What brand associations are

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Abstract. The American polyhistor Charles Sanders Peirce stated that association is the only active force in the mind; and since any meaning of a brand is created through countless associations among the brand users, branding seems to be a cognitive vis-à-vis semeiotic process. In literature on brands the concept of association is by no means new; however, if we take a look at some of the leading and dominant brand researchers, their definitions of associations seem to lack academic depth. We hope to contribute to this hitherto missing depth by applying Peirce's understanding of associations.

Keywords: associations, Charles S. Peirce, branding, brands

> Now the generalizing tendency is the great law of mind, the law of association, the law of habit taking. (CP 7.515, c. 1898)

> Thoughts begin to dance through the mind, each leading another by the hand. (MS400:7, CP 7.388. c. 1893)

Setting the scene: associations

Cognitive research into associations in branding is by no means new: the concept of brand association has been widely explored (See Keller 2001, 2013; Aaker 1991; Van Osselaer, Janiszewski 2001; Franzen, Bouwman 2001; Lee, Leh 2011[1]). The work of

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[1] See: Lee, Goi Chai; Leh, Fayrene Chieng Yew 2011. Dimensions of customer-based brand equity: A study on Malaysian brands. *Journal of Marketing Research and Case Studies*. http://www.ibimapublishing.com/journals/JMRCS/2011/821981/a821981.html.

Franzen and Bouwman is of particular interest, since they developed the concept of brand emgrams. An emgram is a brand defined by its sum of associations; however, their work does not offer a thorough classification of brand associations, their ontology and their epistemology, so to speak. There have been many attempts to categorize brand associations and many experiments testing brand associations on brand users have been conducted. Still, reading the classic texts by Keller and Aaker and supplementing these by newer texts such as the work of John Grant (2004) and Gerald Zaltman (2003) (both heavily building on George Lakoff and cognitive semantics, yet also importing the philosophical problems of cognitive semantics) leaves us with an important question: what is an association? The association models of Aaker, Keller and Supphellen, which are supposed to categorize associations, do not categorize associations, but rather elements that are results of associations and cause further associations. Attributes, persons, celebrities, price, etc., are not associations; however, they cause associations. The aim of this article is to give a more precise definition of association based on the American polyhistor Charles Sanders Peirce (1839–1914), who has an interesting theory about association involving three types of association: resemblance, contiguity, and interest. The reason for using Peirce's theory of association is that his semeiotic, which associations are part of, also offers a theory of meaning creation. We believe that associations represent both interpretative habits of brand users and also the power to create new habits and change old ones. Another important point in our work – related to Peirce – is to bring more clarity into the use of the notion. Mistaking association for effects of association need not entail severe pragmatic problems, yet it is not philosophically sound; we have to know what we are talking about.

We will compare Peirce's typology of association to the one proposed by Norwegian marketing researcher Magne Supphellen that consists of verbal, visual, sensory, and emotional associations, and to the classic brand association models by the marketing experts David Aaker and Kevin Keller. Based on Peirce, we will argue that none of the three typologies in fact are associations, but important vehicles of associations. Hence, we will try to see what lies underneath the association models of Aaker, Keller, and Supphellen. Finally, we will analyse two brand examples using Peirce's typology of association, showing the intrinsic relations between the associations of resemblance, contiguity, and interest.

Returning to the understanding of association within marketing theory, there seems to be a general agreement that brand associations are predominantly caused by visual impression, since two thirds of sensory stimuli that reach the brain are visual. Supphellen 2000 refers to Zaltman 1997 and Kosslyn *et al.* 1990 in order to support this statement. This means that the remaining third is left to other sensory impressions such as taste, smell, sound, etc. Supphellen writes:

> While awake, we constantly make visual observations of the environment. Only a small fraction of these impressions – the ones deliberately attended to and subjected to cognitive elaboration – will have a verbal description attached to them when entering memory. The recognition that memory is largely visual has important implications for elicitation. (Supphellen 2000, *sine pagina*)[2]

This corresponds nicely to Peirce's metaphor "consciousness is like a bottomless lake" (cf. CP 7.547; 7.553–4), where we continuously are being bombarded with percepts. However, only a fraction of them enter the self-consciousness; the rest of them avoid the self-consciousness and sink down into the subconscious where some of them may associate via resemblance, contiguity, or interest to webs of associations and some may be forgotten altogether. This would indicate that associations work in all parts of consciousness and also on a more subconscious level. We can deduce that sensory impressions create associations that are located in memory. However, we do not know how and why the associations got there in the first place. We simply lack a scholarly definition of association that can answer these rather important questions.

Other studies (Fiske, Taylor 1995) show that there is an intricate relation between associations and emotions. This relation is apparently so strong that Supphellen (2000) proposes a category of associations called emotional associations, leaving us with four types of associations:

> So far, we have briefly reviewed four modes of representation of brand associations: verbal, visual, sensory and emotional. An important related characteristic of brand associations is that most of them are unconscious (Plutchik 1993). This contention is consonant with the recognition that only a minor proportion of the impressions that reach the brain is subjected to deliberate reasoning. Large numbers of visual, sensory and emotional impressions are not consciously attended to, but are still stored in the associative network together with verbal associations.

Of course this typology can be questioned since – from our semeiotic perspective – any association, whether verbal, visual, sensory, or emotional, creates emotions. Therefore, we would erase emotional associations from this typology: since emotions are the outcome of any association and thus are on a completely different epistemological level, this classification simply seems tautological.

Aaker's association model claims that brand associations are "anything linked in memory to a brand" (Aaker 1991: 109). This seems to be plausible also from a semeiotic perspective. However, if we apply temporality to this understanding, it appears that

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[2]   The source has been cited from Supphellen, Magne 2000. Understanding core brand equity: Guidelines for in-depth elicitation of brand associations. *International Journal of Market Research* 42. http://www.warc.com/fulltext/JMRS/14256.htm.

Aaker's claim only refers to the past, and we know – as a fact – that we shall also live in the future. Otherwise expectations, hopes, dreams, desires, associations, brands, etc. would not be possible. Aaker also suggests eleven types of brand associations: *product attributes, intangibles, customer benefits, relative price, country/geographic area, competitors, product class, lifestyle/personality, celebrity/person, user/customer, and use/application*. We believe that there are several problems with this list. First of all, the concepts on the list refer to different categorical levels; second, none of them are associations. They can create association and are important in understanding how we understand brands. A celebrity can cause associations, e.g. George Clooney when drinking Nespresso endows Nespresso with style and class – but he is not an association in himself. We can add attributes to a brand, e.g., change colours, add gadgets, rename it, and so on – these acts are not associations but they may cause associations.

Likewise, Keller (1993) suggests three general types of associations: *attributes, benefits,* and *attitude,* but these concepts are not associations either, they create associations. So, when asking what an association is in general and more specifically what a brand association is, Supphellen, Aaker, and Keller do not provide any satisfactory answers. In order to get an answer – at least that is our hope – we will take a closer look at Peirce's definition of the association and, based on that, see how brands make us associate.

The importance of the modes of associations is underlined by Peirce when he writes "[…] association is the only force that exists within the intellect" (CP 7.453). Consequently, we think it is fair to say that these types of associations seem to function at any level in consciousness. This seems to be in accordance with Supphellen, Keller, and Aaker. But what exactly is an association? Peirce sheds some light on the cognitive phenomenon in the following way:

> A great many associations of ideas are inherited. Others grow up spontaneously. The rest depend upon the principle that ideas once brought together into a set remain in that set. Many associations are merely accidental. A child acquires a distaste for a particular kind of food merely because it ate it when it was sick. The idea of that food and the feeling of sickness are brought into a set; and the consequence is that every time the idea of that food reaches a high degree of vividness, the feeling of sickness gets a swift upward motion. Other associations cannot be called accidental because it was in the nature of things that they should appear in sets. Thus, light and warm get associated in our minds because they are associated in Nature. (CP 7.550)

In the quote, Peirce mentions different kinds of associations: some are inherited; some occur spontaneously; some are brought together in a set and remain in sets due to habits; some are accidental; and some are natural associations – but all are associations of resemblance, contiguity, or interest. It is interesting to read that Peirce understands

the concept of association both on an epistemological level, where the association is an active force in the mind relating ideas, and on an ontological level, where it refers to nature's own associations. Our ability to associate is ontologically founded; our ability to make meaning out of associations is epistemologically founded.

Peirce's example with the child who associates a particular kind of food with distaste because she ate it when sick is a classic example of accidental associations, and this type of association is of utmost important to branding, simply because brands evoke emotions and emotions are formed by our experiences; and if we have experienced negative emotions when using a brand, we embed the particular brand with negative emotions. Even if this may seem irrational to some, it is not. On the other hand, positive experiences with a brand cause positive emotions. This is the kind of reinforcement that brand makers want to create, and this is where Aaker and Keller become useful. When endowing attributes to a brand, we are capable of – to some degree at least – managing the associations in our desired direction. Consequently, in branding it is important that the brand user does not experience negative emotions when using a particular brand, since this association can be so strong that the brand user never will use the brand again.

However, before we take a closer look at the modes of associations, we have to note that associations in a Peircean sense involve a relation between a dynamical object, which is the object outside the sign, and its representation, which is the sign and the collateral experience of the interpreter, making associations sign action. Collateral experience is an experience that is not mediated by the sign itself but is an experience parallel to the sign. If we look at a given brand, we need to know that what we see is a brand; we need to know what kind of brand it is, what it offers us. We need collateral experience with the brand in order to interpret it in the way intended by the brand maker.

It is the interpreter who initiates the association based on information. Thus, it involves a mind. This is not the same as to say that associations are constructions without relation to reality, but Peirce says that contiguity – the experience of bringing two things together – results from a power outside the mind and resemblance from a power within the mind (cf. Massacar 2012). These powers stand in a continuous relation to each other. Put in another way, something has an effect on our mind, making us create an association of resemblance – *what is outside the mind is information, what is inside the mind is emotion, what brings the two poles together is knowledge.* Imagine we see a bakery sign. The sign is information and it causes our attention; whenever we are confronted with information, we make associations and emotions occur. These could be positive emotions or negative ones, depending on our prior emotional experiences with bakeries in general or this bakery in particular. When we feel the emotional effect and interpret it in relation to the bakery, we have made an association between the bakery sign and the emotional effect we felt – this is also a meaning-creation process – based on associations of resemblance (we recognize the bakery sign as a sign of a bakery),

contiguity (the store is identified by the sign in time and space), interest (we may have an interest in finding a bakery, e.g., we want to buy an afternoon cake).

If we relate this to Supphellen's typology of associations, the information that causes associations enters our mind either by sight, smell, taste, or other sensory impressions. We see the sign of the bakery and make associations; we smell the bakery and make associations; we hear some talk about a bakery and we make associations. In this way associations are not verbal, visual, or in other way based on our sensory apparatus – rather the sensory apparatus is what mediates information from outside the mind into the mind where associations occur.

So what are associations then?

Peirce's three forms of associations

As mentioned previously, there are three forms of associations: resemblance, contiguity, and interest. In relation to Peirce's sign types, resemblance relates to the icon, contiguity to the index, and interest to the symbol. They form a system. Resemblance, being the most fundamental, cannot be abstracted from the other forms. Contiguity building upon resemblance can be abstracted from resemblance, which means that contiguity cannot exist without resemblance. Resemblance and contiguity can be abstracted from interest, which means that interest cannot exist without contiguity, which cannot exist without resemblance. It is important to notice that when comparing the modes of associations to the sign types, associations follow the same logic as signs do. According to Peirce, a symbol without an icon and an index is "[…] a mere dream; it does not show what it is talking about" (CP 4.52). As Winfried Nöth (2014: 177) formulates it: "Icons are needed to show what we are talking about and indices to connect our thoughts to the reality which they represent. Symbols are associated to the objects they represent by habits […]". An association of interest without resemblance and contiguity is thus a mere dream. Parallel to this, resemblance is needed in order to compare an object with our experience. Contiguity is needed in order to connect parts to wholes, and interest is required to make the comparison intelligible on the basis of habits.
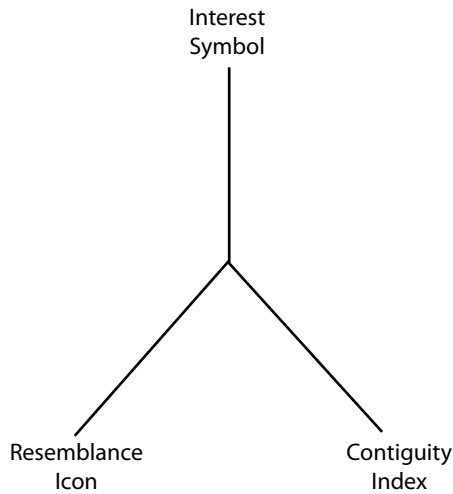
This gives us the system shown in Figure 1:

Interest
Symbol

Resemblance   Contiguity
Icon   Index

Figure 1. Modes of associations in relation to sign types. It is important to notice that the being of signs does not depend on mind action, while association does; this makes associations less abstract that signs. However, they have adopted the traits of the signs they refer to: resemblance in case of icon; contiguity to in case of index and interest in case of symbol.

Association by resemblance

When connecting two or more objects that resemble each other, we have an association of resemblance. If someone is exposed to a certain sign, this sign is only recognized insofar as an idea or ideas in the consciousness are able to recognize the sign. By recognition, we mean comparing the idea with our own personal or extrapersonal experience, which is our collateral experience. Seeing the picture of a bakery and concluding it is a place where we can buy cakes and sweets can only happen because we have prior knowledge of bakeries. Any form of association involves collateral experience. Since it is the mind that connects the objects, association by resemblance is a power from within. Association of resemblance is a connection that we make between objects, due to some purpose we might have. "Resemblance then is a mode of association by the inward nature of ideas and of mind" (CP 7.392). It is the mind that associates things with each other – things are not already associated with one another with the association recognized by the mind, at least not on an epistemological level. The mind creates the association by forming a judgment and this judgment suggests a future direction of how a thing will behave. That is why associations do not only refer to memory, but also to the future: I know of this particular brand, I expect it to be like this the next time I am confronted with it. Expectations reside in the future. Resemblance is a fundamental brand association, since we compare what we see with our experience and in this coupling meaning occurs.

Association by contiguity

The primary difference between resemblance and contiguity is that the latter association is a power from without, meaning that it is something outside the mind that forces itself upon us, making us associate this non-ego with our ego – the latter is our collateral experience. This form of association is based on experiences that unite two things together (cf. Massacar 2012). In association by contiguity, there is an "external compulsion upon us to think things together" (W 6:186), but the frequent experiencing of those things together is not sufficient to form an association. There must be some reason that compels us to pay attention and describe the association between two objects. Two things are related to each other when they are often seen in connection with each other. The calling to mind of one will call to mind the other. "Thoughts begin to dance through the mind, each leading another by the hand" (MS 400:7, CP 7.388). If we mention certain values in connection with a given brand, the mind will establish a relation of contiguity between the two objects, e.g., if we take a low-budget shirt and place it together with high-end shirts, customers will probably believe the low-budget shirt belongs to the high-end shirts; and if we take a low-budget coffee maker and give it an Italian name, e.g., Bugatti or something similar, most customers will make an association of contiguity and believe the coffee maker to be a high-end brand. When seeing George Clooney and Nespresso within the same context, we endow Nespresso with the values of George Clooney, and we also associate drinking Nespresso with a certain lifestyle that we may or may not desire.

Association by interest

Interest in a particular idea does not result from some detached, general stargazing or from the idea's inherent worthiness of interest; rather, the interest in an idea results from the role that the idea will play in the achievement of our general aims (cf. Massacar 2012). The interest results from the utility, the usefulness of something, and the utility is defined by the aims and purposes that one has (CP 7.499, 1898). As stated above, association is the only active force in the intellect. Consequently the intellect, or consciousness, is structured in associative relations. Now, in several places, Peirce uses the metaphor "consciousness as a bottomless lake" to characterize consciousness. The upper part of the lake is the self-conscious; the further down into the lake we get, the deeper we get into the subconscious. Peirce writes:

> These ideas suspended in the medium of consciousness […] are attracted to one another by associational habits and dispositions, – the former in association by contiguity, the latter in association by resemblance. An idea near the surface will attract an idea that is very deep only so slightly that the action must continue for some time before the latter is brought to a level of easy discernment. Meantime

the former is sinking to dimmer consciousness. There seems to be a factor like momentum, so that the idea originally dimmer becomes more vivid than the one which brought it up. (CP 7.553)

There are at least two processes involving associations that we must consider. The percepts (we understand percepts as information) raining on the lake, hitting the surface, are organized in the lake in sets of ideas. The organization of information is based on the following associations: (1) association by resemblance: does the information resemble anything I know? If it does, pieces of information are attracted to one another; (2) association by contiguity: are the pieces of information close to one another so that this can affect other information? If they are they are, attraction occurs; (3) association by interest: am I interested in the information I receive? If so, the bits of information similar and close to one another are organized in sets.

It can be suggested that the lake representing consciousness is the ego; the information falling on the surface of the lake is the non-ego. In this way, the lake metaphor also contains a temporal aspect. The ego being our experience must mean that the ego is the past – our memory. The ego is the sum of interpretations of both personal and extrapersonal past experiences (cf. Brunson 2014), and according to Peirce, "The past [...] is the ego. My recent past is my uppermost ego; my distant past is my more generalized ego" (CP 7.636). The upper part of the lake is the self-consciousness of the ego, which is its recent past, the uppermost ego; further down into the lake is the distant past – the more generalized ego. Peirce wrote that ideas in the lake are suspended on different depths and they are attracted to one another by associational habits, resemblance, and contiguity. But where does association of interest fit in? Peirce writes that the personality of an individual is an organization of ideas. However, Peirce acknowledges the subjective element of personality when he writes: "Each man has his own peculiar character. It enters into all he does" (CP 7.595). Consequently, each human's personality represents his interest, and the way any person interprets information is due to the organization of information in his personality; this personality is his interest. The personality is developed throughout life; therefore, the time aspect is of interest here. The ego consisting of ideas associated to one another through resemblance and contiguity is the past, the self-consciousness interpreting information is the present, and the interpretations of ideas are related to the future; therefore, associations of interest must reside in the future. However, interest as a habit is also related to the past. Consequently, association of interest involving resemblance and contiguity defines man in time and unites past, presence, and future. A person's future lies in his or her past by the sets of ideas forming his or her personality. Again, in Peirce's words, man is a symbol and symbols grow, e.g., by attracting other symbols – man is interwoven with time.

In the following table, we have tried to sum up the four different perspectives on associations:

Table 1. Perspectives on associations.

	Supphellen's perspective	Aaker's perspective	Keller's perspective	Peirce's perspective
Definition		"Anything linked in memory to a brand." (Aaker 1991: 109)	"The other informational node linked to the brand node in memory and containing the meaning of the brand for consumers." (Keller 1993: 3)	"Association is the only force that exists within the intellect." (W 5:326)
Brand associations categories	Verbal Visual Sensory Emotional	• Product attributes • Intangibles • Customer benefits • Relative price • Use/Application • User/Customer • Celebrity/Person •Lifestyle/Personality • Product class • Competitors • Country/Geographic area	• Attributes • Benefits • Attitudes	Resemblance Contiguity Interest

Using associations in branding

Having some knowledge about how associations work in the intellect, we may be able to understand better how and why some people are more attracted to certain brands than others. The brand maker communicates a brand to a brand community. The brand represents several associations of interest of the brand maker. The important element here is that the associations of interest of the brand maker cause several associations of resemblance, contiguity, and interest in the brand users. Are the brand users able to recognize the brand? Do they have experiences with the brand? If they do, they are able to create associations of resemblance. Are they able to identify this brand among other brands? If so, they are able to create associations of contiguity. Are they able to let themselves be convinced by the brand, compare it with other, maybe similar, brands? If so, they are able to create associations of interests. Are they able to associate positive emotions with the brand and place the brand in a set of certain desirable values? If this is the case, they are able to create associations of interests. Consequently, the brand maker's associations of interests cause associations of resemblance, contiguity, and interest in the brand users. When the associations of interest are shared between the brand maker and the brand user a cominterpretant may occur. This is so because of the brand – any brand is information and only information causes attention and associations.

Let us try to look at some examples of association when interpreting brands. For instance, we can see the Starbucks logo (Figure 2):

Figure 2. Starbucks logo.

It makes us attentive, maybe because some of the elements in the picture do not make obvious sense; yet nevertheless an association of resemblance is created. We compare

what we see with what we already know; we use our collateral experience to interpret the logo. If we recognize the logo as the Starbucks logo, we have made an association of resemblance. Whether we feel attracted to it or not depends on our prior knowledge about this particular brand. Some may have negative emotions in connection with it, since it is an American brand in the same associational set as fast-food chains like McDonald's, Burger King and Kentucky Fried Chicken. This is not a coincidence since the décor of Starbucks in many ways resembles other fast-food chains.

Figure 3. An example of association of contiguity.

We can recognize Starbucks coffee based on an association of contiguity. Placing the Starbucks logo on a cup containing coffee suggests that the coffee is from Starbucks, which is a simple case of association of contiguity. It is important to notice that an association of resemblance precedes an association of contiguity. We must see the representation as something in order to be attentive. If we felt like a cup of coffee, we would also create an association of interest. In a positive mood for coffee, the Starbucks logo would trigger our attention and we would probably buy our coffee there. It is interesting that the association of interest triggers the association of resemblance, since we would not make any associations of resemblance, were we indifferent toward the sign in question. If we do not drink coffee, Starbucks will probably not matter to us; consequently, no strong associations will be created. Associations seem to have close affinity to the concept of attention.

    If we take another brand into consideration, we can see how associations affect us even if we know that the brand is questionable in terms of trustworthiness. The

Fairtrade brand is a brand that stems from the 1960s. Fairtrade refers to a number of companies, which have been certified by FLO-CERT (Fairtrade Labelling Organizations International – certification). The general concept of Fairtrade is "a trading partnership based on dialogue, transparency and respect, which seeks greater equity in international trade. It contributes to sustainable development by offering better trading conditions to, and securing the rights of, marginalized producers and workers – especially in the South"[3]. Generally it gives us a way of supporting third-world countries through our shopping habits. A consumer may think: "Last time I bought a Fairtrade product, I experienced some rather pleasant emotions, the feeling of helping others, the feeling of caring, the feeling of making a difference, the feeling of doing good, acceptance from my peers, etc. Now I want to buy another Fairtrade product because I want to experience the same or similar emotions again – I want to reinforce the experience." This example unites the past (memory), present (the here-and-now situation), and the future (expectations). It contains associations of interest: I can imagine how the product will make me feel; I like the feeling; I seek out the feeling; I see myself feeling happy, etc. However, in order to have these associations of interest, I must be able to identify what caused the feeling in the first place. I compare the feelings I experienced at other times I bought Fairtrade products, so we have associations of similarity here. The Fairtrade product I have right here in my hand can cause positive emotions; this particular product generates associations of contiguity. Remember, associations of interest must involve associations of contiguity and similarity.

At the beginning of the article, we asked what lies underneath the association models of Aaker and Keller. Let us take a couple of associations as proposed by these authors and analyse them.

Aaker suggests a person/celebrity as an association. We have already stated that this is not an association, rather it is a result of association and it will cause further associations. Let us use the same example as mentioned before – George Clooney and Nespresso. What are the associations that lead to his ability to brand Nespresso? First of all, there is an association of resemblance – we can recognize George Clooney as a celebrity and we can recognize Nespresso as a coffee brand. There is also an association of contiguity, since George Clooney and Nespresso are mentioned within the same context; there is an outward pressure upon us to think of these elements together. Finally, there is an association of interest, maybe the most important here, since we may buy and drink Nespresso in order to obtain the same status and values as George Clooney communicates. If we have an interest in George Clooney and want to be a little bit like him, we shall buy Nespresso. So instead of analysing the associations from resemblance, through contiguity, to interest, we may reverse the process and say that

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[3]   Cited from http://www.fairtrade-advocacy.org/about-fair-trade/what-is-fair-trade/69-about-fair-trade/what-is-fair-trade?layout=blog.

when it comes to celebrity branding, the association of interest is the most important one. It is through this perspective we create associations. If we replace Nespresso with Nescafé instant coffee and let George Clooney brand it, he would probably convince a lot of consumers of the quality of the coffee – consumers who identify themselves with George Clooney creating associations of interest involving similarity and contiguity. Coffee connoisseurs would probably not buy the coffee; however, the brand in itself being a symbol also involves associations of similarity, contiguity and interest. And the better the product is to represent these associations in relation to their consumer segment, the greater the chance is that the brand will succeed. The brand in itself as a concept is presentative, which means that it has a potential to be represented, e.g. through our use of the brand. The brand, when holding it in our hands is a representation of this potential – it is information. The brand when interpreted is a result of signification – it means something to us. At this stage in the signification process, we decide whether or not to buy the brand; here, the associations in our mind may match the associations contained in the brand. It is important that the potential associations in the brand must be able to be represented in the brand user.

Let us take a look at Keller's associations types: attributes. An attribute is not an association, rather it is a result of association and it will cause further associations. Change the attributes, e.g., colour, smell, taste, letters, packaging, headlines, celebrity, person, price, etc. of a brand and you are likely to change customers' associations. Attributes involve resemblance, contiguity, and interest.

Conclusion

According to Peirce, associations are the only force in the mind. There are three types of associations: resemblance, contiguity, and interest. They can all be identified in people's use of brands. It is not the brand as such that creates associations – it is a meaning-creation process involving the brand as information, a given mind, a collateral experience of the mind. These elements together can create associations: the information outside the mind causes mental images inside the mind, prior knowledge or memory connects the outside with the inside – the connection is the association. Any mind engaging in brand association involves past, present, and future; this is the nature of meaning creation. The aim of this article has been to question some of the leading brand association models and argue that they do not deal with associations, but rather with elements that cause associations. Of course, we acknowledge the fine work done earlier, in particular the insights by Aaker and Keller, and there is no doubt that what they call brand associations are important elements in *creating* brand associations, but we must stress that these elements are not associations in themselves.

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Что такое ассоциации бренда

Американский философ Чарльз Сандерс Пирс считает, что ассоциации являются единственной активной силой разума (*mind*). Так как значение любого бренда создается посредством бесчисленных ассоциаций, возникших в среде потребителей бренда, можно утверждать, что создание бренда является прежде всего когнитивным, а не семиотическим процессом. Понятие ассоциации не является новым в литературе, посвященной брендам, но дефинициям этого понятия зачастую не хватает академичности. В данной статье делается попытка с помощью пирсовской интерпретации ассоциации углубить и уточнить это понятие.

Mis on brändiassotsiatsoonid

Mitmekülgne Ameerika mõtleja Charles Sanders Peirce on öelnud, et assotsiatsioon on mõistuse ainuke aktiivne jõud. Et igasuguse brändi tähendus luuakse brändi kasutajate seas tekkinud loendamatute assotsiatsioonide kaudu, näib brändiloome olevat kognitiivne protsess, vastandatuna semeiootilisele. Brändide kohta käivas kirjanduses pole assotsiatsiooni mõiste sugugi uus, ent kui heidame pilgu mõnedele juhtivatele ja domineerivatele brändiuurijatele, näib, et nende assotsiatsioonidefinitsioonidel jääb puudu akadeemilisest sügavusest. Loodame sellele seni puudujäävale sügavusele kaasa aidata, rakendades seda, kuidas Peirce assotsiatsoone mõistab.