

Callum Jackson-Welford (1702956)

BA Product Design L5

Research in Practice (ADAD5004)

Julia Lockheart

Word Count: 2657

Keywords:

Selling

Pop Culture

Transformation

Introduction

This investigation will discuss how marketing impacts on society, as the market and economy play a pivotal role in ensuring the constant developments in a variety of different areas. It impacts the way we live and leads to question, whether society controls the market or does the market control society. Demands of societal pressure can impact the trends that follow. The three keywords that I have chosen to use as research areas are Selling, Pop culture and Transformation.

Selling: Karl Marx's theories on capitalism

Pop Culture: Jim Graham was behind the most successful automotive product placement of all time.

Transformation: 3D printing has transformed design in both positive and negatives ways. This area will be explored through how the technology has been used.

Selling



Fig.1 New £1 coin design from The Royal Mint (2017)

Historically the concept of exchanging goods has been around nearly as long as humans; however, there was a period of time where a bargaining trade system was prevalent, as societies such as

“The ancient Greeks used to measure values in terms of livestock, and for money in more portable forms they used objects such as weapons, axes, cooking utensils and iron spits, as well as ingots of precious metal.”

(Cribb, Cook, and Carradice, 1990 p.77)

So this method of trading was how people exchanged goods and other items before the introduction of a currency-based system to societies, as “Greeks in western Turkey produced some of the earliest of all coinage in the late seventh century BC [...] and the first issues of mainland Greece and the Aegean islands date from the mid-sixth century.” (Cribb, Cook, and Carradice, 1990 p.77) The idea of the currency-based system spread from Greece all the way to Britain, as when Julius Caesar arrived there around 55 BC, the local tribesmen “were striking their own gold coins”. (Cribb, Cook, and Carradice, 1990 p.10)

There is a limited amount of difference between how bargaining and selling works, as the purpose of bargaining and selling are both ways of exchanging. However, bargaining is the exchanging of goods that are near equal value, while selling involves the gaining of commodities that are backed by a currency. Although, due to the size and variety of contemporary currencies, it is easier to engage in selling than with bargaining as both traders must agree upon which goods are of equal value, but the value of currency is not at a constant as it can change due to performance of the economy as well as the performance of other currencies.

The definition of selling from *The formations of Modern Social Thought* declare that “capitalist production was the emergence of a system of exchange governing the buying and selling of commodities. A system of exchange can be defined as a sphere in society where commodities enter into the process of circulation in order to be exchanged for a monetary price” (Morrison, 2006, p.83). This definition means that exchange for monetary gain is a part of a capitalist societal system as it enables circulation of currency and is based on the importance of commodities. The values of commodities are based on its individual and essential usefulness, which satisfy needs and wants of the consumer. Selling is the act of exchanging commodities for a price that is equal to the value of the commodity and is a part of interaction in society.

Karl Marx’s key principles are discussed in *POLITICAL THEORY - Karl Marx* by The School of Life goes into great details about Marx’s ideology. One of Marx’s principles discussed how the workers during that time period would feel estranged from society as they questioned themselves about whether they were having an impact. Another principle that Marx believed was that workers did not have job security as capitalist companies could invest in technology or hire cheaper workers in order to keep costs low, seeing the average worker as non-essential. Marx theorised that capitalism would always be unstable, as financial crisis’ would repeatedly occur due to the oversaturation of commodities being produced.

A further definition of selling is that it is “the phenomenon of human-driven interaction between and within individuals/organizations in order to bring about economic exchange within a value-creation context” (Dixon, Tanner 2013). Therefore, this definition means that selling is considered as a very common interaction between people and organisations.

Both definitions bear a lot of similarities, as they both discuss the fact that selling requires an exchange of value, but they view selling from different time periods. The first definition perceives it from a Marxist rationalist standpoint, while the second definition uses a more contemporary, yet simplistic ideology, as it makes it seem that it is possible to sell anything to anyone, while the first definition states selling is controlled by “a system of exchange governing the buying and selling”, meaning that selling can be limited by a system (Morrison, 2006, p.83).

Pop Culture

Pop Culture, which is short for popular culture, is any popular tastes at a given time. Areas that are influenced by this are fashion, media, food and locations, the media is particularly wide with areas such as film, television and radio, music and interactive entertainment, also included in this area is advertising which is used within many of the media methods. The use of media is particularly important in developing active streams of pop culture. Pop culture can be considered as the culture

of the people, based upon trends in fashion, music and other forms of entertainment that are contemporary, which means pop culture is constant in nature.

One suggestion about the definition of pop culture is that it is based on trends, which are “populist, popular and public. But, since popularity is unpredictable and highly ephemeral, pop culture is beset by constant turnover of artifacts, expressive and material” (Danesi, 2008 p.4). This definition suggests that pop culture can be enjoyed by everyone; it goes through constant developments and changes, so it is continuous.

However, an alternative definition that has been proposed is that

“Popular culture is the culture of the subordinated and disempowered and thus always bears within it signs of power relations, traces of the forces of domination and subordination that are central to our social system and therefore to our social experience. Equally, it shows signs of resisting or evading these forces: popular culture contradicts itself”.

(Fiske, 1991 pp.4-5)

This quote suggests that pop culture is only the culture of people that are bounded to the ideas of their society and their personal experiences, yet unable to develop a completely new mindset. It also either supports the trends or rejects them, which leads to pop culture as an entity that self-loves and self-hates at the same time.

The initial definition that was given for pop culture seems to describe it from a sociological point of view through the use of words such as “populist, popular and public”, which suggests that pop culture changes with the public response to trends that makes it appear that pop culture is controlled by the people. However, the alternative definition for pop culture comes from a contemporary psychological point of view as it proposes that pop culture is not controlled by the people, but it is rather forced upon them by “forces of domination and subordination that are central to our social system”, this implies that pop culture is actually forced upon the public by governments or companies that have a societal influence. Therefore it could be argued that the alternative definition supports the initial definition, as it states that “pop culture is beset by constant turnover of artifacts, expressive and material”, with these “artifacts” (Danesi, 2008 p.4) which affect pop culture produced by businesses and companies influenced by the national government.

It is interesting to note that in order to boost sales of goods, companies which produce that product will pay media corporations to have their product feature in their show or film. This is a process called product placement.



Fig.2 1977 Pontiac Trans Am "promo car" from "Smokey and the Bandit" (2015)

Pop culture is and has been used as a means of selling through product placement in or with forms of media coverage. Several examples come to mind, but the best example of the tactic involved Jim Graham, who was behind one of the most successful product placements, by placing the car used in the film *Smokey and the Bandit* (1977). Due to the car's promotion within the film this led to it becoming one of most iconic automobile placements, which in turn resulted in driving up car sales as "In 1978, sales for the Trans Am went up from 68,745 in 1977 to 93,341 in 1978, a sales jump of around 25,000 new buyers" (Barclay, 2018). Due to the sales increase, the car used in *Smokey and the Bandit* is considered as the "most successful automotive product placement of all time" (Oldham, 2019). With regard to a contemporary period, General Motors contributed a variety of different vehicles for *Transformers* (2007), which included a "Chevrolet Camaro", which surprisingly to note "didn't actually exist in real life, but its appearance in the film created demand" (CNBC, 2011). When the sequel to the film was in the cinema, the car "was released and sold" and "by the end of the year, over 60,000 units had sold" (CNBC, 2011).

Upon reflection of studying pop culture and how product placement has been used, it has given physical evidence towards the alternative definition, on how pop culture is forced upon people. This definition also can be tied into Cultural Industry, in which Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer discussed how producers of goods and media can claim that the standards are based upon "consumers' needs" and thus the consumers do not refuse what is created and that mass production feeds standardisation of products and in turn people. (Frankfurt School: The Culture Industry: Enlightenment As Mass Deception, Blunden, 2005).

Transformation

Transformation is the process of change from one state to another which causes an impact that cannot be easily reversed.

One proposed definition about the meaning of transformation is that it should be regarded as a significant process due to it being considered as “an internal fundamental change in your beliefs of why you perform certain actions” and it thus “does not require any external influence to maintain, and because of its fundamental nature, transformation is more likely permanent” (Palinkas, 2013). This definition suggests that a transformation is a possible permanent change that impacts the actions taken.

There is another source that lists similar characteristics about the definition of transformation; however, there is one characteristic that differs in that transformation can be “unpredictable and needs progressive planning due to all the unknowns” (Chaudron, 2019). This stated characteristic implies that if a transformation can be unpredictable, then there is a chance that the event can end with negative consequences.

These two definitions above describe transformation from a psychological and business standpoint, as the initial first proposed definition discusses that transformation can be a change which affects your ideology in design and decisions, but the alternative definition, which without planning or logical thought, a transformation could create negative outcomes that could have long term repercussions. However, there is a different definition that offers a simplistic meaning from the *Analytic Quality Glossary* by L. Harvey that summarises that transformation is the development of an individual, organisation and their services or the products offered by an organisation.

Digital transformation is one of the largest, current forms of transformation as it is constantly evolving throughout the developing world. These impacts on the majority of people’s lives due to the changes it brings. Digital transformation can be summarised as the adaptation of technology in all aspects of design, media and business. (What is digital transformation?, 2020). One example of how digital transformation has impacted design is by the development of 3D printers.

3D printing is an additive manufacturing process, which builds a model by adding layer after layer of material to it. This model is based on a sketch that was initially created by a designer/user before being transferred onto a Computer Aided Design (CAD) program, such as Autodesk Fusion 360 or Solidworks. Once the CAD sketch is finished, the designer/user either digitally sends the file to the 3D printer, or places the file on a data storage device that is then slotted inside of the printer (How Do 3D Printers Work?, Woodford, 2020). The most common material used in 3D printers in order to produce a model is plastics, but now there are some printers that can use metals like gold and silver (Goldberg, 2020).

3D printing has contributed in both positive and negative ways to the design world. One example of 3D printing being used for the betterment of others is the development of products for medical purposes, such as creating prosthetics and scientists are working on using the technology in order to create new working human organs (3D Printing History, AV Plastics, 2013). However, while some have used the technology to save or improve lives, there are others that have utilized it negatively and caused serious concerns by creating 3D printed guns that worked.



Fig.3. Liberator, the first 3D printed gun (2013, BBC)

The first 3D printed gun was produced back in 2013 by 25 years old Cody Wilson, who is the head of an organisation called “Defense Distributed”. The only metal component in this 3D printed gun is a nail that is needed to make the gun fire while many parts are made from plastic. Wilson had planned to upload the blueprints online. (World's First 3D-Printer Gun Fired, Morelle, 2013). A few months after the reveal of the gun, journalists within Israel produced their own and managed to smuggle it through security with a metal detector into Israel’s parliament building while the Prime Minister was making a political speech. (Journalists Smuggle 3-D Printed Gun into Israeli Parliament, Captain 2013) In 2018, 5 years later, a judge in USA prevented “Defense Distributed” from continuing to post the files online after Government pronounced that the American public could be allowed access. However, by the time that judge had made their decision; “more than 1,000 people had downloaded the files” (US Release Of 3D-Printed Gun Plans Blocked, BBC, 2018). This completely reveals the darker side of 3D printing due to its accessibility of downloading files online from anywhere worldwide, which has happened as there was a student in the United Kingdom who has been sentenced for producing a 3D printed gun. (London Student Convicted For Making Gun Using 3D Printer, Noor, 2019).

This exhibits the power of digital transformation as its accessibility has caused concerns around the world about people gaining access to produce illegal objects that the authority have banned, which in turn could cause some individuals to believe that perhaps this technology should not be allowed to be owned by everybody.

Conclusion

This proposal discussed how bartering was replaced by a currency-based selling system and its link to commodities and exchange value, Karl Marx was identified as a key thinker and his principles were analysed to assess their association with capitalism.

Pop culture is how trends affect society and can be influenced by product placement within media entertainment, such as films and television. Evidence was provided that product placement impacts sales of a product and creates demand. Theoretical studies with regard to Cultural Industry and the key thinkers of Adorno and Horkheimer will be discussed further in greater detail within the context of the individual investigation.

Transformation is how developments are made and can be both positive and negative due to perceptions and technology. Transformation can also relate to the design process and be controversial in its impact. In the case of 3D printing, the technology is being explored in the medical sector while others have negatively exploited the technological advancements.

This leads to the question 'what are the connections between governments and commercialisation and its influence on pop culture?'

Bibliography

Images

Fig.1. The Royal Mint, 2017. *The New Coin With 12 Sides*. [image]

Available at: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/newsround/38487910>>

[Accessed 11/05/2020].

Fig.2. Barrett-Jackson, C., 2015. *This 1977 Pontiac Trans Am "Promo Car" From "Smokey And The Bandit" Is Up For Auction In January..* [image]

Available at: <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/joshmax/2015/12/24/last-surviving-smokey-the-bandit-pontiac-trans-am-up-for-auction/>>

[Accessed 11/05/2020].

Fig.3. British Broadcasting Company, 2013. *The Gun Was Assembled From Separate Printed Components Made From ABS Plastic - Only The Firing Pin Was Made From Metal*. [image]

Available at: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-22421185>>

[Accessed 12/05/2020].

AV Plastics Injection Moulding | Get Stuff Made. 2013. *3D Printing History*. [online]

Available at: <<http://www.avplastics.co.uk/3d-printing-history>>

[Accessed 08/05/2020].

Barclay, C., 2018. *20 Surprising Facts About The Trans Am From Smokey And The Bandit*. [online] HotCars.

Available at: <<https://www.hotcars.com/things-about-the-trans-am-from-smokey-and-the-bandit/>>

[Accessed 25/04/2020].

BBC News. 2018. *US Release Of 3D-Printed Gun Plans Blocked*. [online]

Available at: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-us-canada-45027237>>

[Accessed 10/05/2020].

Blunden, A., 2005. *Frankfurt School: The Culture Industry: Enlightenment As Mass Deception*. [online] Marxists.org.

Available at: <<https://www.marxists.org/reference/archive/adorno/1944/culture-industry.htm>>

[Accessed 27/04/2020].

Burton, N., 2015. *Bartering In The Modern Day: How People Are Swapping Skills And Services ... For Free*. [online] Forbes.

Available at: <<https://www.forbes.com/sites/learnvest/2015/07/20/bartering-in-the-modern-day-how-people-are-swapping-skills-and-services-for-free/#2b4b003b17ed>>

[Accessed 1/05/ 2020].

Captain, S., 2013. *Journalists Smuggle 3-D Printed Gun Into Israeli Parliament*. [online] NBC News.

Available at: <<https://www.nbcnews.com/technology/journalists-smuggle-3-d-printed-gun-israeli-parliament-6C10570532>>

[Accessed 09/05/2020].

(Chaudron, M., 2019. Change Vs. Transformation - What Is The Difference?. [online] rocknchange)

Available at: <<https://rocknchange.com/change-vs-transformation/>>

[Accessed 04/05/2020].

CNBC. 2011. *10 Big Successes In Product Placement*. [online]

Available at: <<https://www.cnbc.com/2011/06/03/10-Big-Successes-in-Product-Placement.html>>

[Accessed 26/04/2020].

(Cribb, J., Cook, B. and Carradice, I., 1990. THE COIN ATLAS. 1st ed. New York: Facts on File, Inc, pp.10,77,79.)

(Danesi, M., 2008. Popular Culture. 1st ed. Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield, p.4.)

(Dixon, A. L. and Tanner Jr, J.F (2013) Transforming Selling: Why is it Time to Think Differently about Sales Research. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*. volume 32. Issue 1. Taylor Francis Online. Available at: <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.2753/PSS0885-3134320102> (Accessed: 10/04/20)

Enterprisersproject.com. 2020. *What Is Digital Transformation?*. [online]

Available at: <<https://enterprisersproject.com/what-is-digital-transformation#q1>>

[Accessed 5/05/2020].

(Fiske, J., 1991 Understanding Popular Culture. 2nd ed. London: Routledge, pp.4-5.)

Goldberg, D., 2018. *History Of 3D Printing: It's Older Than You Think [Updated]*. [online] Redshift EN.

Available at: <<https://www.autodesk.com/redshift/history-of-3d-printing/>>

[Accessed 07/05/2020].

Morelle, R., 2013. *World's First 3D-Printer Gun Fired*. [online] BBC News.

Available at: <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/science-environment-22421185>>

[Accessed 09/05/2020].

Harvey, L., 2004. *Analytic Quality Glossary*. [online] Qualityresearchinternational.com.

Available at: <<http://www.qualityresearchinternational.com/glossary/transformation.htm>>

[Accessed 5/05/2020].

(Morrison, K. (2006) Marx, Durkheim, Weber: Formations of Modern Social Thought. London: Sage Publications (p.83)

Noor, P., 2019. *London Student Convicted For Making Gun Using 3D Printer*. [online] the Guardian.
Available at: <<https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/19/london-student-convicted-for-making-gun-using-3d-printer-tendai-muswere>>

[Accessed 10/05/2020].

(Palinkas, J., 2013. The Difference Between Change And Transformation. [online] Cioinsight.com.)

Available at: <<https://www.cioinsight.com/it-management/expert-voices/the-difference-between-change-and-transformation>>

(Accessed 04/05/2020)

Oldham, S., 2019. *How Knight Rider'S KITT Became A Pontiac Trans Am* / Hagerty Media. [online] Hagerty Media.

Available at: <<https://www.hagerty.com/media/car-profiles/how-kitt-became-a-trans-am/>>

[Accessed 25/04/2020].

The School of Life, 2014. POLITICAL THEORY - Karl Marx. [image]

Available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fSQgCy_ilcc>

[Accessed 1/05/2020].

Woodford, C., 2020. *How Do 3D Printers Work?*. [online] ExplainThatStuff.

Available at: <<https://www.explainthatstuff.com/how-3d-printers-work.html>>

[Accessed 07/05/2020].