**‘Count the Beats of Your Heart not the Fingers on Your Hand’: The Emotionalisation of Promotional Culture**

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**Introduction**

The rise of the service sector in post-industrial Britain has brought with it a new requisite skill, namely, ‘emotional labour’ defined as ‘the management of feeling to create a publicly observable facial and bodily display; emotional labour is sold for a wage and therefore has an exchange value’ (Hochschild, 2003, p. 7). In this context, the financial service industries deal with our insecurities and anxieties; the travel industry our fantasies and dreams; the entertainment industries our routes of escapism. Service provision becomes foregrounded in advertising campaigns, store interactions and after-sales customer care, all of which concentrate on the management of the consumer’s emotions. This approach relies initially upon finding a point of access to the consumer’s heart and then building upon this connection through the increased personalisation of service provision. Managed successfully, it has an important value within the marketplace, namely, the generation of loyalty and trust. However, with every market sector proliferated by choice and intense competition, more brands are seeking to harness consumer constancy through access to and mobilisation of our emotions. That is to say, exploiting the capacity of the brand to make a particular emotional impact on the consumer through various points of interaction. Therefore, I would argue, a particular affective turn is now more widely recognisable within consumer culture and that the adoption of a psychosocial approach to promotional strategies will allow the examination of why some are more effective than others. In particular, such a theoretical stance is also more adept at focusing on not only on the degree to which marketers take into consideration a product’s contribution to emotional life in general, but more specifically, how promotional work might acknowledge the processes of the inner world and the irrational forces of the unconscious and apply such concepts to the pleasures of consuming and our relationships to the world of goods.

Just as Yates (Chapter 7) taps into tactics employed in the promotional dynamics of party politics, so this chapter examines two promotional strategies that seek to form connections, not with voters and the way in which emotions inform our voting patterns, but rather with consumers and the identificatory practices that mobilise marketplace selection. Hence the floating voter here becomes the floating agent of choice. The first strategy examined is the more recent development of emotional branding which concerns forging relationships between consumers and objects and relies on the symbolic communication of the brand’s emotional qualities. The second approach has a longer history and involves the mediation of another human being, a celebrity, as an informant of choice. As documented by Evans (Chapter 6), within contemporary culture the media engender a range of identificatory processes through which audience members become attached to celebrities. However, studying the promotional capacity of celebrity through a psychosocial lens allows us to explore not only how they mediate between the individual and society, an inner world and an external reality, but also, adapting Evans’s argument, how selling via mass communication channels becomes more personalised through the establishment of ‘celebrity as intimacy’ via the creation of an illusion of direct address.

**Consumer motivation and the role of the unconscious**

Of particular interest to this chapter is how we come to incorporate the mass produced into the construction of an individual self, and the promotional strategies considered here are chosen on the basis that they seemingly allow for this individuation to take place. While the first centres on personalisation through branding, the second addresses how advertising can create points of identification through communicating the meanings of goods that ultimately lie outside the product itself. In this way it is what the product symbolises rather than how it functions that becomes the core of communication and identification. The potential of the symbolic to tap into unconscious desires in the context of promotion was first identified by Ernest Dichter and his post-Second World War development of motivational research (MR). An Austrian psychologist interested in the workings of the unconscious, Dichter placed projective techniques at the heart of advertising research (Stern, 2002), tapping into the unconscious to explore the more hidden motivations behind consumer choice. His work for Ivory Soap, for example, showed how washing is not simply assimilated to cleanliness (rational) but also how it functions as a means of dealing with anxieties (irrational). The focus group was established allowing not only for the

consumers’ voices to be heard but also probed in depth, standing in contrast to the questionnaire. This shift towards a more qualitative approach to consumer research not only provided a critical means by which people’s emotional responses to the use of products could potentially be unlocked but also it informed the creative process, providing insights into how our inner world impacts our external choices. Such knowledge allowed for the development of what might be termed a more emotive form of persuasion, relying heavily on symbolism over textual description. The importance of this breakthrough in advertising research methodology was noted in an early history of advertising (Mayer, 1958). Mayer recognised the originality of Dichter’s approach and its potential arguing that ‘use values and product features are secondary to the purchaser; his “real reason” for buying is the satisfaction of deep drives which he does not consciously understand’ (ibid.,p. 229).

Of importance to this chapter is how through motivational research, Dichter also introduced the idea that brands have personalities due to the way in which people project themselves into products (Bennett, 2005). The term ‘projection’ was first used by Freud (1920/1986, p. 237) to refer to the process of externalising feelings, of ‘dealing with any internal excitations which produce too great an increase of unpleasure’. However, Klein later uses ‘projection’ (and her meaning is applied here) to refer to the communication with objects. Klein argued that this process is underpinned by phantasy and the interplay between internal subjective experience and the external world; ‘a process whereby states of feeling and unconscious wishes are expelled from the self and attributed to another person or thing’ (Wright, 1998, p. 72). An object relations approach to consumption establishes a more interactional relationship between the consumer and the market and in particular focuses on how choice is informed less on rational decision-making and more by the potential of the object to function in relation to self-development. That is to say ‘our relations with objects comprise what we are’ (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 68). This, I would argue, is a more optimistic reading of the role of the consumption than that provided by the appropriation of a Lacanian perspective whereby ‘commodities make promises to consumers, appealing to some kind of “lack” that the consumers may perceive in themselves, either consciously or unconsciously’ (Lupton, 1998, p. 139). Therefore, through the use of the focus group such projections are tapped into, made manifest and then incorporated into advertising communication (Richards, 1994, p. 94). The consumer is asked by the advertising agency ‘what they feel about a product or service [and] builds the communication around those feelings’ (Lury, 1994, p. 94), placing the consumer at the heart of the creative process. Hence a ‘looping activity’ takes place whereby their relationship to the external world is communicated back to them through promotional slogans and signs (Lury, 2004, p. 157).

**Emotional branding**

Branding developed as a means of managing and communicating subtle variations where there is little differentiation in terms of overall functional benefits. Brands allow for every market sector to be divided up based on consumers’ perceptions that operate in a relational schema that is both abstract and concrete. Such categorisations subsequently inform individual choice as we ‘idealize those goods with which we identify and denigrate others’ (Minsky, 1998, p. 198). It can be argued that contemporary branding builds on Dichter’s work whereby a principal driver of choice emanates from our attachment to particular objects and the way they have the potential to make us feel that others do not. It is suggested therefore (Gobé, 2001; Edwards and Day, 2005) that a brand’s success depends on how it forms and incubates relationships rather than through rational appeals to the consumer, such as through price, for example. Recognising the value of intangible assets in the new economy, goods are marketed in terms of the emotional fulfilment they can provide. Those brands that are able to achieve this most effectively have been termed by one advertising agency (Saatchi & Saatchi) as ‘Lovemarks’ (Roberts, 2004). ‘Lovemarks’ can be identified by the love and loyalty they generate commensurate with any meaningful human relationship and by extension ‘are not owned by the manufacturers, the producers, the businesses. They are owned by the people who love them’ (ibid., p. 74).

However, the connections and relationships which brands seek to form with consumers operate in a context underpinned by the juxtaposition of the mass object and the individual consumer. Brand promotion needs to consider how on a personal level the recognition to own can be made effective. Bowlby (1993, p. 101) argues such individuation can be identified in ‘forms of marketing address which are making an emotional appeal [and] can be divided between these two modes: the warning (look what you lack) and the promise (look what you can have or what you can be)’. From a psychoanalytic perspective, emotional branding recognises how we come to terms with this sense of lack through the relationships we build in the material world and the way in which we identify with what we consume for its symbolic capacity to realise an ideal self (Richards, 1994). Communication through the symbolic allows consciously or unconsciously for an individual sense of ‘lack’ to be addressed. The object therefore takes on a highly personalised role assuaging any sense of insecurity or anxiety that the self, or wider collective unconscious, might have. Creatively this can be realised through the technique of transference. In *The Interpretation of Dreams* (1900/1991) Freud explained how in the dream, to avoid censorship, repressed wishes are transferred and ‘the wish-fulfilment’s power of bringing about representation is diffused over a certain sphere surrounding it’ (ibid., p. 75), namely, the events of the previous day which themselves have yet to form any associations. Applied to brand communication, it might be argued that transference functions through the role of symbolisation, the disguise mechanism of the dream-world, in that it allows us to transfer our unconscious wishes (and fears) onto something more concrete in the external world thus injecting such objects with an emotional significance. Transference, applied to the world of goods, can be seen as the attachment of unconscious wishes to external objects. The act of consumption then provides us with pleasure knowing that we are not just purchasing an object but also the potential to feel differently about the self (Campbell, 2005). Ultimately, branding can be positioned as the protection of competitive advantage through the passion someone feels for a brand (such as the Apple iPod dominating the MP3 market). It recognises not only the difficulties of replicating such emotive qualities by a competitor but also the potential such attachments create in the context of brand loyalty. Finally, as the iPod demonstrates, emotional branding taps into the social conditions of late modernity, to the way in which identity is increasingly characterised as a highly individualised, self-reflexive project (Giddens, 1991; Beck, 1992). Within this context brands also demonstrate an inherent capacity to bring individuals together, opening up access to communities of users based on ‘shared knowledges and pleasures’ (Partington, 1991, p. 54).

**Celebrities in advertising**

The second promotional strategy focuses on the use of the celebrity in advertising and takes the role of the image as its starting point. Today we live in a culture where to look is to judge, and where such an examination always involves the categorisation of the self in relation to the other. This heightened sense of concern with our own appearance is increasingly attributable to new media technologies (web cams) and platforms (‘Facebook’, ‘YouTube’) where the screen acts as mirror and generates an increasing sense of looked-at-ness for all online. Virtual worlds such as ‘Second Life’ take this further allowing the gaze to fall on a created self, an avatar, that we have constructed out of our desires to be someone else. This emphasis on self-creation, I would argue, has been informed, especially in the youth market, by an exponential interest in and generation of media celebrities. Celebrities are a manifestation of how identity work is no longer primarily located in the arena of production but rather through sites of consumption; spaces where increasingly we spend our leisure time and money. Not only does the celebrity construct a self through their relationship to the consumer world, in turn they themselves become a vehicle of commodity promotion, guiding choices by association. They represent what Ewen has called a ‘commodity self’ (1988, p. 79). The increased use of celebrities in advertising can be attributed to a number of factors. The celebrity is readily identifiable. Advertising creates meaning by drawing on popular culture, of which celebrities form an integral part, and through their own fame subsequently allow for a critical mass of awareness to be generated around the product or brand endorsed. In this way ‘celebrities humanize the process of commodity consumption’ (Rojek, 2001, p. 14). They bring with them a pre-existing image and personality and above all recognition: whether affiliated to a particular skill (sport, acting, music) or for more simply being well known. Advertising functions as a communication channel, mobilising and divesting meaning away from the specificity of the world of celebrity culture and into the world of the brand and the targeted consumer. Furthermore, the emotional investment already made by the audience into a particular celebrity has ‘added value’ when that same person is used as part of a brand promotion. Within the context of marketing, a celebrity, therefore, can be defined as ‘anyone who is familiar enough to the people a brand wishes to communicate with to add values to that communication by association with their image and reputation’ (Pringle, 2004, p. xxiv).

How we are influenced by and develop a relationship with those we see on screen has both ‘specific’ and ‘diffuse’ consequences (Dyer, 1998, p. 18). The degrees of identification practiced are varied and operate along a scale from simply copying to adaptation, where adaptation is embedded within the context of performance, play and experimentation and demonstrates a more active engagement with celebrity culture (Partington, 1991; Stacey, 1994; Lury, 1996). Such playfulness is evident in terms of how celebrity lifestyle is promoted on Web sites such as asos.com (*As Seen on Screen*) and women’s magazines. Features such as ‘Spree vs. Steal’ (*Marie Claire*) recognise the economic limitations in the interplay of fantasy and reality while concomitantly allowing negotiation between the world of the ‘ordinary’ (consumer) and ‘extraordinary’ (celebrity) through access to consumer goods. Their lifestyles function as aspirational cultural resources that the market exploits so that we might plunder (*In Style*, 2008). Within the discourse of advertising it is not just the individual celebrity image that attracts attention, but extra-diegetic associations add depth to the meaning making process. This extra-discursive world outside of the advertisement relating to the celebrity’s known public/private lifestyle allows the product to have multiple associations beyond that which can be denoted in the limited space or time of print or screen. While the promotional propensity of celebrities is largely generated through their image as a point of identification rather than in relation to any specific merits, this does not in any way lessen their value which is fundamentally an exchange value as opposed to a use value (Marshall, 1997; Cowen, 2000; Rojek, 2001).

Identification through media images commenced with the close-up shot of the Hollywood movie star and the added injection of emotional connection this device could bring. Such cinematographic techniques were exploited as the ‘movie-screen seemed most appropriate for the marketing of a certain feminine self-image’ (Doane, 1989, p. 26) and where a new feminine subject, the ‘spectator-consumer’ (ibid., p. 27), was realised. The promotional possibilities derived from the connection between screen and store were mined by both parties up until the 1950s. Using the star as the primary marketing vehicle for interest in their films, the studios became aware of a growing public interest in their private worlds off screen, commodified initially through the studio’s own publicity materials. The star increasingly became located within a material context as their lifestyles became aspired to and associated products allowed for vicarious access to this world. The emergence of television and television advertising extended such promotional possibilities further and the body soon came to be broken down in advertising discourse as a site of multiple possibilities for improvement. Television also allowed for the increased production of different types of personalities, celebrities, which themselves became subjects of image emulation with specific appeal to different target audiences. Currently, celebrities populate all media forms and offer themselves up as a designated occupation: in 2006 a UK Government poll revealed that 11 per cent of teenagers surveyed would drop out of education to be on TV and 16 per cent believed that they too would be famous as fame for fame’s sake becomes the currency of youth (*YouGov*, 2006). Therefore, as the number of celebrities proliferates so the choice of celebrity for any campaign must be carefully considered: their values and personality must form a synergy with those intended for the brand.

However, returning to the work of Melanie Klein, it is in relation to her concept of ‘projective identification’ and its relationship to ‘phantasy’ that I wish to examine the long-standing role of the celebrity in advertising campaigns. Gilbert (2003, p. 91) draws attention to the way in which the ‘standard psychoanalytic account of the psychic relationship between celebrities and their public’ derives from the Lacanian concept of ‘mis-recognition’ whereby ‘celebrities in the public domain . . . function as fantasy objects, images of impossible perfection which hold out the lure of a fully achieved selfhood to subjects constituted by their perpetual search for just such impossible/absent “fullness” ’ (ibid.). Furthermore, Elliott argues (1996, p. 23), our position as victims to the forces of lack is significantly informed by the way in which ‘personal meanings, which individuals need to experience as real and authentic, are felt to be non-existent. In an age of globalized media images, it seems as if everything is a copy of something else’. Therefore, can the media offer us anything positive in relation to identificatory practices? I argue that by studying the promotional work of Kate Moss the realisation of an authentic self is possible and that celebrities can facilitate its construction through functioning as a conduit between the individual psyche and the external world.

**Case Study – Kate Moss: Image as process**

Several factors contribute to making Kate Moss worthy of consideration in the context of this chapter. Primarily, as a super model and fashion icon her image and fame are one. Her celebrity status is generated by her ‘look’, allowing her to become the face of brands across several different market sectors (fashion, cosmetics, mobile phones). This produces an interesting challenge for the brands involved; how, despite multiple associations, do consumers have the potential to identify with her when normally the number of products a celebrity endorses negatively influences a consumer’s perspective of endorser credibility (Souza and Quintanilha, 2006). Kate Moss reverses this trend, I would argue, as she represents a revised approach to celebrity endorsement: one that does not point to consumption as solution but rather positions consumption as process. Her appropriateness across advertising campaigns comes not from her presentation of self as perfection, but rather through a sense of authenticity derived in part through the way in which she positively positions herself within the arena of consumption, using goods creatively and playfully and concomitantly generating an immediate point of identification with her and her various brand associations. Such identificatory practices can be explored psychoanalytically through the process of ‘projective identification’. A Kleinian perspective positions the subject as relating and connecting to the external world through object-related unconscious phantasies and the difficulties often experienced in distinguishing between the two (Mitchell, 1986, p. 23). Initially perceived as a defence mechanism pertaining to fears around the fragmentation of identity, ‘projective identification’, I would argue, can also be applied through its more communicative facets to explain the appeal of celebrity as part of an ongoing process of unconscious identity construction. It involves, through ‘phantasy’, the controlling of an object in the external world via the projection of the ego or parts of the ego into it (Hinshelwood, 1991, p. 79). This external world is subsequently introjected or assimilated as part of the ego. ‘Thus both the ego and its objects are constructed from varying degrees of mixture and integration of the self and the external world’ (Ibid., p. 182). Our interest in, and in some cases dependence upon, celebrities can be explained through ‘projective identification’; namely, we actually have parts of our egos invested in them.

Barthes’s essay, ‘The Face of Garbo’ (1972), provides an insight into the promotional appeal of Moss. Here he positions Garbo as the apogee of the Hollywood star, a classic beauty intensified through the medium of the close-up shot. Such influence was later to be surpassed, Barthes argues, by stars such as Audrey Hepburn who resonated a more idiosyncratic and holistic sense of beauty. It is possible that Kate Moss’s appeal to advertisers comes from her positioning as a possible fusion of the above: as the archetypal British beauty but with her own sense of style. Moss further challenges the possibility of the advertising image as metaphorical mirror of perfection through her relationship with her audience, or rather how we come to ‘know’ her. There are many representations of Kate Moss that all contribute to the creation of possible points of identification: from the covers of fashion magazines to tabloid front pages. In one publication alone (*Vogue*, 2006), for example, 11 different points of contact could be made with her (the cover; seven advertisements for different brands; two features; and one photo shoot, as *Vogue*’s model of the month). Therefore, the possibilities for the consumer to identify with and be influenced by Moss across a range of brand endorsements can be explained through the way in which a subject’s identifications do not form a coherent system; we plunder different aspects of culture and the market in the formation of an ego-ideal. In this way Moss does not function as the essence of feminine beauty but rather through the transparency of her own identity construction a particular process is made manifest. She epitomises a turn in advertising communication where her appeal, derived from both her public image and private life, demonstrates the difficulties in achieving such a whole. Rather what is underlined is self-identity as process, made transparent through the different aspects of her image and personality projected through the different brands she endorses. Object relations speaks the language of intersubjectivity whereby the self is always a product of our relationship with others and with culture. In times when we know more about the lives of celebrities than we do about the people who live next door, it is little surprise as to their centrality in the identificatory practices of many.

**Evaluation**

Therefore it can established that one of the contributions a psychosocial approach brings to the study of promotion and advertising is to challenge its impact as unidirectional, as manipulation, for as Richards argues (1994, p. 93), ‘we cannot hold others entirely responsible for our own projections’. While the emotive turn within promotional culture recognises and speaks to a troubled self, the possibilities it offers for resolution are somewhat mixed. Emotional branding hinges on our ability to form relationships with inanimate objects, in the belief that we might love them as we do another human being. While several brands seem to have made significant inroads in embedding themselves within people’s lives and simultaneously contributing to the generation of a community of users, one wonders if this has more to do with the power of fashion than any true emotional attachment. Above all, emotional branding fails to recognise the ways in which consumers relate to brands at the level of the unconscious and this might be due to the lack of an appropriate methodology through which to understand affect: the focus group, which has underpinned advertising planning since Dichter, now requires revision (Zambardino and Goodfellow, 2007). This involves a more holistic approach to research, argues Roberts (2004, p. 155), to understand from the consumer ‘what has meaning and significance for them, not just what they buy and use’. This is supported by Zambardino and Goodfellow (2007, p. 30) who challenge the persistence within advertising agencies in employing ‘a cognitive discourse in order to uncover emotional phenomena’ placing ease of data communication to the client at the heart of its perpetuation, a problem noted by Dichter in the late 1950s. In contrast they propose ‘non-direct methods’ such as non-verbal self-reporting instruments ‘often based in the use of visual images of emotional states’ (ibid., p. 33).

In considering the role of celebrity within advertising, it must be recognised that while the production of celebrity as a democratic process is highly questionable, functioning as an aspirational consumer resource, it fares much better. Their location within the world of consumption provides ready appeal for advertisers, being utilised in approximately one fifth of British advertisements (Pringle, 2004, p. 10). Their application to promotional communication, however, is not without its challenges. On the one hand, the appeal of celebrity is derived from their roots in the world of the ‘ordinary’ but as mediated individuals they have crossed over into a different world, that of the ‘extraordinary’ and this impacts specifically on their relationship to consumption: they themselves have become commodified. Secondly, our access to their image is always second-hand, communicated across multiple platforms all asking us to look ‘*Closer*’, to look ‘*Now*’. Ironically, the appeal of the celebrity gossip magazines is one of recognising instability and inconsistency, a ‘what have they done now’ approach which runs kilter to either the concept of celebrity as ego-ideal or their potential as champion of an holistic brand image. The objectification of celebrities consistently makes problematic their own sense of self for ‘it is difficult to be a disembodied image’ (Ewen, 1988, p. 101). Indeed this can lead to celebrities being ‘among the most insecure people in our midst’ (Rojek, 2001, p. 95). Thus, if we adopt a Lacanian approach and consume on the basis of celebrity as mirror, then this is seriously flawed as they too struggle to come to terms with their own sense of lack, often at a very public level (Britney Spears exemplifies this). Working on the basis of this reading therefore we might conclude that celebrity endorsement doesn’t facilitate the problems of identity construction; it exacerbates them and until contemporary social values become underpinned by something other than the primacy of the image, consumption will remain a persistent ‘cycle of desire-acquisition-use-disillusionment-renewed-desire’ (Campbell, 2005, p. 90).

However, a more optimistic and indeed positive reading of the function of celebrity endorsement might be rendered if we turn our attention away from the goal and think more about the process, considering celebrities as points of connection rather than templates for replication. In this way, the object relations approach implies a more active model of consumption and affect than previous Lacanian models based on the impossibility of desire imply. Celebrity is always an ambiguous sign. In this way, consumption becomes a site for the active negotiation between the self and our ideals, a site for experimentation rather than a quest for a perfection that simply does not exist. The celebrities themselves know this and ultimately derive their power in the twenty-first century from the realisation that what they represent is ‘the active construction of identity in the social world’ (Marshall, 1997, p. xi).

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