Woodruff Smith in his delightful volume on *Consumption and the Making of Respectability, 1600-1800*.

The mercantilist world-view was guided by the belief that, to please God, a merchant had to protect his reputation by paying his bills. It also perpetuated the idea that international trade is a zero-sum-game. Hence, marketing protagonists of the time believed that not technological progress but imperialist acquisitions expanded the economic wealth of their country. This notion aligns with Thomas R. Malthus’s--then popular and now frequently reiterated-- notion of limited resources and his related warning that the earth will eventually fail to provide its rapidly growing population with basic resources (Malthus 1809), an issue again being debated in the media with the announcement of the birth of the seven billionth child and the dire effects of global warming.

Marketing Ideology 1900 – 1945: Production & Distribution

Marketing activity certainly began with the first human exchanges, but as readers of the Journal are no doubt aware, the modern idea of marketing arose about 100 years ago in the wake of major technological innovations deriving from the industrial revolution. The social climate at the turn of the 20th century was inspired by a strong economic upswing. Salesmen were perceived of as a “proud symbol of American commerce,” (Converse 1959, 2) and business barons like Morgan, Rockefeller, and Carnegie became the idols of an adventurous and upcoming free market society . The washing machine, the refrigerator, and affordable motorized vehicles were introduced to the markets, and, by using their dollars, people began to “vote” on a product’s success or failure (Hotchkiss 1938).

The nature of market exchange, after periods of intimate subsistence trade among families and face-to-face barter within and among tribes (Malinowski 1961), had fully developed a system of exchanging goods for money, which included the rise of the traveling salesmen trundling across the land in their “coupes” to show samples and take orders. As the marketplace gradually expanded through the benefits of new preservation and transportation opportunities, practical concerns with market distribution sparked the emergence of marketing practice, science, and ideology. When Fred W. Powell (1910) first used the term “marketing” in the *Quarterly Journal of Economics* he addressed problems of distributing Californian fresh fruits to East-Coast consumers. Major contributions on organizing market distribution followed by Butler (1917), Brown Jr. (1925), Cherington (1921), Clark (1924), Converse (1927), and Maynard et al (1939) soon after.

The years following World War I, up until Black Friday, Oct. 10th, 1929, were often characterized as the Golden Twenties (Bubik 1996), as the “Merchandizing Era,” (Hotchkiss 1938, 241), and the “chain store decade” (Converse 1959, 37). Marketing activity was on the

rise, and the marketing ideology expressed a world-view that featured a successful marketer as a person who profitably mastered the complexities of national advertising campaigns, sales management, and strategic product policy. In the decade from 1920 to 1930, 29 books on general marketing were published that summarized the rising body of marketing knowledge (Bartels 1988, 358). In the 1930s, institutions such as the “American Marketing Association” (1937) and the “Journal of Marketing” (1936) were founded to organize and support the emerging marketing research and practice.

Concomitant with the rise of marketing activity and the consumer mass market was the rise of criticism of it and the need to control it. Building on the “muckraker” tradition, the Food and Drug Administration was created to protect the public interest. Also, by the middle of the 20th century, scholarly research had developed such marketing notions as a call for customer orientation by Shaw (1912), which later grew into the “marketing concept.” Clark suggested the elimination of middlemen in 1924, an idea that became *en vogue* again with the rise of digital disintermediation in the Internet economy around the 2000s years. At the other side of the sales counter, with the growth of competition and the ability to make choices, consumer resistance became a topic and phenomenon of interest in the 1930s (Fisk 1967). In addition to criticism and regulatory control was added the idea of self-control or the social responsibility of marketing action (Fisk 1967; Lazer 1969), and now thrives under the notion of sustainable, positive, or green marketing (section adopted from Luedicke 2006).

The early modern marketing ideology was a pragmatic one. Edmund Brown (1925, 3) of the University of North Carolina defined marketing as “the process of transferring goods through commercial channels from producer to consumer.” That definition implies a service orientation, as if marketers were primarily facilitators and providers, executing a quartermaster function for

society. But for the word “commercial,” which inserts the profit motive, the marketing ideology seemed centered on the marketers’ noble pursuit of supplying war-scarred consumers with that they needed and wanted. Practitioners and scholars thus focused on improving the ability to produce goods beyond the level of subsistence, to make them available for exchange, to profit from the division of labor and its competitive advantage, and to use the new equipment for communication and distribution. Brown (1925, 3) also argued from his inductive scientific stance that every economic problem could be viewed both as an individual concern and as that of society. Brown’s thinking reflected the view of marketing as a function whose primary goal was to advance processes and technologies that are directly required to place goods in the consumer’s possession, thus elevating the study of marketing channels and logistics (Stern & El-Ansary 1977).

This technology-focused marketing ideology was a nuts-and-bolts one, like that from the earlier centuries but without their moral admonitions. It rather uncritically took a free market system with little regulation for granted and it did not place much emphasis on the consumer because generating sales had not yet become the defining engine of the commercial system.

This ideology’s time was a transitional period. Consumers responded to marketing ideology and practices by buying at unprecedented rates. But they also began to demand “information and protection” from market forces and asked for “quality merchandise commensurate with the price they pay” (Dameron 1938, 271; Sorensen 1941). This development reflected the notion that the marketing ideology had adopted a propensity to overprice and deceive to make ends meet in an increasingly competitive environment. Detractors such as Ralph Nader and *Consumers’ Reports* criticized industry practices and government agencies intervened. The Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval was a response to this situation along with

the rise of warranties and the Sears Roebuck & Co. promise of Guaranteed Satisfaction.

Marketing Ideology 1945-1989: Customer Orientation & Brand Competition

Throughout the Cold War period from 1945 until 1989, the development of production, distribution, and sales technologies, and their ramifications continued to flourish. But the post-World War II marketing environment was different. The newly rebuilt production lines provided plenitude, competition, and an abundance of choice. This state of affairs entailed two significant changes in marketing ideology; the rise of marketing as a “concept” of “customer orientation” on top of a “function” centered on sales and distribution, and the rise of “brands” that producers and consumers use as symbols and differentiation marks.

The linchpin article capturing the first of these shifts was Robert Keith’s “The Marketing Revolution,” that appeared in the *Journal of Marketing* in 1960, formulating The Marketing Concept. Keith asserted the emerging notion that meeting the needs of consumers was the starting point for successful, profitable marketing. The marketing concept led to an intensified interest in the human aspects of the marketplace, and that interest fueled the explosive growth of marketing research. In the 1960s, marketing scholars began to develop powerful marketing management concepts and behavioral theories that are still in use today (Bubik 1996; Fullerton 1988). The most prominent examples are McCarthy’s *4 P’s* (1964), Borden’s *Marketing Mix* (1965), Ajzen and Fishbein’s *Measurement of Mental Attitudes* (1970), the Boston Consulting Group’s *Portfolio Matrix* (ca. 1970), Porter’s *5-Forces* (1979) and the *SWOT analysis* (ca. 1978). Next to these managerial approaches, psychological and sociological theories and methods had begun to broaden marketing research and practice. Managers of competing brands sought to better understand the increasing segmentation of the mass markets. In trying to account for

consumer segmentation, however, broad stroke demographic information became unsatisfying and less sufficient.

The radical turn from selling material to satisfying consumer desires sparked an inevitable progression from an ideology of marketing as a function concerned with distribution, towards an ideology of marketing as a concept concerned with customer orientation. Levy addressed this newly emerging, consumer-centric ideology in 1963 by defining marketing as “a process of providing customers with parts of a potential mosaic from which they, as artists of their own lifestyles, can pick and choose to develop the composition that for the time may seem the best” (Levy 1963, 150).

This shift from the seller’s perspective to appreciation of the customer’s motivations and perceptions entailed the second significant change in marketing ideology of this era. As (Schwarzkopf 2008, 31) recounts, it “was not before the mid-1950s however and the arrival of David Ogilvy on Madison Avenue that the idea of the brand image became a common staple within the global advertising industry [...] The British immigrant to the US, Ogilvy, had read about the notion that a brand held holistic and personal characteristics in a Harvard Business Review article by Sidney Levy and Burleigh Gardner in March 1955 [...]. The article under the title ‘The Product and the Brand’ was a revelation for Ogilvy and the rest of the advertising world.”

In their influential study, Gardner and Levy (1955) argued that marketers acted mainly on the basis of two ostensibly prevailing consumer motives, “(a) the striving to be economical and (b) the desire to emulate people of higher status.” And that marketing professionals thus built their strategies around the proverbial “idea that housewives [were] preoccupied solely with the whiteness of their laundry“ (Gardner and Levy 1955, 34). Based on innovative socio-cultural

research, Gardner and Levy showed that consumers' have (symbolic) brand images and more complex perceptions, thoughts, feelings about brands than marketers acknowledged.

The rising concept of the brand helped marketers to define their buyer segments and give focus to managers' concern with competing successfully by gaining and retaining brand enthusiasts (Bastos and Levy 2011). The vocabulary grew to reflect these changes. To the formulations indicated by "brand name" and "brand image" were added notions such as "brand switching" and "brand loyalty" that altered the world-view of the marketing people.

Consumers and critics continued to respond vigorously with their purchasing and their criticisms. Vance Packard (1977) blamed *The Hidden Persuaders* and marketers were accused of creating artificial problems such as bad breath or yellow teeth only to sell Listerine mouthwash and whitening tooth-paste; for discriminating against buyers of different races (Sexton 1971), or of hijacking public realms through sponsorship. The media constituted a major force that influenced both branding developments and consumer criticism at the time. Moore and Reid (2008, 24) highlight this point by framing the evolution of branding as "a phenomenon that could have only occurred starting at the end of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth century, due to the media (TV, radio, print advertising, e-marketing, etc.)."

This period's market ideology, which was focused on customer orientation and branding, was best suited to creating and satisfying consumers' needs within an increasingly competitive market environment. But it was not yet attuned to facing online social media, the rise of Eastern markets, or truly global brand competition.

Marketing Ideology 1989 - 2011: Network Conversations & Brand Ubiquity

The concept of customer orientation continued to define the relevant marketing objectives, strategies, and research topics up to the present time. As a case in point, almost 100 years after Shaw (1912) introduced the idea of customer orientation, Gebhardt, Carpenter and Sherry (2006) presented a model in the *Journal of Marketing* that explains how companies can become more market/customer oriented.

In 1989, the Iron Curtain fell and opened many Eastern national borders for global trade. Online communication technologies also began to thrive and open new market opportunities. Driven by instant and global online communication, Western consumers became more critical, elusive, and contradictory (Firat and Venkatesh 1995). The new social media gave rise to “super-empowered individuals” (Friedman 1999, 14) and groups that can leverage brands from nameless marks to global superstars within a few days, and take them down in the same time. Humorous videos such as David Carrol’s famously influential “United [Airlines] Breaks Guitars” song on YouTube (see youtube.com/watch?v=5YGc4zOqozo and Deighton and Kornfeld 2010) are able to render a promising marketing plan entirely obsolete within a day. In the fashion publishing industry, global networks turned some enthusiastic consumers into globally admired bloggers that - like “Fashionista”, “The Satorialist”, or “The Cherry Blossom Girl” - became affluent women’s primary source for fashion inspiration, thus forcing established fashion magazines to rethink their traditional value propositions. The Wall Street Journal has moved dramatically from its original focus on the financial district to a wide-ranging and sophisticated discussion of world cuisines, wine, architecture, *haute couture*, and all the arts.

Thus, in some corners of the Western markets, marketers send out messages that consumers discuss with their local friends, but others send out messages that consumers evaluate, disseminate, reinterpret or overthrow instantly and globally. The related marketing ideology

gained a new narrative stand that considered some markets as conversations. As Levine and colleagues (Levine et al. 1999) portray it in “The Cluetrain Manifesto”, a powerful global conversation has begun. Through the Internet, people discover and invent new ways to share knowledge with electronic speed. As a direct result, markets get smarter—and are getting smarter faster than many companies.

Marketing ideology in our current period tends to focus more on branding. The concept of the brand (Bastos and Levy 2011) turned out to be useful for focusing the manifold and multichannel marketing efforts in complex market environments. As it grew in importance, the concept of the brand morphed from a trademark and a logo into a complex network of social discourses that is animated by multiple brand interest groups talking about and materially expressing their ideas of the brand’s intended meaning (Mühlbacher et al. 2006).

The growth of brand management and the new common use of the term also disseminated the idea that everything and everyone has a brand image. A sweep through everyday reporting in newspaper and magazine articles, and the Internet, shows the diffusion of the brand idea and the broad adoption of a branding-focused marketing ideology. Today, branding occurs at all levels of identity, such that once commodities have been identified, they become brands in themselves.

An example of this happening explicitly is noted by Emily Fredrix (2010) in “Baby carrots sport bold new look.” She says, “Baby-carrot farmers are launching a campaign that pitches the little, orange, crunchy snacks as daring, fun and naughty—just like junk food... The goal is to get people to think of baby carrots as a brand they can get excited about.—not just a plain, old vegetable... ‘This campaign is about turning baby carrots into a brand,’ said Jeff Dunn, CEO of Bolthouse Farms, the nation’s top baby carrot producer... ‘We think ultimately long-term here we’re going to turn it into a very vital brand in the mind of consumers.’” (p. A13). The

marketer of a clementine citrus fruit is amazed at how rapidly his brand named Cuties has become practically a generic term.

In this wake, political parties, churches, schools, museums, the military, celebrities and all other individuals come to be understood and then “managed” as brands. Margot Wallace (2010), for instance, consults to museums and writes on her website that “Branding is no longer a marketing decision but a business imperative. Today's museums must compete for visitors' attention not only with fellow cultural institutions but a myriad of other leisure venues, from theme parks to concert halls.” Similarly, Eric Gorski (2010) notes on the internet: “Consider it a cautionary tale for colleges embarking on marketing and branding campaigns designed to set themselves apart in the cutthroat competition to gain prestige and grab their share of a shrinking student pool. Fifteen years ago, the term ‘branding’ was virtually unheard of in higher education. The idea of selling college like a luxury vehicle was viewed as antithetical to the academic mission. Although pockets of resistance remain, it’d be difficult these days to find a four-year college that hasn’t gone through the institutional soul searching and subsequent marketing blitz that typically goes with being a ‘Brand U.’ ...Pushing the marketing envelope carries risks and rewards.”

These articles reflect the thriving dynamic that once people, things, institutions or even nations begin to recognize themselves as “in competition” with other people, things, institutions, or nations, they turn their family names and professional offerings into brands, give them a logo, a DNA, and a competitive positioning, and cultivate them systematically (e.g. Füller et al. 2008). As branding grew and flourished, marketing thinkers who believed that only what gets measured gets done developed measures of the financial value of brands. David Aaker (1996) and Kevin

Keller (1993) wrote extensively on the topic of “brand equity,” fitting the branding ideology into a traditional money-making marketing ideology.

Consumers also jumped on the “brand wagon.” From their side of the marketing exchange, they accept brands from product owners, but in doing so brand themselves to meet their own needs and to create their own identities. Consumers determine which brands to buy or refuse, and what pattern of brands to organize into their lifestyles (Levy 1963). Consumers see commercial brands as having “brand personalities” (Aaker 1997) and as such come to have “brand relationships” (Fournier 1998) with them. Consumers also modify brands and use them for their own purposes. They may consume them personally, privately, or join a “brand community” and become active in the “co-creation” of the brand (Muñiz and O’Guinn 2001; Schau et al. 2009).

Through the perpetuation of the classic colonial tradition of using cheap foreign labor for domestic cost leadership, Western companies gradually leveraged the labor markets of Eastern economies and thus created new affluent consumers (Zhao and Belk 2008). Aided by training international marketing professionals in marketing technology and ideology at Western universities, marketing academics also contributed to creating new and ambitious international competitors. Two exploratory surveys among marketing undergraduate students in the U.S. from 2006 and 2008 provide some indexical insight. In the first study students rated brands from China, Indonesia, India, and South Korea predominantly as sources of raw material, cheap labor, and cheaply made products (i.e. fitting the first three levels of Levy’s seven-step developmental process) and Japan, France, Germany, and the United States as sources of good value, high quality, and creativity. In the second survey two years later, however, Japan and South Korea stood out for the progress they have made in elevating their brands. Although these surveys were

taken as a small casual sample, the results are clear and consistent, and show some subtlety. It is striking to note that in 1991 Levy saw doubt expressed in the media about Asia's ability to be creative (1991, 443), but 15-17 years later both Japan and South Korea stand out for the progress they have made in elevating their brands. In this process of development, the Western marketing ideology and its technologies are adapted to local needs and market traditions that Western marketers may fail to fully comprehend.

At the end of the 2000s decade, marketing ideology appears to have preserved its basic world-view and general ideas about its socio-cultural contribution, but significantly extended the technological keyboard on which it strikes its appealing chords. The concept of the brand as a complex socio-cultural phenomenon entered center stage of the Western marketing ideology and started to unfold its power in Eastern markets (Cayla and Eckhardt 2008).

Differences in culture may make differences in how the branding ideology is incorporated. Karababa (2012) rejects the imposition of a single historical trajectory of western modernization, saying "there are alternative historical trajectories in the early modern period which have formed today's multiple modern consumer cultures" (p. 13). The particularities of the Ottoman context with its aesthetic, emotional, and playful communicative actions are examined as an example of Islamic ethics. Similarly, Gao (2012) discusses the consequences for consumer rights in considering Chinese nationalism and its impact on foreign brands.

Marketing Ideology 2012 & beyond?

Where is marketing ideology going from here? Traditional forces resist change: financial systems with their marketing of money and its derivatives and their love of leveraging, are controversial influences; and governments fight universal trade by imposing protective tariffs. Thus, we have the first of three scenarios. The "dark scenario" is one in which constructive free-

market forces are offset or interfered with by nationalists, religious fanatics, and power-hungry, corrupt, and dishonest actors who implement the worst of marketing ideologies

But hopefully and optimistically, let us imagine that John Maynard Keynes was right in 1930 when he predicted in some “nice scenario” that one day capitalism will have fulfilled its goal of providing consumers with what they need and consumers will spend more time “singing together” rather than spending more money. The gross domestic product of Austria, for instance, rose 1.6% in average per year since 2000, whereas the new, emerging EU countries Slovakia or Latvia grew 4.7 percent in average (WKO 2011). This might be just a temporary phenomenon, but it is also possible that the more saturated Western European consumers decide to stick to their present consumption levels rather than wanting to spend ever more and more (Uchatius 2011, 23-24). The marketing ideology that has measured success in terms of growth of shareholder wealth may face continued stagnation, or even an overall decline in spending as part of the struggle to reduce indebtedness.

Under such conditions, Western marketing ideology may heed Kotler’s (2011, 123) call for “reinventing marketing” based on balancing sustainability goals with “Something between a zero-growth goal and a modest-growth goal” (Kotler 2011, 133)? Will marketing ideology accept that wants “are culturally influenced and strongly shaped by marketing and other forces” (Kotler 2011, 133) and then strive for creating less wants? What would such an ideology look like? And are we really facing a commercial zero-sum game - as was believed in the mercantilist, pre-marketing era? The emerging ideology seems to note that growth is appreciated as long as it does not exploit people and nature.

Once consumers and political decision makers begin to act upon their calls for more sustainability (cf. Devinney et al. 2010), marketers will inevitably use their skills for delivering

more value from fewer resources, and watch their reputation even more. Reputation, in turn, is the cornerstone of branding ideology, which brings us to our most idealistic outcome. In the third “bright scenario”, Let us imagine that global consumers ask more and more for marketers’ to do “good,” i.e. not only catering to their customers’ diverse needs in ever new and interesting ways, but also to their moral views of the world. Then commercial entities will become hypersensitive about their brands while furthering their goals. As brands enter center stage, marketing becomes a function of branding, instead of branding being a function of marketing. If success with marketing was to be profitable, success with branding is to be regarded as having a desirable reputation.

Levy notes in 1974 that branding achieves a desirable reputation by creating an ideal blend of function (products, tools, attributes, clever use of resources), humanity (psycho-social, segment, culture benefits), and aesthetics (the arts and all the senses) (Levy 1974, see Figure 1).

Insert branding pyramid figure about here

Branding creates its own goals and sense of desirability that is attractive because it is not necessarily focused on making money in the way that marketing is traditionally perceived to be. Milton Friedman envisioned a free market qualified only by avoiding deceit and fraud; but creating the reputation of a brand has the more interesting purpose of developing a particular character and drawing adherence from its devotees. The inclusion of creative arts is one of its special merits. For example, the website <http://www.brandimage.com> says “Design is the Best

Way to Build Brands. We believe design is one of the most powerful tools for brands to create strong relationships with their customers.” The inclusion of moral values into the brands’ narratives is another special merit of branding ideology. Holt (2002) notes, for example, that consumers will eventually demand from companies to become “citizen artists,” e.g. as stalwart citizens of the community that they serve. Yet, what is considered a “contribution” might differ largely among societies or (brand) communities, even with respect to “good” ecological conduct (Luedicke et al. 2010).

For example, youth and subcultural brands may colloquially be so *good* that the street says they are *bad*. Similarly, the most successful brand is both *hot* and *cool* at the same time. To be greatly appealing is to be cool. To be greatly appealing and immediately desirable is also to be hot. An informal survey among undergraduates asked for the names of brands that were cool. Another survey asked for the names of brands that were hot. Two brands stood out for the most mentions. Both Nike and Apple were named as cool, testimony to their excellence in serving the market with their products; but the top brand named also as hot was Apple for the immediacy and intensity of its appeal. The many obituaries for Steve Jobs stressed the role of both technology and aesthetics as keys to his creation of the world’s most successful brand.

How did Apple deliver on the emerging moral values dimension? Apple’s devices may have raised the aesthetics bar for computer products, but also helped consumers overcome their frustrations with the “paradoxes of technology” (Mick and Fournier 1998). For instance, most prior IT products enabled consumers to do many things more efficiently, but also imposed a feeling of incompetence to master the technology. In the wake of this predominant achievement, few Apple enthusiasts cared enough about the computers’ ecological footprint or the company’s

handling of exploitative labor conditions to not buy the latest Apple device. Or is it just the lack of as competitor with a better reputation?

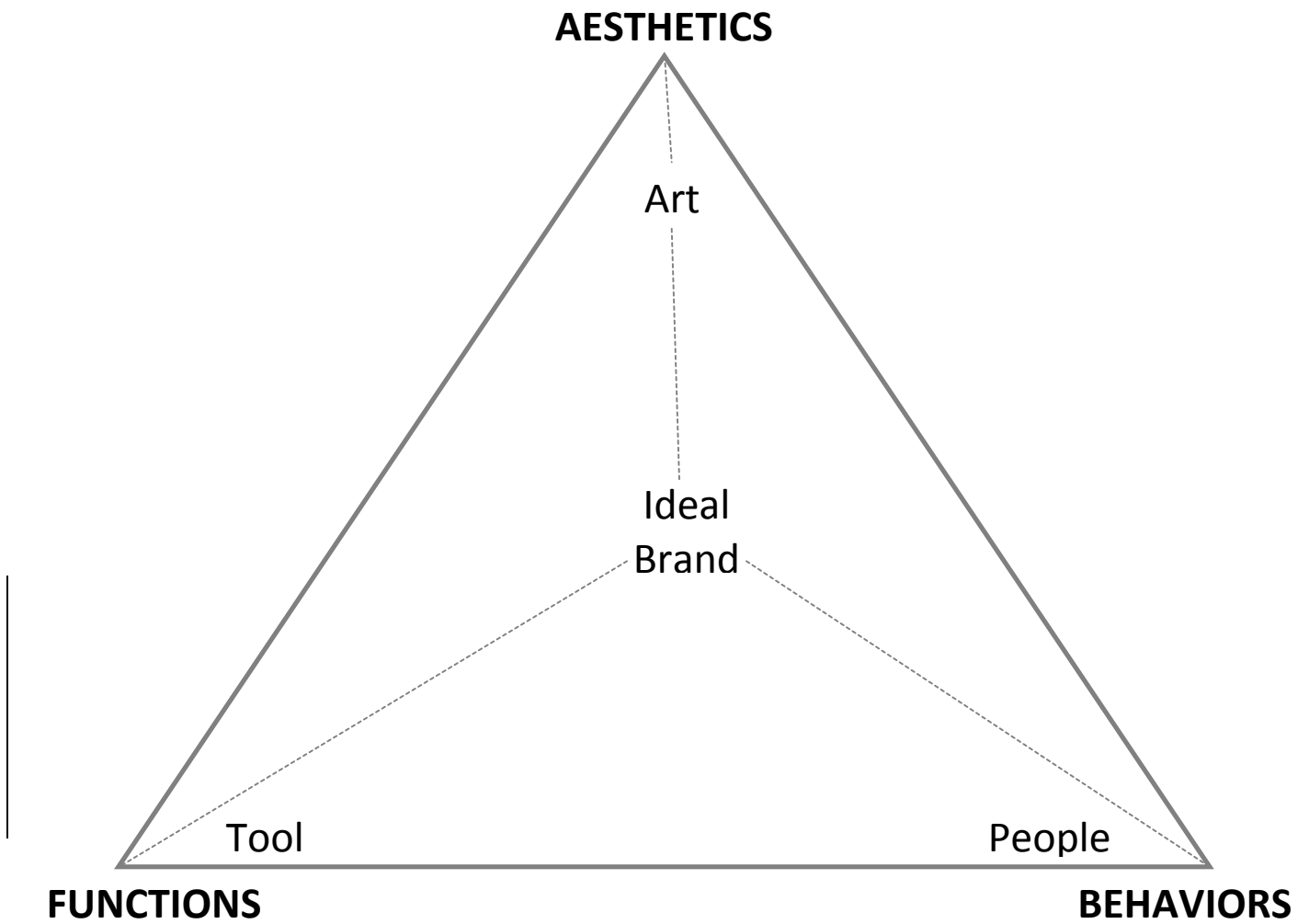
The point is not that corporations become self-sacrificing benefactors of the public or will abandon the profit motive without which they would fail, but that since the 1950s they have become especially sensitive to the need for the socio-psychological and aesthetic enhancement of their brands. They are more aware than ever of the necessity of building relationships with their customers based on more than product function but on the salience of reputation. A recent outstanding example is the way the AFA Company had to file for bankruptcy because its useful ground beef product became distastefully known as “pink slime.”

In practice, also, when marketing ideology and branding ideology are in conflict, the outcome may be determined by the competitive views in a society of laws. A paradigmatic case in point is the attempt by Rosemont Copper, a Canadian company, to create an open pit copper mine in southern Arizona. In traditional fashion, Rosemont seeks permission to excavate copper for global sale, to meet the great demand for copper, especially in China. If successful, it will profit enormously by mining tons of copper on land that is both public and private. The company needs permits from federal, state, and local agencies. Residents in the area are divided about the proposal. On the company’s side are the potential jobs and claims of beneficial effects on the economy; opposed are claims about the destructive immediate and long term environmental effects on the water, the air, and the scenery, indicating a negative physical and aesthetic impact on the public. Rosemont is expending much money and an intense effort to influence the decision with placating proposals about mitigation and restoration, and assertions of its legal rights. It is promoted by a local citizen who ran for mayor of Tucson; and it seeks to enhance the perception of its brand virtue by full page advertisements congratulating happy-looking student

recipients of Rosemont Copper scholarships. Agency bureaucrats and the courts will decide the outcome.

In summary, we propose that owing to an intensifying and globalizing competition branding may overtake marketing ideology as a more glamorous and sophisticated as well as virtuous idea. It means having a vision that is implemented by suitable forms of expression, tangibly, with imaginative language and artistic visualization rather than pursuing less inspiring commercial goals. Branding, like all other human activities, will vary with the motives of the brander. Like Apple, an ideal brand comes to be the epitome of its product, hopefully blending its function with visual distinction and great human service. Perhaps an ideology to strive for.

Figure 1: Ideal Brand Pyramid



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