INVESTIGATING THE EFFECTS OF MYTHOLOGICAL MOTIFS USED
BY BRANDS ON KEY CONSUMER-BASED BRAND CONSTRUCTS

Louis Schütz

Dissertation submitted as partial requirement for the conferral of

Master of Science in Business Administration

Supervisor:

Professor Álvaro Dias, Invited Assistant Professor ISCTE Business School, Department of
Marketing, Operation and Management (IBS) ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa

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RESUMO

As marcas tornaram-se um ativo integral das empresas e um "ponto de orientação" fundamental para os consumidores. Anteriormente, predominavam os aspetos utilitários de "características e benefícios" dos bens e serviços, mas agora a marca, o significado que implica e as experiências hedonistas que proporciona, são ampliados. O Self dos consumidores é aumentado e projetado nas marcas, e o marketing e o branding tomaram diversos caminhos e meios para se relacionarem através de vários meios simbólicos, como a narração de histórias que incorporam lendas antigas, contos e motivos mitológicos, com os consumidores. Estes mitologemas podem ser encontrados no logotipo ou no nome de marcas bem conhecidas. No entanto, a questão de saber se e como a utilização de motivos mitológicos pelas marcas no logótipo ou nome pode afetar o comportamento do consumidor é limitada. Com base num estudo quantitativo de carácter quase experimental, os resultados da análise multigrupo mostram que o motivo mitológico utilizado pela Apple como logótipo não afeta as relações diretas entre as variáveis-chave do comportamento do consumidor, como o envolvimento com o produto, a experiência de marca, a personalidade da marca, o valor da marca baseado no consumidor ou a intenção de compra. No entanto, os resultados também demonstram a força central da influência positiva da experiência da marca sobre a personalidade da marca, o valor da marca baseado no consumidor e a intenção de compra, e mostram uma diferença significativa nas relações indiretas sobre as variáveis para o grupo exposto ao mitologema.

Palavras-chave: Logotipos de marcas, Símbolos mitológicos, Comportamento do consumidor, Marketing experimental, Experiência do consumidor, Valor da marca.

ABSTRACT

Brands have become an integral asset of businesses and a key 'point d'orientation' for consumers. In previous eras the utilitarian 'feature and benefit' aspects of goods and services where predominant, it is now extended with the brand, the meaning it entails and the hedonistic experiences that it provides. The consumers' Self is augmented and projected onto brands, and marketing and branding has taken diverse paths and modes to relate through various symbolic means, such as storytelling that incorporates ancient legends, tales, and mythological motifs, with the consumers. These mythologemes can instantly be found to be the house banner of many well-known brands' logotype or name. However, if and how the use of mythological motifs by brands as their logotype or name might affect consumer behavior is limited. Based on a quantitative study in a quasi-experimental fashion, the results of the multigroup analysis show that the mythological motif used by Apple as their logo does not affect the direct relationships between the tested key consumer-behavior variables product involvement, brand experience, brand personality, consumer-based brand equity or purchase intention between the two groups. However, the results also demonstrate the central key strength of the positive influence of brand experience on brand personality, consumer-based brand equity, and purchase intention and show a significant difference between the indirect pathways over the variables for the group exposed to the articulated mythologeme.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's aeon of brands and consumerism, the means and end goal of consuming goods and services is shifting towards a consumption that is not anymore a mere utilitarian act, that commonly served to meet the basic needs. The initial orientation concerning solely the functionality feature, the quality, and the benefit aspect of the good is now extended with the brand itself and how the brand is experienced by a consumer who has emotional and irrational aspects and who is influenced by symbolic meanings and hedonistic responses. Underneath, it displays the seeking of connection, emotion, and ultimately a sort of augmentation of the individual self to the brand and its products, through a dynamic composition of consumption experiences (Skandalis, Byrom & Banister, 2019; Schembri et al., 2010; Alvarez & Fournier, 2016). In the realm of branding, as an academic study and a practical endeavor, it is now to investigate the significant transformations occurring in consumerism. It entails diving into core questions and seeking answers to the growing importance of the relationship between companies and its customers. This link goes beyond the superficial "feature and benefit" aspects that have already been thoroughly studied and researched, focusing instead on a deeper and more personal level of consumption.

Old and new literature on consumer behavior research has long taken notes of the change of needs in consumers and expanded the traditional image of the purely rational and ever conscious consumer with a consumer that is just as well emotionally driven and who, at its core, seeks engraving experiences with products and brands (Batat, 2019; Ihtiyar et al., 2019; Urdea et al., 2021; Schmitt, 1999; Holbrook & Hirschman, 1982).

In essence, when the consumer interacts with products, searches, and re-searches for them, visits a store's physical or digital environment, encounters its personnel, buys and consumes them, experiences occur. He comes into contact not only with the hedonistic product attributes but also to various brand-related stimuli that are part of its logo design, brand name, identity, packaging, marketing communications and more, that ultimately produces consumers internal and subjective responses that constitute sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses (Brakus et al., 2009). This recent shift presents new questions about how brands can connect to the consumer on an innate layer, thus also, what effect specific designs of brand logotypes and names, the stories conveyed in its marketing communications, apart from the hedonistic attributes, have on the consumer, and covertly, how consumers connect to brands.

When humans first developed the capability to form *logos[1]*, inevitably mythology sprung out of it, as a way to make sense of the world of outer and inner phenomena, to communicate moral directions, the origin of the world and the cosmos, but in essence, as naturally existing as an inborn function to the human psyche and thus to be found universally in all cultures (Fowler, 2011; Jung & Kerényi, 2002; Lévi-Strauss, 1964; 1975; Bradshaw & Storm 2013).

Nowadays it is frequently sensed and quite easily observable that the mythological and religious sphere has outwardly lost their firm roots in many societies against the superiority of the *rational,* particularly predominant in the materialistic western societies since the heave of the rational and scientific mindset out of the 19th and 20th century, convoyed by the industrial revolution (Fowler, 2011; Jung, 2014). The decline of these 'spheres' in human culture, often described as a sort of 'disenchantment' and secularization of modern times, tell us in turn about the transfer of religious and mythological values towards secular ones (Josephson-Storm, 2017), and it can be postulated that, in part, the marketplace fills out the gap (Holt, 2004; Lusensky & Tinsley, 2010).

Although once the content of myths and religious images and symbols weighed of ineffable meaning, not all of it power is yet lost against the rational modern human life. Mythology still carries weight today and when comprehended with the change of consumerism, now branding scoops from the ancient spring and makes use of its potencies, for the stories and symbols of age old relate not solely to human of bygone eras but to human of the present and the future because of its deep engraving into the psyche, whom ultimately is the very maker of them (Losada, 2020; Segal, 2004). Consequently, one explicit mode of relating is through the stories, tales and symbols scooped from mythology and religion, which in some form or another, for instance, appearing in a logo or brand name, as well as hidden in advertisements can be found in many well-known brands such as Apple, Hermes delivery service, Versace's Medusa logo, Starbucks two-tailed siren, Pandora, Venus, to name a few.

A closer look at the influence of mythological symbolism provided by brands on the consumer has not been given greater attention yet. However, new research emerges that seeks to investigate not merely utilitarian product and brand attributes that occur through active engagement and consumption of brands, but also on the experiences through specific brand-

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[1] Britannica, The Editors of Encyclopaedia (2022) Understood as word, speech, and reason.

related stimuli, (Brakus et al., 2009; Moreira et al., 2017; Zarantonella & Schmitt, 2013; Ding & Tseng, 2015) who make up the other half of the utilitarian product and brand attributes, which encompasses aspects like the brand-innate colors, shapes, typefaces, slogans, mascots, brand character; in summary: the brand's design and identity, name and logo (Brakus *et al.* 2009). The mythological stimulus falls expectedly into the latter category, but must take its own, specific dimension which therefore needs further investigation to expand understanding of the mechanisms of mythological symbolism found in its new terrain. Hence, this project seeks to examine if and how the use of mythological motifs by brands as their logotype might affect consumer behaviors measured as involvement with a brand, brand experience dimensions, personality ascribed to a brand, consumer-based brand equity, and ultimately, the intention to purchase from a given brand. This study will, in order to investigate the influence on mythological motifs, focus on evaluating the inter-relationship between these key consumer behavior variables.

In order for the aforementioned research problem to be addressed, this study's objectives are chronologically composed as followed: **First**, it is to examine the history of branding towards a kind of branding that focuses on experiences and tries to embody the consumers desires and the current change in the consumer behavior towards a need for deeper connection and an extension of the self onto a brand; **Second**, it is to investigate theories of mythology from various angles including analytical psychology, anthropology, religious studies, and its relation as it applies to branding. Herein, an elucidation is aimed to be established as well, where theories of mythology, mythologemes, and semiotics will be discussed; **Third**, the following sections address the most important theoretical constructs, who make the foundation of the conceptual framework, namely, *product involvement, brand experience, brand personality, brand equity* and *purchase intention*, as well as mythology and how it relates to branding will be presented, discussed and critically examined, followed by the conceptual model and the hypotheses underlying it; **Fourth**, the methodological structure that was used will be presented, outlined, and justified. Furthermore, key points of orientation for understanding the mythologeme, its history and interpretation of the bitten apple motif by the Apple brand and a complementary case of the Starbucks logotype analysis will be presented in these sections; The **fifth** section presents the statistical analyses and the results obtained, followed by the discussion composed of a critical analysis of the results in accordance with existing literature as well as

theoretical implications drawn from them; **Sixth**, focuses on managerial implications, recommendations for future research and limitations of this study.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Many brands nowadays make use of mythological motifs, whether it appears in their logo, name or in their advertisement. How those mythological motifs influence the consumer is yet to be explored. Consequently, the following chapter is aimed to build a foundational understanding surrounding the research question on the influence of mythological motifs on various brand constructs, that ultimately aim to explore consumer behavior, it is of importance, first, to investigate the developments of brands and branding historically up to its contemporary shape. Special focus will lie on the importance of consumer experience and experiential marketing as an emerging characteristic of current branding. Furthermore, the focus will lie on the mythological sphere, its relating definitions and terminology, with the aim to caricature its nature, wherein its origin in relation to the psyche as well as its newfound habitat in branding is to be explored and applied.

This research is embedded in various key studies on well researched brand constructs such as *product involvement, brand experience, brand personality* and *consumer-based brand equity* (CBBE) and *purchase intention*. A critical discussion, presented in the conceptual model following upon the literature review, will portray the selection of the above brand constructs over others and how they are ideal for transporting the myth stimuli to understand its effects on consumers. Finally, those will be synthesized, exemplified, and critically explored to gain a thorough theoretical understanding around the topic The review of the extensive literature will be conducted in a systematic fashion, located in the second and third chapter of this study.

Brands and Branding

An opening analogy that is repeatedly used on the topic of brands and branding owes its recurrent appearance surely to its usefulness of drawing a perfect image of what brands and branding were always concerned with, at its core (Wiley, 1992; Keller et al 2011; Khan & Mufti, 2007). Looking at the etymology of the English word 'brand', stemming originally from the old Norse word *'brandr'* which translates as 'to burn', as well as 'fire' or 'sword' and can

also be used to refer to burning a trademark onto cattle (Geir, 1910), in our context could be viewed as the modern-day equivalent of the logotype, the flagship of a brand. Hence, it was used as a distinguishing reference of ownership of cattle or other livestock of one farmer compared to another. Another favorable analogy, as presented by branding pioneer Keller (2013), is about a law which was passed in English medieval ages, that required bakers to always put their specific stamp on each loaf of bread; *"to the end that if any bread bu faultie in weight, it may bee then knowne in whom the fault is." (*p. 62).

This draws to conclude the outline of two main branding characteristics, historically: the former, the transmitting of information of ownership or origin, the latter, informing about quality (Briciu & Briciu, 2016). Whether it is on cattle, bread loafs or any other product or service of craftsmanship, and perhaps in different eras or across cultures, the core roles or characteristics seems to remain; a brands aim is to differentiate itself. However, there are a multitude of debates about what a *brand* is in actuality and what is to be understood under the term 'branding' that cannot be too straightforwardly connected to its etymological origin and historical practice. Although the past and present term is related through the overlap of characteristics, Yang et. al. makes a conceptual distinction, which separates the historical from the modern, respectively, a '*mark*' and, a '*brand*' (Yang et al., 2012). Both are similarly defined as 'any sign (consisting of words, letters, figurative elements, combination of colors) that helps to distinguish goods or services from one another' and the definition given by the American Marketing Association (AMA) as, 'any name, term, sign, symbol or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods and services of one seller of group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competition' (Keller, 2013). Hence, both concepts provide information and entail an image of some sort to represent a good or service but is conceptionally divided by the subjective characteristics of brands, namely, a set of human characteristics that is projected or ascribed onto brands as a mean of expression.

There doesn't seem to be historical misunderstandings, nor on the road to coin a definition of what a brand is today, but rather on an inter-relational understanding. In contrast, (Moore & Reid, 2008), proposed the term '*proto brands*', also as a mean to distinguish, which simply connotes to a precursor of modern-day brands, literally meaning 'earliest' or 'first in a series' who shows overlapping characteristics, albeit not on all matters, this did not seem to have been articulated in this manner. It stands as a useful analogy to refer to the *informational* characteristics found in both in ancient and the modern brand.

Moving from the ancient '*mark*' or '*proto-brand*' to the modern '*brand*', on the world timeline, only quite recently new additional characteristics evolved out of the 4000-year-old human phenomenon, at around the late 19th and early 20th century, with the industrialization, the process of packaging of the goods, after their production moved away from local and household manufacture (Khan & Mufti, 2007). The dominance of mass production further enhanced the prerequisite of the design process of trademarking goods or services (Keller, 2013). In the twentieth century, branding underwent three distinct phases, according to Keller (2000), namely, the dominance of mass-marketed brands (1915–1929), challenges to manufacturer brands (1930–1945), and establishment of brand management standards (1946 to 1985).

Modern brands entail the capacity to convey cultural meaning or meaning in general, since they carry value, status, and power. Ultimately, the main role of brands, according to Moore & Reid (2008) and the modern consensus, is its distinct capability to carry and transfer meaning with, and through its aforementioned core characteristic, the transactional side, and the transformational side of contemporary brands. In line with the given definitions so far are standing in common academic and practice alike: an identifier of origins of goods and services, the aspect of meaning and value, and the brand as a conveyer of meaning (Jones, 2017; Keller, 2013; Holt, 2004).

Incorporating here as well, not only the academic analysis of brands and branding, in his monography, Robert Jones (2017) synthesizes his practice as a leading brand strategist with the academic branding expertise for the arduous undertaking of defining a working definition of this complex phenomenon. A brand can serve as a representation of both internal and outward values. The internal form of branding is known as "identity," and the exterior is known as "image" or "symbol" according to Aaker (Aaker, 2014; Jones, 2017). It is yet not further determined whether a brand is therefore what it wants to represent or what lies in the perception of the perceiver, because perhaps it is both. More specifically, Aaker highlights that it is a relationship between individual and brand, not merely a name and logo, but a promise by the brand to not only deliver in terms of functionalistic benefits, but as a symbolic vehicle where, with the individuals projected self-image, emotion and perceptions and overall experiences, can be connected to (Aaker, 2014).

Keller (2013) takes a consumer-centered stance on brands, as "*the power of a brand lying in what resides in the minds of customers*" (p. 69). Similar, Conejo & Wooliscroft (2015) assess the antiquated brand definition by the American Marketing Association (AMA) as they suggest an understanding of brands as a semiotic marketing system, namely, "a complex

multidimensional constructs with varying degrees of meaning, independence, co-creation, and scope." (p. 297). Accordingly, brands create value through the exchange of collaborated meaning for direct and indirect participants, society, and the larger environment (ibid.).

For the scope of this research, brands will be understood synthetically, incorporating several aspects of the valid and accepted definitions above (Conejo & Wooliscroft, 2015; Aaker, 2014; Keller, 2013; Moore & Reid, 2008). Therefore, one that looks at the imbued and transforming meaning and value that is carried by brands and the inter-relationship between brand and individual.

Experiential Marketing

Starting off from the historical development of what brands became, a new player has entered the match-field of marketing. Besides the transactional aspect, once consuming was done to cover the necessities, where goods and services filled a specific function and purpose, the utilitarian aspect of consumption now shares its stage. Brands and marketing and the markets in which they are embedded, might have parallelly changed with the social values and needs of the consumers to engage the Self with what is consumed (Boswijk, Thijssen, & Peelen, 2007, p. 13; Alvarez, & Fournier, 2016).

Pine II & Gilmore (1998) postulated a theoretical concept of a new emerging era in the economic evolution, that developed out of the observation that a change occurs on both sides of the supply/demand axis as well as the old-fashioned characteristic of a "feature and benefit-Marketing", as Schmitt (1999, p. 53) notes similarly on this matter.

Customers desire greater value for themselves as their wealth grows, preferring to spend their money, attention, and *'Self'* on offers that provide them with more worth, importance, and purpose than merely commodities, goods, and services (Pine II & Gilmore, 2013, p. 22). As they recapitulate the history of economic progress in a four-step evolution, from the (1) agrarian economy to the (2) goods-based economy, the (3) service-economy, arriving today at the fourth economic offering, a term coined the (4) *experience economy*. When usually experiences[2] have

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[2] The german equivalent *Erlebnisse* und *Erfahrungen* portrays the meaning better (Pine II & Gilmore, 2013, p. 34); in the sense that something which is experienced, is felt, sensed, thought, related, absorbed. Also, perceived and directly observed (Schmitt, 2015, p.28). Pine II & Gilmore 2013; Schmitt 2015)

been seen as a byproduct, belonging to the goods and services, they put forth to view them as a distinct economic offering in their own right. Experiences are desired by the consumers and businesses are likewise consciously designing and creating them.

What is new about this recent concept is in fact the increasing attention that the systematically staging of experiences gets, and perhaps makes it the 'mega-trend' as others have concluded (Memethoglu & Engen, 2011, p. 239). Overall, Pine II & Gilmore's (1998) provide a valid theoretical observation of an occurring phenomenon in contemporary economies, yet these are often lack an easily operationalizable ground for empirical investigation. They do provide four main experience dimensions, namely, Education, Escapism, Esthetics, and Entertainment. However, in the works of Schmitt (1999; 2015) we find common points on this phenomenon, but taking a slightly narrower stake, with what is commonly referred to as '*experiential marketing*' (1999). Making sense of consumer experiences is crucial to gain insight into "[…] *how consumers experience products and their brands and, in turn, how marketers can provide appealing experiences for their customers, is critical for positioning and differentiating their offerings in the competitive environment*." (*ibid*. p. 26, 1999).

Arriving at the stage of experiential marketing, Schmitt sees three parallel shifts of the general business setting occurring: the omnipresence of information technology, the supremacy of brands and the ubiquity of communications and entertainment. Inspired by this, Schmitt proposed a new marketing era, where the main idea is that the objects of purchase (products and services) and their utilitarian and functional advantages are not the sole sources of value. The hedonic and experiential components around the product and service, as well as the experience of consumption itself, all contribute to value; building on previous research that has made the distinction between the forms of value, namely, utilitarian, or functionalistic, and hedonic or experiential value (Gentile, Spiller, & Noci, 2007). Of decisive difference for Schmitt (2015) is, that it is not evident that societies have yet entered the experience economy, since in most economies the main component is still products and services in their raw form and therefore advises to view the alterations in contemporary economies as a new approach of marketing goods and services. Thus, rather than finding the experiential value in the commodities solely, it dwells equally in the way they are marketed. Overall, the latter

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now make the same use of the german translation due to its distinction that incompasses their meaning more soundly.

understanding of the 'trend' narrows it down to something manageable. It offers a more applicable framework that is less theoretical.

As mentioned previously, it adds to the traditional view of a rational decision maker consumer, focusing on the functional benefit, the solely utilitarian consumer, the view of an emotional human who (seeks) experiences. Schmitt (1999) and Brakus et. al (2009; 2015) proposed, empirically validated and critically reviewed several constructs of consumer experiences (including *brand experience*) and the field of experiential marketing, and have obtained from the cognitive sciences, psychology and philosophies of the mind, respectively, five and four main domains of experiences, namely, *sensory experiences (SENSE); affective experiences (FEEL); creative cognitive experiences (THINK); physical experiences, behaviors and lifestyles (ACT);* and *social-identity experiences that result from relating to a reference group* or *culture (RELATE).* They are also referred to, as *strategic experiential modules* or SEMs in short.

Brakus et al. build his conceptualization upon Schmitt's experience dimensions, thus they coincide altogether except for its last dimension, *RELATE*, that Brakus *et al*. (2009) does not include. Brakus *et al.* (2009, p. 53) defines the experience that one has with a brand as a *"subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments".*

These experience domains will be discussed subsequently in depths when investigating the consumer experience construct as it relates directly to the *brand experience* variable that is at the core of the proposed conceptual model and marks the center point to where the mythological stimuli and the field of experiential marketing and branding flows towards.

Nevertheless, it is essential to present definitions and debates on experience from other scholars and as contrast or complementation to gain an understanding about how mythological motifs are embedded in its new terrain of brands and branding and as something which is experienced. Experience, as a concept and an empirical phenomenon is not as well-established as other consumer and marketing concepts like consumer- choice, attitudes, consumer satisfaction, or brand equity (Schmitt 2010). Yet, no attempt has been made, as shown by Poulsson and Kale (2004) and Khan and Rahman (2015) to systematically define an experience in terms of marketing and therefore lacking a general conceptualization. There are several ways to understand the term, which contributes to the lack of clarity, that Same & Larimo (2012) in

their work tried to assemble together. They distinguish between *experience marketing* vs. *experiential marketing*, that they found to be used often interchangeably, wherein the distinctive feature of experience marketing is seen as a strategic and customer focused approach, meaningful experiences that consider the affective, cognitive, and conative aspects of consumption. The latter they define as a tactical tool on operational level for marketing planning, with the focus on how to conduct marketing experientially but included under the broader term *experience marketing* (Same & Larimo, 2012).

Schmitt has made use of both termini in his works between (1999) and (2009), although his concept seems to offer both, the strategic and the tactic element as well as being consumer oriented. However, the advancement of experience marketing or experiential marketing is a process that starts with a stimulus and ends with a shift in consumer behavior, knowledge, or attitude. Experiences happen as a result of some form of stimuli (Schmitt 1999). Therefore, it is hypothesized that Schmitt's as well as Brakus's concept fit the investigation of mythological motifs on consumer brand constructs sufficiently. As experiences, understood in the milieu of the consumer and brands, rely on stimuli or rather brand-related stimuli, it becomes clear that the 'to-be-experienced' dimension of a mythological stimuli delivered by the Apple Inc. logotype of the bitten apple and its related connotation will be embedded in this framework.

On Theories of Mythology

Mythology is a complex and multifaceted subject that encompasses a diverse range of beliefs, stories, and traditions, alongside various definitional angles that aim to describe its character. Nowadays it is mostly understood as a mere fictional storytelling or a 'making sense of the unknowns and the incomprehensible of an ancient people that could not explain it by rational and scientific means'- definition which appears quite popular. Despite those not being incorrect per se; Mythology *is* expressed through telling stories, while it also explains the coming, being and becoming on the world, with the means of an ancient people's repertoire, it is rather that ancient mythmakers thought in a symbolical fashion, associating symbols with reality rather than rational causes, that is to say, a symbolic representation of reality conveying to us precisely how ancient cultures experienced the reality in which they lived (Kirk, 1975).

As Kerényi (2002) so well elucidated, 'mythology is not a mode of expression in which another instead could have taken place, one that is simpler and more comprehensive, but that it precisely

was the most appropriate and only possible one'. It is a "primordial reality in narrative form" (ibid p.7).

Why mythology is nowadays commonly understood in that particular, rational manner points perhaps to a simple difference of repertoires between the myth-making cultures and the contemporaries. Generally, to meet a mythology, different paths can be taken; myths can be interpreted in a literal or symbolic fashion (Dundes, 1988; Mills, 2020), whereas the first, literal interpreters focus on the factual and historical, and regard them as purely fictional, an invention, come by, by lack of other methods available and therefore an imaginative delusion (Eliade & Klein, 1998). Comparatively, the symbolic interpreter of mythology understands myth as a symbolically encoded truth. Moreover, myth can be understood as (a) figurative, (b) metaphorical, (c) semiotically, (d) imaginative (Mills, 2020).

Subsequently, various academic directions apply different 'magnifying glasses' on myth, that is, different approaches to interpret them. Those can be a functionalistic approach, borne by anthropologist Malinowski, a structuralist one by Lévi-Strauss, Cassirer's neo-Kantian epistemological magnifier glass, a psycho-analytic Freudian or analytical-psychological approach by Carl Gustav Jung, to name a few (Cohen, 1969), wherein either of those can take a literal or symbolic scheme for themselves. Since it is not in the frame of this dissertation to interpret a myth or a mythologem [3] to the fullest extent possible, but to undertake an interpretation in a form that is aligned with what is commonly, thus naturally associated with the bitten apple mythologem. A magnifying glass had to be used regardless, in order to give an introductory paragraph on the meaning of the symbol of Adam and Eve's bitten apple from the Garden of Eden. A literal interpretation would have been in the wrong place, but a symbolic and psychological interpretation was chosen, for only that allows to establish a natural accord between the chosen interpretation and the real context of Apple Inc..

Theories of mythology generally seek to answer three main questions: What is the origin, what is the function, and what is the *subject matter* [4] of myth? The theories proposed to answer those

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[3] The terms *mythologem* and *motif* can be used interchangibly; they are referring to a single, self-contained mythological theme or motif in a Mythology (Kerényi, 2002).

[4] The *subject matter* of myths refers to the *referent* of a myth. Depending on how a myth is read, that is, which theory is applied, the referent would be understood for instance, literally thus straightfoward, apperent, or symbolically and the referent can symbolize to something other than what it appears to be (Segal, 2004).

three fundamental questions stem from an array of sciences: the social sciences, such as psychology, sociology and anthropology, and the humanities, such as philosophy, religious studies, and literature (Mills, 2020; Segal, 2004).

As mentioned above, a short interpretation of the cosmogonic (origin) myth of the bible was presented in one of the questionnaires to convey the meaning through a particular magnifying glass, one, where the subject matter is symbolic, thus, understanding the two-sided tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil and the original sin and fall of man not as a literal historic fact, nor referring to the external world but the human mind and the development of consciousness. Robert S. Segal, renowned scholar on theories of mythology cites and argues of C.G. Jung's theory of mythology to incorporate the answers to all three of these fundamental questions that a theory of mythology asks, namely, *"Myths are original revelation of the preconscious psyche, involuntary statements about unconscious psychic happenings, and anything but allegories of physical processes."* (Segal & Jung, 2020, p.67). In line with this understanding is also Karl Kerényi's, who reads the figures of ancient mythologies as "*Urbilder der menschlichen Seele*", which translates into, 'primal images or arche-types of the human soul' (Jung & Kerényi, 2002).

3. CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND HYPOTHESES

Product Involvement

Although involvement is generally considered a central and crucial concept in understanding consumer psychology and its related theories, there exists not one consensus about its theoretical construct yet. However, it is one of the most crucial concepts and a casual and motivating variable influencing consumer's behaviour (Suh, & Youjae, 2006; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985) and is ultimately dependent upon individual factors, decisions, and the perceived value by the customer (Peng et al., 2019).

First to tackle extensively the concept of involvement, through assembling from a great vary of areas, the psychology of the *ego-involvements*, which accounts of how the individual relates to the world around him, has been done by Sherif and Cantril (1947) and in this context can be viewed as analogous to the concept of *product involvement* (Warrington, 2000). When an issue or object is connected to the particularly held attitudes and values that make up a person's self-

concept, ego involvement occurs, which emphasizes the personal and emotional nature of involvement (Sherif & Cantril, 1947). On the other hand, when a product category is associated with a person's core beliefs and self-concept, product involvement follows (Houston & Rothschild, 1978).

Zaichkowsky (1986) identified three primary roots influencing consumer involvement: *individual characteristics*, such as needs, interests, and values, *situational factors*, such as the occasion of the purchase or consumption, and the consumers involvement may have an influence on factors of how important a product category is to a particular person, how much time is spent searching for information, or how much time is spent weighing alternative options, termed s*timulus factors*, and the succeeding involvement she defines as 'a person's relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values and interests' (1985, p. 342), which describes the psychological state of motivation, arousal, or excitement induced by a product (category) by a brand, in which in turn the significance of that product to the particular person in reflected (Bloch, 1982).

Further, a dichotomy exists consisting of several level distinctions, namely, low- and high-involvement (Engel & Blackwell, 1982), nonetheless it is repeatedly proposed to take this dichotomy with carefulness, that is, when a product or product category is thought of, or characterized as holding varying degrees of emotion and involvement, as assessed by Zaichkowsky (1987). Although when a commodity is referred to as low or high involving, it is rather meant that there exists an interest and concern with that particular good, and generally it is meant to describe, for instance regarding high involving products, major purchases that entail elevated risk such as cars and houses, as well as personal computers, home entertainment systems, and the like (Kapferer & Laurent, 1985; Krugman, 1965). However, goods as low or high involving is semantically imprecise since they are in and of themselves neither involving nor uninvolving and as such involvement is a consumer-defined phenomena, as opposed to a product-defined phenomena (Lastovicka 1979; Tyebjee 1979; Bloch 1982; 1986). Instead, other authors have proposed to best conceptualize product involvement based on consumer characteristics, namely, to think in *consumer involvement profiles* and the development of different involvement profiles according to each individual consumer rather than a single involvement level, that in turn depends on the antecedents of involvement (e.g., the product's pleasure value, the product's sign or symbolic value, risk importance, and probability of purchase error) (Kapferer & Laurent, 1985).

Following Lesschaeve, & Bruwer (2010), the involvement construct could be categorized into *enduring, situational* and *response involvement* which originally builds on Houston and Rothschilds (1977) classification into situational and enduring. While enduring involvement refers to a person's ongoing interest in a specific product category, situational involvement refers to a person's high, but comparatively short-term level of interest in a product. How a consumer feels about their own relevance towards a product affects both types of involvement. Situational involvement is concerned with using a product in a specific situation, as opposed to enduring involvement, which is based on the product's relationship to the consumer's centrally held values across all purchase situations (Warrington, 2000).

Bloch (1982;1986) contributes with his work first, to further solidify situational and enduring involvement that shall overcome the notion of inherently low or high involving goods and secondly, to free involvement - portrayed under the temporal context of situational and enduring - from its traditional purchase setting. Before, product involvement has mostly been examined as an influence on purchase intention but not without or beyond it.

For the purpose of this study and the overall suitability, the product involvement concept is defined as the perceived relevance of a certain product category based on the consumer's inherent needs, interests, and values (Zaichkowsky, 1994). Zaichkowsky's (ibid.) *revised personal involvement inventory* (RPII) encompasses many of the previous definitions, it assesses the warned cautions that are entailed around this elusive concept and is generalizable and applicable across product categories and extended to advertisements and purchase situations to measure the individual variation in level of involvement or interest in various product classes they regularly buy or have previously bought.

The consumer's felt relevance of an object (e.g., brand or product) were shown to increase the probability to employ greater cognitive elaborative efforts to analyse and contemplate brand or product related situations in more detail (Hepola et al., 2017; Greenwald and Leavitt, 1984). As involvement with objects (e.g., brand or good) increases, consumers invest more in (re)-search of information, weighing alternatives and risks (Suh & Youjae, 2006; Celsi & Olson 1988). Mano & Oliver (1993) show that consumers' involvement with a brand or product enhances all the affective experiences, and that products that require higher involvement elicit greater emotional reactions, encompassing both positive and negative emotion. Calvo-Porral et al., (2018) in their research on the Theory of Hedonic Asymmetry showed likewise that the level of involvement of a product or with a product determines consumption-elicited emotions and

links to satisfaction. As consumers are more involved, they are more motivated towards the brand or good (Zaichkowsky, 1985,1994).

The involvement concept is central and crucial in understanding consumer behaviour (Laurent & Kapferer, 1985; Celsi & Olson, 1988). It is dependent upon individual factors, decisions, and the perceived value and relevance by the customer (Peng et al., 2019). Zaichkowsky (1986; 1994) considers three main influencing factors: namely, *individual characteristics*, *situational factors*, s*timulus factors*. It is defined as a "person's relevance of the object based on inherent needs, values, and interests" (Zaichkowsky, 1985, p. 342; 1994). It encompasses a psychological state of motivation, arousal, or excitement induced by a product (category) by a brand, in which in turn the significance or relevance of that object (e.g., brand or good) to a particular person is reflected (Bloch, 1982).

Early research on product involvement predominantly investigated its relation to purchase intentions. It is seen as a key motivator that influences decisions and intentions to purchase (Richins & Bloch, 1986). Several studies have concluded the consumer's felt relevance of an object (e.g., brand or product) increases the probability to employ greater cognitive elaborative efforts to analyse and contemplate brand or product related situations in more detail (Hepola et al., 2017; Greenwald and Leavitt, 1984). Consumer's attention directed on object-related information increases object-related thoughts and cognitive elaboration (Hepola et al., 2017), in relation to the individual, who usually exhibits different levels of involvement depending on product category (Warrington, 2000). It can be expected, as involvement with objects (e.g., brand or good) increases, consumers invest more in (re)-search of information, weighing alternatives and risks (Suh & Youjae, 2006) and hence involvement can be seen as a motivational factor in consumer's attention and comprehension processes (Celsi & Olson 1988).

Mano & Oliver (1993) show that consumers' involvement with a brand or product enhances all the affective experiences, and that products that require higher involvement elicit greater emotional reactions, encompassing both positive and negative emotion. Calvo-Porral et al., (2018) in their research on the Theory of Hedonic Asymmetry showed likewise that the level of involvement of a product or with a product determines consumption-elicited emotions and links to satisfaction. As consumers are more involved, they are in turn more motivated towards the brand or good and research shows strong evidence of the role of involvement as a motivational factor. (Zaichkowsky, 1985,1994; Celsi & Olson, 1988). Thus, as brand experiences encompass emotional, intellectual, sensory, and behavioral dimensions (Brakus et

al., 2009), it is expected that a consumers' involvement with a brand or good as a ground on which brand experience builds (Pallant, Karpen & Sands, 2022). As such, the present study proposed the following hypothesis:

H1: Product involvement has a positive effect on brand experience.

Brand Experience

As touched upon in the chapter on experiential marketing, a brand nowadays serves as a source of differentiation for businesses beyond the inherent qualities of the products or services they offer, arguing that beyond the utilitarian attributes, consumption also includes a hedonistic, experiential, and symbolic component. Holbrook and Hirschman (1982) were first to shine light on experiences as a new aspect of consumption and announced the new and revolutionary concept, besides traditional marketing, that now shows the consumer as seeking out fun, amusement, and fantasy, whereas Brakus et al. (2009), were first to coin the term *brand experience*, on which a multitude of new consumer-centric research could follow.

Initiated by Pine and Gilmore (1998) and Schmitt (1999) followed the terms that postulate a change on a grander scale of economy and marketing, respectively, the *experience economy, and experience marketing* and *experiential marketing*. Due to the emergence of those new eras of 'economies', branding has come to be a high management priority and thus academic interest in brand-related topics has multiplied in the past decade. The brand is now seen as among the most essential intangible assets a firm has (Keller & Lehmann, 2006) as marketers consider it a vital strategy to form a long-lasting consumer brand relationship (Khan & Rahman, 2015).

In the spotlight has advanced the question how firms can induce strong and lasting experiences, and those that are naturally considered outstanding experiential brands, such as for instance LEGO, Apple, and Starbucks try to appeal to all five of the consumers' senses in that they offer feelings, lay foundation of creative and analytical thought and behaviour. In their product or service, their packaging or website, surfaces, sensory stimuli, artwork, music, aromas, surfaces, logo design, brand name, symbols, brand store or flagship store (Dolbec & Chebat, 2013), a memorable impression is created through those cues, which engage and build memories (Brakus et al., 2009; Cleff et al., 2014) that ultimately design an experiential environment that is connected to the brand identity and create anchor points which allows the brand to establish

a connection to the consumers' self, and the contrair, the consumers' self to the brand (Borghini et al. 2009; Schembri et al., 2010).

The brand experiences result from the multitude of anchor points the consumer touches upon, but the total sum of impressions and experiences of a brand, constitutes the concept of brand experience. Accordingly, widely recognized by various scholars (Sands et al., 2008; Dolbec & Chebat, 2013; Pina & Dias, 2021; Moreira et al., 2017) the definition of *brand experiences* has been summarized as *"subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings, and cognitions) and behavioural responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications, and environments"* (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009, p. 53).

Their concept entails four experience dimensions, namely, *sensory*, *emotional*, *intellectual*, and *behavioural*, which are built upon philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science research. A sensory experience induces experiences via the five senses of touch, taste, smell, sight, and hearing. Most extensive research on sensory marketing has been conducted by Krishna (2012), bringing marketing to engage the consumers' five senses that in turn affect their perception, behaviour, and judgements, with the secondary focus on creating subconscious triggers. An emotional experience entails affects, emotion and moods. The intellectual experience relates to the mind, the intellect and inspires creativity, whereas the behavioural experience motivates concrete physical actions, lifestyles, and behaviours.

Initially Schmitt's (1999) dimensions, upon which Brakus et al. (2009) built, included a fifth sphere incorporating a relating element or social-identity experience, that relates to the felt need or motivation to be viewed positively and accepted by individual others. However, it is important to note the differentiation in point of views. In the former they are considered as strategic modules (SEM's), in the latter a consumer perspective is taken, which understands experiences as subjective, internal, and behavioural, which favoured the latter to be fitting for the purpose of this research.

The construct of brand experience is to be understood as conceptionally related only in part with other constructs. Overall, it is conceptionally quite distinct from evaluative, affective, or associative constructs such as product and brand involvement, brand attachment, and brand associations like brand personality (Brakus et al. 2009). In a more recent critical review, Schmitt, Brakus and Zarantonella (2015) stress explicitly that the overall attitude, evaluations, associations toward a brand does not capture the totality of experience. These constructs are

fundamentally based on values, needs, and interests that motivate a consumer, whereas experiences do not necessarily entail a motivational state per se. They can occur independent from and predating those subjective internal motivators.

Here, at this independent point, predating any form of internal responses, a multitude of antecedent stimuli overlap with the mythological sphere. A mythological motif appearing in a brand's name, logo, or in advertisement as enacted into a storyline, must be experienced with at least one of the experience domains, naturally that of the senses, specifically that of sight, and overall, with the intellectual sphere, as stimulating thoughts, ideas, and creativity. Nonetheless, a mythological stimulus naturally is incorporated anywhere in these four experience dimensions. Although storytelling in branding can be found usually in the medium of advertisement, a choosen brand name or logo just as much is interconnected with a story told or ascribed. Stories, understood as incorporated in a motif and symbol, pique the interest of viewers and appeal to their emotions and aspirations, thus producing experiences (Escalas, 2004). People are fascinated by brand stories, which are simpler to recall than facts and may be utilised to strengthen brand associations by providing brand experience (Lundqvist, Liljander, Gummerus, & Van Riel, 2013).

As brand experiences are subject to a priori outer stimuli given by the brand, so is brand personality expected to be a *consequential* phenomenon connected to brand experience and in relative relation to it. That is to say, the consumer is more likely to bestow a brand with personality associations when experiences with a brand occur beforehand, rather than the reverse. Thus, it can be said that experiences inform the brand personality associations (Pham, 2004).

The progression of an experience marketing or experiential marketing is a process that starts with a brand-related stimulus and ends with a shift in consumer behavior, knowledge, or attitude. Experiences happen as a result of some form of stimuli (Schmitt 1999) which led the current emphasize of marketing to put highest focus on creating experiences. As the consumer shifts from focus on functional characteristics to the emphasis on experiences with and around the product and its brand (Brakus et al., 2008; Schmitt, 1999). The brand and the relation had with the brand became a decisive factor for the contemporary consumer, that aims to result in memorable and rewarding brand (Schmitt et al., 2014). As experiences, understood in the milieu of the consumer and brands, rely on brand-related stimuli, it is an important consumer construct for this research in that the 'to-be-experienced' dimension of a mythological stimuli is the Apple Inc. logotype of the bitten apple and its related connotations.

According to Brakus *et al.* (2009: 53) brand experience is conceptualized as "subjective, internal consumer responses (sensations, feelings and cognitions) and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli that are part of a brand's design and identity, packaging, communications and environments", and are divided into four overall dimensions, namely, sensory, emotional, intellectual, and behavioral.

Several studies conclude sensory stimuli to have an impact on consumer behavior (Krishna, 2014; Hultén 2011). Sensory experiences positively influence brand associations and brand awareness (Kumar et al., 2013; Chang & Chieng, 2006), consumer-based brand equity (Cleff et al., 2014), as well as purchase intentions (Nasermoadeli et al., 2013; Moreira et al., 2017; Ong, Lee, & Ramayah, 2018). The emotional dimension of brand experiences is crucial for building strong brands (Gentile et al., 2007; Hultén, 2011). Several studies show the positive influence of emotional experiences on brand associations (Kumar et al., 2013; Chang & Chieng, 2006), brand quality (Kumar et al., 2013), brand loyalty and purchase intention (Ong et al., 2018), and consumer-based brand equity (Chang et al. 2014; Nasermoadeli et al., 2013). Intellectual and behavioural experiences show to have a positive influence on brand associations (Chang & Chieng, 2006), perceived quality (Kumar et al., 2013), consumer-based brand equity (Cleff et al., 2014; Kumar et al., 2013). Further, these dimensions were shown to positively affect brand loyalty (Gentile et al., 2007; Brakus et al., 2009; Bapat & Thanigan, 2016).

Brand personality is understood as "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (Aaker, 1997, p. 347) as is seen as a key element of a successful brand (Eisend & Stokburger-Sauer, 2013). Brand personality is crucial in that it provides a factor of differentiation and enhances loyalty and trust and enables consumers to express themselves though the consumption of a particular brand that corresponds to their needs, values, and Self (Biel, 1993; Fournier, 1998). Louis and Lombart (2011) found equally that ascribing a personality trait to a brand would influence consumers' trust, emotional connection, and commitment positively.

According to Brakus et al., (2009) to associate certain personality traits with a brand offers similar value to consumers as experiences had with a brand, and hence, more traits associated with a brand increases satisfactions and loyalty in regard to the brand. Yet, brand personality is understood as a consequent phenomenon to brand experiences (Brakus et al., 2009), because the higher the overall experiences had with a brand, the more likely the consumer will associate and bestow upon brand personality traits (Kumar et al., 2013; Chang & Chieng, 2006).

Consumer-based brand equity is commonly referred to as a "differential effect of brand awareness on the consumers' response to the marketing of a brand" (Keller, 1993, p.2) or in other words, as a "[..] different response between a focal brand and an unbranded product when both have the same level of marketing stimuli and product attributes." (Yoo and Donthu, 2001, p. 1). Most commonly accepted definitions overall pertain to a surplus value added to a product through its brand name. In that accord, Yoo and Donthu (2001) divide the concept in a cognitive and a behavioral dimension, consisting of perceived quality, brand awareness and brand associations and brand loyalty.

Several studies have empirically confirmed the positive influence and importance of brand experiences on the different dimensions of the consumer-based brand construct (Brakus et al., 2009; Moreira et al., 2017; Zarantonella & Schmitt, 2013; Franciso-Maffezzoli, Semprebom & Prado, 2014; Ding & Tseng, 2015) and strengthen, that positive experiences can lead to enduring benefits for the brand (Brakus et al., 2009; Schmitt, 1999). For instance, brand experiences were shown to positively affect brand loyalty (Brakus et al., 2009), namely, brand experience positively affects the consumers desire to repeat positive experiences had with a brand. While if an affective commitment to the brand is developed alongside, experiences result in even higher loyalty (Iglesias et al., 2011). In fact, different types of brand experience, that is, through sensory, affect, behavioral, and intellect, each influence the consumers brand loyalty differently (Ong et al., 2018). Brand experiences where additionally shown a positive and significant relationship with brand awareness, which demonstrates brand recognition as a crucial consequence of experiences (Kumar, Dash & Purwar, 2013; Ding & Tseng, 2015).

Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010), among others (Chen and Chang 2008; Ong, Lee & Ramayah, 2018; Brakus et al., 2009; Moreira et al., 2017) highlight the significant impact of brand experiences on purchase intention, specifically in forming positive emotion and achieving brand loyalty, which in turn were shown to positively influence consumers intentions to purchase.

Based on the above statements, the present study proposed the following hypotheses:

H2: Brand experience has a positive effect on brand personality.
H3: Brand experience has a positive effect on consumer-based brand equity.
H6: Brand experience has a positive effect on purchase intention.

Brand Personality

Since long in the branding of businesses, research and practice has talked about the personification of brands, that is, a brands personality. It refers to human personality characteristics that are associated with a brand and the focus of investigation academically and practically lies on understanding how a brands-ascribed personality enables consumers own (actual) self, an ideal self (Malär et al., 2011), or particular components and dimensions of the self to be expressed (Aaker, 1997). Findings of core studies underline the relation between strong emotional brand connections with increased consumer loyalty, that ultimately has a positive effect on the company's financial performance and overall increase of consumer-based brand equity (Park et al. 2010).

The concept of a brand's personality was first coined by general marketers and advertisers in the mid twentieth century before it then found its way in academic research. It was commonly understood as a non-material dimension, a sort of character, facet, or personality attribute that the consumer would orient themselves toward apart from the physical product or service. This phenomenon, as related to the transition towards an experience economy shows itself as an increasing effect of non-product-based features of a brand on the consumers purchase decisions (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003).

A snapshot of the totality of research in marketing and branding would show that the brand personality concept stands out as one of the most researched constructs of brand associations, with Jennifer Aaker (1997) having built a groundwork of scale development and conceptual work. Originally, first approaches to conceptualize the concept were firmly based on analogous ideas from personality and developmental psychology, namely, the Big Five Personality Model (B5), which is used as a psychological framework consisting of five dimensions that include openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. This framework can also be taken up when characterizing a brand's personality. Aaker (1997) suggested *sincerity*, *excitement*, *competence*, *sophistication*, and *ruggedness* are some of the five elements of brand personality, and accordingly is "the set of human characteristics associated with a brand" (ibid. p. 347). Although while Aaker's model has been applied and praised, it has received criticism for a lack of empirical validity as well as a lack of transcultural and trans-market application. Besides, brand personality scales rather measure and comprise a wide spectrum of a brands *whole identity*, wherein personality is as a segment included (Azoulay & Kapferer, 2003; Park et al., 2010).

Research on the symbolic use of brands clearly underlines that the individual shows a preference to brands that match their personality (Bosnjak et al., 2007), nonetheless the question arises how human personality and brand personality can be brought together, that is, a construct that fuses brand personality to human personality traits that are relevant, substantial, and applicable to brands (Geuens et al., 2009), rather than relying solely on a human personality model. Malär et al. (2011) research has focused on a comparable purpose to identify the relationship of brands to the consumers *actual self* or *ideal self*, with the main assumption that consumers purchase brands with a personality that enables them to express their self-concept. Under investigation is the *self-congruence*, which refers to the fit of a brand's personality with either one's actual self or their ideal self.

Departing a step further from Aaker's ground model, Geuens et al. (2009) developed a new measure for brand personality. The scales measure five factors, namely, *Activity*, *Responsibility*, *Aggressiveness*, *Simplicity*, and *Emotionality*. Responsibility includes three personality traits: down to earth, responsible, and stable; Activity refers to traits: active, dynamic, and innovative; Aggressiveness incorporates: bold and aggressive; Simplicity refers to: ordinary, simple; Emotionality includes: romantic, sentimental (ibid.). Their scale adopts a stricter, less broad definition of brand personality than Aaker's (1997), in that it only incorporates human personality traits and does not include functional attributes, demographic characteristics (age, sex, nationality etc.) or certain brand attitudes. Their conceptual understanding is based on Azoulay and Kapferer (2003) definition of brand personality as: "[…] the set of human personality traits that are both *applicable* to and *relevant* for brands.", (p. 151). The scale dimensions show reliability and validity as well as applicability across brands, cross-culturally and product categories (Japutra & Molinillo, 2019).

Further research is emerging from a variety of disciplines merging with marketing and branding to better understand how brand personality attributes can affect consumer behavior. Delbaere et al. (2011) in their research on anthropomorphisms - the tendency to assign human characteristics to objects - in brand communications include archetypal and thus often mythological imagery that are embedded in advertisement. The results show an increase of positive emotion felt, which corresponds rather to a domain of brand experience, but also an increase of positive attributes of personality characteristics ascribed to the brand, corresponding to the overall *brand personality*, and generally increase in the brand fondness.

Lloyd and Woodside's study (2013) offers a theoretical framework for the use of animal symbols in marketing communications based on social anthropology and psychoanalysis. The study examines the use of animal totems in brand marketing. By activating and connecting archetypal associations, that is, universal, inborn representations of thoughts, behaviors, and personalities in the consumers' mind, the incorporation of animal symbols serves to activate the cultural schema that the brand stands for. Bechter, Farinelli and Daniel (2016) research objective was to show how Aaker's (1997) brand personality framework and C.G. Jung's (1954) archetypes may coexist in the context of advertising. By merging the features of Jung and Aaker into a single framework and applying it to the analysis of advertising in a hotel context, their research attempted to close this gap. The findings indicate that there is common ground.

Brand personality is considered to a decisive tool of differentiation that can lead to an increase in brand equity (Aaker & Fournier, 1995). Several empirical studies have demonstrated the influence of brand personality on consumer-based brand equity and its dimension. Kressmann et al., (2006) in a study on *self-image congruency* (the match between consumers' self-concept and the personality of a given brand or product) in the automobile industry were found to be predicting brand loyalty, an integral part of consumer-based brand equity. Su & Tong (2015) in a study on the personality of sportswear brands, confirmed the positive relationship brand personality has on brand equity, wherein the traits competence, attractiveness, sincerity, and innovation, are the major significant contributing trait-aspects to the development of sportswear brand equity. Research findings from Hakkak et al., (2015) show the significant effects of not only brand personality on brand equity and purchase intention, but also how consumer-based brand equity plays a positive mediator function between brand personality and purchase intention.

The long-term management instrument brand personality was repeatedly found to have a positive impact on consumer-based brand equity creation (Valette-Florence et al., 2011; Hakkak et al., 2015; Su & Tong, 2015) and as such, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H4: Brand personality has a positive effect on consumer-based brand equity.

Consumer-Based Brand Equity

Under brand equity, marketers understand the value of the brand, as well as the *surplus* value of a product of service of that brand compared to a generic market equivalent. The concept has developed into a central part of a marketing strategy (Keller, 1998). There are two perspectives to arrive at brand equity: the financial perspective that estimates the monetary brand value to the firm; the consumer perspective that understands the value of the brand from the consumers point of view (Cleff et al., 2014); thus, referring to the singular consumer-level measurement of cognitive and behavioral brand relation (Yoo and Donthu, 2001).

Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993) both shaped the common understanding of brand equity immensely and although having established a distinctive theory of brand equity view the concept from the *consumer's perspective*, with the main assumption that brand equity is the consumer's subjective assessment of a brand. According to Aaker (1991), consumers receive value from a brand when they invest and engage more to understand and absorb information and when accompanied by a feeling of trust in the process of making purchases (Moreira et al., 2017). He defines brand equity as a collection of assets or liabilities with five dimensions consisting of: brand loyalty, perceived quality, brand awareness, and brand associations. Respectively, brand loyalty is the enduring relation consumers establish with a brand; perceived quality refers to the subjective perception of overall quality and is a measurable crucial characteristic of a brand; brand awareness is about the familiarity, recognition and recall of the brand name and symbols; and brand association relates to a set of connections, associations and representation of the consumer that are linked to the brand.

Keller (1993, p.2) understands brand equity as the "differential effect of brand awareness on the consumer response to the marketing of the brand". Accordingly, this effect occurs through the consumers awareness and familiarity and through positive, resilient, and personal associations with the brand. Keller's conceptualization first consists of brand knowledge, which incorporates brand awareness and brand image. Brand recall and brand recognition are two additional subcategories of brand awareness. Brand recall refers to the consumer's capacity to remember the brand from memory, whereas brand recognition measures previous exposure to a particular brand. Lastly, brand image is about the associations that endure in a consumer's memory related to the brand.

There has not been a commonly accepted definition around brand equity, as well as a about general comprehensive measurement, or ultimately how brand value is in actuality created (Walgren, Ruble, & Donthu, 1995), although the majority of conceptualizations base their

understanding and consumer centric perspective to a great extent on Aaker (1991) and Keller (1993). A majority of research agrees to refer overall to a surplus value added to a product through its brand name (Yoo & Donthu, 2001). Regardless of a common denominator, a common definition and scale was lacking. Yoo and Donthu (2001) initiated the progress in developing and validating a multidimensional scale, wherein consumer-based brand equity is defined as the consumers' "[..] different response between a focal brand and an unbranded product when both have the same level of marketing stimuli and product attributes." (ibid., p. 1). Yoo and Donthu's scale measures a cognitive and a behavioral dimension, consisting of perceived quality on one hand, brand awareness and brand associations joint together regarding the former, then brand loyalty measured under the latter. They're scale was adopted and seen to fit the extent of this research.

Purchase Intention

Research in consumer decision behavior has put considerable attention to apprehend the critical variable purchase intention, that firstly, refers to the consumers' intent, willingness, and probability to buy a certain good in the future (Ajzen, 1991) or similarly, namely, the intention to purchase as a personal inclination to 'act' in relation to the brand (Bagozzi et al., 1979) and could be defined as follows: "an individual's conscious plan to make an effort to purchase a brand" (Spears & Singh, 2004, p. 56). Secondly, research on purchase intention tries to determine the influencing factors why a consumer purchases a particular good or brand (Shah et al. 2012). Moreover, it can be decisive for businesses to gain insight to the elements that influence consumers' purchase intentions since this information can be used to guide future marketing plans and other strategic decisions.

Purchase intention is influenced by numerous *product-related* factors including quality, design, brand image and reputation, and price (Lin & Lekhawipat, 2014; Dodds & Monroe, 1985); furthermore, *environmental* factors influencing purchase intention include culture and cultural values, social influences, and media (Gunawan & Huarng, 2015). These categories could be summarized to be the *external factors* or *extrinsic cues* (Dodd et al., 1991). On the other hand, *internal influences* influencing the willingness to purchase can be attitudes, perceptions, or behaviors (Moreira et al., 2017). Attitudes refer to the individual's overall evaluation or subjective positive or negative emotion about a good or a brand (Fishbein & Ajzen, 2010). Perception, as perceived quality, or value is considered a consumer's interpretation of

information about a product or brand (Lien et al., 2015). Moreover, behavioral intention, that is, planned behavior is influenced by attitudes, namely internal evaluations, that in turn can predict actual behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2010).

Fundamental was to understand how consumers' level of product involvement influences purchase intention. Higher product involvement was found to lead to an increase in brand loyalty, satisfaction, and perception of value, which in turn can increase purchase intention (Yang & Peterson, 2004; Chaudhuri & Holbrook, 2001). Lower product involvement and thus consumers who have less personal interest, attachment or generally do less information gathering towards a brand or product were found to have a negative impact on purchase intention (Chao & Huang, 2015), however low involvement and intention to purchase is dependent on multiple personal and situational factors (ibid.).

Several studies investigated the antecedents influencing purchase intention. In the context of this research, these constructs were product involvement (Hollebeek et al.,2007), brand experience, and consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) to be antecedents influencing factors of purchase intention. Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010), among others (Chen and Chang, 2008; Brakus et al., 2009; Moreira et al., 2017) highlighted the significant role of brand experience on purchase intention, specifically in forming positive emotion and loyalty, which in turn were shown to positively influence purchase intention. Moreover, several studies have demonstrated, higher consumer-based brand equity (CBBE) result in stronger preferences and purchase intentions (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; Moreira et al., 2017). Several studies investigated the influence of consumer-based brand equity to be a motivating factor on purchase intentions (Chen & Chang, 2008; Chen et al., 2012; Moreira et al., 2017; Buil et al., 2013). The higher the overall consumer-based brand equity is, the stronger the consumers' preferences are carved out and accordingly influence purchase intentions significantly (Yoo & Donthu, 2001; Cobb-Walgren et al., 1995; Moreira et al., 2017). It is commonly known that consumers are more inclined to purchase a product they consider to be of higher value (Aaker, 1991), or the consumers' willingness to pay a higher price which in turn can imply a greater consumer-based brand equity and hence indicates to a stronger intention to purchase (Chen et al., 2012).

Several studies highlight the positive influence of consumer-based brand equity on purchase intention, for instance, in a study on Airline brand equity Cheng and Cheng (2008) found brand equity to have a positive relationship with purchase intention, with a moderating influence of levels of cost switching. Moreira et al., (2017) showed sensory stimulation to be positively

influencing brand experience and brand equity, which, in turn, positively impact intention to purchase. As such, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H5: Consumer-based brand equity has a positive effect on purchase intention.
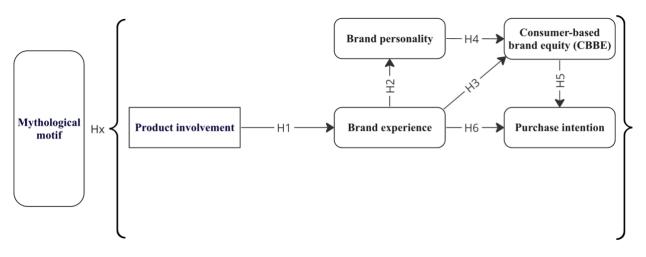
Branding and Mythology

In today's markets, brands have become a decisive part of modern consumer culture. They have established themselves beyond a mere differentiating signifier and identifier of one good from another, that mainly denotes to origin, quality, and affiliation of the good it is attached on Janiszewski & Meyvis, 2001). Whereas before the sole focus for consumers was utilitarian, 'feature and benefit', and functional characteristics, and nowadays is viewed as an expected must-have, consumers now base their purchase decisions to a much greater extent on the brand, in a sense, relating to them and extending and expressing part of their Self through the purchase of a certain brand over another (Schmitt et al., 2015; Fournier, 1998; Schembri & Merrilees, 2010). In reverse, brands seek to build a connection to the consumer's self, establishing their value also outside of their contemporary predominant significance to economic growth (Schembri & Merrilees, 2010; Liagouras, 2005). Brands are key engines, key drivers of value creation and growth for businesses, economies, as well as society (Holt, 2004). They are important intangible assets (Park et al., 2013), serve as tools for companies to stand out from the competition, build enduring relationships with customer and ultimately driving consumer purchase intention and brand loyalty (Kapferer, 2020).

In a market where functionalistic attributes of products and services become ever more similar, standing out, differentiating, and gaining competitive advantage has become an even more integral part of branding and marketing (Court et al., 2006; Keller, 1993; Aaker, 1996). Hence, as above noted, consumers give far more emphasis to the brand and the multifaceted experiences connected to and provided by the brand (Schmitt et al., 2015), as a decisive factor in creating brand preferences and ultimately affecting purchase intention (Gentile et al., 2007). An abundance of renowned brands attach mythological symbols and names of gods and goddesses, an array of fantastical creatures as their trademark logo or brand name. Mythology in branding is not a new invention of recent times. In fact, it is used precisely because it has the power to resonate deeply with consumers through (visual) storytelling, design, and the creation of a narrative around brands (Holt, 2004). Many of such brands come in an instance to mind.
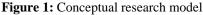
Previous research on the role of brand logos, specifically, has shown that logos can influence a brand's reputation and consumers' attitudes (Van den Bosch, de Jong, & Elving, 2005), as well as purchase intentions (Jun, Cho, & Kwon, 2008) along with brand loyalty (Müller, Kocher, & Crettaz, 2013). Brand names are considered likewise an inherent characteristic significantly influencing consumers' perceptions, and oftentimes a brands name might even be a standalone incentive of purchase decisions (Sundaram & Webster, 1999).

Storytelling in marketing has proven itself to be well suited (Pulizzi, 2012; Woodside et al., 2008) precisely because it resonates with consumers on an emotional level (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010). Ganassali & Matysiewicz (2020) recent research underlines similarly how archetypes, the raw matter underlying mythologemes, used in brand strategy management can produce positive influence on overall brand value through emotional dimensions. In that matter, archetypes and mythology reveal to be a powerful entrance point that connects brands with consumers (ibid.; Holt, 2004), since it has been an integral part of human culture because, through its symbols and stories, it is able to convey questions, answers, values, and aspirations. However, when brands make us of mythologemes in their brand *logotype* or *name*, how precisely there, they might have an influence on some fundamental consumer-based behavior constructs such as brand experience, brand personality, consumer-based brand equity and ultimately purchase intention, is not well understood and under-researched despite its prevalent application by brands and thus more research is necessary to investigate their potential impact.

Ultimately, the following hypothesis Hx is suggesting, that the mythological motif dimension may have a moderating effect on the relationships between the variables of conceptual model but does not explicitly test for a moderating effect. Instead, it is aimed to compare the strength and direction of the relationships for consumers who acknowledge the mythological motifs to those who do not. The mythological motif dimension is not explicitly included as an independent or dependent variable in the hypotheses but is included as a grouping variable to compare the effects of the mythological motifs on the dependent variables brand experience, brand personality, consumer-based brand equity, and purchase intention. The independent variable is product involvement; it is non-manipulated and non-controlled. As such, the following hypothesis was formulated:

Hx: It is expected that the relationships between the variables in the model are significantly different for consumers who acknowledge/recognize the mythological motifs in the brand, compared to those who do not.

The proposed conceptual research model is presented in **Figure 1**.

Figure 1: Conceptual research model

4. METHODOLOGY

Oftentimes we can notice a certain familiarity with a brands name or its name, logo and trademark and perhaps come to realize its mythological origin. Yet it is not yet studied thoroughly how the use of mythological motifs in brands influence the perceiver. This research aims to investigate for more clarity on the influence of mythological symbolism in its new terrain on various consumer-brand constructs when the mythological motif is recognized and understood. Unquestionably, stories, or rather mythological narratives found across religions and as a stand-alone expression of a human phenomenon has always been a container for transporting meaning (Segal, 2004; Jung & Kerényi, 2002), which were expected to have an influence on the consumers behavior towards brands who make use of those motifs in their brand logo or brand name.

History of the Apple Logotype

In order to draw a connection between the motif from the biblical origin myth and the Apple brand, we must first take a closer look at the history of the Apple logotype, followed by circumscribing the meaning subtracted from the motif of the myth, by interpreting it.

Apple's first logo, designed in 1976 by Steve Jobs and co-founder Ronald Wayne, depicted Sir Isaac Newton sitting under an apple tree, which is bearing a glowing apple above his head (Figure 1). Legend has it, that Newton came to discover the law of gravity after an apple fell on his head. The outside border of the banner shows a quote by the English poet William Wordsworth: "Newton . . . A Mind Forever Voyaging Through Strange Seas of Thought . . . Alone" (Wikipedia contributors, 2023, May 1).

Figure 2: Apple computer's first logo

Apple's first logotype did not survive for long, when a more practical image was chosen to replace it. Rob Janoff, famous for designing the Apple logo as we know it today, initially kept the apple motif as portraying now rainbow colors and a bite taken out of it and later when Jobs returned to Apple in 1997, had it changed into a monochromatic look that seemed more fitting the vision Jobs had for Apple of that time.

Figure 3: Apple's logotype. 1976-1998

According to designer Rob Janoff, the bite of the apple had the mere practical reason not to confuse it with another fruit and standing more over jokingly for *byte*. Moreover, Janoff says, the bite metaphorically stands for biting into the vast knowledge that users would acquire through this computer (Burns, 2018). Although, Janoff himself denies the association of the new bitten apple logo with the biblical story of Adam and Eve, Newton, and others (Interview with Rob Janoff, designer of the Apple logo, 2020), the motif stands and speaks for itself when understood with the history and origin of the first apple logotype, as well as the initial meaning the motif can have by its own nature, as the archetypal symbol carries its implicit meaning according to Jung (Bradshaw & Storm, 2013). Besides, it could be argued that a creative act must not be an all too conscious act, which might veil the underlying meaning or motivation of the produced creative artwork, although in this individual case cannot be further determined, but also does not bear a necessity, since the commonly made associations by the consumer after all determines more so the meaning projected onto the Apple logotype.

In order to establish an interconnection between Apple's logotype with the mythological motif and the meaning it entails, we have to take a closer look at the associations that Apple attracts and contrast it with the interpretation of the corresponding mythologem of the biblical story. The commonly made association with the apple logo has long been reflected in the myth of Adam and Eve, thus states for instance quite directly and splendidly Jean Louis Gassée, former executive at Apple Computers 1981–1990:" *One of the deep mysteries to me is our logo, the symbol of lust and knowledge, bitten into, all crossed with the colors of the rainbow in the wrong order. You couldn't dream of a more appropriate logo: lust, knowledge, hope, and anarchy."* (ibid. 2020).

Max Jakob Lusensky, Jungian psychoanalyst and author of *Brandpsycho: A Psychological Exposé Into the Hidden Side of Branding* (2016), undertook a similar endeavor in his essay *Did You Bite the Magic Apple?* (2014) shining light on the phenomenon of the Apple brand, as a carrier of all sorts of projections, values, and ideas, but foremost, investigating Apple's strong appeal that exceeds the realm of its tangible products and goes further than conventional branding, that is to say, the Apple brand as a living symbol (Lusensky, 2014).

When a brand is understood as entailing more than it outwardly points to, and perhaps where it approximately points towards, the power of folklore and mythology and its language of symbols and motifs becomes apparent. Brown (2003) and Holt (2004) similarly reinforce a theory of a brand-as-narrative, that focuses on the stories that arise around a brand by circulating through culture and its consumers and ultimately define the brand. In focus here, is likewise the symbolic stories, narrative, metaphors, originating around a brand from the perspective of the consumers which Brown terms *brand allegories.*

Strikingly, former marketing executive at Nike Scott Bedbury affirms and highlights the above said, when he stated: *"A brand is a metaphorical story that ... connects with something very deep—a fundamental human appreciation of mythology ... Companies that manifest this sensibility ... invoke something very powerful"* (Webber 1997). Nike is an excellent example that highlights how a brand name and logotype tap into mythological motifs and establish a harmonical accord that has made the brand stand out from its competitors. Nike can be considered to be one of the great antecedents that strategically incorporated archetypal (mythological) roots, in that case, the archetype of the Warrior (Lusensky, 2014). Its brand name allures to the Greek goddess of victory, Nike, and indirectly evokes a message that the company itself directs – the idea of victory and thus, the idea of becoming a winner. In comparison to the case of Apple, its logotype and the associated symbolical meaning, Nike is consciously and strategically pushing this narrative, whereas the same cannot be said about Apple. The connection is built and established by the consumer and by a sort of synchronistic harmony that seem to exist naturally between the Apple brand and the symbol that it made its house banner. Although it was shown in the above paragraph of the history of Apple's name

and logo, the connections are not altogether taken out of the air and randomly attached to the Apple brand[5].

The approach to consciously use and strategically direct archetypes, the raw essence and form underlying or filled by mythological motifs has been capitalized by various brand strategists and most notably been initiated by Mark & Pearson (2001). Mark & Pearson put forward the idea that the success of a brand depends in many ways on the effective correspondence between itself and the fundamental patterns in the unconscious in the psyche, that have been termed archetypes. Therefore, harvesting those directly from the raw essence of the innumerous archetypes or borrowed from mythology, folklore, and sagas and then stupe them onto brands, for instance, as seen in Nike. What a brand does, that is, its industry, its products or service, it's very approach will be analyzed and brought in connection with an archetype, in order to form a branding and marketing approach that can, through the archetype establish a meaningful accord and connect to the collective and inherent patterns of thought and emotion within the individual; Nike corresponds to the Hero-archetype, which taps into the Hero's journey and incorporates meanings of strength, courage, nobility, and achievement in athletics and life, that is through the corresponding archetype coded into its heroic brand image (ibid.). Nonetheless, to be able to mobilize an archetype for one's business does not depend on having a mythological business name or logotype.

The archetype approach, as well as the narrative approach, which both draw from the same spring, have contemporarily found a safe and strong footing in marketing and other fields of business and is used and applied by academic and profession alike (Keller, 2023; Greenwood & Hinings, 2017; Sciarrino & Roberts, 2018; Xara-Brasil et al. 2018; Ganassali & Matysiewicz, 2021), to name only a few and recent ones here, that are notable to underline how archetypes positively impact perceived value of brands. A threshold was drawn here between a strategic

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[5] Nonetheless, it is important to note that most brands who use any form of mythological connotation in their logo or brand name do not refer to it in any direct, nor indirect way whatsoever. Apple or Starbucks are not exceptions, but Amazon, Nike, Hermes, Pegasus Airlines, Venus, Maserati, Pandora, Versace and many more own a logo or name that has been lend from mythology and not one of them refers to it directly.

directing and adapting of mythological motifs by brands, to convey a meaningful narrative through brand name, logo, or marketing communications, here referred to as *conscious*, versus an undefined, a priori existing interconnection between brand and mythological motif, that is overall not articulated, strategically directed, or communicated, thus referred to as *unconscious*. The focus lies on the intentionality.

On a macro level, brands have become one of the most important components of the global economy as brand value has grown to be a strong predictor of firm value. Over the past forty years, brands have become the preeminent immaterial capital form in the post-industrial economy. Physical production assets accounted for more than 50% of the economic weight of non-financial firms at the beginning of the twenty-first century. If a company wishes to differentiate its goods from those of its competitors, it must build a connection around its items (Liagouras, 2005), and as brands indicate and develop the relationality that allures the consumer to consume, a brand acquires a significant function within this consumer environment. A brand's relevance resides also outside of a its sole significance to economic growth. Although a brand may refer to a specific consumer good, it is actually a narrative that involves the product, the consumer, and other stakeholders, and therefore an ideal new terrain for mythologemes.

Interpretation of the Mythologem

Just as the collective unconscious is a collective composition, found in all human due to a shared biological equipment, so is the raw forms of the archetypes, which are an inherent part of the psyche. The psychic contents, that are inherent not to the individual alone, but to a society, a culture, and all humans. These are psychic equivalents to the instinctual modes of behavior, emotion and thought pattern, who's form is given a priori and who's existence is due to the collection of experiences since the beginning of the Anthropocene and thus can be viewed as the psychic complementation of instincts (Jung, 2016). Chang et al. (2015) researched on archetypal symbolism and emotion-driven media through a analytical psychological analysis of film clips, and, besides mythology and folklore, showed a modern treasure trove to see the portrayal of archetypal patterns enacted and recognized and differentiated from each other according to participants' emotional responses. Bradshaw & Storm's (2013) research further supported the common tendency to perceive common meanings that are embodied in symbols, even if they are not consciously understood.

The story of Adam and Eve is like many others part of a cosmogonic myth, an origin myth of how the world and everything in and around it was created. There is an abundance of cosmogonic myths, that are part of nearly every religion or mythology. At the core they all have a similar scheme or pattern, a familiar structure (Von Franz, 2017). An equivalent to the biblical creation myth, for instance, that is equally familiar to the layman is the Greek story of Prometheus, a titan who created the first human, yet the gods denied them the fire to keep them obedient and in darkness. Prometheus then stole the fire from the gods and gave it to the humans. He is therefore eternally punished, chained to a rock, and has an eagle tear out his liver, every day anew after the liver has regrown (Britannica, 2022).

Cosmogonic myths or creation myths, like in the Old Testament are by nature more abstract and of impersonal characteristic, compared to other myths, who don't stress the birth of the whole world. The creation of the world then symbolizes the emergence and origin of the ego-consciousness, the "I", that is not anymore identical with the outside world, a primordial indistinguishability of subject and object, i.e., of the primordial unconscious state and the realization of a fundamental difference between oneself and the world (Von Franz, 2017), which came about by eating from the two-sided tree of Knowledge and of Good and Evil, that God had strictly forbidden and as a result banishes them forever from the Garden of Eden. The state of the Garden of Eden represents a state of union with God, that, for instance, all animals still possess. The motif of the apple therefore symbolizes knowledge and consciousness and the bite taken out of it the acquisition of self-awareness, consciousness, and the realization of one's own mortality. Furthermore, it symbolizes the very desire for knowledge and the pursuit of truth and the potential consequences of disobedience (Britannica, 2022).

The following interpretation, as given in the survey on mythological symbols, oriented itself on the above symbolic, psychological understanding:

« The bitten apple of the Apple Inc. logo is a visually appealing and distinctive symbol. In the myth of the Garden of Eden, the bitten apple is a symbol of knowledge and consciousness. According to the story, God had forbidden Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, but they are tempted to do so by a serpent. The bite taken out of the fruit represents the acquisition of self-awareness, consciousness, and the realization of their own mortality. The bitten apple is often used as a symbol of the desire for knowledge, the origin of consciousness itself and the pursuit of truth, as well as the potential consequences of disobedience. It can be seen as a metaphor for the human condition, in which we are constantly seeking to understand

the world around us and our place in it. The bitten apple can also be interpreted as a symbol of the struggles and challenges that we face as we seek to expand our knowledge and the coming of consciousness. In this way, the bitten apple is a powerful and enduring symbol that has captured the imaginations of people for centuries. This motif serves likewise as the iconic logo of the Apple brand. » (From introduction of the questionnaire)

Through the symbolic, psychological magnifying glass that was taken, an accord with the Apple brand is established as a sort of symbolic 'bringer of knowledge', knowledge access and expanding consciousness. The archetypal symbol used carries implicit meaning, as proposed by Jung (Bradshaw & Storm 2013). However, the meaning of the mythological motif, as it is understood here, and the Apple logotype cannot be merely arbitrarily established if it wouldn't be for the very nature of the brand and the context in which it operates. A wholesale supermarket chain with the same bitten Apple logo would not be able to establish the same harmonical accord, whether from the perspective of the consumer nor under academic analysis. It might simply induce associations of freshness of food products, a bio-organic touch, but most likely not be brought in context of a particular mythology. The context, characteristic, and métier of a brand thus has to be in agreement with the meaning of the mythological symbol, whether it is an unconscious, a priori and natural establishment between brand and symbol, or a conscious, strategic branding and marketing communication.

Starbucks and its Mythological Motif as a Complementary Case

Mythological traces can be found in plenty of well-known brands nowadays. To mind come (Gillette-) Venus the Greek goddess of love and beauty with their slogan: "Reveal the goddess in you", Pandora, Maserati's trident borrowed from Poseidon, Versace's Medusa head, Amazon and the fierce Greek warrior women, Hermes the delivery service, Dove, are some of many that borrow from Greek and other mythologies. Furthermore, among many others, brands like Marlboro or Subaru strike the mythological chord not through their brand name or logo but through their advertisement. They tap equally into archetypal motifs, stories, and images that are strategically storied in their advertising. The iconic American "cowboy" theme was used by Marlboro as an expression of the "hero-archetype," which represents the mytho-symbolic world of the smoking, cow-poking cowboy of the American west. Advertising has evolved into a significant visible and pervasive form, or perhaps a socio-cultural form of art in modernity

(Randazzo, 2006). Subaru's famous Crocodile Dundee advertisement presents another archetypal theme: of a "stranger in a strange land", unearthing a universal human experience, that is relatable (ibid.). Lastly, Starbucks in particular is taken for a closer inspection, to give in a minor scope a complementary case to that of the Apple brand.

Figure 4: Starbucks logotype, 2011 – today

Starbucks borrowed its brand name from the novel 'Moby Dick', in which the name of the first mate of the *Peqoud* is Starbuck, the logotype is derived and adapted from an ancient Norse woodcut (Archive Starbucks, n.d.). It depicts a two-tailed naked mermaid, siren, or mélusine wearing a crown and Schultz, head of Marketing proclaimed the mermaid or siren to be symbolizing seduction, as their coffee wants to seduce in the same way as the sailors in Homer's *Odyssey* are lured in with their songs and sexual promises (Schultz & Yang, 2003). The mermaid, siren often called Mélusine are female water spirits and are typically creatures having an upper body in the form of a beautiful, human woman with flowing hair, naked breasts, and a lower body of a fish tail. It is a personification of the seas and the bearing, generative waters and furthermore of sensual love, pleasure, wish fulfillment and often contains the gift of prophecy. Attraction, seduction, and danger are yet unconditionally entailed in those creatures (Ronnberg & Marti, 2010). Interestingly, French historic and expert on the European medieval, Le Goff considers the mélusine, siren, or mermaid representing a figure of fertility and prosperity and emphasizing the mélusine as a fairy of economic growth (Le Goff, 1982). Starbucks, like all businesses wants to attract customers after all. Schultz (ibid.) emphasizes in his autobiography on Starbucks not being in the coffee business, but rather in the experience business. Through stimuli touching all five senses, and similar like the siren, the mermaid and the mélusine, the experience they carry is the sensual message, a seduction to ultimately succumb and be seduced be their coffee (Lusensky, 2015).

Research Design

In order to answer the research question of *how the use of mythological motifs by brands might affect consumer behavior towards a brand*, the design of this study was chosen to be a quasi-experiment. A quasi-experiential design was seen fitting because it aims to evaluate an intervention, namely, the dimension of an articulated mythological motif freely but commonly associated with the Apple Inc. logotype but does not utilize randomization.

A quasi-experimental design takes advantage of natural settings or naturally formed groups, and therefore subjects are not randomly assigned (Leavy, 2022). This type of design is commonly applied where it is not feasible nor desirable to conduct an experiment or randomized control trials. Further, natural experiments like the quasi-experiment allows its findings to be applied to others subjects and settings, having a certain possibility for generalizations that could be made about the population (ibid.). A causality between the intervention and the outcome is aimed to be demonstrated. Whereas a 'quasi'- experiment tries to *resemble* a 'true' experiment, it was chosen because not to randomize, because of the comparable small available sample size that most graduate research attracts. Although one of the main weaknesses of quasi-experimental designs is the lack of random assignment, if properly accounted for any systematic differences between the groups, it can be confidently deducted that this occurred from the inference and not to other confounding variables (ibid.). Further, the research applied deductive reasoning, where hypotheses were formed based on existing knowledge, data were collected in an investigation of the research problem. After analysis and conclusion are drawn, the data were used to prove the hypotheses not false or false (Abbott & McKinney, 2013).

Participants

The sampling frame of this study consisted of N=383 participants. Considering a population as consisting of all elements that share to the least one characteristic common to all and hence composes the universe in a study (Malhorta, 1996). For this research, the population represents all individuals with a level of familiarity with the Apple brand and a Christian background. A sample is a subgroup of the population that was chosen to participate. Considering Marcoulides and Saunder's (2006) critical sample size assessment for PLS, the general '10-times per arrowhead' rule (Kock & Hadaya, 2018) were considered to ensure the results quality. The sample size for this research should be sufficiently large ($n>60$) allowing for statistical inferences.

The target sample included mainly students but was not focused solely on one specific group, across age and sexes. Rather, in deciding upon the respondents to be included in the sample frame, respondents were aimed to have a familiarity, in other words, involvement with Apple and a Judeo-Christian religion and Christian cultural background that connects naturally to the mythological motif in question, i.e., the Christian myth of the garden of Eden, the bitten apple motif from the biblical canon of the Old Testament (Gen, 1. Mose 2-5, Schlachter, 2004). Thus, the questionnaire was handed out mainly to European individuals.

Based on the target population, the sample was collected through a non-probability sampling method, or convenience sampling, in which the most conveniently available sample was used, without aiming to establish a representation of the population (Etikan et al., 2016), due to impracticality and infeasibility to select a random sample. Thus, samples were selected based on the subjective judgement of the researcher and without an equal probability of being selected depending on the place, time, or day the data is collected and therefore 'convenient' to the purpose of a research. Comparatively a random selection is one in which a purposive sampling focuses on the selection of participants that possess characteristics associated with the research study which avoids an occurring research bias such as sampling or selection bias. A Convenience sample does not distinguish characteristics among its participants (Nikolopoulou, 2022). In a quasi-experiment where the groups are not drawn at random, the control and treatment groups are termed not-equivalent groups. Researchers attempt to adjust for any confounding variables when employing this type of design by doing so in their analysis or by selecting groups that are equivalent as possible (ibid.).

Variables, Scales, and Measures

The questionnaire consisted of previously validated and empirically tested scales adapted from related research to measure the following variables appearing in the conceptual model:

Product involvement (P_Inv) was measured using Zaichkowsky's (1994) Revised Personal Involvement Inventory (RPII) consisting of 10 two-pair items of oppositional adjectives. *Brand experience* (BE) was based upon Brakus et al. (2009) 12 item scale, where each item was evaluated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". These items belong to four main dimensions, namely, sensory, affective, behavioral, and intellectual. *Brand personality* (BP) was measured using Geuens et al. (2009) scale, consisting of 12 personality trait items based on the Big-Five personality metric, summarized in five

dimensions, namely, responsibility, activity, aggressiveness, simplicity, and emotionality. Each item was evaluated on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "not characteristic for the brand at all" to "very characteristic for the brand". *Consumer-based brand equity* (CBBE) was measured based upon Yoo and Donthu's (2001) scale consisting of 10 items of overall three dimensions, brand loyalty, perceived quality, and brand awareness / brand association. Each item was evaluated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". Lastly, *purchase intention* (P_Int) was measured with Yoo and Donthu's (2001) scale consisting of 4 items, where each was rated on a five-point Likert scale from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree".

Upon building the questionnaire, it was looked out for general problems and pitfalls of the instrument itself. Instruments, as a questionnaire is, introduces biases (Common Method Bias, CMB), and hence variances which were aimed to be eliminated as much as possible. Method bias can result from using common scale properties (i.e., scale type, number of scale points, anchor labels, etc.) to measure different constructs and thus similar question formats are perceived to be similar affecting respondents' concentration and cognition (Podsakoff et al., 2012). To remedy this, scale properties were sought to be dissimilar as much as the extent allowed, thus eliminating common scale properties. Additionally, to remedy any possible CMB, measures were sought to be collected from different sources.

Table 1. Scale items of the study variables

Variables	Authors	N° of Items
Product involvement	Zaichkowsky (1994)	10 items
Brand experience	Brakus et al., (2009)	12 items
Brand personality	Geuens et al., (	10 items
Consumer-based brand equity	Yoo and Donthu (2001)	10 items
Purchase intention	Yoo and Donthu (2001)	4 items

Data Collection

The questionnaire was pre-tested, or pilot tested on a convenience sample of 10 graduate and doctoral students, following Collins (2003) procedures to ensure valid and reliable results. The respondents were accompanied in the process and encouraged to comment and highlight freely

on any item and the overall structure on the questionnaire, that they felt were problematic, in need of adjustment and underlining the positive. The feedback collected from the pre-test were focused on the effectiveness, strength, simplicity, size, comprehension of the introduction text and the items. Feedback was minimal and amended where appropriate and followed up by another final run through prior to the final distribution of the questionnaire.

Both questionnaires were preceded by a cover letter briefly explaining the objectives of the study. The questionnaire for the treatment group had an introductory paragraph on the mythological motif, that the control group has not received, that compactly elaborated on the Apple brand, the meaning of its brand logo of the bitten apple and established contact and meaning between the two components.

The preliminary paragraph of the treatment group depicted a description of the mythological story of the bitten Apple associated with the Christian myth of Adam and Eve and the original sin, an elaboration of its psychological interpretation as well as several images depicting infamous paintings of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and the Apple logotype. It was highlighted to be read carefully and thoroughly and to observe the images for a moment in order for associations to be permitted and recognized. This was aimed to be the mythological dimension, which separates the two groups as the grouping variable.

After pre-testing and double-checking the validity of the questionnaire items and overall structure data were collected. The data was collected through a questionnaire, with a non-probabilistic sampling technique, namely, a convenience sampling. The final version of the questionnaire was made available online through the *Google Docs* platform over a period of two weeks, and respondents were asked to complete the questionnaire distributed through various social media networks.

5. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Statistical Analyses and Demographics

The total sample collected, as summarized in Table 2, consisted of 383 individuals. The total participants were composed roughly equally, with females (52.2%) and males (47.8%) mostly in between the two age groups of 18-24 and 25-34 (total 81.9%) and a majority of Christian

creed (67.6%) and atheistic representation (24.6%). The control group consisted of 187, and the treatment group (mythological group) of 196 participants.

To test the conceptual model and the hypotheses, structural equation modelling was applied (SEM), utilizing Smart PLS Version 4.0 (Partial Least Squares) software (Ringle et al., 2022), which is a variance-based structural equation modelling technique. The analyses and interpretation of the results followed a two-stage approach. The first step consisted of the evaluation of reliability and validity of the measurement model, followed by the assessment of the structural model.

Table 2. Sample characteristics (N=383)

		N	*%*
Gender	Female	200	52.2%
	Male	183	47.8%
Age	< 18	9	2.3%
	18 - 24	154	39.9%
	25 - 34	162	42.0%
	35 - 44	23	6.0%
	45 - 54	16	4.1%
	55 - 64	14	3.6%
	> 65	8	2.1%
Education	Vocational education	23	6.0%
	Secondary education	75	19.6%
	Bachelor	155	40.5%
	Master	119	31.1%
	Doctoral degree	11	2.9%
Religion	Christianity	261	67.6%
	Islam	6	1.6%
	Judaism	14	3.6%
	Buddhism	2	0.5%
	Agnostic	8	2.1%
	Atheism	95	24.6%

Model Quality

In order to assess the quality of the measurement model used, first to examine were the individual indicators of the reliability of the measures used, namely, convergent validity, internal consistency reliability, and discriminant validity, following the recommendations by Hair et al., (2017). The results exhibited the standardized factor loadings of all items as above 0.6 (with a minimum of 0.62). All loadings are statistically significant at $p<0.001$, showing individual indicator reliability (Hair et al., 2017). Internal consistency reliability was confirmed because all constructs' Cronbach alphas and composite reliability (CR) values surpass the cutoff of 0.7 (See Table 3) (Hair et al., 2017).

The convergent validity was also confirmed by the following deductions. Firstly, all items loaded positively and significantly on their respective constructs. Second, all constructs had CR values higher than 0.70 and third, the average variance extracted (AVE) exceeded the threshold of 0.50 (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). Further, a twofold approach was followed to evaluate the discriminant validity. The first step was based on the Fornell and Larcker criterion. That demands a construct's square root of AVE (diagonal values in bold, Table 3) to be larger than its strongest correlation with any of the other constructs (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). This criterion is satisfied for all constructs (see Table 3). In the second step, the heterotrait-monotrait All HTMT values were inferior to 0.85 (ibid.), confirming discriminant validity.

Table 3. Composite reliability, average variance extracted, correlations and discriminant validity checks.

Latent variables	α	CR	AVE	1	2	3	4	5
(1) Brand experience	0.921	0.933	0.561	**0.749**	0.520	0.643	0.763	0.630
(2) Brand personality	0.759	0.860	0.672	0.435	**0.820**	0.423	0.509	0.397
(3) Consumer-based brand equity	0.895	0.923	0.708	0.608	0.350	**0.841**	0.787	0.906
(4) Product involvement	0.901	0.924	0.670	0.717	0.431	0.711	**0.815**	0.808
(5) Purchase intention	0.952	0.966	0.875	0.609	0.347	0.859	0.749	**0.935**

Note: α -Cronbach Alpha; CR -Composite reliability; AVE -Average variance extracted. Bolded numbers display the square roots of AVE. Above the diagonal elements are the HTMT ratios. Below are the correlations between each construct.

The first step in assessing the structural model was to test the collinearity of the model (Hair et al., 2017). The VIF values ranged between 1.00 and 1.59 which was below the indicative critical threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2017).

Afterwards, we tested the coefficient of determination R^2 for the four endogenous variables of brand experience, brand personality, consumer-based brand equity (CBBE), and purchase intention. These are 51.4%, 18.9%, 37.9%, and 75.0% respectively. Hence, these values surpassed the 10% threshold value suggested by Falk and Miller (1992). The Q^2 values of the endogenous variables (brand experience. 0.505; brand personality: 0.164; consumer-based brand equity: 0.427; purchase intention: 0.461) were above zero, thus indicating the predictive relevance of the conceptual model.

Hypotheses Testing

The results of the bootstrapping procedure to test the parameter estimates (5000 subsamples) are summarized in Table 4, which demonstrates that product involvement has a significant positive relationship with brand experience ($\beta = 0.717$, $t = 22.022$, $p < 0.001$). Thus, these results show support for H1. Brand experience has a significant positive effect on brand personality ($\beta = 0.435$, $t = 7.008$, $p < 0.001$), on consumer-based brand equity ($\beta = 0.562$, $t = 9.742$, $p < 0.001$) and on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.138$, $t = 3.511$, $p < 0.001$), showing support for H2, H3, and H6, respectively. Further, the results show no significant relationship was found between brand personality and consumer-based brand equity ($\beta = 0.106$, *n.s.*), thus not supporting H4. Consumer-based brand equity has a positive significant effect on purchase intention ($\beta = 0.775$, $t = 24.294$, $p < 0.001$), these results provide support for H5.

Table 4. Structural model assessment

Path	Path coefficient	Standard deviations	t statistics	p values
Brand experience > Brand personality	0.435	0.062	7.008	0.000
Brand experience > CBBE_	0.562	0.058	9.742	0.000
Brand experience > Purchase intention	0.138	0.039	3.511	0.000
Brand personality > CBBE	0.106	0.069	1.540	0.124

CBBE_ > Purchase intention	0.775	0.032	24.294	0.000
Product involvement > Brand experience	0.717	0.033	22.022	0.000

PLS-SEM multigroup analyses were conducted to test for significant differences between the parameter estimates in the control and treatment group, and to investigate for the effect of the mythological motif on consumer-behavior constructs in relation to the brand. Specifically, the effects of the mythological motifs used by a brand on various consumer-behavior constructs were compared between the 'myth' and 'no-myth' group. The aim of multigroup analyses is to determine similar patterns or significant differences of relationships between the variables between the two groups (Hair et al., 2017).

The results of the PLS-SEM multigroup analysis (see Table 6) highlight some striking differences, when compared to the direct effects between variables in the bootstrapping multigroup analysis (MGA) (see Table 5). To compare the direct effects of variables between the groups, a bootstrapping multigroup analysis was conducted (see Table 5). The result between the 'Myth' and 'NoMyth' group exhibit to have no significant differences other than due to chance. In other words, there is no substantial difference in the strength of the relationships between the two groups and thus the null hypothesis cannot be rejected. The two groups exhibit similar patterns of relationship between the variables. Four out of five direct pathways are individually significant, indicating the existing relationship between each pair of variables. However, upon comparing the 'Myth' and 'NoMyth' groups, the differences in the direct relationships between the two groups are not significant ($p >$ n.s.). The results do not support the assumption that there is a substantial difference of strength among the variables between the group that is exposed to the elaborated mythological motifs connected to Apple compared to the group who is not. Exposure to the mythological motif in the logo did not significantly impact the direct relationships among the variables. There is not enough evidence to support Hx, therefore, Hx is rejected.

Table 5. Bootstrap MGA

	Difference (Myth - No_myth)	2-tailed (Myth vs No_myth) p-value
Brand_Exp -> Brand_Pers	-0.001	0.997
Brand_Exp -> CBBE_	-0.062	0.588

	Path coefficient	t statistics	
Brand_Exp -> Purch_int	-0.001	0.986	
Brand_Pers -> CBBE_	0.037	0.790	
CBBE_ -> Purch_int	0.034	0.595	
Prod_inv -> Brand_Exp	-0.026	0.672	

Table 6 displays the differences in path coefficients for the overall sample and provides information about the contrast, magnitude, and direction of the variable relationships between the two groups. It shows half of the 10 indirect pathways to be significant, whereas the other half of the path differences are not significant.

The exceptions of the significant relationships indicating the extent of differentiation between groups were, between product involvement > brand experience > brand personality ($\beta = 0.312$), and between product involvement > brand experience > CBBE_> purchase intention ($\beta = 0.312$), and between product involvement > brand experience > CBBE_ ($\beta = 0.403$), and between product involvement > brand experience > purchase intention ($\beta = 0.099$), and lastly between brand experience > CBBE_ > purchase intention ($\beta = 0.435$). These results are interesting and constitute an important finding because they highlight the magnitude of the path coefficients, showing the existence of significant differences between variables for the two groups, but do not provide further information about the relative influence of each group on the pathways.

Table 6. Multigroup comparisons of path coefficients

	Path coefficient	Standard deviations	t statistics	p values
Prod_inv > Brand_Exp > Brand_Pers	0.312	0.050	6.299	0.000
Prod_inv > Brand_Exp > Brand_Pers > CBBE_	0.033	0.022	1.528	0.127
Prod_inv > Brand_Exp > CBBE_ > Purch_int	0.312	0.039	8.029	0.000
Prod_inv > Brand_Exp > CBBE_	0.403	0.051	7.939	0.000
Brand_Exp > Brand_Pers > CBBE_	0.046	0.030	1.547	0.122
Brand_Exp > Brand_Pers > CBBE_ > Purch_int	0.036	0.023	1.538	0.124
Prod_inv > Brand_Exp > Purch_int	0.099	0.030	3.308	0.001
Brand_Exp > CBBE_ > Purch_int	0.435	0.046	9.491	0.000

Prod_inv > Brand_Exp > Brand_Pers > CBBE_ > Purch_int	0.026	0.017	1.522	0.128
Brand_Pers > CBBE_ > Purch_int	0.082	0.054	1.528	0.126

6. DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND THEORETICAL CONTRIBUTIONS

Even with a multitude of mythological motifs appearing in the logotypes and names of many well-known brands, investigations on how these mythologemes might influence the consumer's behavior is still under-researched. This quasi-experimental research contributes to narrow the gap. Further, based on the empirical results, this study provides support for the confirmation of most of the hypotheses presented in the conceptual model. As such, this study contributes to existing literature on product involvement, brand experience, brand personality, consumer-based brand equity, and purchase intention, as well as the interrelationship of these key concepts in consumer behavior research.

The empirical evidence shows that product involvement influences brand experience significantly positive ($\beta = 0.717$). These findings are consistent with studies by Calvo-Porral et al. (2018), Hepola et al. (2017) or Pallant, Karpen & Sands (2022). A consumer, who is to a certain degree involved with the brand, its goods, and services offered, is more likely to be receptive to the array of experiences provided by or with the brand, its goods, and services. Second, this study provides support for the key role of brand experience in the modern marketplace as argued by Brakus et al. (2009), Schmitt, Brakus, and Zarantonello (2014), and Pine and Gilmore (2011).

The relationship between brand experience and brand personality ($\beta = 0.435$) is significant and consistent with Kumar et al. (2013), Chang & Chieng, (2006), Cleff et al., (2013), and Japutra & Molinillo's (2019) findings. That is to say, consumers are more likely to associate favourable personality traits and characteristics with the brand if they have a pleasant and positive brand experience, and when the different factettes of experiences, namely, sensations, feelings, cognitions, and behavioral responses evoked by brand-related stimuli are provided (Brakus et al., 2009). Experiences had with the brand significantly influence consumer impressions of, and bestowment on a brand's personality, and hence can affect their attitudes and behaviours

towards the brand in that a distinctive and memorable brand identity is created that appeals to consumers when it offers pleasant experiences that stimulate and match its targeted personality attributes.

The relationship between brand experiences and consumer-based brand equity (ß = 0.562) is found to be significantly positive, which means that brands can enhance consumer's perceptions of quality and loyalty, awareness, and associations by improving the array of experiences they offer to customers. These findings are consistent with the studies of Brakus et al. (2009), Moreira et al. (2017), Pina & Dias (2021), Hueltén (2011), Iglesias et al. (2011), and Ding & Tseng, (2015).

This study found no significant correlation between brand personality and consumer-based brand equity and could thus not find evidence for supporting Hakkak et al. (2015), Valette-Florence et al. (2011), and Su & Tong's (2015) findings. However, this result could be explained by an alternative reason. The different consumer segments do associate particular brand personality dimensions with, for instance, sportswear brands, leading to directly influence brand equity (Su & Tong, 2015). Hence, it should be highlighted that brand and industry specific factors could play a decisive role in the formation of brand equity through personality attributes associated with brands.

The impact of consumer-based brand equity on purchase intention (β = 0.775) revealed a significant positive relationship, as argued likewise by Chen & Chang (2008), Chen et al. (2012), Moreira et al. (2017), and Buil et al. (2013). This confirms that consumers with a strong connection to a brand, who perceive the brand and its products as qualitative and unique are more determined to repeat their experiences and thus, have higher motivation, preference, and intention to purchase at a given brand.

This study supports the finding of a somewhat significant relation between brand experience and purchase intention (β = 0.138), in accord with Zarantonello and Schmitt (2010), Chen and Chang (2008), Ong, Lee & Ramayah (2018), Brakus et al. (2009). Although the effect size is relatively small, it does indicate that even a slight improvement to experiences with a brand can form intentions to purchase. The willingness to engage with a brand through actual purchases increases when attention is paid to the elements of experiences provided by a brand and in turn helps to create positive experiences. This somewhat significant result could be explained by the high costs associated with Apple products, that may prevent the consumers from being exposed to repeated experiences with the products of the brand in question, regardless of the unique brand and product experiences offered by Apple. Thus, when consumers' purchase intentions

are aimed to be strengthened, it is crucial to focus on building brand equity as well, which in turn helps to strengthen their customers' purchase intentions.

This study contributes to the understanding of the impact mythological motifs have, when used by brands as their logotype, on some central constructs of consumer behavior and psychology. The results demonstrate that a (articulated/elaborated) mythological motif in a logotype of a brand does not seem to influence the consumers' behavior or attitude, measured through the direct relationship between involvement with a brand, brand experience, brand personality, consumer-based brand equity, and purchase intention, and compared between treatment and control group (see Table 5). These results do not support the Hx hypothesis presented in the conceptual model. Yet, as shown by van den Bosch & de Jong (2005), Jun et al. (2008), Müller, Kocher, & Crettaz (2013), Sundaram & Webster (1999), Ganassali & Matysiewicz (2020), a brand *logo* or *name* has far-reaching influence, namely, on a brand's reputation; attitude toward the corporate logo effecting overall brand attitude and purchase intention; on brand loyalty; on brand perception; and brand value through qualitative and emotional dimensions, respectively. This study, however, is the first of its kind to specifically test for the value of mythological motifs used in brand logotypes in the context of consumer behavior.

The results were somewhat surprising, considering not only previous research on brand logotypes and various aspects of consumer behavior but also on the significance of mythology and symbolism. These results can, perhaps, be explained by the rationalization and intellectualization and, ultimately, by the disenchantment of the world, as Max Weber said so suitably (Weber, 1946), fundamentally describing the decreasing sphere of tradition and belief (religion, myth, or fairytale). "Disenchantment" is one of the phenomena most characteristic of modernity, where the emergence of instrumental reason, the progressive alienation of humans from nature, and the creation of a bureaucratic and technologically advanced world devoid of mystery and awe are predominant (Josephson-Storm, 2017).

One imagines a manufacturer, around 150 years ago, named Apple and having the bitten apple logo above their store's doorstep and milled even on their mechanical device. This good, perhaps, illuminates and revolutionizes in some way the hard and simple life of the people. This mythological symbol would have struck every chord in the people. They would have known intrinsically what it refers to and they would have known Gods work in it. This, of course, hypothetically, but a question followed up: What then, can it mean today for the people, for the "consumer"?

Upon examining the multigroup comparisons of path coefficients, the indirect path relationships highlight the significance and central key role of brand experience. Involvement is considered crucial in forming consumers' perceptions of brand personality traits by demonstrating that as consumers become more involved with a product, they are more likely to have positive experiences which in turn contribute to the establishment of brand personality. As brand experience influences positively brand equity, subsequently purchase intention is impacted. This emphasizes the importance to promote and strengthen pleasant brand experiences to elevate customers' overall brand equity, which in turn impacts their decision to buy from a given brand. Additionally, brand experience is strengthened by increase in engagement with the brand and thus contributing to a stronger perception of brand equity.

The significant pathways highlight and demonstrate the key role of experiences. Pleasant and meaningful experiences with a brand, its products, or services, can contribute to a stronger brand image, enhance overall brand equity, and lastly, play a decisive role in the consumers' intention to purchase from a brand. To the degree that consumers are involved with a given brand, that is to say, to perceive brands and their offerings as personally relevant to their desires and interests in some form or other (Zaichkowsky, 1985), the consumers' receptiveness to experiences increases with it. Involvement not only enhances or unlocks various doors of experiences with a brand, also the high involvement products, like Apple, elicit stronger emotional reactions and stimulates cognitive elaboration in themselves by nature of demanding higher cost, consideration, and risks (Calvo- Porral, 2018; Suh & Youjae, 2006). Consumers' involvement with a brand is understood as the ground on which brand experiences can build upon, showing again the importance of the involvement concept in consumer behavior research (Pallant, Karpen & Sands, 2022; Suh, & Youjae, 2006; Laurent & Kapferer, 1985)

The results draw attention to the magnitude of the path coefficients, demonstrating indeed the existence of substantial difference across variables for the myth and the no-myth group, yet they don't offer any more specifics regarding the relative impact of each group on the paths.

7. CONCLUSION

Managerial Implications

This study has several notable implications for both the academic and business world. Academically, the research contributes to bridging the gap of mythological brand logotypes or names and its effect on consumer behavior. Further, and through this, the proposed research model has the merit of clarifying the inter-connection between involvement and brand experience, brand personality, consumer-based brand equity, and finally, purchase intention, contributing to consumer-behavior research, experiential marketing, and branding, mentioned above. From a managerial point of view, the empirical results also contribute to a set of strategic implications for branding and marketing. The study shows the central key role, the array of sensory, affective, intellectual, and behavioral experiences plays in creating a positive brand association, influencing brand equity, and fostering intentions to purchase. In business terms, companies should invest in strategies where the consumer can have the receptiveness to the experiences in the first place, namely, a brand and its goods and services, that require a higher degree of involvement, given that companies have provided experiential anchor points to be experienced. Managers should focus on creating compelling brand experiences, and for Apple and others who make use of mythologemes, to articulate the connotations underlying their mythological motif so that it can resonate with consumers and evoke positive emotions and alter perceptions. This could be through various means such as advertising, packaging, and in-store experiences. Conclusively, which experience dimensions should be struck, ultimately depends on the industry and the target consumer to reinforce the relationship between consumer and brand. Because, although overall brand experience positively influences brand personality, brand equity and purchase intention, this is not always true for every brand experience dimension, and therefore it should be taken into consideration not to try to stimulate all the brand experience dimensions, which would be a quite difficult endeavor anyway, by the nature of certain products and services in question.

The empirical findings show no support for the assumption that acknowledging the mythological motif and its connotations will affect the direct relation between the tested consumer behavior variables significantly different. The findings suggest nonetheless that the inclusion of mythological motifs seem to enhance the interrelationship pathways between the groups and may contribute to a more favorable brand experience. Yet, as the ASA states: "Scientific conclusions and business or policy decisions should not be based only on whether a p-value passes a specific threshold." (Wasserstein & Lazar, 2016). Whether this study could have proven that mythological motifs, used by brands in their logo design or brand name, would

have a significant influence on the consumers' behavior or not, to abstain for that reason, from making use of them purely because they did not show the desired results is not the suggested conclusion in business terms. Other studies, in the realm of advertisement and brand narrative strategy, have successfully shown, businesses should aim to use archetypes in their brand storytelling since it can produce positive impacts on brand value, perception of quality, and emotional experience dimension. Different archetypes, the raw forms out of which also mythologemes are made, elicit specific feelings towards the brand. Symbols serve to activate and connect the archetypal associations automatically in the mind of the consumer (Ganassali & Matysiewicz, 2021; Lloyd and Woodside, 2013).

Accordingly, in the scheme of this study, it is nonetheless encouraged to make us of mythological motifs in logotype or name, and to strike a harmonical chord between the nature of the business, its goods, and services, as well as mission, vision, and philosophy, and between a mythologeme. A brand, like Apple is something that is experienced on various points of time, pre-purchase and post-purchase and everything in between and after, and thus is their logo something inevitably to be experienced and perhaps subliminally understood and working. Here it can be helpful to articulate the connotations underlying their mythological motif so that it can resonate with consumers in a rather straight-forward fashion. The significant differences observed in the multigroup analysis indicate that it can be implemented suitably and may act as a differentiating factor in the market. Brands who effectively incorporate mythological motifs into their logotype, name, and narrative may stand out from competitors and create a unique brand identity that resonates with consumers beyond utilitarian features.

However, the above strategic implications are not limited to Apple nor to the technological industry in any way, but applicable and can be verified in a broader context. The results suggest that for brands to increase their brand equity in the consumers' mind, create favorable associations, encourage purchase intentions, they should understand how to articulate the mythologeme they use and understand their connotations in order to reach the modern consumer. Further, to establish long-term relationships with consumers, companies have to understand the central role of experiences in the modern market and align its dimensions with their product category.

Limitations and Suggestion for Future Research

Despite its theoretical contributions and managerial implications, this study is also characterized by some limitations which hopefully may provide opportunities for future investigation. Firstly, this study is limited by its sample size and convenience sampling method which make the results not able to be generalized to the entire population of consumers. Thus, future research should make use of larger samples. Secondly, the non-significant direct relations between groups not necessarily mean the absence of effect between the variables. An effect might exist, but it is possible that the effect size and sample size are too small, or there is too much variability for the hypothesis test to detect it adequately which requires future research with a larger sample that allows for a broader generalization of the results. Ultimately, what is measured is the probability of observing a certain value, and not the probability that a hypothesis is true. Additionally, it is important to acknowledge the limitation of not knowing precisely which group has a stronger influence. Identifying and understanding the existence of differences were done, but to explore and determine the specific direction or magnitude of those differences between groups will have to give way to investigations of more sufficient resources. Thirdly, future research could consider behavioral measures, the research question is optimal to be researched in settings of behavioral academic disciplines like psychology, anthropology, or analytical psychology. It could be interesting to incorporate word association as a projective measurement technique to gain insight into participants' unconscious or conscious thoughts, feelings, and opinion, as is also occasionally used in market research.

Fourthly, further studies could include product involvement as a control variable, in order to control for its potential effects. This study also focused on brand experience as the central mediating variable between product involvement and the dependent variables. However, there are other important mediating variables that can be considered, which further research could explore underlying processes.

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9. Appendix

Questionnaire Mythological motifs and Brands

Welcome. My name is Louis Schütz and I'm a student of the Faculty of Marketing and Business at the ISCTE Business School in Lisbon, Portugal.

The following research is aimed at the investigation of the effects of mythological symbols used by prominent brands on consumers, specifically on the symbol of Apple Inc.'s bitten apple logo.

This survey will take less than 10 minutes. It is completely anonymous. If you are interested in the results of this research, please leave your email at the end of the survey.

Thank you greatly for your time.

Please take a few moments to read this following paragraph attentively

The bitten apple of the Apple Inc. logo is a visually appealing and distinctive symbol. In the myth of the Garden of Eden, the bitten apple is a symbol of knowledge and consciousness. According to the story, God had forbidden Adam and Eve from eating the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, but they are tempted to do so by a serpent. The bite taken out of the fruit represents the acquisition of self-awareness, consciousness, and the realization of their own mortality. The bitten apple is often used as a symbol of the desire for knowledge, the origin of consciousness itself and the pursuit of truth, as well as the potential consequences of disobedience. It can be seen as a metaphor for the human condition, in which we are constantly seeking to understand the world around us and our place in it. The bitten apple can also be interpreted as a symbol of the struggles and challenges that we face as we seek to expand our knowledge and the coming of consciousness. In this way, the bitten apple is a powerful and enduring symbol that has captured the imaginations of people for centuries. This motif serves likewise as the iconic logo of the Apple brand.

The creation myth of the Bible is freely associated with the Apple's logotype, but many people commonly make this connection whether consciously or unconsciously. Apple founder Steve Jobs believed "technology was more than a tool, it was a way to elevate human consciousness". The core interpretation of this myth symbolically fits the mission and vision of Apple and, more importantly, Apple's place in society perfectly.

Now, please take a few moments to look at the images below, let any associations freely come forward. Further, keep the mythological association text mentioned above in mind while answering the survey; Answer according to your own personal standpoint.

Questionnaire Figure 1: Apple Inc. logotype black bitten apple

Questionnaire Figure 2: 'Adam and Eve'- Lucas Cranach 1526

Questionnaire Figure 3: 'The Fall of Man' - Cornelis van Haarlem 1592

1.Section

Make each item a separate and independent judgment. Work at fairly high speed through this questionnaire. Do not worry or puzzle over individual items. It is your first impressions, the

immediate feelings about the items, that we want. On the other hand, please do not be careless, because we want your true impressions.

1.To me Apple products are: _____ * *Mark only one oval.*

Important 1_2_ 3_ 4_ 5_ 6_ 7_ Unimportant

2.To me Apple products are: _____ * *Mark only one oval.*

Uninteresting 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5_ 6_ 7_ Interesting

3. To me Apple products are: _____ * *Mark only one oval.*

Relevant 1_ 2_ 3_ 4_ 5_ 6_ 7_ Irrelevant

4. To me Apple products are: _____ * *Mark only one oval.*

Exciting 1_2_3_4_5_6_7_ Unexciting

5. Apple products:_____* *Mark only one oval.*

Means nothing to me 1_2_3_4_5_6_7_ Means a lot to me

6. To me Apple products are: _____ * *Mark only one oval.*

Appealing 1_2_3_4_5_6_7_ Unappealing

7. To me Apple products are: _____ * *Mark only one oval.*

Fascinating 1_2_3_4_5_6_7_ Mundane

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8. To me Apple products are: _____ * *Mark only one oval.*

Valueless 1_2_3_4_5_6_7_ Valuable

9. To me Apple products are: _____ * *Mark only one oval.*

Involving 1_2_3_4_5_6_7_Uninvolving

10. To me Apple products are: _____ * *Mark only one oval.*

Inessential 1_2_3_4_5_6_7_ Needed

2. Section

1. Apple makes a strong impression on my visual sense or other senses. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

2. I find Apple interesting in a sensory way. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

3. Apple appeals to my senses. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

4. Apple induces feelings and sentiments. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

5. I have strong emotions for Apple. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

6. Apple is an emotional brand. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

7. I engage in physical actions and behaviors when I use Apple. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

8. Apple results in bodily experiences. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

9. Apple is action oriented. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

10. I engage in a lot of thinking when I encounter Apple. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

11. Apple makes me think. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

12. Apple stimulates my curiosity and problem solving. *

Strongly Disagree _

Disagree Somewhat _

Disagree _

Neutral _

Somewhat Agree _

Agree _

Strongly Agree _

(1-7)

3. Section

1. To me, Apple is: down to earth

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

2. To me, Apple is: stable

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

3. To me, Apple is: responsible

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

4. To me, Apple is: active

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

5. To me, Apple is: dynamic

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

6. To me, Apple is: innovative

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

7. To me, Apple is: aggressive

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

8. To me, Apple is: bold

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

9. To me, Apple is: ordinary

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

10. To me, Apple is: simple

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

11. To me, Apple is: romantic

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

12. To me, Apple is: sentimental

Not characteristic for the brand at all _ _ _ _ _ _ _ (1-7) Very characteristic for the brand

4. Section

1. I consider myself to be loyal to Apple.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

2. Apple would be my first choice.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

3. I will not buy other brands if Apple is available at the store.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

4. The likely quality of Apple is extremely high.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

5. The likelihood that Apple would be functional is very high.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

6. I can recognize Apple among other competing brands.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

7. I am aware of Apple.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

8. Some characteristics of Apple come to my mind quickly.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

9. I can quickly recall the symbol or logo of Apple.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

10. For me its easy imagining Apple in my mind.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

5. Section

1. Given the chance, I intend to purchase from Apple.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

2. Given the chance, I predict that I should purchase from Apple.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

3. It is likely that I will buy products from Apple in the near future.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

4. I expect to purchase from Apple in the near future.

Strongly disagree _ _ _ _ _ (1-5) Strongly Agree

Thank you for your time for completing this survey.