



# Investigating archetype-icon transformation in brand marketing

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## Abstract

**Purpose** – The archetype paradigm has been gaining importance as a marketing approach to global branding, advocating that strategists should create archetypal symbolism to engage with fundamental human psychology. The study reported here is based on consumer imagination theory, which aims to offers a means to determine whether a brand archetype will transform into an icon, and thereby achieve the maximum effect.

**Design/methodology/approach** – In-depth interviews with 810 loyal customers of the Nike Air Jordan brand took place in the Asia Pacific, Western Europe, and North America regions of the world. Sub-samples were selected and interviewed by research assistants in each sampling location, under central control to ensure that all profiles matched the known characteristics of the population under study. A relatively unstructured first phase generated question topics, which were transformed into verbatim sentences on cards, which respondents subsequently sorted. Matrix analysis elicited relationships among the resultant constructs, in terms of degree and direction. Focus group discussions were conducted to refine the emerging findings. Data were subjected to “open”, “axial”, and “selective” coding. Key concepts and relationships were finally incorporated into a fully developed model.

**Findings** – A “brand archetype-icon transformation” model derived from the analysed data suggests a plan for the implementation of the “archetypal marketing” strategy, combining four theoretical elements under the overall coordination of a “comprehensive brand management” philosophy.

**Originality/value** – This study is an original and exploratory transfer of theoretical principles from classic psychology to marketing strategy. The final section examines practical potential by reference to other global brands. The paper proposes a paradigm for building and sustaining consumer loyalty to global brands.

**Keywords** Brand management, Brands, Brand image, Consumer behaviour, International marketing, Imagination

**Paper type** Research paper

## Introduction

### *The archetype paradigm*

Brand marketing has been growing into a global practice, and such brands as Nike, Louis Vuitton, Lexus, Intel, iPod, Hallmark, and Starbucks are now household names at a global level. Amid the progress of globalization, the archetype paradigm, based in large part on Jungian archetype theory, has attracted increasing attention from brand marketing scholars, including Veen (1994), Randazzo (1995) and Mark and Pearson (2002), among others.

The primary rationale for incorporating the archetype paradigm into global brand marketing is, as Mark and Pearson (2002) summarize, grounded in the premise that associating archetypes with product brands serves to provide symbolic meaning with which consumers can construct identities across cultural boundaries.



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Briefly, brand archetypes are said to be capable of combining with fundamental human psychology for identity construction, so they can help to build and sustain consumer loyalty. Take NIKE AIR JORDAN, for instance: its brand archetype is the hero, which is a universal symbolism that all humans may be able to identify with in one way or another. As a result, the brand has become an icon, which is widely preferred and purchased by a large number of loyal consumers from a variety of socio-cultural backgrounds.

#### *Research purpose*

In order to further explore how brand marketers may benefit to the maximum from the archetype paradigm, the current study employs a conceptual framework, based on the imagination theory initially proposed by Jung and later developed by the Jungian School. It proposes that the consumer imagination mechanism determines whether a brand archetype has the potential to transform into an icon. To render the framework more comprehensive, several major theories and empirical findings relevant to consumer imagination are also drawn upon. The findings of in-depth interviews with 810 loyal consumers of a global prestige brand permitted the development of the conceptual framework into a brand archetype-icon transformation model.

Most importantly, the model suggests several theoretical and practical implications in alignment with the philosophy of comprehensive brand management, which may contribute to enhancing the effectiveness of the archetypal marketing approach in building and sustaining the consumer loyalty to global brands.

### **Theoretical background**

#### *Jungian archetype theory*

According to Jung (1938, 1946, 1961, 1964), human beings have preconscious psychological potentials called “archetypes”, enabling them to react in a human manner. These represent an unlearned tendency to experience things in a certain way, acting as an “organizing principle” for the things we see or do. Only a few basic archetypes or templates exist at the unconscious level, but there is an infinite variety of specific images which lead back to them. In other words, archetypes are elemental forces that play a vital role in the creation of the world and of the human mind itself. The archetypal patterns and images are found in every culture and in every period of human history, pointing to the fact humans do not have separate and individualized unconscious minds in an absolute sense. In many ways, they share a single “universal unconscious”, in which the human mind is rooted as a tree is rooted in the ground. Through archetypal patterns and images, we represent the invisible realities of the human soul or psyche. Quite a few historical and social materials exhibit a surprising commonality in both form and substance, and it is these universal patterns of archetypes that shape them.

Jungian archetype theory is traceable to his psychoanalytic interpretation of dreams and myths (Jung, 1938, 1961). A dream is a private myth, and a myth is a social dream. In the original Greek, myth means “a telling word”, a picture in language by which we tell about our experiences of invisible realities. Such pictures are not created out of nothing, but arise from the universal unconscious that we all share. When such a language picture is discovered and shared within a community as a way of picturing what reality is, it becomes a myth; when it belongs only the individual, we call it a dream. In essence, both are constellations of archetypal images. A myth reveals the deep and hidden structures of the universe, in which we live as a community; a dream

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reveals the deep and hidden structures of the universe, as we experience them personally. In either case, the laws of archetypes apply and “mythic worlds” emerge.

In Jung’s view, these mythic worlds, built on archetypes, transcend mere communication. They are directly related to the unconscious images that every individual constructs during the course of life. The deepest such images are those reflecting the most basic human experiences from infancy. Since archetypes are common to humankind, in the sense that everyone has an idea of such concepts as “father” and “mother”, “child”, “lover”, “explorer”, “creator”, “magician”, “aristocrat”, “ruler”, “wise man” or “hero”. Jung regarded the unconscious images derived from archetypal structures as the most fundamental perceptual symbols of human’s psychological existence.

Silverblatt *et al.* (1999) have more recently emphasized that archetypal myths help people to make sense of the world around them, dealing with a deeper understanding, or truth, about the human condition. Myths, as factual or fictitious accounts of historical events, speak of an inner truth in a way that science cannot. It is irrelevant whether they are true or false; what matters are the meanings that archetypal myths can bring to the human experience.

#### *From brand archetype to brand icon*

The primary rationale for incorporating the archetype paradigm into global brand marketing is, as Mark and Pearson (2002) say, grounded in the premise that product brands, like archetypes, reflect the ways in which humans interpret their relationships with their way of life, and thus serve to provide symbolic meaning that consumers around the world may use for identity construction. Thus, brand marketers strive to discover the universal “soul” of their brands, and then express it in ways that tap into universal archetypes, connecting with the fundamental psychological inclinations of consumers so as to create true global icons.

The inner logic for the linkage between the archetype paradigm and global brand marketing is probably best explainable by the identity-seeking-agent explanation of consumption behaviour, advanced by Veen (1994), Brown (1995), Randazzo (1995), Hogg *et al.* (2000) and Voase (2002), among others. Generally, they tend to see all consumption as in one way or another related to the hero archetype. As Veen (1994) sees it, the goal of consumption is a combined vertical and horizontal role shift, steered by “call finders,” or products which help consumers uncover their role or “calling” in life. Consumption is thus ritualistic behaviour. The potential of the ritual to confer benefits is enhanced and perpetuated by myths, and heroes are personifications of myths. Thus, all consumption rituals have heroes.

As the fundamental archetype of brands, the hero can metamorphose into, as it were, hyphenated archetypes: heroic father, heroic lover, heroic magician, heroic wise man, and so on. The consumer’s relationship with products becomes similar to the epic quest of a hero, who originally separates himself (or herself) from existing social roles, enters uncharted territory, conquers adversity and returns with bounties (the symbolism of the product) to be hailed as a hero.

A brand that is iconic, rather than ordinary, resembles the greatest hero of the greatest archetypal myths, exercising the prophetic and charismatic power and providing the cultural leadership that permits the consumer to complete his or her heroic journey. The consumer buys the iconic brand to acquire the symbolism of the mythic archetype, and uses it in a quest to construct self, social and cultural identities.

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Randazzo (1995) argues that the iconic brand may be imbued with symbolism by associating it with archetypes that consumers can recognize through generally culturally accepted symbols. Words or images, locked in unquestioned anthropological orthodoxy by the consumer's mental processes, conjure up associative linguistic concepts that may assume magical proportions if they trigger a response in the deepest areas of emotion. By combining symbolic concepts of archetypes in the representation of a brand, marketing strategists can potentially transform products from lifeless objects into icons that are exciting, aspirational, and meaningful.

Among the proliferation of global brands, only those with iconic status are well placed to acquire: an expansive and solid base of loyal customers who are strongly engaged with the brand and keep coming back to buy it; high and stable profitability that is less subject to economic fluctuations; and unique market status that competitors will find it difficult to imitate.

#### *Creation of archetypal meaning*

Although the archetype paradigm has contributed to broadening the horizon of brand marketing, there is a theoretical equivocality surrounding it that poses important questions. How can a brand archetype be universal in its symbolic meaning to diversified segments of consumers from different socio-cultural and personal backgrounds? Is it theoretically and practically appropriate to treat individual consumers as a collective entity uniformly receptive to the archetypal meaning provided by the brand, regardless of socio-cultural and individual diversity? Among the answers attempted by theorists, the most noteworthy are focused on moving the archetype paradigm away from possible extreme universalism-orientation, highlighting that the socio-cultural and personal differences of consumers lead to diversified interpretations of the brand archetypal meaning.

For example, Kozinets (2001) explores how consumers interpret Star Trek, a TV/movie drama featuring the archetype of heroic quest for utopia. The study findings show that they linked the Star Trek archetype to social categories of sanctuary for the alienated and for social utopians, and to egalitarianism and tolerance values. It was also found to be associated with rationalist belief in science and technology, secular humanist philosophy, and even religion. Overall, participants in the study understood why and how that brand archetype might impact on their identity construction, in diverse ways.

### **Methodology**

#### *Conceptual framework*

To further demonstrate that in the process of the brand archetype-icon transformation the consumer is an active creator instead of a passive audience, the study reported here draws upon the "imagination theory" initially proposed by Jung and later developed by the Jungian school, analyzing the dynamism in the process of transforming the brand archetype into the brand icon.

According to Jung, the archetypal mode of manifestation is a step-by-step individuation process via creative imagination. Archetypes exist in the collective unconscious from before the time individuals are born, and it is their creative imagination that releases them, tailoring the archetypal meaning to specific contextual situations (Campbell, 1988; Edinger, 1972; Matthews, 2002).

Creative imagination is conceptualised by Sherwood (1975), Bocoock (1993) and Voase (2002) as the mechanism for creating new ideas and thought structures, not by addition, simple association, but rather exponentially by interrelating cognitive and affective activities. In the contemporary consumer culture, creative imagination functions to enhance the anchoring of meaning and value derived from the direct and indirect encounters with a product brand. More than just a daydream or fantasy, it develops the consumers' own definitions about their relationship with the branded product, thus making consumption a richer and more pleasant experience.

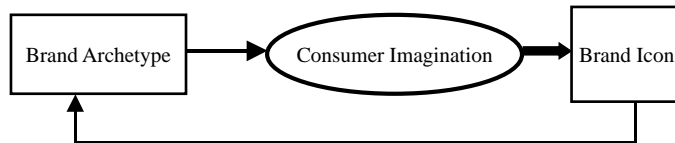
The conceptual framework of the current study (Figure 1) depicts the mechanism of consumer imagination as the key factor determining whether or not a brand archetype transforms into an icon. The objective of brand archetype-icon transformation is not achievable unless that mechanism creates a representation of the archetypal symbolism that is consistent with the consumer's criteria for a brand icon. Thus, the consumer imagination is theorized as the determinant in the brand archetype-icon transformation process.

*Data collection*

To develop the conceptual framework further, in-depth interviews were conducted with typical loyal consumers of the prestige sportswear brand Nike Air Jordan, which is clearly associated with a hero archetype in the global market. The rationale lies in the premise of identity-seeking-agent theory that all consumption is in one way or another related to that archetype. It was decided that the investigation should focus on their perceptions of the brand's association with the hero archetype, so that consumer loyalty in relation to the archetype-icon transformation in brand marketing could thereby be further explored.

A mix of purposive and dimensional sampling technique, following Suchman and Jordan (1992), was chosen as the means to selected informants representative of the brand's loyal consumers in different regions. A total of 810 was recruited from the three regions of Asia Pacific, Western Europe, and North America. Although the interviews were conducted separately in each, sample selection was controlled to ensure that the profiles of all sub-samples matched the characteristics of loyal consumers of the brand under study: see Table I. They were recruited separately by research assistants in each location.

**Figure 1.**  
Brand archetype-icon transformation framework



**Table I.**  
Participant profile

Age	Gender	Education	Brand loyalty span (years)	Geographical region
18-25: 305	Male: 685	High school: 285	3-8: 515	North America: 295
26-35: 265	Female: 125	College: 420	9-14: 200	Western Europe: 305
36-45: 150		Graduate: 105	15 and over: 95	Asia Pacific: 200
45 and over: 90				

In the first phase, participants were asked to note what questions came to mind when thinking about their brand loyalty in relation to the hero archetype, thus generating question items for further investigation. The second phase began with the researcher transforming the generated question items into declarative sentences on a series of cards which retained the exact terminology and phrases used by the participants, who were then asked to confirm that those did reflect what they were thinking and feeling. All cards were sorted by each participant according to the perceived importance of each item. The third phase was matrix analysis, which elicited relationships among the concept items identified by the participants, in terms of both degree and the direction. Finally, four rounds of focus group discussion were conducted to further inform the process of model building.

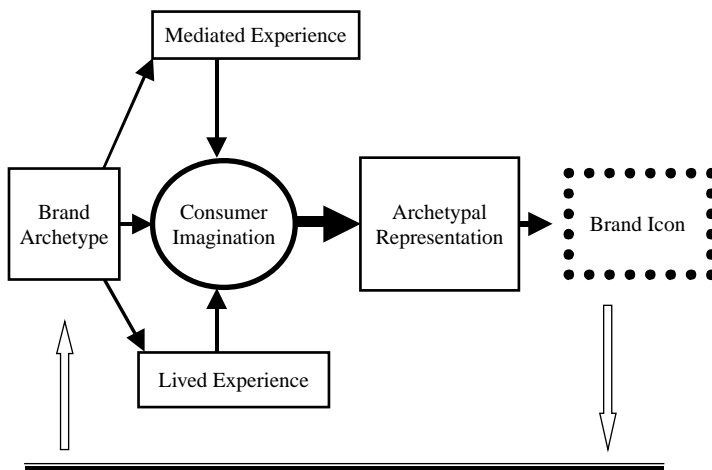
The research team recorded and transcribed the collected data, and subjected the transcripts to “open”, “axial”, and “selective” coding, in line with the multistage coding method for category generation (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Key concepts and relationships were thereby identified, for incorporation into a fully developed model.

### Analysis of findings

A brand archetype-icon transformation model emerged from the analysis of depth-interview data, as shown in Figure 2. It shows that mediated experience and lived experience of the brand archetype constitute the consumer experience in totality, and that the total experience is organized and integrated by the consumer imagination to create an archetypal representation of the brand. If the marketing objective of a marketing campaign is to be achieved in the process, there must be a match between the archetypal representation of the brand created and the consumer’s expectations of a brand icon.

#### *Consumer imagination organizing total experience*

To the 810 loyal consumers interviewed, the Nike Air Jordan hero archetype is not an abstract concept. They become aware of the brand’s celebrity spokesman, Michael Jordan, get to know more about him, and develop deeper cognitive and affective



**Figure 2.**  
Brand archetype-icon  
transformation model

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responses towards him, to add to their understanding of the functional quality and performance of the product itself. Generally, through advertising, events, publicity and daily conversation with peers, they recognize Michael Jordan as having the image of the hero archetype. But this is not the whole picture; effective product management is found to be another important factor that influences the entire embodiment of the hero archetype.

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About 85 per cent of the respondents were inclined to associate Michael Jordan with perceived quality, aesthetic appeal, user-friendly design and efficient pre- and post-purchase service. It was found that, in addition to the direct contact and usage experience of the branded product itself, marketing communications and interpersonal communication contributed to the total consumer experience of the hero archetype. One indicative verbatim statement was:

I like to see Michael in the TV commercial, playing basketball with skills and styles. I participate in a variety of events organized by Michael's fan clubs, and also pay attention to news reports related to him. My basketball team talks a lot about Michael, and I enjoy this kind of talk. When I use the Nike sportswear, the image of Michael comes up, and I tend to associate the product functions with what Michael appears to me. Usually, I would make comparison between how I feel about the usage of the brand and how I feel about the superstar.

Thompson (1995, 1990) and Mooy and Robben (2002) distinguish between two types of consumer experience, "mediated" and "lived", which constitute the total perception of a particular object. Conceptually, mediated experience results from media-generated and word-of-mouth messages involving narratives and events spatially and temporally distant from the practical context of daily life. Lived experience is the practical activities and direct encounters of our everyday lives; it is situated, immediate, and largely non-reflexive. According to Campbell (1994), the individual consumer is an "artist of imagination", taking images from memory (mediated experience) or the immediate environment (lived experience) and rearranging or otherwise improving them so as to make them more pleasing. Experiences derived from both media and direct contact are processed by imagination, in order that the consumer understands what is presented to the senses.

In a conceptual model of consumer imagination, Schau (2000) proposes that the total sensation, feelings and thoughts that the consumer has about the product furnish cognitive and affective resources, which the consumer imagination processes and to which it assigns meaning and value. The processed resources are evaluated and selected, and subsequently used for constructing self, social and cultural identities.

The total consumer experience of the brand thus becomes an input into the consumer imagination mechanism, and is then organized and integrated by the mechanism. The representation of archetypal symbolism is actually an outcome that the consumer engineers through creative imagination, so whether or not the archetypal symbolism is perceived as a brand icon depends on how the consumer imagination creates the brand representation.

#### *Congruence between representation and identification*

Only 51 per cent of the respondents in this study claimed to perceive Michael Jordan as an icon. An in-depth analysis of their perceptions shows that successful brand archetype-icon transformation results from the congruence between the representation

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of archetypal symbolism and the preferred identities of individual consumers, but that such congruence is difficult to form. There is variability in interpreting the brand symbolism. For example, one respondent imagined the hero archetype as an ambitious cosmopolitan who pursues high-level posts in corporations:

I am eager to be successful, and what I mean by being successful is to get a job that allows me to bring my potential to full play. If you ask me what a hero is, I would definitely say a hero is the one who churns out the greatest career accomplishment in his life time. Michael is my hero, because he started from scratch to the zenith of his sports career. Using AIR JORDAN gives me impetus to pursue the zenith of my own career.

To another respondent, the hero archetype was a social activist who liked to campaign for philanthropic causes:

Nothing is more exciting than making some contribution to people around me. Walking down the street sometimes may cause deeply felt frustration on me, because there are so many miserable underdogs sitting there to beg for just tiny portion of food. I wonder why people cannot all enjoy their lives, and I want to do something about it. Yes, of course, I always look up to someone as a hero who is capable of making a difference in the dire situation. AIR JORDAN represents a brand that is a hero, who cares about basketball sports and has actively been engaging itself in sponsoring basketball players in many countries, particularly helping those who are economically under-privileged to bring their sports talent potential into full bloom.

A more important discovery is that these loyal consumers do not necessarily all identify with the brand icon; identification itself is a volatile phenomenon. About 22 per cent of respondents described themselves as having changed their identification:

I surely know that many people buy Nike because it has an image of hero, and Michael Jordan to some consumers is a god. As far as I am concerned, I respect the sportsmanship of Michael, but I do not think he has much to do with my having continued to buy the brand for almost ten years. Earlier, I used to identify myself with Michael because I believed he was like a mentor for me to emulate. More recently I have seen myself different from I was, no longer needing this guy to guide me spiritually. I do hope Air Jordan may soon find another hero spokesperson who I feel more identifiable with, otherwise I will consider switch to another sportswear brand.

In recent years, many socio-cultural psychologists, including Shweder and Sullivan (1993), Brewer and Gardner (1996), Hart and Yates (1996), Miller (1997), Dien (2000) and Eckhardt and Houston (2002), have defined identity construction as a life-story development. Conceptually, a life story is an internalized narrative integration of past, present, and anticipated future, providing a sense of unity and purpose. Identity construction is a dialogical development process, in which people tell each other stories and listen to stories, in all cultures at all times. As one tells and retells one's life story, one's identity is steadily revised.

In the "ongoing narrative project" of identity construction, to use the terminology of Eckhardt and Houston (2002), people construct different self, social and cultural identities in different stages of life development. Thus, in one period an individual identifies with certain images and narratives, but at another time may switch the identification to other images and narratives. In the case of respondents in this study, some brand loyalists used to imagine themselves as the follower of the brand icon, and switched their identification later. In other words, congruence between

the representation of archetypal symbolism and the consumer identification is not a permanent phenomenon.

*Quality assurance and affective consumption*

The brand archetype was seen an icon by only half the 810 loyal consumers of the brand under study (51 per cent). Almost a quarter (22 per cent), although recognizing the attractiveness of the brand archetype, categorized it a “has-been” representation. However, the identity switch had not resulted in immediate brand switch among this sub-segment.

More interestingly, another quarter (27 per cent) saw the brand archetype neither as an icon nor as a major reason for repeat-purchase behaviour. Among respondents who had remained loyal to the brand but had switched identity or did not identify with the brand icon at all, there was a general inclination to ascribe their loyalty to the satisfaction of utilitarian or emotional needs, or both:

What I am concerned most about is whether the product suits my concrete needs, and I will continue to use the brand as long as it is a preferable choice for my concrete needs. NIKE AIR JORDAN as an iconic brand probably is considered important by some people, but this does not have bearing on me.

I do not buy icon, I only buy things that I feel good. As a person who emphasizes feelings, I will never be interested in anything unpleasant to my senses, be it a brand with God himself as the endorser.

On the surface, the discovery that lack of identification does not impact on some loyal consumers seems to be a surprise, at least to advocates of archetypal marketing. But, theoretically speaking, this is quite line with the “perfectionism and high-quality consciousness” premise, and also with the self-pleasure theory of prestige-brand consumption.

According to that premise, superior quality is a taken-for-granted attribute of luxury-brand products. There are consumers who usually look for prestige brands to maximize quality assurance, and they are much less responsive to brand symbolism. In a research project on consumer decision-making styles, Hafstrom and Chung (1992) identified perfectionism and high-quality consciousness as characterising a significant segment of consumers, whose expectations overrode other purchase values. Gentry (2001) and Miquel *et al.* (2002), in two cross-national studies, found that consumers did not necessarily buy prestige brands mainly because of their symbolism; some purchasers were dominantly affected by the superior quality.

As for affective consumption theory, it is mainly derived from the conceptualizations and empirical findings presented by Roth (2001), Luomala and Lewis (2002), O’Cass and Frost (2002) and Tsai (2006). Briefly, the purchase of prestige brands is in many instances related to their use to achieve affective goals of either entering a positive emotional state and/or leaving a negative one. Affective goals may be achieved by either an instant gratification strategy or a delayed gratification, resulting in four types of affective consumption. “Relief and recover” consumption centres on alleviating negative mood such as sadness and grief; “sensation and fulfilment” consumption seeks a heightened state of feeling like that in a celebratory occasion. Regardless of the type of affective consumption, the motivation for buying a prestige-brand product is more ascribable to the perceived emotional value than to the brand symbolism.

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## Discussion

### *Archetypal marketing and comprehensive brand management*

As the current study demonstrates, brand archetypal symbolism is represented through the consumer imagination. Its substantive content in the imagination is derived only partially from advertising, events, publicity, and word-of-mouth. The other building blocks of imagination are perceived quality, aesthetic appeal, user-friendly design and efficient pre-purchase and post-purchase. This finding, pointing to the multi-dimensionality in creating the brand representation of archetypal symbolism, can be placed in the context of the comprehensive brand management philosophy.

Haynes *et al.* (1999), Sirgy and Johar (1999) and Tsai (2006) define comprehensive brand management as an integrated approach to managing the needs, perceptions, and satisfaction of consumers. Synergistic cooperation and coordination should exist across all interrelated marketing efforts, so that the brand strategist may develop self-congruity and functional-congruity in the brand. The first of those attributes concerns the match between the brand user image and the consumer's self-image, both personal and social. The second, on the other hand, describes a match between the consumer's beliefs about a brand's utilitarian attributes (performance) and the consumer's referent attributes. Balancing self-congruity and functional-congruity in brand-image building increases the probability of consolidating and expanding a niche of loyal customers.

Timmerman (2001), applying the conceptual representation framework of Barsalou and Hale (1993), has constructed an Inventory of Brand Representation Attributes (IBRA). It is suggested that effective brand representation configures some or all of the tangible and intangible attributes listed in the IBRA: product usage, price and quality, brand identifiers, brand personification, market, origin, advertisement, attitudes and purchase behaviour, and personal reference. The IBRA paradigm, which lays emphasis on specified attributes as the basis for holistic brand representation, offers strong support to the proposition that brand representation strategy should be aligned with a comprehensive brand management philosophy.

### *Dialogical identity construction*

Some loyal consumers of the brand under investigation used to imagine themselves as the follower of the brand icon, but switched their identification later. This finding illustrates that identity construction, in relation to the representation of archetypal symbolism, is an online creation of alternative combinations of meanings, inferences and associations. Hence, probing into the volatile identity construction process requires multiple research methodology, mixing qualitative and quantitative approaches. In that way, brand strategists would be able to penetrate deeper inside the heart and mind of the consumer, and the marketing management and communications programmes could be geared more effectively towards matching the brand representation and the consumer's identity construction.

Brand managers are also advised to bear in mind that identity is metaphorically comparable to a life story, which is composed of internalized narrative integration of the past, the present, and the anticipated future. Identity construction is a dialogical development process, so there is hardly a representation of archetypal symbolism that caters to all the specific identity criteria set by individual consumers. The potent

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currents running underneath individuals' dreams, desires and aspirations constantly configure and re-configure the themes of life stories, so brand strategists should attend closely to the metamorphoses involved.

#### *Unresponsiveness to archetypal symbolism*

To those who do not care about whether the brand has an archetype, the brand's quality assurance and emotional value come first, exerting a primary driving force for the augmentation of consumer loyalty. In managing this sub-segment of consumers, which was found to make up a significant proportion of the entire brand loyal sample, it may seem that the archetypal marketing approach has no practical relevance, and that could be seen a setback for researchers and practitioners who believe in the construct. However, a primary focus on quality assurance and emotional value, rather than archetypal symbolism, does not necessarily have to be in conflict with the archetypal marketing approach.

Specifically, the hero archetype of NIKE AIR JORDAN, in association with a fundamental psychological inclination, is mostly symbolic in its meaning, which is capable of transforming the brand into a favourable symbol. The brand's high quality standards and its function of satisfying affective needs, which more than a quarter of the loyal consumers in the sample perceived to be derivable from the brand, are not necessarily unrelated to the fundamental psychological inclinations of humans. In this sense, quality assurance and emotional value can be categorized as "semi-archetypes". These brand attributes, unlike those of the hero archetype, serve to provide utilitarian and affective meanings to the quality-conscious and affective consumption segments of the market. Under the principle of comprehensive brand management, utilitarian and affective meanings are by no means less important than symbolic meaning. In fact, the three types are not in the least contradictory with one another, but rather highly complementary.

Some consumers' unresponsiveness to archetypal symbolism is not counter-evidence against the effectiveness of the archetypal marketing approach. It only serves to demonstrate the necessity to combine it with a programme of comprehensive brand management.

#### **Strategic implications**

The study reported here has underscored the importance of aligning brand archetype-icon transformation strategies with the philosophy of comprehensive brand management, in order to enhance its effectiveness in building and sustaining consumer loyalty. Specifically, three significant strategic implications can be identified.

##### *Implication 1*

The consumer imagination is a creation mechanism, through which the total consumer experience of the brand archetype is organized and integrated to accomplish brand representation. Brand archetype-icon transformation can be achieved only via synergy among interrelated marketing efforts under the guidance of a strong brand management philosophy, embodied in integrated management and marketing communications. Product research and development, product manufacturing, price formulation and customer service form the basic foundation upon which integrated management is to be implemented. As for integrated communications, the strategic

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combination of advertising, special events, publicity and other elements of the “promotional mix” is necessary for effective branding campaigns.

The symbolic meaning conferred by archetypal marketing will not realise its potential as a powerful catalyst in generating consumer loyalty unless the brand representation strategy is based on integrated management and communication practices, conducive to a seamless management of total consumer experience.

An illustration is provided by Ikea. This iconic brand in the furniture market appeals to its global customers via the brand archetype of a heroic creator, invoking the great potential of human creativity to make beautiful and useful things out of simple materials. Relying on a seamless system of total consumer experience management, Ikea has been highly successful in marketing its core concept of the “prosumer”: half producer and half consumer. The products are pleasant on the eye, comfortable to the touch, and easy to assemble in a do-it-yourself way. They provide simplistic beauty and efficiency, which offer the possibility of upgrading the functional and aesthetic design of one’s home space oneself. Catalogues, publicity and word-of-mouth serve as the main communication tools, drawing shoppers to a unique store environment, in which they may search for a wide choice of high-quality but low-price furniture and accessories. “Store consultants”, displaying a friendly and professional attitude, assist with decisions on how to customize specific combinations of furniture, tailored to individual needs and wants. This ambiance is supported by other types of service available in-store, such as a nursery area in which children may be safely left for the duration of the search.

Low cost, standardization, technology, customization, rapid delivery, and integrated communications are all contributing factors to a holistic brand representation strategy, which Ikea has been successfully deploying to create a total consumer experience.

### *Implication 2*

The observed universality of brand archetype is not in itself an issue. Rather, the real concern lies in the substantive content of archetypal symbolism created by the consumer imagination. Brand marketing researchers should not waste time and effort discussing which brand archetype is the most universally acceptable, but should adopt a multiple methodology in exploring how the brand representation may correspond to the variability in the desires, fantasies, dreams and aspirations of the target market, thereby enlarging the representation-identity congruence of the archetypal symbolism.

To many consumers who tend to use wrist watch as an expressive symbol, Swatch has become one of the most iconic brands in many parts of the world. It presents the archetypal symbolism of the heroic magician, who skilfully turns a simple timepiece into a life-story teller that the consumer uses to express self-image and socio-cultural identity. The Jellyfish model, with its transparent design, presents the image of a light-hearted and carefree person. To cater to the kind of consumer whose value structure inclines more to diligence, economy, and down-to-earth practicality, the Nine-to-Fiver model is designed to look congruent with those values. The Dark Forest possesses a kind of beauty characterized by mysterious delicacy and coolness, an thereby attracts consumers who see their own identity as non-conformist but graceful.

Swatch targets customers with such high precision on the basis of a multiple research methodology, ranging from ethnographic observation to opinion surveys,

which allows designers and marketers to catch the nuances and commonalities in the life stories different individuals tell themselves as well as to others. Research-derived images matching the target audience's deep-rooted desires, fantasies, dreams, and aspirations help to formulate an effective strategy to elevate the congruence between brand representation and consumer identity.

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*Implication 3*

The congruence between representation of archetypal symbolism and consumer identity, though influential for many loyal consumers, does not have an equal impact on the whole loyalist population, and so is still insufficient for eliciting cross-the-board brand purchase value. The holistic effectiveness of global brand marketing requires alignment of the archetype paradigm with other marketing approaches, which also take account of the consumer's utilitarian and affective goals. Alongside symbolic representation, brand marketers must steer their endeavours towards assuring the utilitarian quality and performance, as well as fostering the emotional values perceived by the consumer.

Louis Vuitton commands an iconic status in the luxury-goods market, reinforced by its acquisition of the Martell and Hennessy brands to form the LVMH superbrand. Its legendary heritage reaches back to the Titanic: only Louis Vuitton luggage survived a year-long soaking in salt water with its contents remaining totally dry. This perfect quality assurance, well known among luxury consumers, conjures up the emotional responses of trust (the brand promises are kept under toughest circumstances) and warmth (the consumer's well-being is safeguarded with care).

Widespread counterfeiting has failed to steal the consumer loyalty from the brand. Even during the late 1990s and early 2000s, when a bubble economy blew up and many luxury brands reported severe losses, this iconic brand remarkably managed to enjoy continued high growth, not only in countries where the recession was relatively less severe, but also in hardest-hit markets, such as Japan.

These brand characteristics of quality assurance and emotional value, allied to an archetypal symbolism of heroic aristocrat (pursuing aesthetic supremacy to maintain elegance and taste) are precious assets reinforcing extensive and solid consumer loyalty. Without them, the brand might well have been more susceptible to the potentially catastrophic combination of rampant counterfeiting and a drastic decline in consumer spending.

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