

Research In Practice Essay

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Lecturer: Timi O'neill

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STUDENT NAME: AMY BEAN
COURSE: CREATIVE ADVERTISING
STUDENT NUMBER: 1707951

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Introduction

The aim of my research will be to deconstruct topics under the three chosen categories for my chapters- Identity in society, Personal Identification and Branding/Advertising. My main focus will be to gain an insight as to where we stand as an individual but also within society and or/community, and the role branding plays in marketing towards our stereotyped portrayals. What ultimately dictates our decisions? and the acceptance of self-responsibility vs human psychology/behaviour. Within my research I hope to construct a question which could be used towards my dissertation.

Chapter 1- Identity

Identity Definitions:

1. **“The condition of being oneself or itself and not another”**
2. **“ Condition or character as to who a person or what a thing is; the qualities, beliefs etc, that distinguish or identify a person or thing”**
3. **“The sense of self , providing sameness and continuity in personality over time”**

Reference: CAMBRIDGE DICTIONARY, identity, [online], Cambridge Dictionary
<<https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/identity>>

Identity is largely concerned with the questions of “Who am I? What does it mean to be who you are ?” It relates to our basic values in which dictates the choices we make in life e.g relationships and careers. Through our choices, we reflect who we are and what we value. In a generalised view, **identity** can be associated with examples of gender, interests, ethnicity and age; however, these factors become a more complex discussion when factoring in definitions of **identity** within **society, advertising and personal identification**

Morals & Ethics

To be 'human' is a biological term. If the DNA is human then it's scientifically classified as being human. However the term 'person' is deemed a **moral** term in which a person is a part of a **moral community** and deserves **moral consideration**. Theorists have also argued the expanse of moral obligation and whether it applies to animals rights and the environment.

Morals Definition: "Founded on the fundamental principles of right conduct rather than on legalities, enactment, or custom"

Ethics Definition: "A system of moral principles." "A branch of philosophy dealing with values relating to human conduct, with respect to the rightness and wrongness of certain actions and to the goodness and badness of the motives and end of such actions"

The word **morals** is a noun taken from the Greek word 'Mos' meaning 'custom.' This associates with the ideas of what we **believe** is right or wrong. This could be seen in the form of showing compassion, honesty and understanding, communicating the notion of what we believe to be someone who is 'good'. We are not necessarily obligated to show/be these things.

Ethics however comes from the Greek word 'Ethikos' meaning 'character'. Ethics describes **behaviour** which is right or wrong, which depending on the rules of a situation determines our actions. An example of this can be abiding by a contract without breaching its rules. **Morals and Ethics** can sometimes conflict and be compromised against one another. An un-ethical action could be taken for example in order to comply with **moral obligation**. How do we then judge whether a person is good or bad?

Leading up to my second chapter I would like to explore what influences our decision making firstly by understanding our roles within society. What influences and changes how we adapt to

evolution within our community. This will then lead into questions of freedom and personal identity.

Nature vs Nurture- Our Identity Within Society and Community

Nature is the part of human behaviour which is biologically determined and instinctive. **Nurtured behaviour** however, is factored by the people and environment you're raised in.

Society & Community

Society Definition: "An organised group of persons associated together for religious, benevolent, cultural, scientific, political, patriotic, or other purposes."

Community Definition: "A social group of any size who's members reside in a specific locality, share government, and often have a common cultural and historic heritage."

Gerhard Lenski- Sociocultural Evolution

American sociologist Gerhard Lenski focused his research on macrosociology and social structures, taking an evolutionary approach to his thesis. He believed a process of **social changes** occurred through evolution within societies innovation, transmissions and technological advancements, also known as, **Sociocultural Evolution**. Looking back on our human history, Lenski divided our timeline into five separate societies, defined by the 'technology' they used and the social organisations the technology created and sustained .

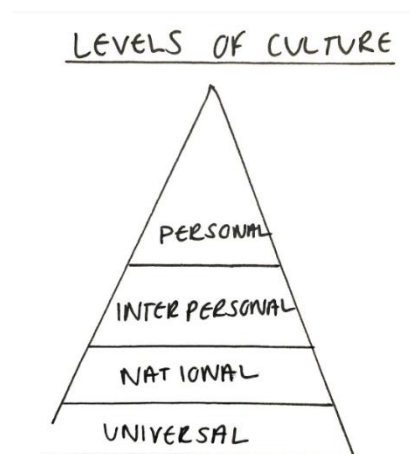
Through this timeline we see that societies have grown from hunting and gathering groups (which used basic tools for survival) up to the present day **society** we live in - post-industrial civilisation (an economy which has advanced in specialization and technological advancements with values central to information, service and technology.)

Through **specialisation**, societies have been able to evolve by developing necessary skills for survival – tackling and/or revolutionising against that periods problems. However in specifics to technological advancements, that alone cannot solve the fundamental issues within societies. For example although it has helped us evolve as societies & communities, it does not teach us how to live peacefully. Current examples of problems we face today are global warming, increase in modern warfare, inequality and climate change.

Culture:

‘Culture ... is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society.’ Tyler (British anthropologist) 1870: 1; cited by Avruch 1998: 6

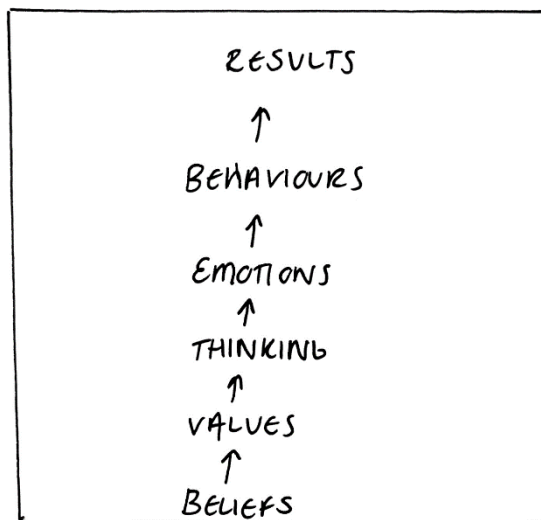
Culture is something which is learned from childhood, growing up within a **society’s norms and values**



Reference: Intercultural English, 2018, ‘*The Cultural Iceberg*’ YouTube [online]

When travelling abroad for example, **the basics of culture** can be understood through our senses. Examples of what we can gain insight to is a cultures language, clothing, music, food, art, religion and behaviour. These are characteristics which we can observe and experience on a surface level.

Customs, rituals and traditions is what defines a regions **identity** and brings awareness into a society's way of life.



Although we can get a general view of what a culture is this way, to gain a deeper understanding of what consists of a culture, we must look further into their values and customs.

Reference: Intercultural English, 2018, *'The Cultural Iceberg'* YouTube [online]

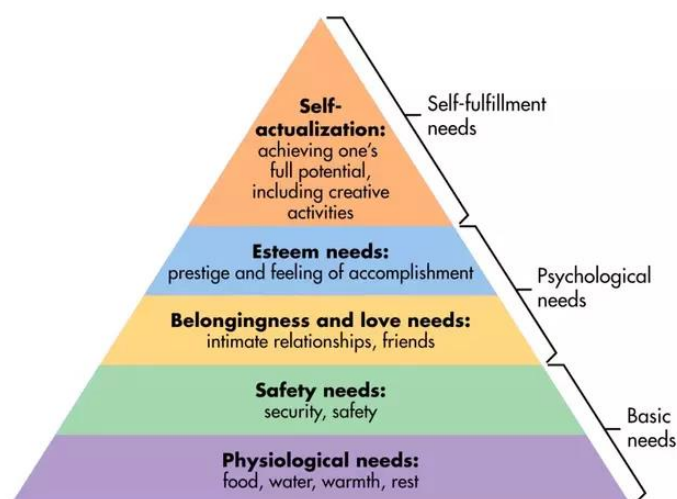
First a cultures beliefs. Although religion can be an aspect of a **cultures belief system** – this is something we can interact with on a surface level. However by looking at a **societies fundamental views** on education, history, politics and science for example we understand the principles and values of that society's behaviour and norms. **Secondly a cultures Ideals.** A cultures ideals are typically a unified agreement and understanding of what is best for an individual and society as a whole. An example of this could be seen as 'The American Dream' where values are shared in achieving financial, political and social freedom through the prospect of hard, honest work for the individual and family. **Third prospect is cultural norms:** As mentioned briefly earlier, this is the behaviours which are seen as 'normal' within that society. As people, we rely on these **social norms** to build structure and identify what is 'good' and 'bad' for our community. It is the ultimate goal in which this society wants to achieve. **An important consideration is the roles we play in society.** Throughout our lifetime our roles within society are likely to change as we age. A man for example

will initially take on a role of a son. With time this role may change to a father role and then later on into a role of a grandfather. Other roles are taken on as part of our identity. Examples of these are our gender, ethnicity, economic status, job role and personalities. With the characteristics we determine which kinds of roles we take on.

And finally, concepts within culture. The concepts of culture is when a more abstract view begins to take place. This is where we question where we belong as an individual, how our behaviour has an effect on others and bigger questions surrounding the concepts of time and life itself. This is what I would like to explore further throughout my essay – what contributes to society’s conceptual thoughts but also our thoughts as an individual .

Having a now stronger concept on the roles we play within society, I will continue explore the definition of identity in relation to ourselves (personal identification) relating back to the idea of nature vs nurture. This I feel is key to understanding our sense of freedom and how much choice we have in being independent with our thought process. How much do we believe simply because society tells us to or how we are brought up?

Chapter 2 -Personality & Personal Identity



Reference: McLeod S, 2020, '*Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs*', Simply Psychology [online]

Maslow's hierarchy of needs is a motivational theory in psychology made up of five layers, describing the fundamentals of human needs within the shape of a pyramid. The bottom tier can be described as the basics of what we need as humans to survive whereas the top layer describes the needs of fulfilled in order for self-actualization and self-fulfilment to happen.

Personality:

Sigmund Freud born in 1856 was a psychologist specialising in works of psychoanalysis and human behaviour. One of his most famous theories was the idea of how personalities are developed .

Believing we are born with something called an 'id', this is the resemblance of our most basic needs, an unconscious drive with desire for food, comfort and attention (much like that of a baby/infant.)

Balancing the 'id' we then develop the Ego and Super ego. The Ego is the voice of reason, making a conscious effort to reign in that what is demanded by the 'id', whereas the Super Ego is made up of the cultural values and norms you internalise and use to guide your decisions.

This theory has influenced psychologists throughout time who have researched the definition of identity and personality. An example of this is the work of Jean Piaget on cognitive development – how we grow to understand the world around us from our perspective as children. Piaget suggested that there are four key stages to cognitive development.

1. **Sensorimotor Stage (Infant)** – The level of development where all knowledge is based on what you can perceive with your senses
2. **Preoperational Stage (approx. age 2)** – Able to use language and ask questions about the world. At this stage the mind is ego centric and the perspective is influenced mainly by how they view the world
3. **Concrete Operational Stage (approx. 6/7)-** We are able to develop the ability to take on other peoples perspectives and begin to make cause and effect connection between events in their surroundings.

4. **Formal Operational Stage (approx. 12)**- Begin to think in the abstract and use logic and critical thinking

Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg later expanded on this theory studying ages in which children are able to make moral decisions, not only on what feels right to them but based off their social conditioning. American psychologist Carole Gilligan noticed that girls tended to make moral decisions based on interpersonal reasoning called a care and responsibility perspective, whereas boys defined morals on a justice perspective defined by formal rules. This she argued was because of the **roles** in which society has pre-determined to each gender from cultural conditioning. Girls tending to be associated with nurturing qualities, femininity and empathy and boys masculinity, dominance and responsibility.

Theories that question our Personal Identity- Are we the same person over time?

Body Theory- This theory suggests that personal identity persists over time because we remain in the same body from birth to death.

On one hand this is true however our bodies are constantly changing e.g skin, cells, age. Where do we determine that line of change that would define us as physically changed on a level of Identity? Philosopher John Locke argues that the factors which determines an identity is not that which is physical but instead your consciousness.

Memory Theory- Personal Identity persist over time because you retain memories of yourself at different points and each of those memories is connected to one before it e.g remembering a specific memory from childhood means that you have a memory link to that person.

Arguments against this however is that we do not remember being born in turn suggesting that we do not have a personal identity until our first memory. It also questions if a person began to lose their memory e.g those suffering with dementia – do they stop being that person ?

Having a sense of what personal identity is, is key when understanding the way in which brands and advertisers target their selected demographic. Essentially we are stereotyped by groups in age which pre-determines what some of our values may be and behaviours/roles in society. This will be explored further in my next chapter, developing the principles of morals, ethics and freedom of choice.

Chapter 3 Branding & Advertising

Branding Definition: “A brand is a name, term, design, symbol or any other feature that identifies one sellers goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers.”- American Marketing

Association

Advertising Definition: “ The business of trying to persuade people to buy products or services.” – Cambridge Dictionary

The Success of a Brand

Target Audience: A target audience profile is the specific group of customers most likely to respond positively to your product, service or promotion. Target audience analysis will likely conduct of information such as age, location, demographics, and income etc. From this, companies can structure their marketing plan around the needs, wants and values of their chosen Target audience in order to grow the brand through customer loyalty.

Marketing Customers

Currently there are five categories in which target audiences have been divided into based off their age group. However these groups are further defined from stereotypical analysis' of that generations time and values. These studies indicate how these groups of people behave in society and how they would likely respond to advertising methods based off their interests and values.

Persona Generations

Here are the five categories in order of oldest to youngest ; **Silent Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, Generation Y (Millennials)** and finally **Generation Z (Gen Z)**

Semiotics & Symbolism:

“Semiotics is the study of signs and symbols, in particular as they communicate spoken and unspoken.”

Symbols are anything that carries a specific meaning that's recognised by people who share a culture. Essentially, symbols or signs are a nonverbal form of language , a way to communicate a meaning to others without physically speaking. Semiotic examples could be colour, symbol, gestures. These signifiers will have connotations associated with them, which will then become the signified. This means that signifiers are used to represent a larger meaning . In advertising logos for example



tend to use symbol which references a metaphorical meaning or association. The brand Apple for example uses the apple icon to symbolise wealth and desire- a depiction of the apple from the biblical story of Adam and Eve, symbolised through bitten piece of apple . these signifiers communicates the message to consumers that the apple brand is rare and desirable.

Colour Theory- Emotive Response in design:

Colour is also a key signifier in advertising, used to evoke emotion and signify the messages and values of the brand visually without text. However as colour can symbolise different meaning in many cultures it is important to be aware of these meanings to ensure the right message is being translated.

Conclusion- Preparing Questions for Dissertation

After conducting my research, areas that have taken my interest and I would like to explore further in my dissertation are; the psychological relationships we have as an individual with society, the media, cultural conditioning and personal identification. Within these topics I would like to explore the idea of freedom; how much of our mentality is natural human behaviour and how much of our identity is influenced by the factors we live in. This would expand into areas of my practice with focus on our current lifestyles – researching communication platforms such as social media and the need for perfectionism, fake news and the morals behind branding techniques and platforms and also a deeper analysis of self-identification and sub cultures. The goal will be to identify and explore the overall topic of freedom vs morals and ethics within advertising/branding.

Question Mock ups to potentially use

“What is the meaning of freedom? How do we define our own freedom and what may affect the ways in which we use this term?”

“How do we define Identity? How much freedom do we have to make our own choices and what factors determine our decision making process?”

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