The Inc.redible risks of using myths!
or how Apple has maintained different

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Abstract

Myths have been used for a long time; to tell a story and to teach something. However, it is not until recently it has attracted attention in the marketing field. Communicating through myths contributes to a stronger relationship with customers and the customers buy a brand's products to consume the myth. One of the greatest difficulties with the use of myths is to maintain the myth credible over time. The aim of this research has been to study how successful brands can maintain credibility of their myths. In this study we conduct a case study of one successful brand, Apple, to obtain a deeper insight of how a brand can maintain the myth credible. This has been analysed together with a theoretical discussion, mainly with a cultural strategy approach. Hence, we compiled a model that link the case study together with the theoretical framework, which is our contribution on the subject. The result shows that the myth needs to permeate the entire organization, the brand needs to be consistent with the myth and deliver what the myth promises over time. This study provides a deeper understanding of why it is important that the myth is credible and how credibility can be maintained. For a brand to succeed with this, a constant high level of dedication to the myth is demanded.

Keywords Myth, Credibility, Apple, Cultural Branding, Marketing

Myth - a key success factor?

Myths are derived from Ancient Greece and the word myth comes the Greek word "mythos" that means legend, fable, fiction or tale. However, in contrast to other kind of stories myths contain symbolic meanings to be interpreted (Edsman & Johannesson 2015). For instance the Greek story about Orpehus who was married to Eurydike is a classic myth. When Eurydike died, Orpheus desperately wanted her back. While playing beautiful music, he went to Hades to bring back his wife. There was only one the condition and that was that he must not look at his wife on the way back from Hades. However, as he longed for her immensely, he was not able to follow through on these terms and therefore Eurydike never came back to life (Henrikson 1958). As Holt (2003a, p. 36) states;

"Myths are stories people rely on to organise their understanding of themselves and the world".

Myths help people make sense of the world (Holt 2003b). It is important that believers feel that the myths are trustworthy, which make the myths compelling (Holt 2003a). Furthermore, myths are neither fact nor fiction (Holt 2003a). Myths have been used throughout history, and some brands have used the power of the myth to become successful. According to Holt (2004a) companies give customers the myth in a tangible form, which make humans accept their products more easily.

According to Holt (2003b), the use of myths has been a key success factor for some of the most successful brands, for instance Nike and Apple. This is a way for them to differentiate from others (Holt 2003b). According to Aaker (2003), differentiation is critical for a successful brand. Brands that do not differentiate do not give customers reasons to choose their brand over others. In order to differentiate, branding is important to create associations around brands (Atkinson 1999).

There are several definitions and ways to measure success. Interbrand (2014b)

measures this through five different criteria. According to Interbrand (2014b), a successful brand must be worldwide, have exceeded geographic and cultural borders effectively, have expanded across the global established economic centres and have entered the main markets of the future. Apple is the most valuable brand according to these terms (Interbrand 2014b).

Furthermore, there are several myths about Apple as a brand, its creation and its founder and leader Steve Jobs (Belk & Tumbat 2001). Apple has used these myths in their marketing to differentiate their brand. For example, this can be seen in their "1984" television advertisement from 1984 (Belk & Tumbat 2001) and in their "Think different" television advertisement from 1997 (Shields 2001). According to Holt (2004a) some brands use people within their myth, which creates a strong relationship to people's feelings and emotions.

People buy the product to consume the myth (Holt 2003b). Customers identify with the brand, and therefore it is not only the product, but also the lifestyle they buy (Holt 2003b). To conclude, myths are effective for creating a successful brand. However, is it a problem-free path?

Challenges using myths
We have identified the following risks that have occurred due to lack of credibility with using mythology for brands; lack of coherence between the myth and other aspects of the brand (Holt & Cameron 2010), and implausibility (Holt, Quelch & Taylor 2004). According to Holt and Cameron (2010) and Holt, Quelch and Taylor, Marlboro and British Petroleum have used myths in their marketing. Marlboro is a brand that tried to establish a myth around a cowboy culture, but failed with this myth, because of lack of credibility. The lack of credibility was due to their inconsistency with the myth and the myth was not in line with the ideology and culture codes (Holt & Cameron 2010). To be

credible one needs to be consistent (Herbig & Milewicz 1995). It took a certain time, and also the experience of making several mistakes, before Marlboro found their way (Holt & Cameron 2010).

Another brand that has failed due to lack of credibility of their myth is British Petroleum (Holt, Quelch & Taylor 2004). Holt, Quelch and Taylor (2004) have stated that the myth needs to be credible and gave the example of how British Petroleum failed on this point. British Petroleum aimed at creating a myth about being environmentally friendly. However, this failed, as this myth was not credible for them as a petroleum producer. The brand was critised and this myth actually hurt the brand (Holt, Quelch & Taylor 2004a). According to Holt, Quelch and Taylor (2004) the myth needs to be credible.

Significant amount of brands' myths fail due to lack of credibility, as the brand then easily can be seen as untrustworthy (Holt & Cameron 2010; Holt, Quelch & Taylor 2004a). Brands that lack credibility will lose customers and their profit will decrease (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995). The credibility will increase if a brand's actions and statements are coherent (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995). Credibility is dynamic and can change over time (Herbig & Milewicz, 1995). Therefore, we believe an interesting question is *how successful brands can maintain credibility of their myths*. Hence, that is our research question.

The aim of this study is to gather greater understanding and explain, how successful brands can maintain credibility of their myths. Furthermore, we will try to create a model showing how this can be done.

By answering this research question, our study will contribute with more knowledge within the research field concerning credibility of myths. The study's limitation is the examination of one of the key success factors, the myth. The study will only look at

one of the problems of the use of myths – how to maintain the credibility of it. The study will not take other factors into consideration, which might have had an impact on a brand's success. This study will mainly interest stakeholders, such as companies, shareholders and researchers.

Theoretical framework

Branding

In order to study how brands can maintain the credibility of their myths, we looked into the theoretical research field of the use of myths in branding. Generally, branding is a long-term process and has an important role for organizations and has become a management priority (Keller & Donald 2006). Successful brands have worked greatly on their branding to achieve strong, beneficial and unique associations that differentiate the brand against competitors (Keller 1993). An important and wanted result of branding is strong associations, which affect brand choice and brand consideration (Franzen & Bouwman 2001).

Previously, brands mainly used the marketing mix model as a tool for branding (Grönroos 1994). However, some brands have moved away from this traditional branding and moved towards other approaches (Grönroos 1994). Holt (2004) discusses four different branding models in *How Brands Become Icons*: mind-share branding, emotional branding, viral branding and cultural branding.

Mind-share branding is a cognitive method, about clarifying the brand's position on the market. Furthermore, it is a method with the aim to win customers top-of-mind awareness and convict how the brand differentiates from competitors (Holt 2004). Emotional branding involves the use of emotions to build a strong relationship with the customers (Holt 2004). Brands takes advantage of loyal customers' willingness to share their brand's marketing viral, which is called viral branding (Holt 2004).

The theory of the cultural branding (Holt 2004) is the cornerstone of the cultural approach to branding and serves as the core theme of this research. It is only with culture branding, integrated with one of the other approaches (mentioned above), a brand can become an *icon* (Holt 2004). Cultural branding completes the other approaches with another dimension, which is what the most iconic brands have succeeded with; for instance Corona, Snapple and Coke (Holt 2004).

Iconic Branding

According to Holt (2003b) brands compete on the "myth market" and the winners become icons. These brands have earned market power due their myths (Holt 2003b). Brands that are seen as icons have loyal customers, beneficial associations, and strong product attributes (Holt 2004) for instance Apple, Nike and Harley Davidson (Holt & Cameron 2010). It is only the market leader within a product category that manages this (Holt 2004). Icons spread symbols and products in an immaterial form as myth and experience according to Holt (2004). The purpose of a myth for the customer is to create a clear and desirable experience with the products that customers want to consume (Holt 2004).

Holt and Cameron (2010) state that myths are created with the aim to provide a framework that offers an understanding of people in the emerging ideology. It is around these myths new icons emerge and replace existing ones. The icons act as carriers of myths and help people remember the myths in their lives (Holt & Cameron 2010). The brand's function as an icon is what Holt and Cameron calls iconic brands. They discuss several brands that they believe have done well with this, such as Nike, with the myth and expression "Just Do It" and their connection to suburban cultures in big cities in the US during the late 1980s. According to Holt and Cameron (2010) this is a myth in the sense that it is a story to be

interpreted. It teaches you to believe in yourself and dare to "Just do it".

Another example is Jack Daniel's who based their brand around the hillbilly culture. Holt and Cameron (2010) state that it is powerful that brands are valued collectively as a common symbol of a certain ideology of a certain segment of the population. Holt (2004) states that successful brands have been able to build reputations and tell a story that addresses the desired identity.

Mainly, our study will use the works of Holt, as he has researched on the subject of myths, iconic branding, and cultural strategy. Together with Cameron (2010) in the book *Cultural Strategy*, he discusses the importance of building a brand in a cultural or social change in society, which they call a cultural change. According to Holt (2004), cultural innovation strategy is a very risky approach and not for all brands, which could be seen as one reason to not use this strategy. Holt pioneered in cultural branding with his book *How Brands Become Icons* from 2004 (Cultural Strategy Group 2015).

In line with Holt's approach to branding, lie McCracken's theories, as these are contrasting to the conventional and traditional theories of branding as well. McCracken (1986) states that consumer goods have significance beyond their utilitarian character and commercial value, which rests mainly in their ability to carry and communicate cultural meaning. Moreover, McCracken (1986) states that consumer goods receive meaning from their culturally constituted world and transfer it to the consumer through advertising, fashion systems and through certain rituals. However, Holt's theories focus more on the management of brands, which is a difference from the other publications with a cultural perspective (McCracken 1986).

Myths

Culture branding is the strategy that guide and direct the brand toward a particular myth. Hence, culture branding specifies how the brand should compose the myth (Holt 2004). Furthermore, Holt (2004) states that if a brand authors myths people find valuable, the brand earns the power to tell similar myths in the future. Thus one myth can nourish other myths, which in turn can positively affect a brand (Holt 2004). To conclude, successful brands have been able to tell stories that address their consumers' desires, which has been a part of their success of using myths.

Holt and Cameron's (2010) cultural strategy is derived from the consumer culture theory. Consumer culture theory concerns how consumers actively rework and transform symbolic meanings encoded in advertisements, brands, retail settings, or material goods to manifest their particular personal and social circumstances and further their identity and lifestyle goals (Arnould & Thompson 2005). As stated, myths are stories with symbolic meaning. Accordingly, myths are effective to reinforce the symbolic meaning of the brand. However, to serve this purpose, the myth needs to be credible. How is that done?

Holt and Cameron (2010) discuss the concept "mythologizing the company". One example of this is how the real story of the distillery for Jack Daniel's whiskey was exposed in American media in the 1950s, and gave rise to several other cultural attributes that formed the brand. Later, these cultural codes were reinforced through marketing by the brand itself. While other brands tried to modernise, Jack Daniel's went in the opposite direction. By relying on realistic portrayals of the brand, the Jack Daniel's myth established enormous credibility and authenticity (Holt & Cameron 2010). Mythologizing is an increasingly popular and powerful tool, as consumers have become more and more cynical and sceptical about brands. In this mythologizing process, the brand itself becomes the stage for branding (Holt & Cameron 2010).

How can a myth be credible?

Holt and Cameron (2010, p. 53) state regarding credibility "*brands can champion only those ideologies that are credibly linked to the product, usage context, or its customers*". Holt and Cameron (2010) thus suggest that the credibility lies in the linkage between different aspects of the brand. Furthermore, Holt and Cameron (2010 p. 63) suggest that the myth becomes credible when the company "*walks the walk, living their ideology every day in their business*". By *living* the myth, it becomes credible and therefore it succeeds. To conclude, it seems like the myth becomes credible when it permeates the whole brand.

Already in 1995, Herbig and Milewicz stated that consistency is crucial for credibility and that credibility is linked to the coherence with a brand's statements, i.e. permeation of the whole organization. Successful icons rely on the intimate relationship between credibility and a rebel world, for instance Apple with cyberpunks and Nike with the African-American ghetto (Holt 2003b). But what do we believe in?

Authenticity

Beverland (2005) means that authenticity is important to create credibility and trust. Beverland (2009) has constructed a model by studying companies that are icons, such as Apple, Harley Davidson and Ferrari. Beverland (2009) states that authenticity is central, regarding the core value for brands that are icons. Icons that succeeded are brands that have "repaired" cultures that have been in need. Beverland (2009) has identified seven habits of iconic brands to create authenticity:

1. Storytelling:

Myth is kind of a story with historical background (Edsman & Johannesson 2015). Compared to traditional communication tools, storytelling can increase the memory capacity by 60% (Love 2008). Furthermore, storytelling is a natural link to branding, whereas both are linked to emotions, attributes and values (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2005). A story creates authenticity and credibility because it gives the customers something to relate to (Beverland 2009). Furthermore, communicating through storytelling is powerful and unique (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu 2005). It is an effective way to spread brands' history, their knowledge, core values, but also to communicate emotions (Heijbel 2011; Salzer-Mörling 2004).

2. Appearing as artisanal amateurs:

An amateur is seen as someone that does not have a formal education and is poorly paid. Furthermore, an amateur can also be a person, who is passionate about hobbies and turns it into a profession (Beverland 2009).

3. Sticking to your roots:

Stick to your roots can been seen through stories of brands' history. Moreover, brands can also stick to their roots through consistency (Beverland 2009).

4. Loving the doing:

An important part of the authenticity is that a brand's products are made with love. This shows that they have high quality and that the brand keeps their promises (Beverland 2009).

5. Market immersion:

Innovations are seen as necessary and it is important that a brand does not break their connection with their roots (Beverland 2009).

6. Being at one with the community:

Brands with high level of authenticity are deep anchored with time, place and culture (Beverland 2009).

7. Indoctrinating staff into the brand cult:

For a brand to be seen as authentic, it needs a leader and staff with passion that stand behind it (Beverland 2009).

These seven steps are tools to help brands build authenticity and create credibility,

according to Beverland (2009). Furthermore, Beverland's study is a qualitative research with specific industries, which does not make the research applicable in all contexts (Schallehn, Burmann & Riley 2014). We find these seven steps interesting and aim to test if these are relevant concerning maintaining credibility of a myth as well. In our research, we will use Beverland's model, as authenticity is an important part of credibility. Taking this model into consideration can give us an indication of what factors have created and maintained credibility of a brand's myth.

Furthermore, Erdem and Swait (2004) define credibility as the believability of the product information in a brand, which requires that consumers perceive that the brand has expertise and willingness to *"continuously deliver what has been promised"* (Erdem & Swait 2004 p. 192). Erdem and Swait's results indicate that brand credibility affects both conditional brand choice and brand consideration, and this is as stated previously, a wanted result of branding (Franzen & Bouwman 2001). These different ideas concerning credibility are not contrasts; we consider them to be complements.

We see these theories as complements in the sense that Holt and Cameron (2010) provides the framework of credibility concerning myths, which can lead to building an iconic brand. Beverland (2009) has developed a model with what iconic brands have in common. Beverland's model is more detailed and thus used as a tool for us to assess how credibility is created and maintained, including concerning Holt and Cameron's terms. Furthermore, Herbig and Milewicz's (1995) theories concerning credibility are in line with Holt and Cameron (2010) about the necessity of consistency. However, they take the theory further and complete it with a time perspective; credibility is dynamic and can change over time. Erdem and Swait (2004) complete the theories concerning credibility with the aspect of the need to continuously delivering what is promised to be credible.

How to create and maintain credibility in a myth?

Heding, Knudtzen and Bjerre (2009) have stated that staying relevant through cultural changes and time is one of the difficulties with iconic brands. For the myth to be powerful, it has to constantly be recreated (Heding, Knudtzen & Bjerre 2009). Thus, the question of how to maintain the myth is very relevant and therefore how the credibility of it can be maintained.

We have created a model, see figure 1, to show which factors we have concluded have an impact on credibility of a myth. Our model has been based and combined on Holt and Cameron's (2010), Herbig and Milewicz's (1995), Beverland's (2005), and Erdem and Swait's (2004) theories, where we have identified factors that we believe are important and necessary for the myth to be credible. We divided these factors in two different parts of credibility, create and maintain. This is done as we have interpreted that permeation is necessary to create credibility, but the consistency and to continuously deliver what is promised is to maintain credibility, as they both have a time perspective by definition. Thus, these two parts, create and maintain, are seen as independent from each other and that is why they are separated in the model.

The factor we have identified to be crucial for creating credible myths is that they permeate the whole organization, see figure 1. This we have interpreted by Holt and Cameron (2010) and Beverland's (2009) theories that have been mentioned above. In order to maintain credibility, we believe that the brand needs to be consistent with the myth, see figure 1. We have drawn this conclusion from Herbig and Milewicz (1995) that state that an organization needs to be consistent with their statement over time.
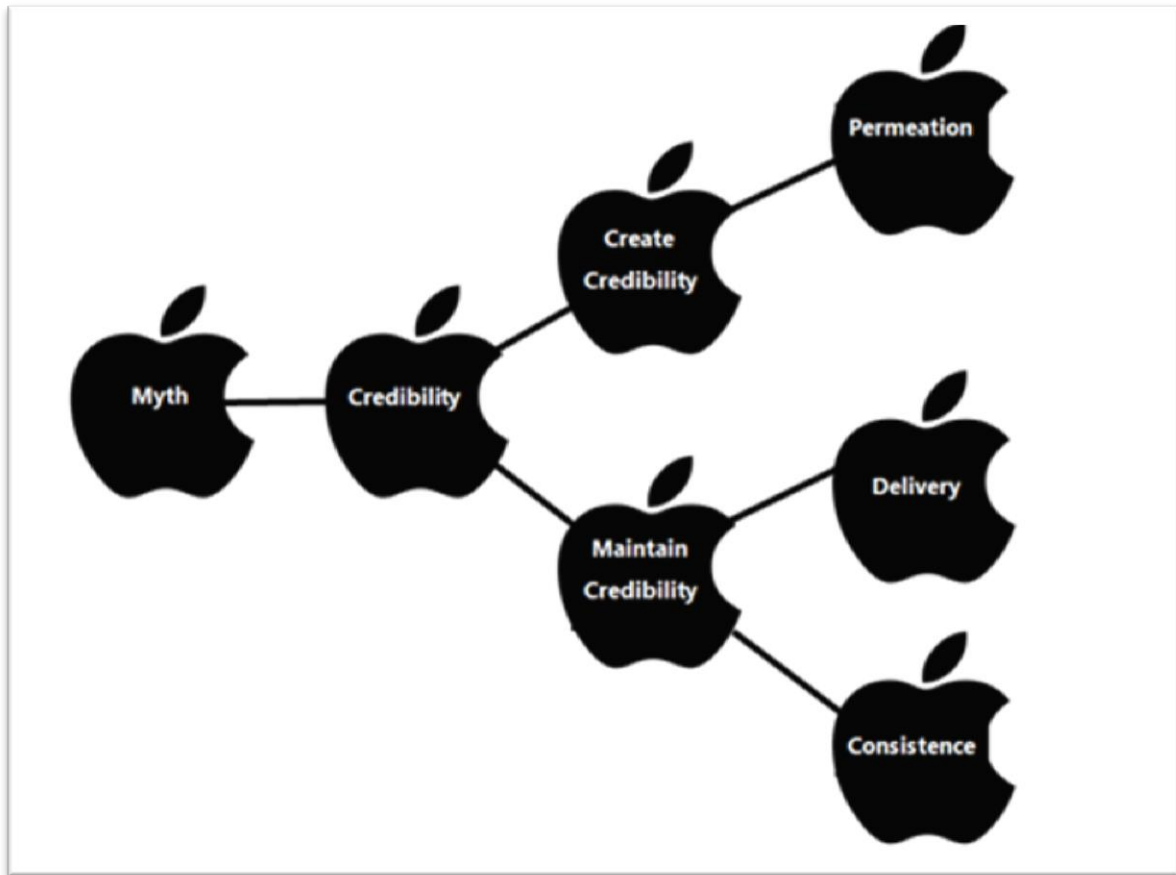
Figure 1: Model concerning credibility within myths (Agrell & Dunder 2015).

Furthermore, the organization needs to continuously deliver what has been promised according Erdem and Swait's (2004) theory, see figure 1. Through these theories we have concluded that in order to maintain the credibility of myth a brand needs to be consistent and deliver what the myth promises. As the focus of our study is concerning how to maintain credibility we find it interesting to test our presented model (figure 1).

Method

How did we do it

This study's aim is to receive a greater understanding and explain *how* successful brands can maintain credibility of their myth. Our research started with identifying that the use of myths can be one important part for a brand's success (Holt & Cameron 2010). Thereafter, we studied myths within brands; both when it has been successful and when it has failed. For instance it succeeded for Nike with "Just Do It" and failed for British Petroleum with their attempt to be seen as environmentally friendly. Furthermore, we identified risks regarding the use of myths. We found several problems, however all of them seemed to derive from credibility.

Hence, we identified that one of the greatest questions regarding credibility is how to maintain it in a myth. The data have mostly been collected through secondary resources, such as academic journals, books, articles, annual reports, magazines, and television advertisements. The advantage of secondary sources is that it is time efficient, which means that you have more time to analyse the data (Bryman & Bell 2013). The secondary data that is made of experience

researchers or institutions have high quality (Bryman & Bell 2013).

This have resulted in that we only use researchers who have studied for a long time, are seen as credible sources and considered to have high quality on their materials (Bryman & Bell 2013). One negative aspect with secondary sources is that we are not familiar with the material (Bryman & Bell 2013), to minimise this we have studied our material carefully. We have tried to understand how they received the data, how they have analysed it, and how they come up with the result.

However, to return to the purpose of our study, we want to find out how they have been able to maintain the credibility of the myth. Mainly we focused on the variables, see figure 1, on how the credibility of myths can be maintained. We assess these credibility variables through how myths according to Holt (2003a p. 36) are performed:

"through advertising, through all facets of marketing – product design, retail environment, packaging, public relations, product placements and service delivery".

Why a case study?
A case study is the most suitable method for our research, since it focuses on *how* and *why* questions that are complex to answer (Yin 2014). A case study is not statistically significant since a case study has a subjective interpretation (Yin 2003). To increase the credibility within our research, we have gathered important information from different sources (Yin 2014). Furthermore, a case study research will give us a deeper understanding and greater insight of a phenomenon in the real context (Sinek 2009; Yin 2014), such as a myth. Yin (2003, p. 13) explains a case study as;

"an empirical inquiry that investigate a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident".

One of the limitations of a case study is the difficulty to generalise the result to brands in other contexts (Farquhar 2012). This research is a longitudinal case study, as we looked on factors that we consider are relevant to maintain credibility of myths in the case over a time perspective, from 1984 to present day (Yin 2014).

Holt and Cameron (2010) state that Apple's success is due to their use of cultural innovation. Apple's breakthrough with this cultural strategy came with their "1984" Super Bowl television advertisement, according to Holt and Cameron (2010). Even if our study focuses on the "Think different" myth, this advertisement is very relevant and will be discussed. Moreover, this research is an exploratory case study. Therefore, the study goes deeper within the case and aim to explain *how* (Yin 2014) a brand has maintained the credibility of some of their myths over time.

Apple Inc.
The choice of case is Apple and its brand. Apple is an American multinational corporation that designs, develops and manufactures hardware and software consumer electronics. The company was founded in Cupertino, California, in 1977 by Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak. Apple's first commercially marketed product was the personal computer Apple II (Persson & Henriksson 2014).

This choice is based on the fact that Apple is one of the most successful brands in the world according to the study of Interbrand (Interbrand 2014a). Furthermore, Apple is surrounded with myths according to Belk and Tumbat (2001) and Shields (2001). However, we identified "Think different" myth, which we chose to study. Beverland (2009) and Holt (2003b) have used Apple as an example in their theories, which made us interested in this case.

How will the theories be used?

In our theoretical framework we accounted for several theories concerning credibility. In our study we will see how well Apple has performed according to these criteria concerning the "Think different" myth. The criterion as we see it concerns how well the myth permeates the whole organization and how well the brand is consistent with the myth. Furthermore, we will assess how well Apple lives up to Beverland's (2009) seven terms. Beverland's model is used as a tool to assess how credibility is created and maintained, including concerning Holt and Cameron's (2010) terms.

Moreover, we will see how well Apple continuously delivers what the myth promises, as that is Erdem and Swait's (2004) terms for credibility. We will study where and how the "Think different" myth can be seen in Apple's marketing and why it has maintained credible. As the myth, according to Holt (2003a), is manifested through all facets of marketing (product design, retail environment, packaging, public relations, product placements and service deliver) this is what we will look at.

Concerning the consumer culture theory, Arnould and Thompson (2005) state that studies operating in this research field frequently draw conclusions from semiotic and literary critical theories. These methods are used to "*analyze the symbolic meanings, cultural ideals, and ideological inducements encoded in popular culture texts and the rhetorical tactics that are used to make these ideological appeals compelling*" (Arnould & Thompson 2005, p. 875). A semiotic analysis is thus something we find necessary to do.

Bryman and Bell (2013) discuss that semiotics represents a view on the analysis of documents and other phenomena with focus on the importance of finding or reaching the deeper meaning of the phenomena being studied. Correspondingly, we found it necessary to use a semiotic method to analyse how the chosen myths are manifested through different aspects of marketing, as this will make us understand how the credibility of the myth is maintained. We have included the findings within the semiotic analysis, with what we have found regarding the effects of myths, for instance in articles, journals, and annual reports. Furthermore, we investigate how this is done over time and thus we can see how the credibility is maintained. This has given us a greater understanding of how myths have affected the brand.

Results

The mythical Apples

There are several myths concerning Apple. Belk and Tumbat (2001) have identified four myths with religious aspects that surround Apple, which have created a cult-like brand community for Apple with extreme loyalty to the brand. "*The Mac and its fans constitute the equivalent of a religion*", state Belk and Tumbat (2001, p. 207). The first myth identified is the Creation Myth, which refers to how Steve Jobs and Steve Wozniak created the first Apple computer in Jobs' parents' garage. The second myth Belk and Tumbat (2001) have identified is the Hero Myth, which refers to Steve Jobs' rise and fall within Apple. This myth follows the structure of the classic Heroic Adventure Myth, formulated by Joseph Campbell (1991).

According to Campbell, mythological heroes have all ventured along a dangerous path, a journey glutted by misfortune and hazardous perils, but against all odds, returned victorious. Steve Jobs' journey from somewhat of a witty, pot-smoking hippie with an idea and a garage to billionaire, CEO of the decade and cultural icon on the forefront of successful branding (Isaacson 2011) can be interpreted as classic myth (Belk & Tumbat 2001). Jobs' story is a classic hero myth.

The third myth explained by Belk and Tumbat (2001), is the Satanic Myth. This constitutes of the enemies of Apple – IBM and Microsoft. This myth is mainly shown in the "1984" advertisement, which we will return to later. Belk and Tumbat (2001) also refer to a fourth myth that consists of Jobs' successful return to Apple, which restored the faith in the brand – the Resurrection Myth. Belk and Tumbat (2001) have researched on how these myths have been re-created and restored through Apple's marketing.

Shields (2001) has analysed the mythic strategies found in Apple's "Think different" campaign. He discusses Apple's use of historical images, which has empowered the corporate myth. Shields (2001) has identified how Apple's advertisements' mythic positioning have linked Apple's struggle against IBM with images of Adam's banishment from the Garden of Eden and David's triumph over Goliath. Furthermore, Shields state that there are other myths concerning Apple, for example concerning the Apple logo (Shields 2001).

A different myth
However, as we are more interested in the cultural strategy, we will explore a myth more in line with the theories of Holt and Cameron (2010). Even if Shields (2001) has written about the advertisement "Think different" and stated that there are mythical elements surrounding this slogan; he has not explicitly phrased it as a myth per se. However, we do.

We identified "Think different" as a myth, based on Holt and Cameron's (2010) approach and compared it to Nike's "Just Do It" myth. These myths have several similarities, for instance Apple also use their myth as a slogan. Furthermore, Nike encourages people to *just do it* (Holt & Cameron 2010) while Apple encourages the world to *think different*. Both of these phrases are appeals and encouraging. Another similarity between the Apple advertisement

(Apple 1997) and the Nike advertisement is that they are both black-and-white (Holt & Cameron 2010). They are both rebellious and challenging, and not satisfied with the status quo (Nike 1987; Apple 1997). They both call for a change and evoke feelings of exhilaration. Also, it is branding, which is seen in how they rather sell a lifestyle and an experience than a product (Nike 1987; Apple 1997). Later we will show more of how this is a myth and how the credibility of this myth is maintained. But what is the story behind the "Think Different" advertisement?

The "Think Different" advertisement
Between 1996 and 1997, Apple reported losses totalling 1.85 billion and a market share of 3%, as opposed to nearly 10% in 1991 (Burrows 1997). To reverse the trend, Apple founder Steve Jobs returned in 1997, fired twelve years earlier. He began by reducing the number of products and by focusing operations. Moreover, he initiated the launch of the campaign "Think different" with the advertising firm TBWA/Chiat/Day, the same company that created the iconic "1984" campaign.

According to Jeremy Miller, a spokesman for the advertising firm, the campaign's aim was to establish a brand identity (Shields 2001). By paying tribute to creative innovators, Apple emphasised the brand's core values - love for exploration and innovation - and once again provided an implicit promise of fulfilment by Apple products, which the "1984" advertisement also did (Shields 2001). As stated, we interpret the "Think different" myth as a promise that Apple is unique and different. According to Holt (2003a) myths are preformed through marketing, for instance products, design and advertising. The "Think different" television advertisement won Emmy and Obie awards, among others (Shields 2001; Emmys 2015).

The "Think different" television advertisement is a screenplay with pictures

of Albert Einstein, Bob Dylan, Martin Luther King, Jr.; Mahatma Gandhi, Amelia Earhart, Alfred Hitchcock and Pablo Picasso among others, with a voiceover that says:

"Here's to the crazy ones. The misfits. The rebels. The troublemakers. The round pegs in the square holes. The ones who see things differently. They're not fond of rules. And they have no respect for the status quo. You can quote them, disagree with them, glorify or vilify them. About the only thing you can't do is ignore them. Because they change things. They invent. They imagine. They heal. They explore. They create. They inspire. They push the human race forward. Maybe they have to be crazy. How else can you stare at an empty canvas and see a work of art? Or sit in silence and hear a song that's never been written? Or gaze at a red planet and see a laboratory on wheels? We make tools for these kinds of people. While some see them as the crazy ones, we see genius. Because the people who are crazy enough to think they can change the world, are the ones who do."

(Apple 1997)

As stated in the beginning, a myth is a story with a symbolic meaning to be interpreted (Edsman & Johannesson 2015). Moreover, Holt's (2003a) definition of a myth is that people learn something from it and it helps them understand themselves and the world. We interpret the ad from 1997 as a myth according to those terms. It encourages people to do what they believe in and follow their hearts, which is thus what you learn from it. Apple challenges people to not be afraid to be themselves, unique and different from others. These people have achieved great success and can change the world.

"Think different" can be seen as "be different", something that you do every day; it is a lifestyle. This is thus a promise that Apple is unique and different. As stated, people buy the product to consume the myth and identify themselves with the brand, and therefore it is not only the product they buy, but also the lifestyle (Holt 2003b). "Think different" permeates the whole organization, from Apple's way to communicate to the audience to their products and design. This we will show later.

In this television advertisement Apple clearly positions themselves as the outsiders who turn out to be geniuses, through the use of famous people that have gone through a similar transformation (Apple 1997) and also as Steve Jobs has done the same journey. The advertisement "Think different" challenged the audience to change the world, not to be satisfied with the status quo, and praised the people who artistically and imaginatively did creative things (Shields 2001, p. 207). Furthermore, Shields states that it was not an advertisement about a product; the advertisement was instead something far more fundamental:

"*Apple's restatement to the world and to themselves of corporate identity and mission*" (Shields 2001, pp 206).

Shields (2001) states that Apple uses mythology in the form of cultural icons to connect consumer aspirations with new technology in this advertisement. The pictures of the famous individuals that visually merge into each other, creates what Shields (2001, p.212) describes as a "*mirrored heterotopic place of renewal and opportunity*".

Think differentiation
There have been speculations about how Apple created this slogan. In 1997 when Apple launched their advertisement "Think different", IBM's campaign was "Think IBM" (Forbes 2011). This was thus a way for Apple to differentiate from competitors. Apple's slogan, "Think different", is not grammatically correct. "Think" tells people what they should think about, and should be seen as a noun (Shields 2002). Furthermore, in the television advertisement from 1997 "different" is referring to "*the ones who see things differently*" (Apple 1997), who also are the ones that change things. "[D]ifferent" here has positive connotations and is associated with rebellion and geniality. This

advertisement from 1997 builds on the performances and the associations founded in 1984, with the advertisement with the same name.

The advertisement "Think different" is seen as a turning point for Apple (Hormby 2013) and was very effective (Shields 2001). Market researchers noted that the advertisement increased sales (Perry 2002). Matzer (1998) wrote that Apple through this advertisement, managed to both appeal to their core users, creative professionals, while capturing others who liked to see themselves as creative geniuses. This was done without the use of a conventional advertising design. The campaign was directed to the people who identified themselves with its rebel status (Matzer 1998). It was in line with the same values that were portrayed in the earlier "1984" advertising campaign and this consistent with what had been previously presented from Apple.

Different Feeling

According to Shields (2001) the advertisement "Think different" worked as it evoked feelings of love and exploration that was already associated with Apple. Just like the "1984" advertisement where Apple is presented as the hero to save humanity, the "Think different" campaign's appeal also originated from it's implicit promise to empower, via the use of Apple technology (Shields 2001). Taube (2014) says the advertisement was "*a message to the world that Steve Jobs and his innovative vision had returned to Apple*".

According to Holt and Cameron (2010) Apple's breakthrough with the cultural strategy came with their "1984" Super Bowl advertisement. The "Think different" myth is partly a development of the advertisement "1984". The television advertisement "1984" is a reference to the novel "Nineteen eightyfour by George Orwell, which depicts a dystopian society where free thought and free behaviour is prohibited (Orwell 1949). In the television advertisement "1984", all

people are watching a screen where "Big Brother" announces the agenda. The facial expressions are indifferent and their uniform clothes and shaved heads make them look like clones.

The "1984" advertisement was a criticism of the standardisation of components and operating systems that occurred at the time in the industry. During that time it was basically Apple against IBM and Microsoft (California Computer Care 2005). Berger (2000) in Shields (2001), writes that the blonde woman throwing a sledgehammer in "1984" advertisement acts as an "Eve" figure that lead people to the knowledge of good and evil. Apple told the world by this, how they are the heroes and rebels there to save humanity from "conformity" (Apple 1984). The Macintosh is portrayed as a means for saving humanity from their enemies – IBM and Microsoft.

Apple's marketing

As stated previously, according Holt and Cameron (2010) the myth needs to permeate the whole organization to be credible and the brand needs to be consistent with it. Firstly, we will see how well Apple performs according to this. After that, we will account for how they deliver according to Beverland's (2009) terms for creating authenticity as an important part of credibility and how those factors are maintained. Thereafter, we will show how Apple continuously delivers what has been promised through the myth, which is important according to Erdem and Swait's (2004) definition of credibility. As stated, we interpret the "Think different" myth as a promise that Apple is unique and different.

There are numerous theories, articles, blogs and more about why Apple has succeeded in their marketing. What everyone seems to agree on is that Apple has managed to create wholeness and experience around their products that in a clear way speak to the customers (Moorman 2012). Apple's marketing in general and "Think different"

in particular, is not for a certain product but for the brand, i.e. branding. "Think different" reinforced the "*corporate identity and mission*" (Shields 2001).

Apple's three point marketing philosophy founded by Markkula in 1977 is:

"**Empathy** – *We will truly understand their [customer] needs better than any other company.*

Focus – *In order to do a good job of the things we decide to do, we must eliminate all of the unimportant opportunities.*

Impute - *People DO judge a book by its cover. We may have the best product, the highest quality, the most useful software, etc.; if we present them in a slipshod manner, they will be perceived as slipshod; if we present them in a creative, professional manner, we will impute the desired qualities.*"

Apple's third point in their marketing philosophy, impute, is coherent with their "Think different" myth and is also the core of what has made Apple's marketing unique and *different*. As we see it, the "Think different" myth permeates the whole organization through Apple's marketing, which means their advertisements, Genius personnel, their packaging, the stores' design and products' design that also are in line with Apple's marketing philosophy to impute.

Permeation
These aspects of Apple's marketing have been different compared to other brands, which confirms the "Think different" myth. Apple shows through these facets of marketing that they think different than others, which is the core of their differentiation. Apple stores are kept secret and covered until the entire store is complete before they show them for the public (Gorbauch & Vogel 2012). No one except from construction workers and the responsible are allowed to enter the store until it is finished (Gorbauch & Vogel 2012). This indicates that the design in the stores

needs to be unified with the organization before they can present it. Moreover, this is also reflected in their products. Apple products are easy to distinguish from other products and prepared to be unique in its design such as the stores. Regarding this, they try to create an overall experience, which indicates that the myth permeates the whole organization over time.

One other important factor for Apple has been how they have built compatible experiences. Apple has succeeded in creating a streamlined, intuitive way to make their computing and entertainment devices work as a whole (Moorman 2012). Hangen (2010) has is stated that, "*Apple does this by making sure that the experience doesn't end at the cash register*" which concludes their marketing.

Moreover, Apple does not just sell an experience in the sense that their products are marketed as an experience. Through their Apple stores the product itself can be experienced, i. e. tested (Moorman 2012). The Apple stores enable customer discovery and differentiation (Moorman 2012). A great part of how they have managed to seem unique and different through their marketing is how Apple sells an experience and lifestyle, rather than products. As stated, people buy the product to consume the myth and identify themselves with the brand, and therefore it is not only the product, but also the lifestyle they buy (Holt 2003b). Apple has shown through their marketing that they *walk the walk* as Holt and Cameron (2010) phrase it; they do think differently.

A current example of how Apple sells an experience more than a product is how the Apple Watch is marketed (Apple 2015d). In these advertisements, it is not the watch itself in the main focus - it is rather how one uses it and what the effect of using it will be. The Apple Watch is marketed as a tool for increasing your everyday activity and thus a more active lifestyle (Apple 2015d); all in

accordance with how a cultural strategy should be completed.

Moreover, Apple builds up suspense and excitement before launching products (Kalb 2015). When launching a new product, a short film of how to experience it is published on their website, called "events". There their latest launches are presenter by Tim Cook, their current CEO (Apple 2015a). One can pre-order products in order to get them before others. This causes an exclusivity for the ones who knows about this and does it. "*Pre-order is now available exclusively online*" as it says on the website, regarding their latest product, the Apple Watch (Apple 2015b). These activities help the "Think different" myth to permeate the entire organization, as this is a unique and different way of marketing. In this way, the myth permeates the whole organization. The need of permeation of the myth in the whole organization is shown in our model, figure 2.

Consistency
According to Moorman (2012) Apple has stayed consistent to their three point marketing philosophy, incorporated in 1977. As the "Think different" campaign built on the same values shown in the "1984" advertisement, it was consistent with previous messages (Shields 2001). One of the most difficult parts is to maintain the credibility in a myth and to keep it relevant in our dynamic society. Apple has succeeded with this according to Miller (Shields 2001). Miller in Shields (2001) states that the "Think different" advertisement serves as

"*a reminder that the Apple Computer Company is still very relevant to those who not only think differently but those who choose to change the whole body of what they think about*" (Shields 2001).

The "1984" advertisement was unique and a success, "Think different" was different, and the whole "Get a Mac" campaign from 2006-2009 is all about how they differ from their competitors (Apple 2006-2009). Concerning the "Get a Mac" campaign,

Garfield (2006) states, "*Apple is consistent. You know what it means, what it stands for and what it will always stand for*". And as stated; consistency creates credibility and this finding is thus also in accordance with the theory of Herbig and Milewicz (1995). The need of consistency to maintain credibility of the myth is shown in our model, figure 2.

Maintain authentic to maintain credible
Beverland (2005) states that authenticity is necessary for credibility, and formed a model (2009) in seven steps to show how that is done, which we have accounted for. The first step is storytelling, which is something Apple does through this myth (Shields 2001). They do this by telling a story about being different and by that being able to create greatness, which is something Apple has done continuously (Shields 2001).

Beverland's (2009) second step is concerning appearing as artisanal amateurs which is also very fitting for Apple and its creation. Steve Jobs had a vision he followed and created the company from his parents' garage, firstly as a hobby with great passion (Belk & Tumbat 2001). This soon became his profession and the company got successful. The myth tells a story of people being different and changing the world, and as stated before this is clearly related to Steve Jobs' journey.

The third thing Beverland (2009) states is important for authenticity as a part of credibility, is to stick to your roots, something we can see that Apple has done. As stated, they have been consistent in their marketing; from 1984, through 1997 and to the present day, which can be seen in their stores, products' design, stores' personnel and advertisements, for example the "Get a Mac" campaign. Apple has been consistence and consequent with their three point marketing philosophy since 1977. When Steve Jobs returned to Apple 1997 he begun reducing the numbers of products that shows they wanted to stay *focused*, which is one of their core points for marketing. The

myth tells the world that Apple is different, which they have shown continuously and consistently through their marketing.

Fourthly, it seems like Apple loves the doing. Apple communicates different from others in their branch, which makes them different and unique. They communicate to the audience what they believe in, which creates loyalty. The audience joins Apple because they believe in what Apple believes in (Sinek 2009). Customers are loyal and the brand community is strong. Belk and Tumbat (2001) state concerning the brand community of Apple, that the devoted loyal community members

"*believe that Apple is not so much motivated by the desire to make money as it is by the desire to bring about the hierophany of offering the world truly 'neat stuff.'*" (pp.212-213).

This means that Apple appears to have succeeded in seeming to develop and produce technology because they love to, not for economic or other purposes. Steve Jobs once said, "*One of the keys to Apple is that we build products that really turn us on*" (Moorman 2012). As the myth tells a story of how Apple is creative and innovative and that "Think different" is encouraging, this is in line with how it seems like Apple loves the doing.

Beverland's fifth requirement concerns innovations, which are seen as necessary. It is important that a brand does not break their connection with their roots. Apple is seen to be first to create new products that show they are innovative, which create authenticity. As it turns out, Apple has not always been the first ones at creating new products, however they have been the most successful at it and been credited for it. We will return to this later. The myth tells the story of how creative, innovative and different Apple is, and thus this requirement supports the myth

Beverland's sixth necessity concerning being at one with the community is something Apple's is to a high extent. As stated by Belk and Tumbat (2001), Apple's brand community is like a cult, which is due to the many myths surrounding the brand. The community (or cult) members romantically ennoble their brand and engage in what Susan Fournier (1998) called intimate "brand relationships". According to Belk and Tumbat (2001) "*Apple's customers are distinguished by their fierce loyalty to the brand and their personal identification with Apple's Macintosh computers*" (pp. 205). Moreover, there are several online forums for the devoted community members, and some of the most extreme ones even have the Apple logo tattooed on their body (Belk and Tumbat 2001).

The last requirement is about indoctrinating staff into the brand cult, which is clearly shown in with the Apple Store Genius Bar (Apple 2015c). The personnel are included in the brand myth that creates more credibility for the brand and at the same time the brand is one with the brand community. The "geniuses" are regular technical support, but they appear as experts as they are called geniuses, and unique as other brands do not have expertise personnel in the same way. Other brands do not even have their own stores. Belk and Tumbat (2001) state that Apple has "*highly dedicated employees*" (pp. 207). Steve Jobs once said,

"*Apple is built on refugees from other companies. These are the extremely bright individual contributors who were trouble makers at other companies*" (Linzmayer 1999, p. 541).

The "Think different" myth is explicitly directed towards "troublemakers". Moorman says, "*this means that the products are exactly what they want because Apple employees are so deeply entrenched in and committed to the customer's experience*" (Moorman 2012). This is a clear example of how the myth permeates the whole organization.

Apple fulfils all the requirements that Beverland (2009) concludes create authenticity, which according to him is important for credibility. *Stick to your roots* that we interpret as consistency and *storytelling*, which is a part of myths, have been crucial for Apple to maintain credibility of their myth. The other habits have been important to create credibility through permeation through the whole organization for the myth. This has resulted in that Apple has succeeded and become the market leader. This indicates that Apple won on the "*myth market*" that made them to an iconic brand (Holt 2003b).

To conclude, now we have shown how the "Think different" myth has maintained credible according to the terms by Holt and Cameron (2010) and Beverland (2009); permeation through the whole brand and consistency over time. Furthermore, we showed that this is also in line with Herbig and Milewicz's theories (1995). Now we move on to show how Apple performs according to Erdem and Swait's (2004) terms concerning continuously deliver.

Delivery

As stated, we interpret the "Think different" myth as a promise that Apple is unique and different. Regarding delivery, we mean how well Apple delivers what their "Think different" myth promises through their marketing, for instance advertisements, products, packaging, and design.

Kalb states (2015) that a very important factor for Apple's marketing success is that Apple "*ships products that over-deliver*". St John (2012) states something in line with this, when analysing the follow up after the successful "1984" advertisement. Apple launched the television advertisement "*Lemmings*" in 1985, for Macintosh Office. However, this failed. The reason for the failure was that "*Macintosh Office did not deliver what it promised*" (St. John 2012). Thus, one can conclude that the "1984" advertisement succeeded as Apple and the myth shown,

did deliver what the advertisement promised. Considering the success of "Think different" both in sales and attention, one can conclude the products delivered; otherwise it would not have been a success. According to Marketing Minds (2014) "*Apple's core competence remains delivering exceptional experience through superb user interfaces*".

Erdem and Swait (2004) define that credibility requires that consumers perceive that the brand *continuously deliver what has been promised*. As we have shown, Apple has proven to think differently and been different. Apple has continuously and consequently delivered unique and different products, experiences and marketing since 1984.

Is Apple different, or do you just think they are? Apple has in fact thought differently than other companies (i.e. IBM and Microsoft), but mainly through their marketing. The marketing of their products, has contributed to the idea that they have been thinking differently, even if they only have with their marketing, not necessarily their products. Hence, this becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. In line with this, Shields (2001) state that "Think different" is both "*self-serving and visionary*" (pp. 213). This is in alignment with what Holt and Cameron has stated about Nike. They conclude that;

"*what Nike did differently was to be found in its advertising, not its shoes. Marketing models should be of some help in understanding how Nike communications led its innovation*" (Holt & Cameron 2010, p. 45).

Even if Apple has not actually been the first ones with some of their most successful products, they are the ones who have been credited for them and some of their product brands have become generic. For example, this is the case with the iPad. They were not the first ones with tablets, but they are the most successful at it (Bort 2013). Thus, they have managed to seem innovative and first,

as they were the first ones to succeed with the product. Thus, Apple's products are not necessarily different, but as their marketing has been given that impression - it seems like it.

The necessity of delivering to maintain credibility of the myth is shown in our model, figure 2. According to the TED Talk with Simon Sinek (2009), Apple's success is due to their differentiation from others by thinking differently. Sinek means that Apple firstly tells their customers why they exist, which also answers what their purpose is and what they believe in. After that, they answer the question of "how" and "what" one would buy their products. By that, an incentive to buy their products is firstly created, as you believe in what the brand believes in (Sinek 2009). Apple's communication creates a need among their customers. Hence, Sinek's (2009) statement is in line with Apple marketing philosophy to show empathy and understand their customers' needs.

To conclude, the Apple myth "Think different" fulfils all different theories' requirements concerning credibility we have included in our study. The "Think different" myth has consequently permeated the whole organization, Apple has been consistent with it and also delivered what the myth has promised, which has created and maintained the credibility of this myth. The use of myth is a part of cultural branding, which is an effective way to create strong associations, which affect brand choice and brand consideration.

Conclusion & Discussion

Our research question was how to maintain the credibility and what we have found is that Apple Inc. have kept their myths credible as they have managed to stay consistent with it and it has permeated the whole organization. Moreover, Apples has continuously delivered what the myth has promised; they have been different. It is that Apple has continuously proven to think

differently and been different, that have maintained the credibility of this myth. This is what has made the Apple stay fresh.

Based on our findings we created a model (see figure 1) that we have used as a tool in our analysis to investigate how different factors influence the credibility within a myth over time. After we used figure 1. as a tool in our analysis of empirical data we have modified it (see figure 2). The difference from our original model (figure 1) is that we have found that permeation, consistency and delivery are all important factors to maintain credibility of a myth, only consistency and delivery is not enough to maintain credibility. The permeation of the myth needs to be consistent over time and the brand needs to deliver what the myth promises consistently. Figure 2. shows how the myth must permeate the entire organization. These three factors must be consistent over time and consequently deliver; both in terms of marketing but also in terms of delivering good enough products.

Apple's "Think different" myth permeates the entire organization. Apple is acting after "Think different" myth in their way to communicate, for instance in their advertisements from 1984, 1997 and 2006-2009, in their design of their products and packaging. Furthermore, Apple keeps their promises of the "Think different" myth by delivering good products, unique design, store design, and personnel. It is important that an organization delivers what their myth promises.

These findings indicate that if a brand wants to use and succeed with myths, it needs to be determined to let it permeate the whole organization, to stay with it and consequently prove its relevance and deliver what it promises. Apple has in different ways stayed with the same message for over 35 years, through a changing society. The same with Nike; they have both unwaveringly proven their message to "Just
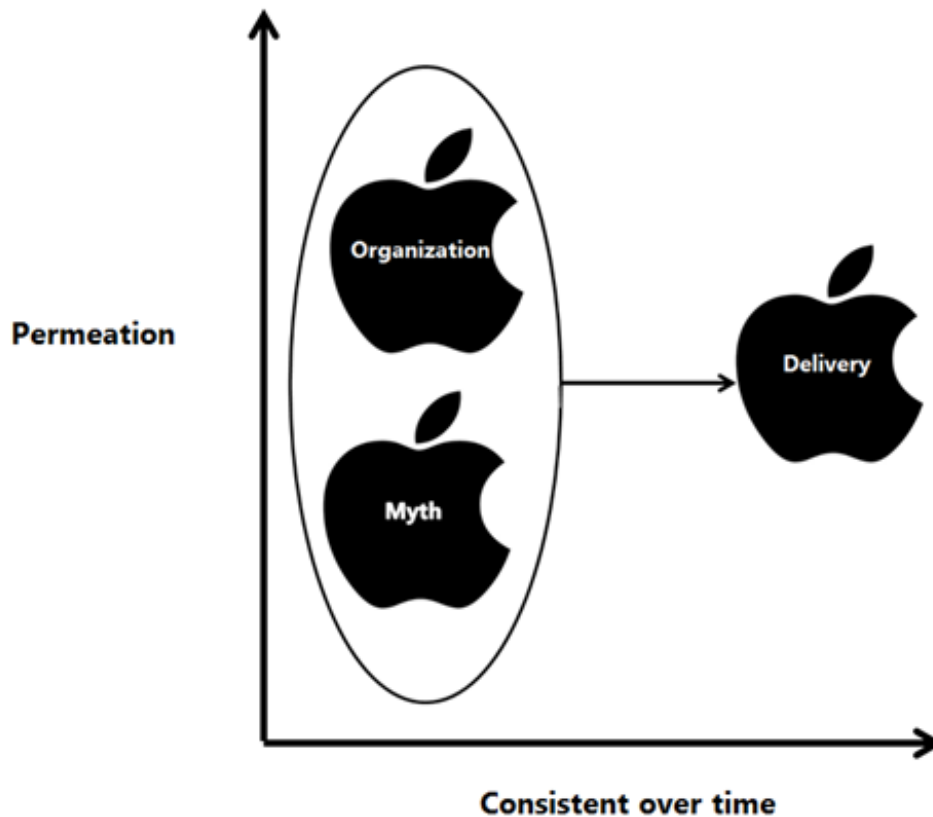
Figure 2: How to maintain credibility of a myth (Agrell & Dunder 2015)

Do It" and "Think different is still relevant. To succeed with this, it takes endurance and determination to stick with it, courage to let the brand depend so much on one message, (genius) staff indoctrinated enough to follow it and also deliver products that support the message. In Apple's case, their success is probably also helped by a cult-like brand community with extreme loyalty to the brand, and due to several other myths that surrounds the brand and Steve Jobs. An organization who wants to use myths in their marketing need to keep in mind that it is a long time process to build up credibility of a myth. As stated, Apple has managed to succeed with their myth "Think different" due to keeping it credible

Practical implications
Firstly, we have no scientific primary sources, except for our own interpretations through a semiotic analysis and conclusions. A part from that, we only have secondary sources. If we had executed this study in a different way, perhaps our results would have been different. For example, we could have interviewed people concerning their opinions, associations and image of Apple and the "Think different" slogan. That would have been interesting as a comparison.

Secondly, we rely heavily on Holt's theories concerning cultural branding; this is of course a weakness within our study. However, Holt is seen as a pioneer in this field. For example, we have relied on Holt's theory that the cultural strategy has been a key success factor for Apple. Other researchers might consider other factors to be more important for Apple's success.

Thirdly, we have only studied one case. It would have been interesting to compare our results to at least one other case; more than shallowly as done with the comparison with Nike. Perhaps this would have given us a deeper understanding of the subject of cultural branding, and another result. We would maybe be able to see how different contexts have for impact on the result.

Fourthly, we have probably been subjective in our search, in the sense that we have more or less found what we have been looking for. We have looked for how the myth has been shown, and accounted for that. However, there are surely other aspects and examples of Apple's marketing where this myth is or is not upheld. We have not looked at all aspects of their marketing since 1984. Even if it is somewhat of a longitudinal study; all years since 1984 are not represented. We have chosen to include the aspects of their marketing we have found relevant and where we have seen the "Think different" myth manifested. There is an enormous amount of writings on Apple and Apple's marketing. It is impossible to read through everything and account for it. We have tried our best to find and use relevant articles.

Lastly, we have found different theories concerning credibility, which we have accounted for and measured Apple's performance with. However, there are probably more theories concerning this, which we have not found or taken into consideration. This can of course be an implication of our study.

Future Research
Our focus has been to examine how a brand can maintain the credibility in their myths. For future research it could be interesting to examine how effective a myth can be and how the use of myth can change the associations of brands. Another research that we interesting is to study the differences between the use of myths and storytelling. Furthermore, we have encountered brand communities around brands as an effect of the power of the myth. It would be interesting to study what affect brand communities have on myths and how brand communities are created.

Acknowledgement

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