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The role of Lovemarks from an Experience Marketing perspective: the case of Moleskine

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INTRODUCTION

“The best and most beautiful things in the world cannot be seen or even touched. They must be felt with the heart.” (Hellen Keller, 1905)¹

This aphorism immediately raises a question, which also represents the starting point of this dissertation: how much importance do people give to emotions? This first question is followed by a second one: can emotions be studied and manipulated to take economic advantage of them? The answer to both questions is encapsulated in the concept of Experience Marketing, which is the theatrical stage for the main ‘actors’ of this dissertation – a very appropriate metaphor, as will be explained later in this paper. The aphorism suggests another interesting food for thought: beauty is something imperceptible, elusive to the eye or touch, as it is unseeable and untouchable. Beauty gives things an aura that wins the heart of those who experience it. Beauty sets in motion a series of psychophysical stimuli that give life to emotions. Nowadays, the perception of beauty is increasingly distorted, and its pursuit has faded in the background. This is because of the era in which we are living that marks time in a fast rhythm. The increasing digitization and the globalized economy have made the retrieval of information and products too fast and just a click away. Therefore, the contingencies of our historical period have shifted the attention towards instinctive mass consumerism. It is just when this path turned out to be a futile *cul-de-sac* that it was realized that the immoderate consumption carried out so far was worthless: a constant consumption of products for the mere hedonistic gratification of the individual. The gradual awareness of the emptiness of this practice has led consumers to reassess the importance of authenticity, sensations, and feelings. This has led to a transformation of the consumer role that has, consequently, also redefined the economic strategies of companies: they now have a single, precise objective, namely, to have a semantic value that would make the enjoyment of the product an indelible, unique and unrepeatable experience. This new current of thought has completely reshaped the economy, now attentive to the search for beauty to trigger emotions in the consumer that can create an indissoluble bond between him/her and the

¹ KELLER H., (1905), *The Story of My Life*, [Letter to Rev. Phillips Brooks dated June 8, 1891], Grosset & Dunlap, New York

company's product. The discussion not only aims to understand the key to success of Experience Marketing, by examining its characteristics but also wants to understand how emotions, the bargaining chip of this new economy, can be stimulated and aroused in consumers. Intense emotions can turn into love towards brands, which undergo a process of transformation into Lovemarks. Love is nothing but the result of a courtship between companies and consumers, in which words have a significant influence. Words can seduce consumers, attract them to the doors of a retail store, and induce them to the purchasing process. The economic and linguistic dimensions dance together, merge into a single entity, and from their interweaving Lovemarks are born. Moreover, I reported a concrete example of a brand that has achieved the status of Lovemark, because a further objective of the discussion is to understand the degree of incidence of a passionate language in the communication of Lovemarks. In other words, it is important to determine whether the more a brand – my case study examines Moleskine – uses a language teeming with predictive terms of positive attitudes, the more likely the brand will be loved by consumers and, therefore, will become a Lovemark.

The content of the first chapter is introductory: before discussing the present economic scenario, it is important to take a step back and investigate the economic situation prior to the 21st century. That is why an overview will be made of the changes that have occurred in the surrounding world, in terms of technological advancement and internationalization of markets. Indeed, they are decisive factors in the definition of a new economy to which now a consumer strongly changed by the rise of the Internet and globalization contributes: the 'prosumer'. Furthermore, it will specifically investigate what Experience Marketing is and its characteristics, focusing on the nature of experiences and its close connection with the sensory dimension.

The second chapter will focus on the idea that in this new marketing paradigm, companies aim at stimulating emotions through their products. The more a brand manages to arouse enthusiasm and give a semantic value to its product, the more this will move away from the degrading process of commoditization. Now the ultimate goal of businesses is to be part of the exclusive group of Lovemarks. Lovemarks are those brands that manage to receive unconditional, long-lasting love, and loyalty from their consumers. The chapter will describe the three main characteristics that distinguish them from ordinary brands: mystery, sensuality, and intimacy. Even before, however, the transition

from brand to Lovemark will be extensively explored in the chapter, thus presenting some important concepts to understand the change, such as Brand coolness, Brand admiration, Brand equity, and so on.

In the third chapter, once meticulously investigated the phenomenon of Lovemarks, it will be presented a concrete example of a brand that has managed to take advantage of this new economic structure and to make experiences its starting point for global success. Here the entire history of the Moleskine brand will be retraced, from its foundation to its consecration as a reference point for international marketing. Then, some of the initiatives set up by Moleskine, which have differentiated the company from its competitors, will be listed. The projects that will be mentioned, namely *Moleskine+*, *MyMoleskine*, *Moleskine Café*, and *Moleskine Foundation*, are those that have played a crucial part in making Moleskine a real Lovemark. These projects are nothing more than well-designed marketing manoeuvres, in which the focus is on the figure of the consumer as an individual. Indeed, they greatly stimulated people's creativity, so guaranteeing them the possibility to express themselves and their artistic streak. Moleskine has created a micro-universe made of many elements – it is important to understand that Moleskine is not a leader in the stationery industry solely due to its notebooks – such as products, accessories, recreational spaces, non-profit organizations, communities, all connected by a *fil rouge*: the emotional dimension. Through these commercial operations, Moleskine has made its customers aware of the importance of emotions in their existence and how much they give meaning to life itself.

In the fourth, and last, chapter, I will change the perspective from which studying Lovemarks and, more specifically, the emotions that Moleskine manages to arouse in the consumers. That is why I will put a magnifying glass on Moleskine's online communication – taking its website and social media as reference points – to carry out a corpus analysis of the brand's language. This chapter represents the *summa* of what I studied during my academic career, in which I deepened both linguistic and economic disciplines. It is precisely in the creation, management, and analysis of a corpus to grasp the extent to which Lovemarks make use of a passionate, warm language, that this convergence between economics and linguistics can be identified.

Although this introduction may appear concise and lacking in detail, metaphorically speaking, it is intended to entice readers to jump off the diving board and fully immerse

themselves in the underwater, open their eyes, and be dazzled by the vastness of the ocean that lies behind that small drop of water, that is the phenomenon of Lovemarks.

CHAPTER I

The role of brands in the post-modern economy: the importance of experiences

This chapter aims to examine the concept and the more and more crucial and strategic role of brands in a market that is by now saturated with competitors and rivalry – in which the quality of the products offered seems to have become more and more a requisite rather than a critical success factor –, by investigating, from a semantic point of view, the innumerable values and meanings that are associated with brands. Brands had to cope with the phenomenon of commoditization, which has determined an increasing standardization of products; in this economic scenario, consumers are more inclined to lose the capability to distinguish those products with which they constantly come into contact. All this represented a risk for companies as they had to interact with a consumer who is no longer able to grasp the quality differences between products. Thus, brands shall try to establish a new type of dialogue with consumers. Below will be presented an overview of the brand concept, followed by a thorough analysis of the nature of the post-modern market, which represents a brand-new economic reality with which brands have had to reckon, and on which they have had to shape themselves.

1.1. What is a brand? A short retrospective

As far as brands are concerned, it is important to reflect upon the concept of branding and both its economical and psychological implications on economical consumer's behaviour and its repercussions on marketing strategies, to better understand the importance of brands and to try to define them. Unfortunately, it is not that simple: as a matter of fact, a lot of economists and experts struggle to answer this albeit banal question. It is a process that is susceptible to multiple interpretations.

The etymological analysis of the term 'brand' reveals that it was coined for the first time in the United States: it derives from the Old Norse word *brandr*, which means “to burn” (the identifying mark burned on livestock with a heated iron) as brands are the means by which owners of livestock mark their animals to make them easily identifiable in terms of ownership (Maurya, Mishra, 2012). This idea of identification transcended the rural dimension over the years, and it passed on to the economic context. Indeed, brands were used to define the differentiation of a good from the generic competition.

“A name, term, design, symbol, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from competitors.”, (Kotler et al., 1996)

So, it can be said that a brand is definable as a distinctive mark, typical of a business (a name, a logo, a sound, or other declensions) which allows companies to distinguish themselves and their products from other businesses: in short, a brand generates a difference.

“Branding means more than just giving name and signalling to the outside world that such a product or service has been stamped with the mark and imprint of an organization. Branding consists in transforming the product category.”, (Kapferer, 2004)

More generally, brands transform the way we perceive products and change the way we discern reality: branding enables consumers to recall memories thereby facilitating the initial buying process. Therefore, branding generates association with consumers' culture, characteristics, and the environment where they operate. Brands are omnipresent; they penetrate almost every aspect of our everyday life. They affect psychological behaviours and influence the decision making of consumers.

Furthermore, brands are subjective, they are strongly related to perception and meaning. That is why the idea of what brands are has become more and more complicated and hard to pin down with a single definition. As Heidi Cohen (2011) stated, brands are shorthand marketing messages that create emotional bonds with consumers. They are composed of intangible elements related to its specific promise, personality, and positioning and tangible components having identifiable representation including logos, graphics, colours, and sounds. A brand generates perceived value for consumers through its personality in a way that makes it stand out from other similar products. Its story is intricately intertwined with the public's perception and consistently provides consumers with a secure sense that they know what they are paying for.

For this reason, when it comes to defining what brands are, the first thing that is underlined is the impact they can have on the consumer. Indeed, it is very likely that brands may mean different things to different people at different times. This implies that a single brand may signify something unique to each individual. The real nature of brands

is changing and dynamic: brands are not static (Berry, 1993). They can play a different role depending on whom they interact with and when. Several consumers connect with certain facets of a brand, while others connect emphatically with other aspects within the same brand. Moreover, a consumer's relationship with a brand can really develop, increasing trust, attachment, and engagement: these passion-driven behaviours generated by the brand experience make consumers fall into the arms of companies. In a nutshell, good brands can infuse consumers with positive perceptions and moods which automatically increase their satisfaction and loyalty towards brands. (Batra, Ahuvia, Bagozzi, 2012) With this in mind, it can be assumed that brands are amorphous, as nebulous and vague. How we have seen before, a brand can be the sum of brand experiences or communication, but those interactions have immeasurable possibilities. Thus, the brand can flourish, expand, evolve, and shift with the times. Brands are notoriously about feelings, and feelings are awfully intricate. Indeed, consumers cannot explain and pin down why they are attracted by certain brands. At most, they might provide a list of rational motives and logical reasons, but it often comes down to emotion. Consumers are continually evaluating goods and services, not just based on how their immediate needs will be satisfied, but also on how they will satisfy their deeper moral needs. It is no coincidence that successful brands today are usually emotionally infused. They hold great emotional meaning for consumers and that is what makes that brand desired and respected. In short, brands may be interpreted as generative elements that produce meaning independently of the product, linked more to semantics, to the meaning that the brand generates. Furthermore, brands perform various important functions towards the consumer:

1. *Guarantee*: a brand put its signature on the products that the company manufactures; there is a translation of trust, by the time that a brand resembles a guarantee on the quality of those products (quality consistency, but not necessarily the best quality) (Onkvisit, Shaw, 2004). In a sense, a brand represents an important tool for consumer loyalty.
2. *Orientation*: brands are often capable of facilitating the purchasing process because they generate a kind of short-list among all offers (i.e. when people have to buy pasta, only a few brands, such as *Barilla*, *De Cecco*, *Del Verde*, *Garofalo*, and so on, are taken into account by consumers during the purchasing process).

3. *Practicality*: it is linked to the function of ‘Orientation’; actually, brands allow the consumer to reduce the time spent on purchasing decisions. Consumers are more likely to consider the short-list previously mentioned.
4. *Customization*: brands are not anonymous, they have an origin, a history, aesthetically communicated; they engage with consumers by the time that brands also reflect certain semantic and cognitive values.
5. *Playful*: brands generally satisfy the consumers’ needs of novelty and hedonism, collective play, social status, typical of contemporary societies.

I can summarize, before we go any further, the concept of what brands are, by saying that branding embodies a complex phenomenon that goes beyond the dimension of the economy and involves psychological behaviours – this is the central aspect that it will be discussed later in the text. It can be assumed that brands represent something that has semantic value and emotional meaning for the consumer. And it is not just a name or a label (as the trademark can be): the consumer is strongly bonded to the brand and influenced by it. A brand is something that stands out very strongly from other offers. A brand name represents the totality of product image, company image, and corporate identity (Dowling, 1993; Doyle, 1995; Levitt, 1983). It has value elements that distinguish it and goes beyond the single label, it has a more autonomous value concerning the product. As we have seen, defining what a brand is, it is not a simple process. The emotional transport that binds the brand to the consumer will be explored thoroughly later on. This brief overview has been necessary to introduce the reader into the world of Lovemarks: step by step, we will dive into the entanglement between consumers and branded products. But first, it is useful to focus attention on the post-modern economy, that is, the backdrop in which all of this takes place.

1.2. Post-modern economy: a new interaction between producer and consumer

Branding is a phenomenon that must be analysed and examined by considering the social, cultural, and economic scenarios in which it relies upon. For this reason, it is essential to focus on post-modernism and reflect upon it. In short, post-modernism can be defined as a shift toward a brand-new society. It is a slippery term, by the time that it is commonly used to refer to new developments and shapes in terms of perceptions, values, desires, and so on. As post-modernism embodies a set of ideas that appeared in a

variety of areas and disciplines, herein it will be considered only the implications that post-modernism had for economics and marketing. Post-modernism is a natural evolution of the previous historical period:

“Modernity is constitutionally and ceaselessly pregnant with its own postmodernity”
(Lyotard, 1991).

Post-modernism has disengaged individuals: it has given individuals the advantage of a restart, it has made them free to live their life as they want, and it has made people in condition to rule and manage their way of life. Post-modern society put in evidence the importance of reconsider one’s identity: people started claiming their status and integrity, by the time they struggled for a long time the lack of a secure and legitimate position in society and marketing mechanisms; they suffered the possibility of being able to plan their life with the minimum of interference, to play a key role in a game in which the rules do not change overnight, but are dictated by people themselves. To sum up, having a decisive role in the marketplace helps to regain one's identity. In economic terms as well, there has been a translation of the axis, as we can see in the figure below.

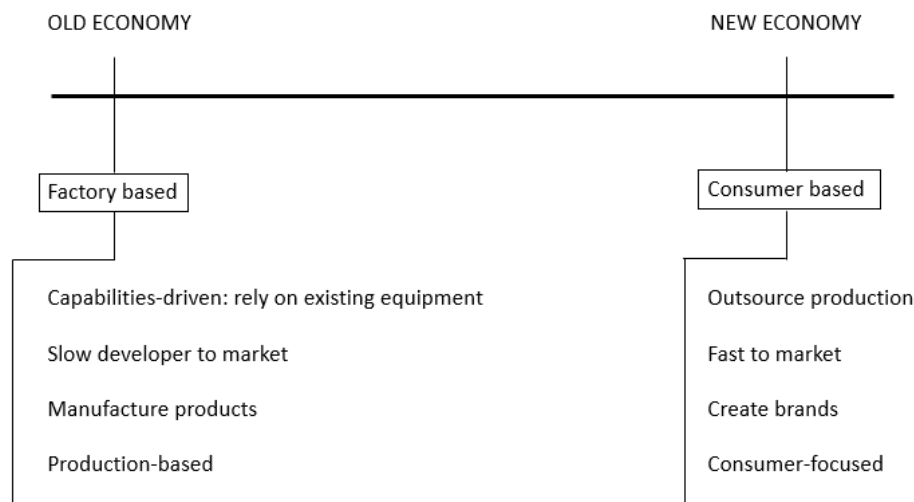


Figure 1.1: Transition from the traditional economy to the new economy. (Gobé, 2001)

Figure 1.1. briefly summarizes the crucial economic aspects of the transition from modernity to post-modernity, which is characterized by new ways of production and the emergence of new information and communication technologies (ICTs). As individuals

started playing an increasingly important role, the focus of marketing has shifted to people. All of this affected the way producers and consumers interact. Nowadays a transaction is the mere result of a relationship between producer and consumer. Although consumption was highly subordinated to production because companies did not give weight to consumers, now it is not that easy: companies cannot just produce a good and put it on sale in the market. There is a new economy that is consumer-based. It is important to ask ourselves where does the empowerment of consumers comes from.

As has already been said, post-modernism can be defined as a ‘condition’ (Samuelson, 1997), a general state of unease and discomfort. Consumers started feeling a sense of malaise caused by the offer of companies – which it was being more and more pushy – and the obtrusive advertising of mass media to which consumers were subjected. Indeed, companies began to chase people, by multiplying the so-called ‘touchpoint’, that is, those places where it is possible to come across a brand, even unexpectedly (Fabris, 2010). Retailing and shops represent the fastest and easiest way to put in contact buyers and sellers. As it will be examined later in the text, retailing reflects, metaphorically speaking, a threshold that can be walked across by consumers, who can access to a new universe as exquisite as it is artificial. It follows that consumption is nothing more than manipulation and, consequently, consumers are victims of economic strategies. Those marketing actions rely on the set of individual’s cognitive and semantic values, attitudes, and behaviours which are highly influenced by the purchasing process. Hence, production showed a complete disregard and disrespect for consumers: obesity is the perfect adjective which describes the voracious greed, the excess, and the degenerative relationship with which producers and consumers interacted (Fabris, 2010). They were living in a world where anything which could not be bought or sold, lost importance. It was a fabricated, unreal reality, where image and inauthenticity were the pivots of traditional marketing. It has been a phenomenon that affected the structure of the markets, their dynamics, their ethical and moral values, and consumers’ purchasing behaviour. Traditional marketing suffered from short-sightedness, by the time that the vision of the market was oriented to market shares, not to consumers. But also, presbyopia, as marketing used to look at the market so closely that it did not totally understand the origin of consumers’ choices and both the social and environmental consequences of consumption acts.

As a result, post-modernism made that feeling of inauthenticity leave room for the reputation and appreciation of a quality to which ethical and sustainability factors contribute. The marketing companies were asked to renounce their role as a deforming mirror of demand and highlight the virtuous nature of companies to optimise consumer satisfaction. The post-modern economy encouraged virtuous management and disheartened inappropriate conduct (Fabris, 2010). Indeed, the new-economy strategies aim at informing and increasing consumers' awareness. Thus, post-modern marketing becomes the company's guarantor. Now businesses are strongly motivated to pursue innovation to enlarge their competitive advantage. This competitive edge is given by the adoption of strategies meant to involve consumers in the supply chain: in short, the new economy generates an involvement that elaborates the sense already implicit in the act of purchase. Particularly noteworthy is the role played by both technology and globalization, as we will see below.

1.2.1. The technological innovation and the advent of the Internet

The last two decades have seen rapid adoption and intense use of various information and communication technologies (ICTs) as an essential foundation for business activities (Kakihara, Sørensen, 2002). The technological breakthrough played a significant role in the transformation of the traditional economy: the advent of the Internet can be described as a long-term phenomenon which has contributed to the previously mentioned forms of involvement, of transition from a disinterested consumer to an interested, creative one, due to the word of mouth and the system of interpersonal connections it provokes: Web allowed anyone to leave a trace, learn and/or teach. In this sense, consumers turn to the net as a source of information, since the digital switchover changed the way information and interaction generate and represented a break with the traditional system of mass communication – it was based on the one-to-many system, without the chance to receive feedback from consumers. Internet overthrew this structure: people, who once were passive recipients, now begin to provide information. The technological revolution unequivocally revealed new mechanisms of interaction which are based on the net and which go beyond the control of companies. Hence, the traditional one-to-many interaction has been left behind, in favour of a bilateral approach.

Marketing was caught off guard by this change: it had a lot of control over consumers, companies could decide whether to leak information about the company's activities or not. Today, consumers are no longer isolated, they can surf the net, share information with other users and produce information themselves. It can be assumed that companies started losing strength and that they had to regain ground in a new world based on the sharing of knowledge. Consequently, companies began to rethink their *modus operandi* and to act differently. Hence, those technologies have offered the firms various alternative options for restructuring their business processes and organisational forms. ICTs allowed individuals:

- a) To acquire information – this also applies to companies, which can more easily learn about the target and its preferences.
- b) To get in touch – Internet facilitated interactions between individuals, who can exchange and discuss their ideas, perceptions, but also consumers, who can share the evaluation of goods or services, their opinions, and experiences. It promoted the development of a thought that differs from the benchmarks of companies.
- c) To become active – consumers are enabled to organize, plan events, and meetings.
- d) To live a 'hyperreality' – technology is constructing, through information processing, a sort of dematerialized unreality that procures whatever experience and excitement individual desires within the space of his home (Cutcliffe, Goldman, Media, Sanmartin, 1992).

To sum up, as far as the new economy is concerned, it is important to say that the 'fluid interaction' (Kakihara, Sorensen, 2002) changed much of our daily lives, not just the ways we communicate but also our ways of doing, behaving, and even perceiving the world (Kopomaa, 2000). The distinctive feature of post-modern culture is the so-called 'informatization' – the fact that all facets of social life are subjected to ubiquitous information technology (Hardt, Negri, 2001). That is why ICTs should be considered while talking about the factors which led to the post-modern economy.

1.2.2. The power of globalization

The process of globalization at various levels contributed to the shape of a new economy. It is truly important to say that it does not embody a single phenomenon or process, but a catch-all concept to describe a wide range of forces at work.

“Economic ‘globalization’ is a historical process, the result of human innovation and technological progress. It refers to the increasing integration of economies around the world, particularly through trade and financial flows. The term sometimes also refers to the movement of people (labour) and knowledge (technology) across international borders. There are also broader cultural, political and environmental dimensions of globalization.”, (International Monetary Fund, 2000)

The economic effects of globalization in terms of companies’ production and organization, resulted in the intensification of Global Value Chains – the Value Chain can be defined as all those activities that firms do to bring a product from its conception to its end use and beyond, such as design, production, marketing, and distribution.

- Increasing international fragmentation of production and optimal re-location of the various stages of the supply chain.
- Increasing Intra-firm or Intra-industry trade (IIT) – that is, parts of a product are made in a country and exported to another country as inputs in the next production step.
- The growing importance of international outsourcing or offshoring
 - a) Outsourcing = performance, outside the firm/plant, of a production activity that was previously done inside the same firm/plant.
 - b) International outsourcing = geographic separation of activities involved in producing a good (service) across two or more countries. (Ietto-Gillies, 2012)



FVA = share of export value added coming from the use of foreign inputs

Figure 1.2: Increase of Global Value Chains. (Ietto-Gillies, 2012)

Furthermore, customs barriers have been broken down, which means that it has become easier to transport goods from country to country. Hence, globalization has led to important transformations that have changed the production chain: once the products were made in the country where they were distributed, today this is no longer true. Nowadays supply chains are divided among multiple firms and geographic spaces; a product may use labour and materials from multiple suppliers in different countries, then, it may be assembled in another country, and might ultimately be sold in other places.

Thus, this has led to a deep interdependence between markets: what happens in one part of the world has an impact on the rest of the world. All of this happens because economic systems are increasingly connected, while, in the past, companies could bind markets or interact with a specific market – which is no longer the case.

Globalization affected marketing, leading to the construction of iconic sites of identification through the cynical use of images in advertising and branding (Oliver, 2009).

“Differences (of commodities, populations, cultures, and so forth) seem to multiply infinitely in the world market, which attacks nothing more violently than fixed boundaries: it overwhelms any binary division with its infinite multiplicities [...] With the decline of national boundaries, the world market is liberated from the kind of binary divisions that nation-states had imposed, and in this new free space a myriad of differences appears.”, (Hardt, Negri, 2001)

Since the world cannot go back to what it was before globalization, companies had to face the changes led by this phenomenon and started thinking about a brand-new way of communication with consumers. As a matter of fact, consumers’ mindset changed as well as manufacturers did.

“Globalization has contributed to a remarkable shift in people’s consciousness.”, (Steger, 2003)

For this reason, companies had to improve their real listening skills in order to establish a sincere dialogue with the consumer, but also a sense of respect, the ability to satisfy his needs and desires by adapting the characteristics of the products to his needs and incorporating increasing shares of services into the products.

As it will be seen later, the post-modern economy – as well as technology and globalization – has determined the acknowledgement of individuals and the rise of a new kind of consumer. Indeed, the role of consumers has become increasingly crucial and influential in guiding the entire economic system, by the time that they are actively involved in business dynamics. Consumers' power becomes real: they impose production choices consistent with new sensibilities, towards ethical products. The consumer votes every day, with his own consumption and saving actions, for economically and socially sustainable development, and for the change of direction of the economic system (Fabris, 2010).

1.2.3. The rise of a new kind of consumer: the 'prosumer'

As we have seen, ICTs contributed to subverting the passive act of reception, which left room to increase individual participation in the virtual world of the Internet. Nowadays individuals are no longer standardized, rather computerized and digitized (Pine, Gilmore, 2000). The evolving environment led to the disappearance of the separation between the content providers and content consumers as the information consumer is also assuming the role of provider. Web 2.0 – which we talked about earlier – enabled individuals not only to receive services but also to create and distribute new contents. In this scenario, it can be observed both an ascending spiral in the quantity and quality of content and the quality and diversity of services available to users. Furthermore, the empowerment of consumers has changed the way many businesses create new products and knowledge. Indeed, companies could benefit from leveraging the participation of their audiences and customers.

"People have greater input into the creation and dissemination of the products and services they consume [...] Open Source software, virtual worlds and media-sharing communities are at the forefront of new modes of user-led innovation that unsettle established boundaries between producers and consumers.", (Sharp, Salomon, 2008)

Consumers' contribution relies on iterative, evolutionary development models in which large communities of participants make incremental changes to the established knowledge base, thereby enabling a gradual improvement in quality (Giurgiu, Barsan, 2008). Metaphorically speaking, Prometheus, with his chains, is the representation of the

powerlessness of old-era consumers. Nevertheless, the new-era consumer is associated with Prometheus, who has freed from chains thanks to the advent of Web 2.0 – whose absence had produced the traditional separation between production and consumption –, a liquid universe where he can get in touch with other individuals, he can socialize, acquire information and create new contents (Fabris, 2010). Now that the consumer has an active role, he can be defined as ‘prosumer’, a customer who helps a company design and produce its products. The term was coined in 1980 by Alvin Toffler; the *portmanteau* is formed from the words ‘producer’ and ‘consumer’ (Cambridge Business English Dictionary, 2020). The consumer wants and is convinced that he can choose for himself. The rise of ‘prosumer’ conceals a cluster of mental, spiritual, and emotional transformations that should be taken into account, and that expresses a general manifestation of disenchantment towards the world.

Today, consumers are more demanding and harder to please. For this reason, they are usually dissatisfied with the products they purchase. This is because the offer continues to grow without increasing quality and service and because companies have adopted pushing policies, befuddling consumers. There is a process of collective detoxification in the face of the huge number of commercial messages and massive advertising that consumers are subjected to every day. Post-modernism shaped a consumer’s new mentality, as in the new ‘information society’. The following quote suggests that a widespread cynicism pervades post-modernity:

“Most information is apparently to be distrusted, as being more of a contribution to the manipulative image-making of those in power than to the advancement of knowledge.”, (Butler, 2002)

The Easterlin paradox states that at a point in time happiness varies directly with income, but over time happiness does not increase when a country’s income increases (Easterlin, 1974). The paradox contradicts the idea of economic development as synonymous with well-being: after certain levels, consumption no longer generates increases in perceived well-being and happiness. Over the long term, happiness and income are unrelated. Consumers realized that an increase in consumption does not correspond to the rise of individual well-being. Consumers, in brief, realized that the long-

term growth rate of life satisfaction can be determined by little consumption. Hence, the willingness to spend is addressed to choices considered psychologically or socially relevant, avoiding those for which a qualitative surplus is considered irrelevant – we are witnessing the development of a new sensitivity towards waste. Therefore, products with strong relational content that have become the main protagonists in a world where well-living and well-being are no longer synonymous. The awareness has emerged that giving up some purchases or spending less – consumers have intensified a price sensitivity, which can be defined as attention to price – does not reduce consumer satisfaction, and that more expensive products are not always synonymous with higher quality (Fabris, 2010). Consequently, it is the consumer, with his own independent appraisal, without any subjection to those who propose it, who decides whether prices are fair or not: today, the price appears, therefore, less and less as an independent variable.

And it always comes back to this: the advent of the Internet and the greater use of ICTs have played a key role, by the time that those advanced technologies made individuals aware that it can be possible to find the same product, online and offline, at a different price. In short, the consumer today is aware of spending well, and the value for money – the tendency to consider price concerning quality – is transformed into ‘value for me’ (Fabris, 2010). In the twentieth century’s economy, consumer’s orientation is not to intensify but to qualify his decisions with quality alternatives, which really enrich his everyday life. Moreover, it can be observed the increasing consumers’ awareness that many of life's pleasures such as feelings and affections are not for sale, have no price, and, for this reason, do not pass through the market and do not belong to the economic dimension. The tendency is, therefore, to broaden the category of economic goods to include interpersonal relationships and connections: greater importance is given to relational goods – which put individuals in relation with each other and emphasize the non-instrumental interaction between them.

As has already been said, the strongest influence on purchasing processes is exerted by Web 2.0, which extends interpersonal communication and relationships globally. With the Internet, consumer empowerment has become a reality, and what is more, it can damage a company's reputation. The consumer has become nonconformist and polemic towards the offer, he is autonomous, which means that he is no longer subordinate to producers. Moreover, he can make responsible choices in the context of market

oversupply; he is more competent, as he has acquired a deeper knowledge and product sensitivity; he is more disenchanted, as indicating the growing pragmatism and realism towards the market; he is more reflective, as he pays attention to the social meanings of the products, their impact on the environment and he redefines the emotional and symbolic values related to consumption. And what is more important, consumers have developed a strong orientation from a holistic point of view: that is, consumption is an experience which involves all the dimensions at stake, both tangible (use-values) and intangible (emotional, cognitive values, and semantic meanings).

So going back to the idea of 'prosumer', it can be assumed that his decision-making power and, thereupon, his figure is no longer subordinate but at the same level as the producer, precisely because the consumer embodies the essence of that period. The prosumer is a mirror of post-modernism; he can control the new economic structure, precisely because he fully understands how the new mechanisms of marketing work. Individuals are undeniably the real protagonists of twentieth-century society. Consumers became rulers of marketing actions and strengthened their conditioning power over the supply chain as a result of the growth of their bargaining power towards the world of production, of their discretion of choice, and of the knowledge about the goods and services they buy and consume. In this sense, consumers understood that they now have both rights and duties – towards himself and towards the others – and responsibilities; therefore, consumers figured out that his choices can affect the quality of life.

By reducing the distance between production and consumption, consumers' contribution to the personalization of the offer increased. Particularly, ICTs led to an easier propagation of tons of ideas born from below. Because of this, we have already seen how consumers became creative and regained a degree of knowledge that put him on the same level as the producers. Prosumer is nothing more than a craft consumer who overlapped his meanings on those of the materials received by the offer system.

Web 2.0 is populating with creative consumers of this type, who assemble technologies and materials of various origins, giving them original and personalized meanings, which are enriched as the initial idea spreads. Consumption, to become creative, is intertwined with life and its complexity: the creative consumer invests, risks, produces his ideas, spreads them, and protects the original knowledge at his disposal, to produce value for the supply chain. Consumption is creative as it generates new worlds with imagination

and sharing the possible. In short, the essential nature of production consists in directing the offer towards the consumer, who is immersed in the social reality in which he or she lives. In this sense, the purchasing process can be defined as an activity to share and establish personal relationships with others: sharing objects, services, knowledge, problems, and no longer just public spaces and services.

In conclusion, the analysis of the figure of the ‘prosumer’, of the new creative nature of consumer and his contribution within the productive mechanisms of companies, has allowed us to better understand the functioning of a new economy, strongly refurbished, modernized and transformed by the technological innovation and the phenomenon of globalization – which have modified the world order. In this contemporary reality, brands – which we had to set aside for a while, to focus more on the context in which they are inserted – had to reinvent their *modus operandi*. But before we get back to branding, it is crucial to take a last in-depth look at marketing, especially, at its experiential dimension, which has turned the tables and has redefined the way companies work. It will be examined the transition from the fruition of a good or service to the importance of its experiential sphere, which gives depth to consumption. Although brands represent a point of reference, a certification, and reassurance of quality, we have seen how consumers have become less dependent on the awe exercised by them. Customer loyalty and active interest are fundamental, especially in a world where many products are designed to be used in a flexible or multi-purpose way, suitable for different contexts and judgements of use. As we shall see, brands have become important only if their messages and products are filled with meaning by the consumer.

1.3. The Experience Marketing

As anticipated above, we have embarked on a path that has investigated and saw first-hand various aspects of society, as well as its economy, which is completely new. This long ‘path’ comes to a halt, as it aimed to introduce the experiential dimension of consumption. As Schmitt stated, the twenty-first century represented a decisive point, a watershed, the middle of a revolution that has replaced traditional feature-and-benefit (F&B) marketing with experiential marketing (Schmitt, 1999). ‘Experience Marketing’ can be defined as strategic and holistic marketing of relevant and meaningful experiences; it is carried out through the transition from needs and desires to experiences. The fact is

that the expectations of customers have gone beyond the basic satisfaction of core product, by the time that a product is more than a physical entity. Other factors play a significant role in whether a consumer would lift a product off the shelf or not. Indeed, Carù and Cova defined experience as:

“A subjective episode in the construction/transformation of the individual with, however, an emphasis on the emotions and senses.”, (Carù, Cova, 2003)

Theodore Levitt described the physical product as features, styling, quality brand name, and packaging. He also states that companies now compete on augmented products: it can be assumed that a product is a web of benefits and attributes that may be compiled in different ways to meet the different customers' needs (Levitt, 1983). Nonetheless, there is a lack of clarity by the time that 'experience' is an empirical phenomenon, and no attempt has been made to systematically define an experience in marketing terms (Poulsson, Kale, 2004). Brands are struggling to study the mental structures of their target audience, to create significant, long-lasting impressions in this digital age. Real-world experiential marketing campaigns provide an opportunity to leave an impression, intrigue, and compel consumers. Experiential marketing campaigns tend to use an activation, such as product sampling, immersive experiences, stunts, events, and much more, to bring brands to life and interact directly with consumers. Experiential marketing gets to the heart of what motivates people, positioning brands as useful, interesting, relevant, and desirable. The best campaigns put people first, aiming to delight, provoke, challenge, inspire, motivate, and, ultimately, produce tangible results.

An increasing amount of people are searching for meaning, happiness, sensations, new forms of fulfilment and core values, which they often find in market offerings (Fortezza, Pencarelli 2011), and for this reason, companies rethought their brand experiences, which should be engaging, interactive and entertaining. The focus is on experience, but it is important to mention two other essential components, that are the customer and experience co-creation. Experience represents a meaningful relationship between a person's perceptual activity and a life situation and is of particular significance to the person (Perttula, 2007). Shared experiences with other individuals have a deeper psychological link to long-term intrinsic happiness than buying products.

“Experience marketing can create emotions by making entertainment for customers, by allowing them to escape from the reality, by educating them and giving them aesthetic objects or places to see” (Pine, Gilmore, 1999).

Hence, the increasing importance of the experiential sphere has shifted the orientation of consumption by individuals towards all those goods and services that were imbued, or cloaked, with semantic value. Now products are not mere outcomes of supply chains – that only had to satisfy utilitarian functions and bring benefit to the consumer –, rather new products, as they have been reshaped like clay by brands, which increasingly seek to infuse intangible values and meanings into those same products.

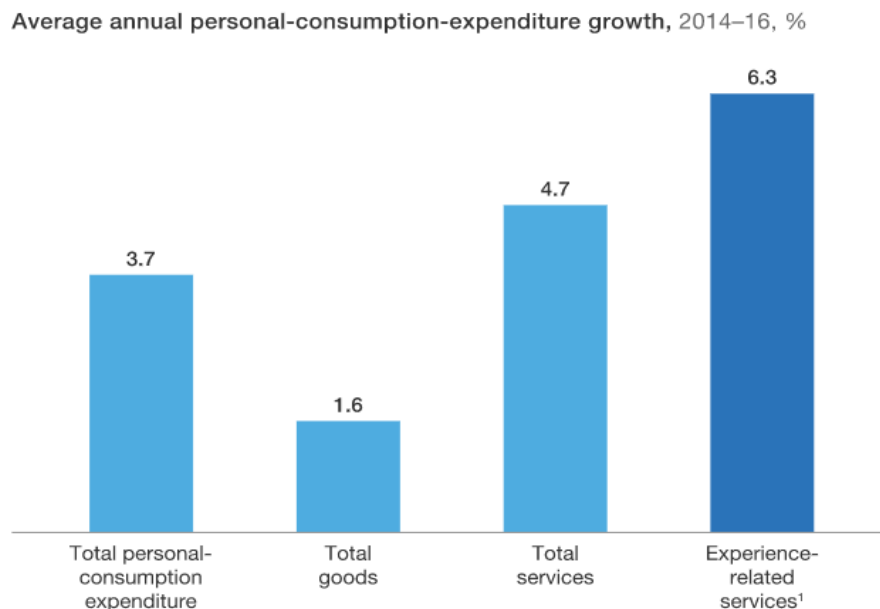


Figure 1.3.: Shift of consumption from goods and services to experiences. (US Bureau of Economic Analysis, McKinsey Analysis)

Pine and Gilmore, along with Bernd Schmitt, are the authors who made the greatest contribution to the investigation on the experiential sphere of marketing. Their research has represented an important contribution to the understanding of the so-called new economy and of all those economic activities and technical tools that have changed the overall world business scenario. When a person buys goods or services, he or she also buys a set of intangible assets. But when they buy experiences, they pay to spend their time enjoying a series of memorable events that the company organises – like a theatrical performance – to engage them directly. In this perspective, experience reflects an offer of

economic value when it provides the prolonged use of a product, which allows consumers to experience the good (Pine, Gilmore, 2000). Nonetheless, experiences have always been there, but consumers, companies, and economists have always grouped them together with Services; now, however, experiences represent a third solid and independent economic proposal (Pine, Gilmore, 2000).

Pine and Gilmore affirmed that every enterprise is a theatre company and, therefore, work is a play. The two authors aimed to grasp what characterized the competitive advantage that determined a clear distinction between a company and its competitors. In an economic world now transformed into a play, the phenomenon of 'theatricalization' enabled companies to distinguish their product from a commodity and to differentiate themselves. Companies aspire to pack a product which is as far from being standardized as possible – a commodity can be defined as an indistinct, ordinary good, unable to differentiate itself from other products. For this reason, reference is made to experience as the enjoyment of memorable, unique, hardly repeatable events, and significant time. Products are steeped in experiences, which can offer knowledge, distraction, beauty, and fun. Metaphorically speaking, the theatre play embodies the perfect representation of a new type of offer that provides a unique opportunity to experience an exclusive, uncommon moment. Hence, companies have developed a high interest in the link between products and memory, as they impress a mark on it. Pine and Gilmore's warning is that companies who fail in the process of the theatricalization, drag the product towards the commodity model. To sum up, brands do not only focus on the product, but also on making consumers live the experiential dimension. The new offer of companies, that is experience, occurs whenever a company intentionally uses services as a proscenium and goods as a support to involve an individual. Staging experiences does not mean entertaining customers but involving them. Therefore, the company - which can be defined as the 'director' of experiences - no longer offers only goods and services, but the resulting experience, rich in sensations, generated in the consumer, who is subjectively involved on an emotional, intellectual, physical and even spiritual level. The great difference with the product of traditional marketing lies in the fact that the product does not die with the performance, but rather the experience of the latter continues in the mind of any individual with an imperishable memory. Consumers developed a strong sense of necessity towards products that not only have a strong functional value and bring physical

benefits given by the use of them, but products that induce emotional transfer, that have a cognitive nature and initiate a transformation of the perception of reality and the consumer himself. The company's aspiration in the manufacturing of a product does not focus on an external good or service, rather on the customer himself and what he wants to become, after having experienced that product (Pine, Gilmore, 2000).

As a result, brands are starting to put the accent on the unforgettable experiences that customers can have and that are included in the purchasing process, as experiences are now intrinsic in owning a certain product. In the economy of experience, instead of relying solely on our means to experience the new, the individual is increasingly inclined to buy products from companies that stage experiences for us. Since companies are no longer producers of goods, but of memories with a strong economic value, they must keep on renewing their experiences to guarantee a constantly attractive and new offer, that it is worthwhile to be bought and tested again.

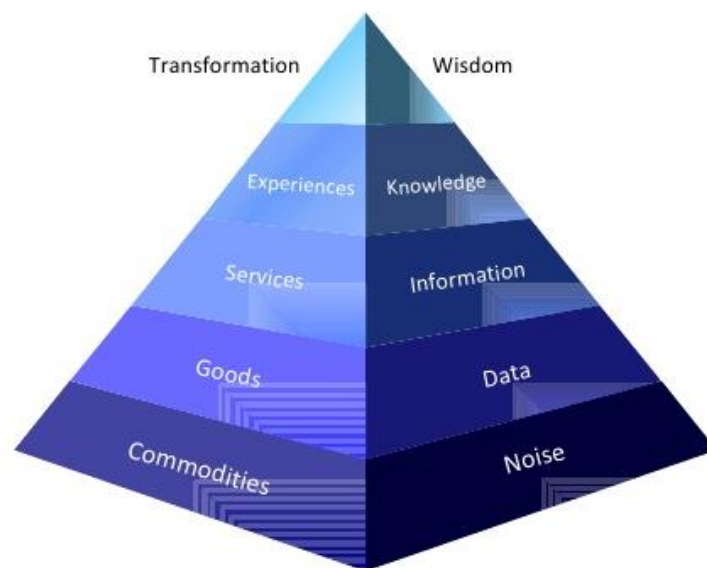


Figure 1.4.: Progression of economic value: the economic pyramid. (Pine, Gilmore, 2000)

As it can be observed in Figure 1.4., the tip of the pyramid indicates exactly the transformative character given by experiences, which cannot take place without the unshakeable foundation given by all the lower steps – it can be assumed that the experience economy has solid foundations. At the bottom, commodities correspond to disorganized information, with little or no meaning. Once encoded or systematized – ascending the pyramid – commodities take on meaning and become valuable until they

reach the top, where experience, not by chance, is brought closer to knowledge. And it is precisely from these experiences, which redefine the existence of individuals, that wisdom can be achieved. In the end, the products that best demonstrate the value of knowledge are those that make consumers live experiences and that transform and reshaping them. And this is precisely the fulcrum of this new economy.

In this perspective, retail has assumed an increasingly fundamental role, as the physical place reflects the need of companies to organize the experiential place of their offers. Indeed, one of the approaches that make products more experiential is that of adding elements that intensify the client's sensory interaction with them.

In the next chapter, the importance of retail environment will be analysed in detail, with an emphasis on scenography and design of stores, which have become possible, coherent universes, made of their own semantic values; they are the point of contact between consumer and producer, and for this reason, they must be as attractive as possible to easily attract people. The attractiveness of the shops includes sensory dimensions that incorporate sounds, colour gradations, smells, sensations that strike straight to the heart, and to the psychological sphere of the individual – that is why it deserves a separate, in-depth discussion.

1.3.1. Sensory stimulation: the phenomenon of ‘synesthesia’

Since the fulcrum of the new economy is experiencing goods, retailing – which is the main dimension that allows consumers to experience a product and a brand – becomes the focal point of the question: how to improve it to obtain the best brand experience?

The post-modern economy's retail business requires more than just innovative products and low prices. Consumer experience must include every point of contact at which the customer interacts with the business, product, or service (Andajani, 2015). As has already been said, the companies which work in the new economy's scenario are constantly trying to distance their goods and services from the commoditization phenomenon, which acts like a wormhole that tends to make products disappear from consumers' eye. Consumers often perceive products and services as homogeneous; that is why retailers and designers try to differentiate themselves from competitors by directing the design of retail environments toward triggering memorable customer experiences – a process in which multiple tangible and intangible stimuli can interact

(Carù, Cova, 2003). Marketing goes from a primacy of sight to an idea of global mobilization of the senses (synesthesia, i.e. putting together different senses). Companies could benefit from adopting a “synesthetic” approach that causes multiple senses to interact. Indeed, an approach that included a sensory reference can enhance memory of experiences, creating long-lasting impressions that can increase appreciation (LaTour, 2019). As far as retailing business is concerned, this is a crucial aspect that reaches spasmodic attention: those brands who design stores and boutiques are attentive to the sensory dimension (auditory, olfactory, and so on) and its interaction with memory. The sensory stimuli accompanying an experience should support and intensify the theme: the more effectively an experience can engage the senses, the more memorable it will be. In a sense, services are transformed into engaging experiences, into indelible impressions, when they are charged with sensory transport (Pine, Gilmore, 2000). Companies began to reflect on the reasons that drive consumers to buy a product and to wonder what were the best ways to push them through the door of their store, taking into account the influence of psychological, sensory, and emotional dimensions. In a sense, retailers aimed to create excitement to attract customers to their stores to enhance their growth and profitability.

The most interesting academic area of inquiry pertains to how people encode, retain, and retrieve retail information from memory (Puccinelli et al., 2009). The level of information encoding depends on the level of information processing undertaken by the consumer (Craik, Lockhart, 1972), which must be taken into account by retailers to devise strategies to aid consumers in making quicker associations. Involvement in retailing considers how retailers might motivate a disinterested consumer into becoming interested in a product or service and ultimately making a purchase. (Grewal, Levy, Kumar, 2009). It is important to focus on those factors which enable the reinforcement of the interaction – which would ensure that a favourable attitude toward a retailer translates into actual retail sales – such as store atmospherics and social environment. Indeed, retailing management and marketing typically focus on developing insights into, and predictions about, the influence of certain atmospheric signals on the consumer’s experience, such as music (Yalch, Spangenberg, 1990) or colour (Bregman, 2002). Generally, when consumers are exposed to products and their advertisements, they do not perceive a personal need for the good: several individuals are not actively seeking information about

products, rather stimulating emotions and feelings is a better way to distinguish a product and draw interest. Music is a particularly effective approach, as it circumvents the rational mind and petitions directly to the emotional mind in which desire-driven shoppers revel. Individuals are likely to choose products accompanied by the music they like. Colours can easily mesmerize and captivate consumers because they, similarly, enable identification and prompt particular images and meanings. Indeed, colour branding is not about being pretty and aesthetic: an original chromatic gradation conveys significant information to consumers, as it calls to mind thoughts, memories, and modes of perception. In the same way, touch, whether it is the product itself, the store, or even its floors and ceilings, is an important dimension of retailing experience – particularly in this tactile-deprived world, which is becoming even further limited by the advent of the Internet. And last but not least, the scent is an oft-neglected tool for providing consumers with engaging and exciting experiences: indeed, odour has a potential to evoke feelings and moods with more effectiveness than any of the other senses, by the time that consumers are driven by scents to create a direct link to their memories. Consumers love scented products and they will choose them over other products (Gobé, 2001).

What needs to be focused on is the question of how different variables interact and influence customer emotions and responses in a shop interior. Interaction is the main aspect retailers reflect upon when discussing the importance and value of every square meter of the store surface.

“Every designed space needs to grasp potential customers already from before the first threshold, and guide them through the store in order to eventually send them back home fully satisfied and happy.”, (Andajani, 2015)

Brand experience achieves the best results when it takes place in an alluring and fashionable store. The nuance of an image, the memory of a familiar sound, the associations of an ancient scent: these are the cues which form unforgettable imprints on our emotional memories: that is what consumers’ brain wants to experience when entering a shop and purchasing a product. Sensory inputs have powerful effects on consumers at the point of purchase because they are immediate and capable of changing

their lives. Carefully crafted sensory appeals can create that consumer preference that distinguishes a brand amidst a multitude of competing commodities (Gobé, 2001).

	Spatial Perceptions	Consumer Action	Managerial decision
<i>Part I</i>	Length or distance perceptions	Route/destination choice	Store/mall layout
<i>Part II</i>	Number perceptions	Perceptual count of people in waiting lines, waiting line choice, perception of variety, calorie estimation, consumption	Waiting line design, variety in package, retail shelf organization and communication of food package content
<i>Part III</i>	Area/Volume perception	Product choice, product purchase, actual and perceived consumption, and post-consumption satisfaction	Pricing, packaging, product design, communication of sizes

Table 1.1.: Framework for the review of spatial perception research. (Krishna, in Wedel, Pieters, 2008)

Table 1.1. focuses on factors that affect spatial perceptions and their implications on consumer behaviour. It underlines the idea that retail business represents an ongoing relationship that continues long after the sale, which constantly reinforces to consumers the idea that brands are committed to providing them with the best products at the best value. Shopping provides opportunities for dreaming and playing. As a result, there is much greater demand, value, and potential inherent in shopping than in its counterpart, buying. Companies that create an environment conducive to shopping give their consumers a good reason to create opportunities to purchase (Gobé, 2001). Retailing is the place where consumers come to experience brands, not just to buy their products.

*“Although product satisfaction certainly constitutes one important experiential component – the stream of associations that occur during consumption (imagery, daydreams, emotions) are equally important aspects of consumer behaviour.”,
(Holbrook, Hirschman, 1982)*

It is often suggested that the design and structural aspects of indoor shopping and consumption environments can affect people’s thought processes and responses (Becthel, 1997). Not only emotional and psychological involvement make retailing efficacious, but also visual effects: indeed, visual marketing researches have investigated the many ways in which visual stimuli may determine the conditions for retail success. Eye movements are not accidental but guided by decisive factors, which affect instinct. The position of the objects on the shelves – it is no coincidence that the shelves’ positions are put up for sale and that the central ones have higher rental prices than the shelves that are out of visual range –, the logo, billboards, aesthetics in general, help to influence consumers and their purchasing process as a retailing function is to encourage him to return to that place. Overall, consumer visual information processing at the point of purchase is mostly driven by packages rather than by prices. Briefly, stores are designed to have pervasive effects on the consumer’s attention (Wedel, Pieters, 2006).

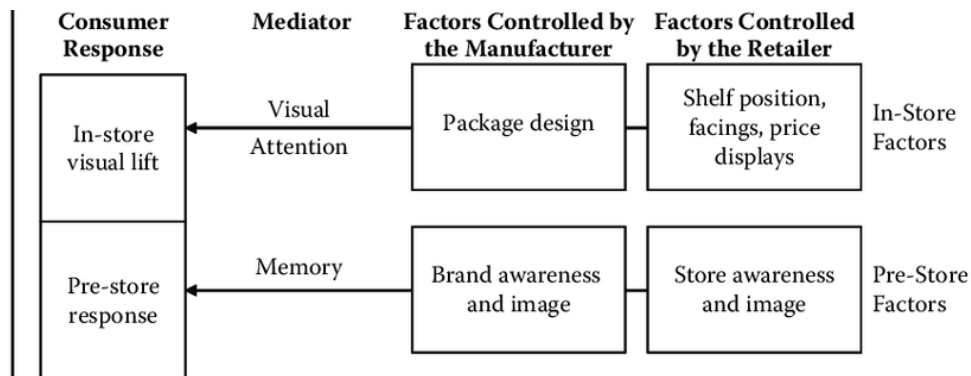


Figure 1.5.: A framework of the effects of visual attention and memory at the point of purchase. (Chandon, Wesley Hutchinson, Bradlow, Young, in Wedel, Pieters, 2008)

As summarized in Figure 1.5., consumer behaviour at the point of purchase is influenced by out-of-store, memory-based factors, and by in-store, attention-based factors. In the first case, the memory-based response reflects the part of consumer behaviour attributable to factors residing in memory. In the second case, visual lift reflects the part of consumer behaviour attributable to factors mediated by visual attention, such

as shelf location, number of facings, and other architectural designs. These factors are predominantly under the control of the retailer (Chandon, Wesley Hutchinson, Bradlow, Young, 2008).

To briefly summarize, it has been analysed in depth the importance of retail business to surprise consumers pleasantly and to provide their emotional satisfaction, and the extent to which stores represent universes made of sensory stimuli coherent with the message that brands want to convey; synesthesia has semantic value and can move and enchant the consumer, by creating a strong emotional and psychological link between the latter and the product.

1.4. Conclusion

This first introductory chapter is almost concluded. It was very important to give a detailed overview of the socio-economic context in which brands have found themselves operating: an economy, as we have seen, strongly transformed by the changes that have been taking place in recent years. There has been a shift from traditional marketing to marketing ruled by strong emotions and intense experiences, which has forced companies to re-dimension their structural choices and internal organizations.

We initially made an analysis of what the brand is and what its characteristics are. Then, we went deeper into the economic landscape and the market in which brands operate, underlining the changes brought by the advent of new technologies, the Internet and the rise of a Web 2.0 in which sharing has become a categorical imperative, the penetration rate of the network has intensified and producers and consumers are linked by a double thread. Globalization has also had its strong impact on the circulation of ideas, which increasingly come from below: this is the case of the figure we have been talking about, the prosumer. In the new economy, the state of subordination of the consumer to the producer has disappeared: indeed, the consumer is now a co-creator and contributes actively and creatively to the production chain of goods.

All this occurs in an economic framework, in which marketing roams in the direction of experience. From this point of view, brand experience takes place precisely through the stores, which have always been points of contact between producer and consumer, and that now need to be reinterpreted and renewed. The brand experience relies on stores that now carry meaning: all five senses are actively involved to create a neuronal,

emotional connection with the consumer. The experience comes before the product. The product is the passport that allows the consumer to cross the threshold and access those possible worlds that are retail. This chapter acts as a watershed, it is a checkpoint – in video game terms – and it lays the foundations to go under the surface. We have just scraped the tip of the iceberg: now it will be examined how deep the rabbit hole goes.

The main topic of the next chapter is Lovemarks, which represent the maximum expression of those feelings of affection such as admiration, attachment, and devotion that brands can exert on the consumer. It will be discussed, in an in-depth and analytical way, how this phenomenon of brand love takes place. The following section will focus on the concept of customer loyalty, that derives from the various meanings that the brand can infuse in the product which consumers purchase and that leads to the birth of passion-driven behaviours.

CHAPTER II

The rise of Lovemarks: when brands touch consumers' hearts and minds

What we have seen in the previous chapter has given us a better understanding of what brands are, what are the crucial factors that have determined the rise of a new market in the twenty-first century, and what are the main characteristics of this market. The most important of these attributes is undoubtedly the experiential dimension: experiences represent a thin, delicate *fil rouge* that holds companies and consumers' firmly, inextricably linking products and emotions. We have seen how, in the post-modern economy, consumers purchase goods and uses services to live unrepeatable, unique experiences, and adventures that remain etched in their memory. Therefore, all five senses are actively involved through well-conceived and well-designed retail shops. Buying a product is a process that brings with itself a series of emotional and psychological factors that influence the future consumer attitudes and behaviour at the time of purchase, and that contribute to the boost of the customer loyalty. For this reason, in the following chapter, it will be examined the concepts of Brand admiration, Brand coolness, Brand equity and Brand love.

Besides, it will be extensively investigated the series of cognitive processes enhanced by experiences, underlying the consumer's feelings of attachment to the brand: metaphorically speaking, this path will lead us to the top of the mountain, the fulcrum of the dissertation, that is the phenomenon of Lovemarks. It is a kind of parallelism since Lovemarks also represent the ultimate goal of companies, that is to infuse in consumers' hearts strong feelings of pure, unblemished love towards products. Experiences are the fuel of passions which, in turn, determines the transition from brands to Lovemarks. Indeed, through the experiences and emotions that products manage to make consumers live, brands can create a long-lasting and solid connection that foster customer loyalty. Those brands that infuse passionate behaviours such as devotion, attraction or attachment and are aesthetically appealing, original, iconic, and authentic are Lovemarks. For this reason, Lovemarks and their components (Mystery, Sensuality, and Intimacy) will be analysed thoroughly, by emphasising their implications to consumers.

2.1. The transition from brands to Lovemarks

The previous chapter allowed us to better understand how the new economic framework has represented the perfect, fertile ground for the development of brands and the emergence of brand experience. As has already been said, the market passed through a constant evolution which changed its physiognomy: the technological breakthrough, the globalization and the rise of Web 2.0 have exposed consumers to high concentrations of information – having become active information receivers and content producers themselves. Therefore, consumers built up an effective filter that allowed them to discern the most interesting information data to satisfy their needs. The information overload compelled consumers to reinforce their defences to protect themselves from the overwhelming commercial stimuli to which they were unceasingly subjected. As consumers became more attentive, more cognizant of the possible choices of the market, and, by extension, demanding in evaluating the strategies and the *modus operandi* of companies, the latter started to reshape brands, wrapped with ‘anthropomorphous’ characteristics (Bengtsson, 2003). Indeed, companies had to develop new original marketing skills and communication techniques to stimulate consumers, not only by giving them the benefits of the product but also by offering them goods and services that are indelible for the mind and the senses.

“Marketing passed from being a merely transactional and exchange field to become a relational process, as producers started to be in contact with consumers.”, (Sheth, Parvatiyar, 1995)

When the economic environment started to widen its boundaries – especially because of the phenomenon of globalization –, to evolve, and the number of competitors began to grow and to multiply dramatically, companies had to find a way to differentiate themselves and to modify their products (Roberts, 2005). Inspiring confidence in consumers to go beyond the mere product has become a crucial step in marketing strategies that businesses had to consider in order not to fail in the new economic environment.

The ultimate goal of the Experience Marketing is to go beyond the expectations of disenchanted consumers, making them live an experience that can be defined as

significant and indelible, as it gets deep into their feelings and stays there permanently. Brand managers started moving towards more reflective and responsible practices. Now brand strategists aim to create a significant relationship and to keep in touch with consumers, to understand them. Consequently, the experience for companies has become a new category of offer that allows consumers to activate their senses and produce sensations and emotions.

“Promises turned into experiences. The only exchange currency is ideas that attract consumers. We are talking of a new consumer idiosyncrasy.”, (Oliver-Talavera, 2009)

In the post-modern economy, there has been the transition from *homo economicus*, whose decisions were based on strong rationality, to *homo ludens*, whose choices and judgments relay on the playful dimension and are based on the continuous search for enjoyment.

Nevertheless, managing brands is convoluted – it represents one of the companies’ main challenges of the new economic framework. Just holding a trademark does not guarantee successful distinction even if they reach the trust and the respect of consumers (Roberts, 2005). Consumer preferences and, by extension, market trends are easily subjected to mutation. What is considered cool can become obsolete or outdated in the blink of an eye. Companies shall be aware of these sudden changes of direction – which make companies tread a fine line – and shall try to create products that are synonymous with security and durability.

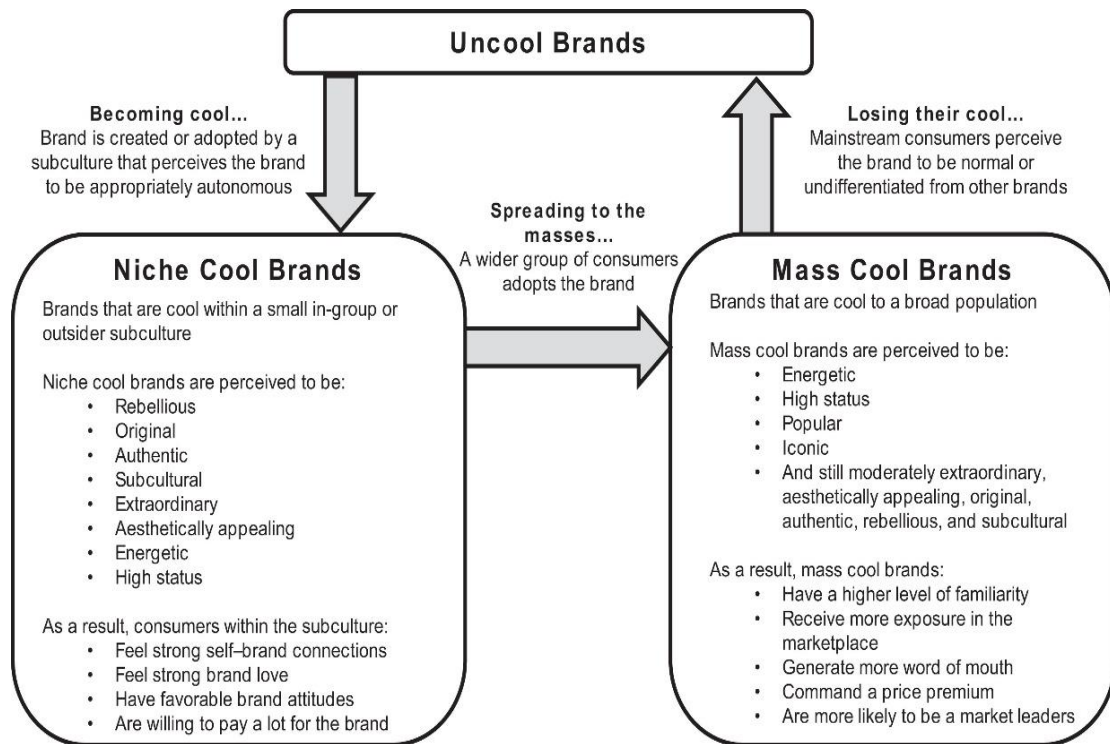


Figure 2.1.: Life cycle of Brand coolness. (Warren, Batra, Correia Loureiro, Bagozzi, 2019)

As summarized in Figure 2.1., at one point, in most cases brands tend to become generic. Indeed, brands started going out of style and standardizing due to their multitude; therefore, they failed to create significant differences: the Figure demonstrates how Brand coolness is perceived higher when brands are adopted by a smaller group and are not spread to the masses. So, the problems start when brands became overused and the strategy did not get to connect emotionally with consumers despite their attributes: although brands showed benefits and qualities of their easily identifiable product, if they cannot get into the affective side of the contemporary consumer – who has continuous interactions with several other brands – they might not last longer. The process of commoditization made brands unable to get noticed and create links with people. Brands commonly refer to successful products, capable of offering functional benefits to the consumer. However, they are destined to a gradual decay, as beyond their utilitarian function, they are not desired brands. As competition and quality levels increase, these brands are likely to lose market share. To sum up, brands were no longer able to be clearly recognisable on the market and were struggling to establish a durable link with consumers.

Kevin Roberts uncovered the causes of this problem:

1. Brands have become something overused, sterile, and non-creative.
2. The new awareness of consumers has increased their sensitivity, making brands less mysterious (see 2.6.1.1.): consumers have understood the mechanisms and functioning of brands.
3. Brands, in contrast, are not able to frame the new nature of consumers.
4. The massive presence of brands has saturated the market and hindered the emergence of individual brands: it is difficult to be noticed and those characteristics so different that distinguished them thin out and appear.
5. Brands have been downsized and reduced to simple formulas, mathematical equations with a final solution to seduce consumers.
6. The innovative nature of brands has experienced a slack period, which has plunged companies into conservatism, far from risk and hazard. (Roberts, 2005)

As competition became increasingly fierce, marketing was forced to be more creative, more interesting and to evolve. As a result, to compete adequately in the marketplace, companies started focusing on establishing a long-lasting relational bond with consumers. In other words, it is not sufficient for companies to be notorious brands to successfully differentiate themselves and become long-lasting icons: although they are vital to surviving in a market that demands companies to constantly search for differentiation, they are still not enough to win the game. As we have seen, the socio-economic framework of the new millennium has led people to the frenetic search for bonds of affection and the desire to abandon themselves to passions: in fact, it is the emotional dimension that dictates consumers' decisions.

As we will see later, companies had to transcend the concept of brand to create Lovemarks. Nevertheless, the transition from brands to Lovemarks was not immediate: there is an intermediate step in which those emotionally involving brands were firstly defined by Kevin Roberts – the putative father of Lovemarks – as Trustmarks. Although they were sensible, credible, Trustmarks were lacking in enthusiasm: Lovemarks represent the next level. The best brands were Trustmarks but the really iconic ones were Lovemarks (Roberts, 2005). But before we go any further into the world of Lovemarks, it is necessary to take a step back and examine how emotional entanglements can influence brand management and marketing dynamics.

2.2. Emotions as a determining factor in the rise of Lovemarks

Most consumers buy and consume with the heart: although they are looking for a rational reason, the purchase is based on an emotional decision. Indeed, in the consumer-brand relationship formation, there are both a rational and an emotional pathway that interconnect through the executive function of the ego (Pawle, Cooper, 2006). This entails the possibility to reflect upon the rational or cognitive aspects that may be reduced or enhanced within brands to turn into Lovemarks. Consumers are human beings with feelings, yet companies have always treated them as mere numbers. For this reason, brands started selling with a focus on reaching the heart rather than the head, the rational part of consumers: they shall not sell products, but all the emotions they generate. Indeed, consumers want to buy goods and services that are closer to them and capable of reaching a strictly personal dimension.

“The essential difference between emotion and reason is that emotion leads to action while reason leads to conclusions.”, (Donald Calne, 2000)

And this is how, then, we get to an economy – the one discussed in the previous chapter – where the attraction is at the core of marketing mechanisms: attracting means creating emotion in order to enchant and fascinate. As we have seen but as we will also see later on, the post-modern market has made sensory mobilization one of its strengths; after all, multisensory experiences with a brand represent the perceptual gateway to stimulate other cognitive processes. The ‘attraction economy’ sees sensory experience and irresistible, fabulous designs assume command: the ability to show is the first step of attraction. It had been demonstrated that decision-making process and action are influenced by emotions, not reason. To achieve an important place in the consumer’s mind and heart, brands must go beyond functional benefits and focus on providing a meaningful and inspirational value proposition, creating cognitive connections and emotional engagement that would enhance consumer’s purchase decisions. Consumers are engaged in deep, intimate interactions with brands, which are beyond the benefit-based satisfaction, and which generate special trust-based relationships (Morrison, Crane, 2007). Depending on the reason why consumer approaches the product, it creates different emotions on consumers that finally can lead to the action of approaching toward

brands, discover their story, be involved and engaged with their values. It is important to stress that, although categories of events or circumstances are frequently associated with particular emotion responses, it is not the specific events or circumstances that produce the emotions but rather the psychological appraisal made by the individual assessing and interpreting them (Bagozzi, Gürhan-Canli, Priester, 2002). In their daily lives, consumers are not paying attention to every detail and they are not conscious of all the stimuli of both social and economic environments: they use to focus their attention when there is something emotionally significant for them (Pawle & Cooper, 2006). It means that brands that can create this emotional bond with consumers may have a stronger relationship with them than those that only have rational strategies in their communications. That also means that feelings have a formidable influence over consumer decision-making than reason. But what is an emotion?

“A valenced affective reaction to perception of situations.”, (Richins, 1997)

Emotion is conceived as a mental state of readiness that arises from cognitive appraisals of events or thoughts, is accompanied by physiological processes, is often expressed physically – i.e. gestures, posture, facial features – and may result in specific actions to affirm or cope with the emotion (Bagozzi, Gürhan-Canli, Priester, 2002). Furthermore, the set of feelings towards brands depends on their valence. A brand can be perceived either positively or negatively: so, marketers need to be prudent about what kind of feelings are generating.

“The word emotion is a contraction of two words, exit and motion. The ancient Greeks believed that an emotion is the soul coming temporarily out of the body [...] There is the belief that emotional displays contain the core truth about a person and that to ‘be emotional’ is to reveal one’s true self. In a sense this is true, since what people get emotional about reveals what concerns them.”, (O’Shaughnessy, 2003)

Companies must infuse semantic values and emotional meanings into their products, precisely because emotions reflect human sensitivity. Emotion-infused products unconsciously attracted consumers, as they see a part of their soul mirrored in those products. Objects are animated by us, and ‘live’. They are seductive, for this reason,

consumers feel passionate about them. We, as human beings, imprint our objects with ourselves: we leave shadows of ourselves on them (Sayers, Monin, 2007). As has already been said, it is the emotional subject that communicates brand values through the development of solid brand relationships. Henceforth, companies will concentrate on the intense emotional and psychological bonding between brands and consumers, as they lead to higher levels of firm performance and competitive advantage. In addition, emotional interactions between brands and consumers facilitate customer satisfaction and repurchase intention.

2.3. Brand admiration

As has already been said, brands can provide real benefits to companies. Brand benefits refer not to the features the product has, but rather the outcomes from a brand acquisition that meet consumers' needs and wants as human beings. As far as emotions are concerned, consumers generally seek benefits that entice them, that is to stimulate their minds, their senses, and their hearts: consumers want emotionally evocative brands to feel gratified, engaged, playful, thrilled, and warm-hearted. Also, benefits that enable consumers to solve their problems leave them feeling empowered, in control, secure: consumers trust brands that they can rely on to solve their problems and conserve their resources. Brands provide sensory or cognitive stimulation, activating consumers' thoughts and senses in ways that make consumers feel good; brands can also arouse sentimentality, empathy, nostalgia, and so on (Whan Park, MacInnis, Eisingerich, 2016).

Companies need to establish themselves on the market by building brand admiration, which is by providing those benefits which foster the conditions that characterize admiration, among them brand love and respect – about which I will discuss more after. Such companies should be able to build, strengthen, and leverage their admiration over the long run by their continual efforts to best themselves in the benefits and values they provide to consumers. In short, brands that have emphasized these benefits unceasingly over time have managed to prosper, thrive, and succeed over generations.

Types of Value	What an Admired Brand Does
<i>Revenue Generator</i>	An admired brand increases customer loyalty and attracts new customers.
<i>Cost-Efficiency Enhancer</i>	An admired brand is in demand, which allows the company to take advantage of economies of scale and allows the company to enjoy cost-saving customer brand loyalty and brand advocacy behaviours.
<i>Growth Facilitator</i>	An admired brand facilitates the introduction and success of its extensions to other markets and other products.
<i>Human-Capital Builder</i>	An admired brand helps recruit and retain talented people who will ultimately determine the company's success in the marketplace.
<i>Employee-Morale Booster</i>	An admired brand motivates employees to protect and strengthen the brand.
<i>Second-Chance Provider</i>	An admired brand enhances customers' willingness to forgive mistakes made by the company.
<i>Market Protector</i>	An admired brand serves as a barrier to entry to future competitors.
<i>Alliance Facilitator</i>	An admired brand facilitates alliances with desirable and powerful external partners.
<i>Asset Builder</i>	An admired brand enhances the company's marketplace value, and also allows it to demand a premium price in a brand-selling situation.

Table 2.1.: Value of an admired brand to a company, (Whan Park, MacInnis, Eisingerich, 2016)

When consumers admire brands, they start feeling a personal connection between the two of them, as brands can symbolize an aspect of who one is, the status, the groups of which one is a part: in this perspective, brands make customers feel connected, influential, validated. Brands resonate with consumers' personal, social, cultural lives. Since consumers admire brands, they purchase them relentlessly, rather than buying competing brands, and they are willing to pay a price premium for them – brand loyalty, along with Brand love, will be analysed in-depth later on this chapter.

2.4. Brand equity: a little detour

Identifying a brand and differentiating it from competitors only makes sense when the brand offers value: in this perspective, brands are conceived as value-generating entities relevant to both customers and companies (Whan Park, MacInnis, Eisingerich, 2016). Concepts as Brand equity and its effect on consumer preferences and purchase intentions could be useful to investigate and explain how the greater awareness of companies influenced the emergence of Lovemarks. Businesses figured out that higher levels of Brand coolness and Brand love may convey messages and permeate the lives of consumers without necessarily being intrusive since the value of the brand becomes greater than mere production facilities. Henceforth, this value entered into the balance sheet and started being valued even in billions. The concept of Brand equity indicates the economic potential of a brand: in monetary terms, the brand is valued as a disposable intangible asset. In short, brands with higher equity generates significantly greater preferences and retention, and consequently, higher incomes.

“Brand equity is defined as a set of assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name, and symbol, that adds to or subtracts from the value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers.”, (Aaker, 1991)

I do not wish to spend too long on this concept. I would like to highlight just the salient points necessary for the dissertation. So, in short, Brand equity describes the strength and the value of a specific brand on the market, and it may be interpreted both from a financial point of view – Brand equity as the value of the brand as an asset of the company's assets (such as patents and brands), in other words, the incremental financial value of a product due to the brand –, or from a marketing point of view – Brand equity as the image assets that a brand has managed to build over time (Srivastava, Shocker, 1991) and the effect that brand awareness has on the consumer's response to the brand's marketing projects and strategies. In this perspective, brand value can be measured based on the marketing effects attributable only to the brand itself, which means that it corresponds to the capital a brand accumulated through all past marketing operations. Brand equity reflects the financial value of the brand to the brand holder based on the company’s efforts to build brand admiration among consumers. The financial measure of a brand’s equity should

consider how the brand has built value for the company and its consumers. It can be defined as the difference between customers' endowment to a brand and the investment the brand holder has had to bear to secure this endowment from consumers (Whan Park, MacInnis, Eisingerich, 2016).

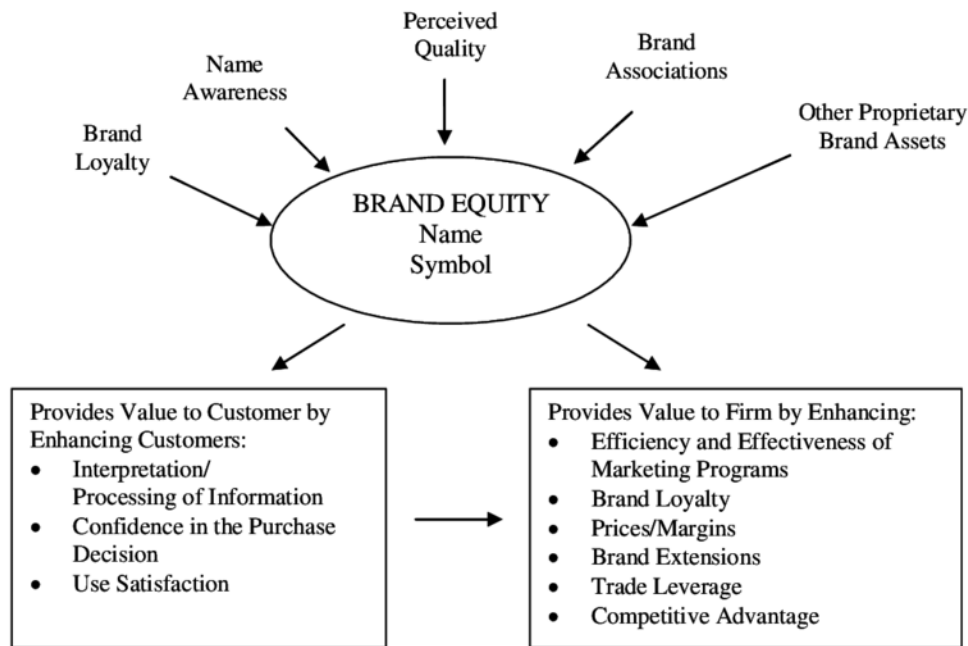


Figure 2.2.: Aaker's Brand Equity Model. (Aaker, 1991)

According to Figure 2.2., a mix of indicators and components can be used to determine what Brand Equity is made of:

1. Brand loyalty – which is a measure of the customer's propensity to buy back a brand.
2. Brand awareness – which identifies the degree of brand awareness by the target audience.
3. Perceived quality – which is defined as the consumer's perception of the overall quality or superiority of the product or service concerning its intended use, also considering possible alternatives.
4. Brand associations – which are defined as everything that is connected to the brand in the consumer's mind.

5. Other proprietary brand assets refer to the set of intangible assets owned by the company: patents, registered trademarks, channel relationships, etc.

A little later, Aaker added few modifications to his earlier findings, making the model more encompassing of different markets, as it can be observed in Figure 2.3.

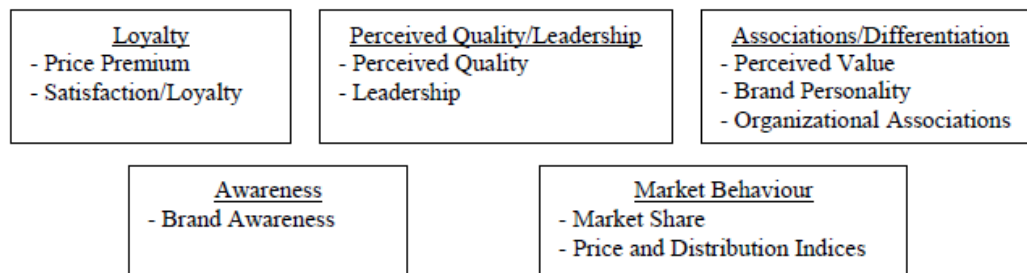


Figure 2.3.: Ten Brand equity dimensions. (Aaker, 1991)

The concept of Brand equity outlines the necessity of developing a brand identity, to achieve greater brand loyalty. Brand loyalty is a concept that describes the behaviour of consumers who buy exclusively – or almost exclusively – a specific brand. Hence, Brand loyalty is characterized by a strong attitude of consumers to prefer a brand to the detriment of other brands in the same product category, which leads to allegiance, which is the repetition of the action of purchase in the long run. A prerequisite for Brand loyalty is customer satisfaction: one can speak of real loyalty only when the usual purchase of the brand is not due to particular market scenarios that may impose the lack of alternatives, but when it is the result of an increasingly strong loyalty. The ability of businesses to make consumers loyal to the brand over time is the ultimate goal of companies since a high level of loyalty reduces the vulnerability of a brand to competitors and helps to ensure continuity of income in the long run. In addition, a positive perception of a brand's quality can facilitate the adoption of brand extension operations: in a nutshell, brand extension is a phenomenon that occurs when high brand consideration could result in high consideration for related products. Hence, achieving brand loyalty leads to stronger market positions with lower entrepreneurial risk. This explains the *fil rouge* which bonds brand equity and brand loyalty – as one of its key components. High levels of coolness are reflected in high levels of brand equity ratings, which is why we have taken a slight detour to better define this concept.

2.5. Brand coolness and Brand love

In the rational world of brand management – with its tendency to intensify functional and performance advantages, companies were called upon to break the ‘emotional’ ice. Emotional bonds are what irrefutably make the difference in post-modern market. The importance of building long-lasting brand-consumer connections based on the emotional dimension depicts an imperative blueprint for success in the competitive environment of the market. In this perspective, the level of arousal mostly depends on the quality of brand experiences evoked. In most cases, the emotional and passionate bond with a brand is a predictor of Brand coolness and Brand love that, in turn, predicts higher levels of brand attachment and brand loyalty.

2.5.1. Brand coolness

The concept of coolness was first introduced in the paper in Figure 2.1., as Brand coolness cyclicalality helped me to explain how brands, even the most popular ones, may run into serious problems when it came to imposing themselves in a market that is strongly oriented to standardization. Coolness and its consequences in the context of marketing predict consumers’ attitudes toward brands and products: it is important to pinpoint the economic value of coolness. Companies are increasingly chasing cool content: it has become a fixation to the point that businesses started utilizing techniques and demanding working figures to understand cool consumption – ‘coolhunters’ are employees whose sole job is to detect all the emerging trends that would become accepted as cool in the future. Hence, companies aim to create and maintain a cool brand image, since the cool factor inspires consumers and managers, adds symbolic currency, and drives trends (Gladwell, 1997).

“A subjective and dynamic, socially constructed positive trait attributed to cultural objects.”, (Warren, Campbell, 2014)

According to this definition of ‘coolness’, Brand coolness may be defined as an attribute of a brand – whereas Brand love should be a response to and, thus, a consequence of Brand coolness. As Brand coolness increases positive feelings toward companies, such as desirability and liking, it may also be intended as a patchwork of perceived qualities,

especially authenticity, novelty, enthusiasm, and uniqueness. Hence, cool brands embody the most desirable attributes that consumers aspire to have and own. Brands are cool when they turn into multidimensional constructs that manage to influence significant outcome variables, including consumers' predilection for, satisfaction with, intentions to talk about, and willingness to pay for the brand (Warren, Batra, Correia Loureiro, Bagozzi, 2019). The component characteristics of Brand coolness summarized in Table 2.2. reflect an overall air of exclusivity, while still being attainable.

Characteristic	Definition
<i>Extraordinary/Useful</i>	A positive quality that sets a brand apart from its competitors/offering superior functional value
<i>High Status</i>	Associated with social class, prestige, sophistication, and esteem
<i>Aesthetically appealing</i>	Having an attractive and visually pleasing appearance
<i>Rebellious</i>	A tendency to oppose, fight, subvert, or combat conventions and social norms
<i>Original</i>	A tendency to be different, creative, and to do things that have not been done before
<i>Authentic</i>	Behaving in a way that is consistent with or true to its perceived essence or roots
<i>Subcultural</i>	Associated with an autonomous group of people who are perceived to operate independent from and outside of mainstream society
<i>Popular</i>	Fashionable, trendy, and liked by most people
<i>Iconic</i>	Widely recognized as a cultural symbol
<i>Energetic</i>	Possessing strong enthusiasm, energy, and vigor

Table 2.2.: Definitions for component characteristics of Brand coolness. (Warren, Batra, Correia Loureiro, Bagozzi, 2019)

In this sense, it is hypothesized that nonconformity rather than conformity leads to enhanced inferences of coolness in the eyes of consumers. Brand coolness is proposed here as a mix of defining components such as autonomy, usefulness, originality,

authenticity, and so on. As regards autonomy, acting independently and resisting group pressure is perceived as an admirable gesture. Then, usefulness is perceived by consumers when brands offer tangible benefits or help consumers in some way by selling high-quality products. Originality defines the extent to which brands are perceived as different or distinct from other brands. Finally, authenticity is perceived by consumers when brands manage to create an image of newness and innovation, which is congruent with the values and traits represented by brands. To sum up, a variety of antecedents for coolness has been identified to define what makes brands cool, amongst others, authenticity, aesthetic appeal, originality, creativity, and innovativeness, as well as popularity and fashionable, eye-catching (Budzanowski, 2017). As far as Brand coolness is concerned, it is important to introduce the concept of ‘Sweet spot of coolness’. It provides a clear comprehension of the two different extremes of the coolness continuum, which avoid any misunderstanding regarding contradictions associated with the idea of coolness.

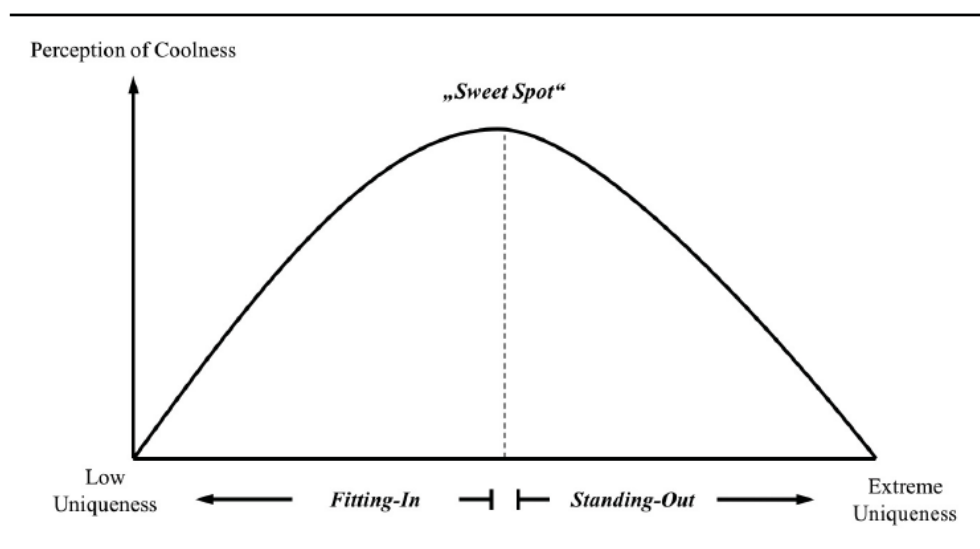


Figure 2.4.: The sweet spot of coolness. (Wooten, Mourey, 2013)

As summarized in Figure 2.4., the two ends of the continuum are ‘fitting-in cool’ and ‘standing-out cool’.

- a) ‘Fitting-in cool’ is a category of coolness which is aroused by social concerns: that is why it aims to gain acceptance through social comparison and emulative consumption behaviour. The authors argued that imitation is a part of a validation process required for something or someone to be recognized as being cool.

Notwithstanding, heightened duplication can lead to a misperception of coolness: so, in light of this, imitation appears to have both a facilitating and inhibitory effect on coolness, which can be represented as an inverted u-shape curve.

- b) ‘Standing-out cool’, on the contrary, manifests a sense of annoyance whenever an individual feels identical to the masses. Those who display standing-out cool are closely linked to personality traits such as independence, rebelliousness, detachment, and indifference towards others or innovative consumption behaviour. In contrast to its counterpart, standing-out cool is embodied by innovators or early adopters who are motivated to try new products, and identify or even create new trends and styles that others will adopt.

As it can be observed, the perception of coolness is reflected in an inverted U-shaped relationship with opposing sides of uniqueness at each end of the continuum, which has very different connotations and meanings. On the left end of the curve, there are feelings of fitting-in and fuels an individual’s need for belonging by consuming cool brands and products that are particularly popular. While social validation is high, the level of uniqueness or distinctiveness is rather low. On the right end of the curve, there are feelings which are powered by inferences of rebelliousness, and autonomy. Extreme levels of fitting-in or standing-out are dysfunctional to coolness perception because consumers will become perplexed and respond disapprovingly. Although, society rewards individuals who display their differences, it is not advisable to feel almost identical to the masses (Wooten, Mourey, 2013). These two types of coolness are driven by two fundamental human motives of consumer social psychology: mate attraction and self-protection. On the one hand, standing-out cool can be an effective method to attract attention and to show distinction to a larger group. On the other hand, fitting-in cool is associated with self-protection, since to survive it is often necessary to strategically mimic others and avoid standing out from the crowd.

2.5.2 Brand love

Emotions can be divided into primary and secondary emotions: on the one hand, primary emotions are short, intense, simple to understand. Secondary emotions are more complex, they turn emotions into complex reactions and increase the intensity of those reactions (Becker, 2006). It can be assumed without a doubt that the fundamental emotion

is love. Love is one of the key elements that allow creating strong links between brands and consumers – therefore, love became one of the main focuses of marketing. After all, companies' dream is to be loved by their consumers. The theoretical antecedents and consequences of romantic consumer brand love generally include components such as a passion for the brand, attachment to the brand, positive evaluation of the brand, positive emotions in response to the brand, and declarations of love for the brand (Sarkar, 2011). Indeed, brands have developed the ability to create intense and profound bonds and make consumers – who are placed in a condition of sentimental dependence – experience passionate emotions. As we will see later, this condition leads them to pay much more to satisfy their need (premium price), to justify any objective defects, and so on. Little agreement exists as to what Brand love is: psychologically 'love' is defined as a mix of components as affection, attachment, care, interest, and passion. Consequently, many dimensions (dream, memory, pleasure, duration, uniqueness, beauty, trust, and satisfaction) and several core elements (self-brand integration, top-of-mind brand recall, passion-driven behaviours, positive emotional connection, long-term relationship, confidence) converge in the concept of love for the brand. Moreover, Brand love can be interpreted either as a simple 'emotion' (happiness in talking about the brand or anxiety in not being able to use it) of short duration or as a longer 'relationship' with the brand (Batra, Ahuvia, Bagozzi, 2012). Patwardhan and Balasubramanian (2011) have defined Brand love as a state of emotional attachment, a series of stimuli that is characterized by high arousal caused by the brand and a tendency of the brand to dominate the consumer's cognition. Indeed, a product is of a loved brand, rather than a liked brand, if it facilitates passion-driven behaviours and, therefore, creates a strong desire to use the brand. In short, it can be assumed that Brand love can be defined as the degree to which consumers adore a brand and want to be near it because of how much it pleases their senses, minds, and hearts. So, picking up on my previous comment about brand loyalty: in order to be loyal to brands, consumers need to love them first. The romance between brands and consumers will result in prolonged loyalty and to spread positive word-of-mouth. Indeed, consumers, who are in real love with a brand, will stick to it to avoid separation distress (Sarkar, 2011). As summarized in Figure 2.5., Brand love is conceived as an umbrella of latent components and constituent items which provide consistent gratification. Basically, these aspects define what Brand love is: a spasmodic, unconditional love in which a brand is

the best on the market, whose high price is justified by the high quality offered. In addition, there is a strong reflection of identity between consumers and loved brand products, when there is a sense of naturalness in the use of a product – that is made especially for me and reflects a sense of 'rightness' –; consumers are willing to invest time, energy and money in the brand and its products and are strongly linked, even on a tangible level, to it, as they never separate from it, find themselves thinking about it all the time and always have it with him. Brand love is like a relationship in terms of duration, it constitutes or has constituted a part in the life of the individual, narratively speaking.

High Quality (Antecedent)	Well-made, functional quality, practical.
Self-Brand Integration (Also Includes Attitude Strength 1)	
Current self-identity	Says something about who you are, others seeing you using it get a sense of who you are, important part of self, degree of image overlap between brand and self, personal identity matches brand identity, important to be one of the people who use this brand, brand is an important part of self-identity, brand is a rewarding part of self-identity.
Desired self-identity	Helps present self to others as the person you want to be, makes you look like what you want to look, makes you feel like how you want to feel.
Life meaning and intrinsic rewards	Makes life meaningful, makes life worth living, gives life purpose, is inherently important, is more than an investment in future benefit, experience feelings of desire.
Passion-Driven Behaviors	
Willingness to invest resources	Have spent lot of time making it fit my needs; willing to spend lot of money improving and fine-tuning it after buy it; willing to spend lot of time improving and fine-tuning it after buy it; have invested lot of time, energy, or money in it; was willing to spend lot of time shopping to buy it specifically; have used it often in appropriate occasions.
Passionate desire to use	Feel myself craving to use it, feel myself desiring it, feel a sense of longing to use it, feeling of wanting toward it, feeling of desire toward it, feeling of longing toward it.
Things done in past (involvement)	Have been involved with it in past, have done a lot of things with it in the past, have interacted a lot with it or the company that makes it.
Positive Emotional Connection	
Intuitive fit	Feel psychologically comfortable using it, meets needs perfectly, natural fit, what I've been looking for, fits tastes perfectly, felt right when first encountered it, now feels right, strength of feeling of liking.
Emotional attachment	Feels like old friend, emotionally connected, feel a bond.
Positive affect	Content, relaxed, fun, exciting, calming, helps relax, pleasurable.
Long-Term Relationship	Will be using for a long time, will be part of life for long time to come, feel sense of long-term commitment.
Anticipated Separation Distress	Anxiety, worry, fear, apprehension.
Attitude Valence	Satisfaction, compares well with ideal product, like–dislike, positive–negative, meets expectations, feelings of liking toward it, good–bad, favorable–unfavorable.
Attitude Strength	
Attitude strength 1: frequent thoughts (part of self–brand integration)	Very often talk to others about it, very often have thoughts about it, frequently find myself thinking about it, frequently find myself thinking about using it, find that it keeps popping into my head, feelings toward it are strong, feel lots of affection toward it.
Attitude strength 2: certainty and confidence	Certainty of feelings/evaluations, how strongly hold feelings/evaluations, how quickly feelings/evaluations come to mind, confidence of feelings/evaluations, intensity of feelings/evaluations.
Loyalty/WOM/Resistance (Consequence)	Strength of loyalty, if hear something bad would question it in own mind, would buy again, would say positive things about brand to others.

Figure 2.5.: Brand love prototype model: latent constructs, components, and constituent items. (Batra, Ahuvia, Bagozzi, 2012)

Hence, love branded products say something about who consumers are, and represent a part of their identity and help them show themselves for the people they want to be. Brand identification is defined as the level of how the consumer recognizes himself coincides with the image of the brand; the identification with the brand is considered as the degree of congruence between consumer and brand image. The degree to which brands enable consumers to express their own identity these products make life worth living, since they create emotional attachment like an old friend, make consumers psychologically at ease using them, and generate satisfaction with an ideal, perfect product (Batra, Ahuvia, Bagozzi, 2012). Loved brand products give something deeper, reflective, which has a significant value. So, in light of this, consumers' loyalty no longer relies on rational constructs and materialistic aspects, but rather is based on emotional bonds between customers and brands. Love is an attitude that leads to thinking, feeling, and behaving in a certain way. Therefore, the purpose of Brand love is to stimulate passionate feelings, reflecting values that the consumer considers suitable to identify himself. With such saturated markets, abundance of choice and fierce competition between brands, consumers are demanding so much more in terms of engagement. Consumers, all services being almost equal, prefer those brands which try to engage with them in a significant and memorable way. So, consumers love brands that act in more human and personal ways. Brand love expresses the emotional element of brand loyalty, which also represents the objects, activities, and brands; Brand love concern about passion and emotional degree belonging to the consumers that are reflected in the brand. Nonetheless, Brand love is not intended by consumers as interpersonal love, but rather as a different, inferior love. Some differences can be detected: for example, there is a strong sense of consumers' altruism for the beloved, which means that they are interested in things the brand can do for them, but not vice versa, as brands cannot express their passions and cannot reciprocate the love of the customer. So, Brand love is not about what consumers can do for the brand but what the brand can do for them: it is selfish, and it is likely to be based on habit. In short, love is an attitude that leads to thinking, feeling, and behaving in a certain way. For this reason, the marketing industry has been awash with terms like loyalty, trust, love, for many years. But love is based on what? The answer is simple: love requires respect. Without it, love does not last. The first step to becoming full-fledged Lovemarks is to convert indifference and suspicion into respect for

consumers. Respect contains important and indivisible emotional baggage: love. Brand respect can be defined as the degree to which consumers look up to brands and hold them in high regard; consumers commend brands for what they stand for and idolize them for their aspirational impact. In this sense, a set of values increases the degree of respect the consumer has for the company: performance, commitment, innovation, reliability, honesty, and responsibility. In order to become Lovemarks, brands need to establish a love/respect relationship with consumers, without leaving behind quality, reliability, and excellent performance to build a long-lasting bond. Respect is not only something that slips out of the fingers constantly but also something that companies have to laboriously achieve. The increase of love and emotional connection toward a brand may increase respect as well, so these two axes are also correlated with each other.



Figure 2.6.: Cartesian plan of love/respect relation. (Roberts, 2005)

In Figure 2.6., it can be assumed that respect is the key to success because it enables lasting relationships. Consequently, love immediately emerges as a goal above and beyond respect.

- Products – the area to the bottom left welcomes commodities, those products that consumers need but are neither desired nor appreciated. If a brand wants to escape this quadrant, it must involve the emotional sphere in its marketing operations.

- Fads – the area on the bottom right welcomes all those whims, fashions and infatuations that give way to new "summer crushes". They are fun, frivolous but without solid foundations, that is respect.
- Brands – they have obtained enormous respect for the numerous operations, investments and sacrifices made. Their efforts have certainly given a lot of margin in terms of respect, but they have not gained as much love. Much respect can guarantee customer loyalty but in the long run there is a need to go beyond reason, towards love.
- Lovemarks – in this part of the Cartesian plan are brands in which love and respect coexist at high levels. The new challenge for businesses in the new market environment is to place the brand in this position. Indeed, Lovemarks that are seen as brands with high love and high respect have a strong positive correlation with future purchase probability (Pawle, Cooper, 2006).

To sum up, there is no love without trust, and the strongest path to building trust is to personalize the experience: consumers demand action from brands, especially, relevant content and personalized experiences. Once the company manages to build a brand that people love, the transition to Lovemarks will happen.

2.6. Lovemarks

The long route reaches its last stop: Lovemarks. As has already been said, it is a challenging time for businesses to keep their brands on the shelves in the stores. The new economic environment, the concentration of retailers and the ever-changing customer behaviour predicted the solution to this scenario: Lovemarks (Kelemen, 2012). Over the past decade, emotional branding has emerged as a highly influential brand management paradigm (Gobé, 2001). Emotional branding is a consumer-centric, relational, and story-driven approach to forging deep and enduring affective bonds between consumers and brands. These potent consumer–brand linkages typically emerge when branding strategies use narratives and tactics that demonstrate an empathic understanding of customers' inspirations, aspirations, and life circumstances, and that generate warm feelings of community among brand users (Thompson, Rindfleisch, Arsel, 2006).

Entrepreneurs naturally want their brands to be true Lovemarks loved by millions of consumers., brands become Lovemarks, if it facilitates passion-driven behaviours and

creates a strong desire to use the brand, positive connections between customer and brand. Therefore, in Lovemarks, the emotional bond between the brand and the consumer is very strong and intense. Moving from a brand to a Lovemarks means changing the relationship between consumer and company. The transformation takes place when brands get into consumers' hearts and feelings.

In short, Lovemarks are those brands that create within consumers "loyalty beyond reason", that attract their memories. Lovemarks are those brands, experiences and events that people fall in love with. Not only do they admire them and enjoy them, but they love them, with passion. Strong emotional attraction is what produces loyalty beyond all reason. Lovemarks make consumers talk about them with admiration and love, they are fond of it and cannot give them up.

"The fact is that lovemarks are created and owned by the people who love them. Where you have a customer in love, you have a lovemark.", (Roberts, 2005)

Nevertheless, the power is always in the hands of companies, as they know that their products will be the best because as long as they will add to the market something extremely unique that allocates a great deal of wealth to consumers. Therefore, entrepreneurs are asked to go beyond the functional dimension of the product to position themselves on the level of emotions. According to Roberts (2005), passion, devotion and attachment are necessary: whilst a rational approach to the brand by consumers will lead to a conclusion, an emotional approach will push for action. Lovemarks are those brands and companies that are able to establish authentic, real emotional bonds with the communities and systems in which they live, and to develop intimate and personal contact with them. In a nutshell, the ultimate goal of Lovemarks is to make consumers feel good about a brand, so that they feel positive emotions. Those brands that infuse passionate behaviours such as devotion, attraction or attachment and are aesthetically appealing, original, iconic, and authentic are Lovemarks. They can be defined as charismatic and personal brands since they can be anything, as long as people love and protect them – people, cars, countries, organizations.

“Consumers today not only want to be romanced by the brands they choose to bring into their lives, they absolutely want to establish a multifaceted holistic relationship with that brand, and this means they expect the brand to play a positive, proactive role in their lives.”, (Gobé, 2001)

The critical discussion of Lovemarks moves directly to an exploration of how we conceive of our feelings (including love) towards objects. This analysis must take into account the economic environment: indeed, Lovemarks are embedded in a commodity culture of conspicuous consumption. Brand strategists should focus on telling stories that inspire and captivate consumers. These stories must demonstrate a genuine understanding of consumers’ lifestyles, dreams, and goals and compellingly represent how the brand can enrich their lives. Thus, the strategic objective of emotional branding is to forge strong and meaningful affective bonds with consumers and, in so doing, become part of their life stories, memories, and an important link in their social networks.

As far as antecedents and components of Lovemarks are concerned, Figure 2.8. perfectly summarize the main factors that define them and reveals what are the main differences between brands and Lovemarks.

BRAND	LOVEMARK
Information	Relationship
Recognized by Consumers	Loved by people
Generic	Personal
Presents a Narrative	Creates a Love story
The promise of quality	The touch of sensuality
Symbolic	Iconic
Defined	Infused
Statement	Story
Defined Attributes	Wrapped in Mystery
Values	Spirit
Professional	Passionately Creative
Advertising Agency	Ideas company

Figure 2.7.: Differences between Brands and Lovemarks. (Roberts, 2005)

According to Figure 2.7., storytelling emerged as one of the crucial elements: in order to be catchy, brands should tell stories. The first principle of storytelling affirms that:

“Human memory is story-based.”, (Schank, 1999)

The information is received and stored by human beings in the form of history. This implies two important characteristics of storytelling: immediacy, as it is a 'natural' communication; ease of memorization, as human beings have a narrative memory – the brain does not remember data, as computers do, but rather have a dynamic memory. Thus, the better a story is told, the easier it will be to remember. There are elements, such as places, actions, attitudes, decisions, conclusions in the stories that can implicitly convey understanding, empathy, appreciation, warmth, awareness. These elements create connections and references between that story and real experiences of the listener: the listener unintentionally brings together their own experiences in the interpretation of the story. Therefore, brands and products play a central role in storytelling and the use of archetypes to tell stories that everyone can reflect on. The involvement of consumers in these stories creates a link with the product, given by the sense of pleasure in listening to these stories, which are so representative and easy to identify – usually short, personal, and introspective stories. To persuade the listener, the story has to be compelling, fascinating, catchy: it has to convey not only information but also energy, emotions, meanings. A captivating story needs little creativity, but a lot of technique: metaphorically speaking, storytelling is like a well-oiled machine, a set of perfect mechanisms which lead to a well-conceived, memorable, indelible story. What are the criteria for a fascinating, well-told story? A story expresses how and why one's life changes: a situation defined 'inciting incident' creates narrative disorder and throws events into chaos. A good storyteller put the protagonist among opposing forces (equilibrium and chaos); the protagonist will have to deepen his psychology, to evolve, to take risks and make courageous choices to restore the initial balance. The perfect story is the one that mirrors reality. The choices the protagonist will make reveal the truth about the protagonist, and, by extension, about ourselves as human beings (Woodside, 2010).

The style of the language must be symbolic, mythical, metaphorical; it tends towards emotional and soul involvement, the identification of the protagonist; it follows the

autobiographical logic. The decisive element of the stories is the presence of narrative bifurcations, which lead to a change in the normal narrative path. Without the bifurcation, there is no narrative.

In a nutshell, the main functions of storytelling are:

1. Acculturation – Stories inform the consumer.
2. Entertainment – Stories involve, entertain, and interest the consumer.
3. Participation – Stories mobilise consumer's emotions and feelings.
4. Seduction – Amusing stories attract the consumer.

But back to us. Quoting the title of Roberts' book: 'The future beyond brands are Lovemarks': the concept of Lovemarks have been pointed out as the new direction for manufacturer brands. In this perspective, companies need to realize that market leadership, and a trusted brand does not equal to a passion brand. The company needs to go further and should create love affection. There is no doubt that many consumers are extremely knowledgeable and very wary of marketing. However, they always react positively to passions: no one can resist the enthusiasm and emotional frenzy. Nonetheless, it is very difficult to convey the emotional dimension in the business. Since Lovemarks are not owned by those who make them but belong to those who love them, it is not easy to establish how to become Lovemarks, as it is the people who love brands who decide it. Clearly, there is no idle time for companies: indeed, loving means building a meaningful, significant relationship; love is a constant process that implies maintaining contacts, working for and with consumers, trying to understand them, spending time with them, and so on. Lovemarks must look at the lives of consumers as human beings in their entirety, at the things the individual hopes for and dreams of, the things s/he fears, and the things s/he loves. Companies need to understand what people give deep meaning, not just what they buy and use. Working with consumers, actively involving them, learning to think and feel the way they do means becoming a Lovemarks (Roberts, 2005). Lovemarks could not be limited to the world defined by brands and marketing. So, what distinguishes a true love? When it came to determining what gave Lovemarks their emotional charge, three criteria were identified quite quickly. The time has come to pinpoint what made some brands stand out from the crowd and what made consumers love them: Mystery, Sensuality, and Intimacy.

2.6.1. The components of Lovemarks

As discussed above, Lovemarks are more than just an idea that can transform brands and marketing all-round: they are a means to change the way companies see themselves and the attitude of consumers towards companies. That is why there is a need to reshape the skeleton of companies themselves in order to be tough-skinned: metaphorically speaking, Lovemarks aim to create a new armour that makes companies barefaced and able to deal with the difficulties of the post-modern economy. As suggested by Figure 2.8., the armour is forged from durable, hard-wearing materials: Mystery, Sensuality, and Intimacy. They contribute to the transformation – already seen in Chapter 1.3. – of the brand experience in theatre. The process of theatricalization redefines the concept of shopping: entering the store means going to a *pièce de théâtre*, it means entering the theatre of dreams, where choices are dictated by emotional instinct, as well as the place where consumers are seduced.

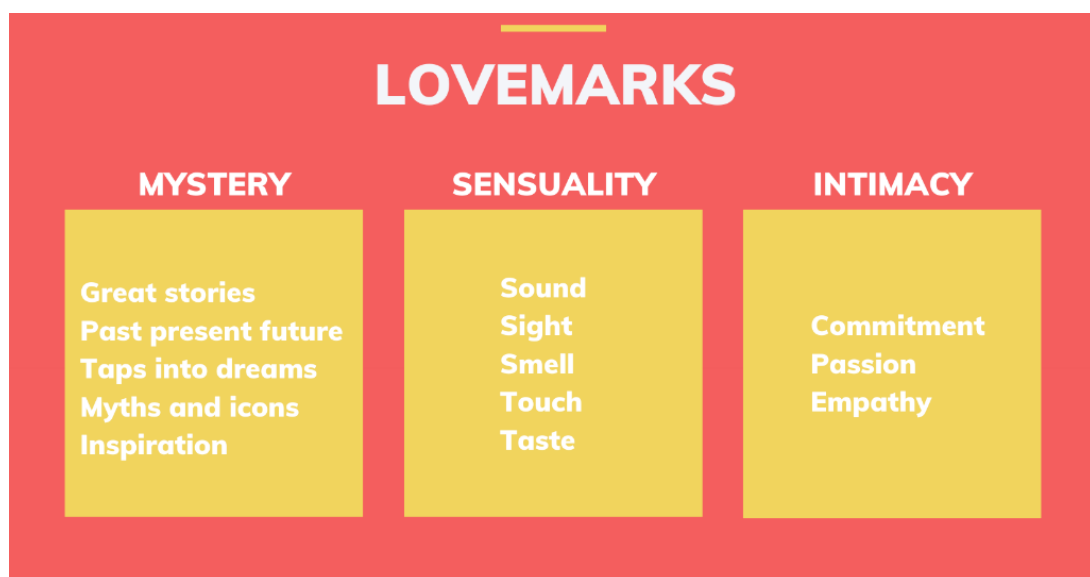


Figure 2.8.: The 'ingredients' of Lovemarks. (Roberts, 2005)

2.6.1.1. Mystery

The previous speech on storytelling was not by chance, in fact, it anticipated just the essence of the 'mysterious' component. Submerging consumers and drowning them in an ocean of information is tantamount to extinguishing desire: in fact, consumers want to make discoveries on their own and want things to intrigue them. Mystery consists of great stories that tap into dreams, myths, and icons. Mystery provides inspiration. The mystery

keeps you going back for more and “keeps you guessing” (Sayers, Monin, 2007). Storytelling is a powerful marketing strategy that uses narratives to appeal to or inspire consumers, to stimulate their imagination and to involve them emotionally. Given that well-told stories are better remembered and more convincing than facts, narratives enhance consumption experience in a way that influences consumers’ feelings, opinions, or lifestyles. Through this emotional influence, storytelling creates a holistic brand image and can relay to consumers the desired information (Mossberg, 2008).

*“The telling and hearing of stories is a bonding ritual that breaks through illusions of separateness and activates a deep sense of our collective interdependence [...] Other methods of influence - persuasion, bribery, or charismatic appeals - are push strategies. Story is a pull strategy. If your story is good enough, people - of their own free will - come to the conclusion they can trust you and the message you bring.”,
(Simmons, 2006)*

Such stories must be told, but not too often, as happens with legends and myths, of which we receive only fragments, small portions of the story. Lovemarks adapt to new generations of consumers by keeping their own story: Lovemarks, in fact, know how to capitalize on their stories, they know that these are told by individuals. stories come from people who love what the company does. big brands, after all, have always had great stories. Since Lovemarks are the embodiment of a real romance between consumers and branded products, their relationship must be nourished by novelties, expectations, and surprises. When the consumer already knows everything there is to know and the brand becomes predictable, there is no longer the curiosity to discover and the beauty to be amazed. A relationship adrift is like a dull flame that must be enlivened by the spark of the unexpected. Mystery is a paradox: it is widely believed that a product that is flooded with numerical data increases its credibility, but the fewer details there are, the more it creates a halo of secrecy that excites consumers. Therefore, companies must aim to maximize the Mystery, avoiding adapting the world to their necessities and processes. Consumers cannot escape the fascination of the unknown: Mystery increases interest and expectations. The consumer buys the product to go beyond the Mystery and discover the truth. It is not surprising that companies struggle to communicate with consumers, when the language is that of diagrams, statistics, etc. Lovemarks must simplify their vocabulary, they must speak an intelligible language – that of emotions – to reach the heart of its

buyers. Through a process of reduction, we reach the essence of the Mystery: an epiphany, a rapid flash, called *coup de foudre*, namely a love at first sight through which the Mystery reveals emotion and adds complexity to relationships and experiences (Roberts, 2005). Unfortunately, being mysterious becomes difficult for companies in the post-modern economy, where the penetration rate of the network is very high and consumers, as a result, have an equally high level of knowledge. In this sense, the goal of businesses is to find new ways to make their processes indistinct and vague. Lovemarks combine past experiences with the dynamics of the present to build a great future. Indisputably, the past reshapes the present. Companies should not be thrown away their own stories like a garment that has been worn-out and deteriorated by time. The knowledge of the past gives companies a competitive advantage. companies must make the most of their legacy and transport it intelligently into the present. Hence, the creation of Lovemarks is cumulative: their legacy can inspire passion for current projects – which is why Lovemarks will rarely fossilize and crystallize in its own time. Lovemarks are aware that consumers are like passionate, emotional, and irrational lovers. Lovemarks must know how to listen to consumers, to show them that they can understand their desires and turn them into tangible pleasures. Only brands that can inspire their users can be called Lovemarks. In doing so, brands will be transformed into real, memorable icons. All this is Mystery, and it is a crucial element to create ‘loyalty beyond reason’.

2.6.1.2. Sensuality

When it comes to Sensuality, it is necessary to take up and expand the discussion already dealt with in Chapter 1.3.1., in which sensory mobilization, a typical connotation of Experience Marketing, was examined. As we said, the five senses are stimulating and immediate. Human beings live through the five senses, which act as a filter that allows them to discern between the things they love and the things they avoid. Brands that offer sensual experiences will become leaders in the industry, namely Lovemarks. It is no coincidence that the word ‘sense’ comes from Latin *sentīre*, present active infinitive of *sentīō*, from Proto-Indo-European **sent-*, which means “to feel”. The senses are the shortcut to emotions as they speak to the mind of people with the language of feelings, without the use of words. Sensuality is “the fast track to human emotions” and the sensual design elements of objects, scent, texture and flavour, overtly exaggerated beyond the use

aspects of the object, will influence response over and above the more “rational” product arguments (Sayers, Monin, 2007). For this reason, Lovemarks must learn to actively engage consumers, stimulating their senses: if they fail to do so, they will never be real Lovemarks. Underlying this must be an awareness of the importance of the five senses in human decision making and persuasion techniques. Nowadays, brand management must aim to satisfy the needs and desires of consumers, not to provide the simple utilitarian function of products. Channels of distribution must be thought of as providing form, time, place, and possession utilities for consumers. Unfortunately, with the increasing complexity of our lives and experiences in a society that is constantly changing, where frenzy does not give us fixed points, we no longer pay attention to what our senses suggest: yet, it is our senses that put us into action. Indeed, retail now relies heavily on ideas and imagination, in favour of store shapes and surfaces. The winning strategy is to skilfully combine colours, sounds, flavours and create a cocktail of sensations that will inebriate the consumer. For manufacturers, retailers must be partners in developing products that will appeal to consumers. Indeed, retail stores are closed environments that can exert a significant impact on consumer behaviour, cognition, and affect. The major decision areas in designing effective store environments are:

- 1) Store layout: it influences factors – i.e. how long consumers stay in the store, how many products they come into visual contact with, and what routes the consumer travels within the store – which, in turn, affect what and how many purchases are made. ‘Grid layouts’, for example, can be very effective in increasing the number of products purchased because the probability of purchasing is increased once consumers see the items. Alternatively, ‘free-flow layouts’ are designed to group merchandise into patterns – products are divided based on fixtures and signs – that allow an unstructured flow of consumer traffic: this arrangement is useful for encouraging relax shopping and impulse purchases, and for helping salespeople to move consumers to several different types of merchandise.
- 2) In-store stimuli: stores have many stimuli that influence consumers such as noises, smells, lighting, temperature, signs, colours, displays and so on (Peter, Olsen, Grunert, 1999). As far as senses are concerned, it must be said that the eyes absorb an incredible amount of information at the speed of light, which is why the processing of this infinite mass of information involves two-thirds of the cerebral

cortex of the human being. This is why the R&D sectors take into account the importance of colours: companies choose wisely the colours that will prove to be winning through a very long process that precedes the supply chain of the product by many years before it is manufactured and put on the market. Indeed, colours have been shown to have a variety of physical and psychological effects on consumers' perception of retail store environments. In addition, it is important to underline the idea that more shelf space and displays increase sales. Secondly, the sounds are evocative, and consumers' ears are like radars that pick up the frequencies of music coming from the stores. After all, music is part of our lives, we listen to it even when we do not realize it, and it accompanies us at every moment of the day; we associate songs with special moments of our existence, and when we hear a certain melody, our heads are flooded with memories. Hence, music influences people's moods and arouses strong emotions. Therefore, music played in the background while other activities are being performed affects attitudes and behaviour: the slow-tempo musical selections lead to higher sales volumes because consumers tend to spend more time and money under this condition. As far as scents are concerned, taste and smell speak to people's minds, settle in the most hidden corners, and stimulate dreams, emotions, memories. Smells stun, deceive, inebriate and capture consumers: that is why Lovemarks must develop an identifying smell that attracts, hypnotizes potential customers, and makes them cross the door of the store. As a matter of fact, the smell of particular products, such as leather goods, perfume, coffee, etc., can influence consumers' cognition and attract them to come into contact and purchase these products. Moreover, ambient scent, which is the scent that is not emanating from products but is present in the store environment, can influence store and product evaluations and shopping behaviour (Peter, Olsen, Grunert, 1999). Finally, touch is one of the most developed senses: it allows people to identify the characteristics of an object instantly, due to the sensitivity given by the dense nerve endings that people have.

To sum up, as stores with very similar product offerings proliferate, even slight differences in location can have a significant impact on market share and profitability. Store atmosphere and buyers' personality together determine the consumers' emotional responses to the store environment, which can be described in terms of pleasure (the

degree to which consumers feel good, happy and satisfied), arousal (the degree to which consumers feel excited and stimulated) and dominance (the degree to which consumers feel in control of or free to act in the store). That is why Lovemarks have to put a lot of emphasis on the senses and exploit their potential. In choosing to make life easier, companies have eliminated the beauty of feeling strong sensations from their products. The world of retailers is changing as one realizes the potential of the senses; expanding the five senses in corporate organizations, product development, and consumer relations can be an extraordinarily successful and productive source of inspiration (Roberts, 2005).

2.6.1.3. Intimacy

If Mystery and Sensuality are two short-term goals, which indicate two shortcuts to re-establish contact between brands and consumers in a deeper and more emotionally rewarding way, a third piece of the jigsaw puzzle must be found in the intimacy and interiority. Lovemarks should aim for intimate interaction with consumers without being intrusive. Sensory stimuli and surprises are counterbalanced by the warmth and confidence of Intimacy. In a nutshell, Intimacy consists of commitment, empathy, and passion. Intimacy is a natural consequence of the phenomenon of commoditization – which I have already talked about extensively – which has caused a significant distance between brands and consumers. Indeed, the obsession with growth and the lust for attention has dehumanized companies, which have lost – or never had – sensitivity towards consumers and the surrounding reality. Lovemarks must not forget the intimate dimension, on the contrary, they must follow, like Ariadne's string, the emotional thread that will retrace their way out of the labyrinth of the post-modern economy. Sterile and fast, but efficient transactions are now replaced by trading based on Intimacy. The main problem is the change of course caused by the expansion of the market: as broadens and profits increased, companies became indifferent to interpersonal relationships. Creating Intimacy means stopping talking and starting to listen and understand what consumers care most about. And it is precisely Intimacy that lays bare the companies themselves: in doing so, the barriers of secrecy are removed, and the brands finally become Lovemarks.

As mentioned earlier, one of the components of Intimacy is empathy, which is the ability to understand the emotions of others, to listen to what their hearts want to communicate – both their words and their silences. An empathic relationship, in fact, is

given by the set of signs and messages that inflexions, pauses, and gestures create. Without empathy, no emotions are created. And this is not easily acceptable for brand strategists and marketing managers since their work has always been based on numerical calculations, on data systems to be processed. Intimacy is a dimension that transcends these piers of information: Intimacy is understanding emotions. Being Lovemarks requires a long-lasting and constant commitment: it is a commitment that transforms fidelity from an unconscious acceptance to a concrete condition. Commitment turns into waiting and waiting into forgiveness of mistakes: Lovemarks make consumers overcome hard times when common sense would suggest changing (Roberts, 2005). Ultimately, passion – that is the intensity of great loves that make a relationship survive in good and bad luck – allows Lovemarks to establish their dominance on the market in the years to come. As a matter of fact, passion allows brands to achieve even the most difficult objectives: in fact, without the love of which we have so much praise, even the most meticulous plans can wither and die. Without love, even major corporations are doomed to fail. Allowing consumers to actively participate in the brand's corporate manoeuvres is a winning tool, as one often gains power by giving it away.

2.7. Future perspectives

Lovemarks are nothing more than a current representation of future prospects not only of the market but of the world as a whole. The future must be in the hands of Love, the future must depend on emotional bonds between relatives, between friends, between employers and employees, between students and professors. Human beings need affection, inspiration, optimism, creativity to solve insurmountable obstacles in everyday life. Lovemarks, in this sense, are an inspiring muse for all of us, not only as a reference model limited to the economic dimension but as a source of inspiration in every sphere of life. Lovemarks are aware that the past is immutable: one can only take inspiration from it to improve your future. Indeed, Lovemarks aim at outlining the rosiest future for marketing, promoting sustainable measures, and morally and ethically acceptable initiatives. In light of this, companies must always remain transparent and honest with consumers, who will always be placed on a pedestal and will always be at the top of the pyramid of corporate priorities. Lovemarks mean something to consumers: the best companies continuously involve them with motivations that create identity value, develop

understanding, arouse passion, and challenge future adversity. As also pointed out about Intimacy, one of the imperatives of Lovemarks is commitment. Commitment is a source of inspiration for consumers, who will be inspired by this dedication and will, in turn, commit themselves in all areas of their lives. This galvanising and motivating each other will help them to make increasingly rapid progress towards a better world. Inspiration is crucial: the more diverse the experiences Lovemarks offer, the more consumers will experience unusual things; the more varied the experiences, the more consumers will question and look at the world from different angles. It is then that the influence of Lovemarks will be significant and will have a major impact on changing the world. Only inspiration creates action: it is a matter of people expressing their potential and putting themselves out there more in life. In summary, it is precisely the creation of Lovemarks and the love that they can spring from consumers that transform them into enterprising, inspired, and action-ready individuals. Given that Lovemarks are the embodiment of the future world economic scenario, as well as the ultimate goal of companies to compete in a challenging, tough marketing environment, it is important to look to the future to understand how to keep Lovemarks' flame alive so that they do not lose ground and competitive advantage: back to the beginning, Stories and storytelling are the means that allow Lovemarks not to lose the challenge against time, not to be defeated by the passing hands, not to find themselves at the mercy of fleeting fads and temporary trends. It is only through the stories that pass from mouth to mouth, from consumer to consumer, from year to year, that Lovemarks will gradually settle down in the memories of generations of buyers. Only in this way, Lovemarks will become invulnerable and imperishable establishments. Stories become myths, myths in turn become icons. This is what keeps Lovemarks' spark alive.

2.8. Conclusion

The time has come to make an overview of this long chapter to outline the path that this dissertation is delineating and to better understand what awaits us on the horizon. In this second chapter, the transitional process from brands to Lovemarks was initially addressed – focusing on the difficulties that businesses may encounter in the economic framework previously illustrated in the first chapter. The substantial difference is made by passions and the all-round emotional dimension. Indeed, emotions shape the

relationship between human beings and companies. Now that passions play a fundamental role in the strategic asset of brands, they have become increasingly humanized in the eyes of consumers. Feelings have, therefore, provided a new perception of brands that has fostered the development of brand admiration: now brands can be cool, can be admired, can be loved. Then we came to Love, the primary emotion for human beings, as well as the main component of Lovemarks. If there is no love, there are no Lovemarks.

Lovemarks are the target to which all business realities must aim if they want to be one step ahead of competitors and reach the top of marketing. But as well as to cook a good dish, one must follow the recipe to the letter and use the ingredients listed appropriately, in order to become Lovemarks, certain components must absolutely be taken into account. If there are Mystery, Sensuality, and Intimacy, there are the prerequisites to create emotional ties between brands and consumers. Only if there are these pieces, the jigsaw puzzle is finished and Lovemarks created.

In the next chapter, I am going to put the magnifying glass on a real example of Lovemarks, which is Moleskine. I will analyse the history of the brand from a diachronic point of view, starting from the dawn, from the constitution of the brand, to understand how Moleskine has managed over time to consolidate and become the irreplaceable reality that it is today. Not only the chronological stages of the brand will be taken into consideration, but also the various products, social networks, to understand the marketing operations and winning strategies that have made Moleskine one of the most appreciated Lovemarks by people.

CHAPTER III

The case of Moleskine: a Lovemark *à la carte*

After an initial overview of the post-modern economic scenario – an economic framework in which the experiences and the strong emotions that arose from them rule the roost –, in the second chapter the reader got acquainted with the concept of Lovemarks, the natural consequence of such a market: if the emotional dimension is the catalyst for the new economic framework, companies must, therefore, aim to exert a strong influence on consumers through passion. Love is the only feeling, as well as the only means, that can guarantee lasting success to companies. After having painstakingly analysed all the facets of a market dominated by Lovemarks, and their main characteristics, the time has come to bring back a concrete example of a company that has managed to convert its brand into an unshakable, imperishable Lovemark: Moleskine. It is an Italian company with an international orientation, which has managed to bring the paper, the analogue, to the fore in a society strongly dependent on digital. Moleskine is a business that has been able to intercept external stimuli, and, as a result, it has been able to anticipate the new transformations of the market. In this chapter, it will be discussed the founding and growth challenges facing the Milanese company. The title of the chapter “a Lovemark *à la carte*” implies an underlying meaning: Moleskine is a broad-minded company, which has been able to shape its features according to the needs of its consumers. What Moleskine produces is nothing more than a physical materialization of the needs of these customers. Moleskine manufactures products for all tastes.

As we will see later, the company has been able to establish itself decisively in the market, even though the product offered is situated poles apart concerning the inputs given by a technologically advanced society. Returning to getting a pen and paper is a challenge won by Moleskine. But let us not linger, the time has come to dive completely into Moleskine's world.

3.1. Moleskine retrospective: from origins to success

To better understand the prestigious position that Moleskine currently holds in the market, it is necessary to take a look at the past, precisely at the dawn of the brand: we need to go back to 1997. Moleskine is an Italian company founded by Francesco

Franceschi, who used to manufacture and design a wide range of products – such as luxury notebooks, journals, sketchbooks, wallets, various accessories, and so forth – that met the needs and wishes of his consumers. The choice of the brand name is not accidental: it is well known that the word ‘Moleskine’ appeared for the first time in Bruce Chatwin’s book *The Songlines* (published in 1987). Indeed, Maria Sebreghondi, one of the co-founders of the company, was reading to Chatwin’s novel when she got the idea to undertake this enterprise. As stated in the book, the author used to stock up his notebooks to have enough sheets to write down all the information, suggestions, thoughts that were given birth as a result of his countless trips and journeys around the world. This is why it is no wonder that one of his most famous quotes is just the following: “To lose a passport was the least of one’s worries. To lose a notebook was a catastrophe”. A few years after the publication of the novel, the author dies, and Chatwin’s notebooks will not be heard from for a while. Indeed, as Chatwin himself stated in *The Songlines*, “Le Moleskine n’existe plus”. The writer was desperate because, in 1986, the original family-run manufactory closed down; since those notebooks were unique, he could only buy them in Tours or Paris in Rue de l’Ancienne Comédie. And from the simple abovementioned citation, one can notice the beginning of Moleskine's resurrection process, like a phoenix rising from the ashes. Indeed, Moleskine no longer existed until a small company, formed by two Milanese entrepreneurs, discovered that the trademark has never been registered and decided to make it his own, proposing again that notebook that had travelled not only in the writer's pocket but also in those of, among many others, Ernest Hemingway, Henri Matisse, and Vincent Van Gogh. It was in this way that Moleskine brought back to life an object much used during the last century, associating it with a long history that made it the heir to the notebooks of famous contemporary artists and made it an object of worship. Thanks to all this, the company was able to unlock a new market within the stationery sector and, at the same time, pursue cost leadership and diversification strategy.

But now it is necessary to retrace in detail the various stages of the brand's success. I will start by saying that during the 1990s Maria Sebreghondi was a freelancer and owner of a concept design and strategic communication studio. Her travelling companions were Francesco Franceschi, entrepreneur of the company *Modo & Modo*, and Fabio Rosciglione, sales manager. Maria Sebreghondi pitched the idea of resurrecting the aforementioned iconic notebooks to Franceschi’s company, even though the product

category was already saturated with other types of notebooks that stocked the shelves of stationery stores.

*“We discovered that the name Moleskine was copyright free. In order to win the bet, it was a question of creating small objects that were not only functional but also aesthetically beautiful, with their own storytelling. Objects that were certainly intended for a market niche, but that we knew it was comprehensive of creative and hyper-technological professionals.”*², (Sebregondi, 2017)

As a result, *Modo & Modo* trademarked the Moleskine brand, officially reintroduced a simple high-quality notebook to the marketplace in 1997, and started a small production. The notebook production has risen dramatically: the company has seen a sixfold increase in the number of units manufactured within a year – it passed from 5,000 to 30,000 notebooks. By 2000, *Modo & Modo* expanded its market, distributing in hugely across Europe. But that was only the beginning: the company's broad outlook was not limited to Europe; soon Asia was also the recipient of the notebooks that were now enjoyed by half the world. The small Milanese company was now in the public eye and was competing with large multinationals, offering a product of high calibre. A high-quality product – which from Italy has managed to reach distant destinations and touch the hearts of consumers even in Japan – must necessarily be supported by professional management. Unfortunately, as such globalization put pressure on the company's small staff, Moleskine's employees became unable to keep up with demand. That said, in August 2006, the French investment fund *Société Générale Capital Europe* purchased 75% of *Modo & Modo*. One of the first manoeuvres of the new management was to change the company name to Moleskine S.r.l. The reason why the Italian firm *Modo & Modo* chose the name Moleskine is that it referred to the 20th century artistic avant-garde I talked about before. This sharpens the perception of authenticity – as we will see later –, through a strong sense of continuity between the past and the present. Another key manoeuvre was to invest in its expansion by extending Moleskine's production to new categories. It is important to remind that during the *Modo & Modo* period, the company had just a few

² Since I wanted to quote a source from a language that is different from the one I am writing in, I am also presenting the original passage: “*Scoprimmo che il nome Moleskine era libero da copyright. Per vincere la scommessa si trattava di creare piccoli oggetti non solo funzionali ma esteticamente belli e storytelling, con una loro storia. Oggetti destinati certo a una nicchia ma che però sapevamo essere globale di professionisti creativi e ipertecnologizzati*”.

product categories. It is only afterwards that Moleskine continued expanding by developing a new variety of different product collections and lines. Most of the objects – these new collections were designed by Italian industrial designer Giulio Iacchetti – were accessories surrounding reading and writing than paper goods. As we will see later, the wide range of products manufactured by Moleskine will meet the needs of consumers, will try to merge analogue and digital to create hybrid solutions, will anticipate the trends that have emerged with technology. It will be a return to paper, without forgetting the technical support given by digital. The more the brand grows in notoriety, the greater will be the diversification of the collections available. By July 2012, Moleskine collections were distributed in 22,000 retailers around the world. Moleskine's affiliations in the two largest markets outside Europe – *Moleskine America*, established in 2008, and *Moleskine Asia*, established in 2011 – reflect Moleskine's clear strategy of fully developing the brand. The following year an important event in the brand's history occurs: the company announced an Initial Public Offering (IPO) at the *Borsa Italiana* and, therefore, Moleskine became a joint-stock company, Moleskine S.p.A. In 2016, the Belgian investment group *D'Ieteren* acquired a 41% stake in Moleskine. Then, after having launched a public takeover offer on the remaining shares of the company, *D'Ieteren* crossed the 95% threshold, which gives it the right to launch a squeeze-out procedure to gain full control of Moleskine. The following year, *D'Ieteren* acquired 100% of Moleskine and, thereafter, decided to proceed with the delisting from *Borsa Italiana*.

As already said, the dissertation does not want to sort through the changes that have transformed the Moleskine business, but it must be taken into account the impact that all these events had on the company and on the decisions taken by the managers and consultants at that time. All these vicissitudes made the company evolve consistently over the years to the present day. In short, Moleskine S.p.A. has always aimed to transform to be a professionally managed firm by expanding into new geographies, product categories, and distribution channels. The company has also developed several strategic collaborations with Silicon Valley firms to expand into an array of digital products – this issue will be addressed later. The strength of the company has been that it has always been internationally oriented, without losing sight of the local reality, of the importance of the individual. The ultimate goal of Moleskine business is to expand the firm's capabilities while continuing to preserve its organizational identity and creative culture.

As a reference to Greek mythology, Moleskine, unlike Icarus, has been able to dare, to fly too close to the sun; Moleskine knew that its wings would not melt, that the means at the company's disposal would overcome the obstacles of the market. But in order to understand how the brand became a Lovemark, a point of reference for thousands of devoted consumers, we cannot just dwell on a simple timeline of events from the company's birth to its affirmation. It is crucial to analyse the strategies put in place and the decisions made by the firm, which have proved fundamental to Moleskine's global success.

3.2. Moleskine's transition to Lovemark

As I argued earlier, what has decreed Moleskine's enormous global success and have led it to change its strategic positioning in the stationery sector is the company's ability to identify what were the core values for an unborn target group that was emerging, but also the ability to anticipate market changes and exploit them to its own advantage: metaphorically speaking, a good sailor is someone who can predict adverse currents and exploit them to make his vessel go faster and faster. Surely the business success is given by the great contribution of consumers, who are always put on a pedestal by Moleskine – just think of the *MyMoleskine* initiative and other projects like this, which will be discussed thoroughly in Chapter 3.3.2. Moleskine's customers want to be creative people who handwrite what they are experiencing while they are travelling or when they have their creative moment; by the time that they have a high cultural level, they need a product that would make them feel like contemporary artists and help them redefine their role in society. Hence, if we were to position the perception of the Moleskine brand, in fact, we would have to insert it more towards the cultural and identity dimension, rather than the functional one. Everything named Moleskine is designed to enable self-expression and the diffusion of ideas. As already stated, Moleskine objects are chosen by consumers for both their semantic meaning and their functionality: Moleskine's products embody one's own individual identity; besides, the mix of items and articles people never leave home without tells a unique story about who they really are.

“A key to understanding what possessions mean is recognizing that, knowingly or unknowingly, intentionally or unintentionally, we regard our possessions as parts of ourselves.”, (Belk, 1988)

Indeed, people express their selves through possessions; they also rely on possessions to reflect an identity that they have achieved or that they wish to embody (Alexis, 2017). In this perspective, the Moleskine notebook, apparently an ordinary object, represents a facilitating artefact for the performance of the identification process of the individual.

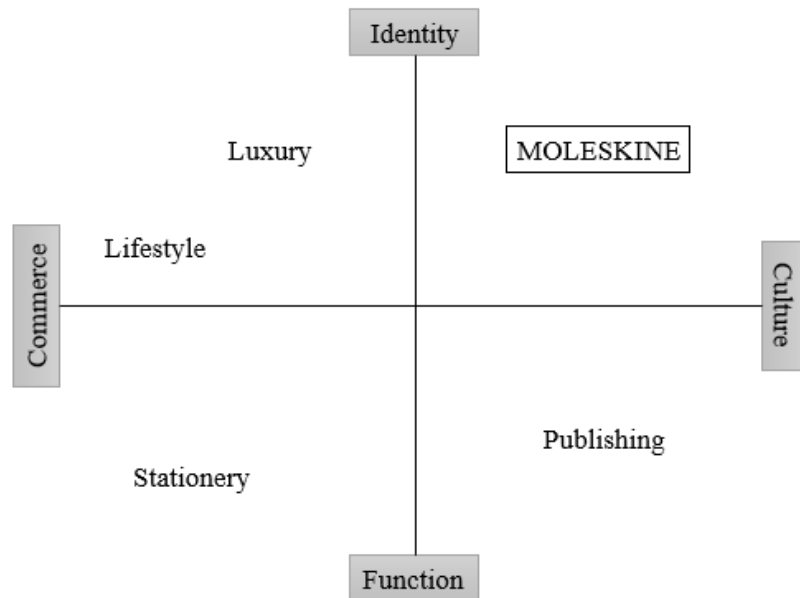


Figure 3.1.: Moleskine's strategic positioning. (Quiroga, Speirs, 2013)

From Figure 3.1., it is evident that Moleskine is not a simple company operating in the stationery sector, but a trading reality that offers something more, as it can move something significant and strong in the consumer on an emotional level. As a matter of fact, the possession of a Moleskine notebook made consumers feel differently about themselves and drove them towards self-enhancement. Moleskine reflects the way objects are used as self-expression in service of building an identity around writing. Moleskine objects, therefore, represent a record of one's mental life, thoughts, and emotions; thus, aspects of one's being (Alexis, 2017). As it can be observed in the Cartesian plan, Moleskine's positioning is closer to a luxury brand, rather than a stationery firm. This can be explained by the margins on the selling price that characterize Moleskine collections and lines: in fact, these are far from the usual margins in the paper industry (Boscato, 2019). But what does it mean to be able to adapt to a new market? Or rather, how has Moleskine adapted to changes in the market? The features of the market that have come to emerge recently are the same that have been extensively analysed in the first chapter

of the dissertation. And these features are the same ones that in a certain way have then outlined a path that, if followed step by step, leads the brand to its coveted destination: becoming a Lovemark. As far as the economic framework is concerned, one of the discontinuities of the post-modern market is that of technological advancement. As a matter of fact, Moleskine has perfectly grasped the competitive advantages deriving from digitalization and has incorporated the techno into the retro. Moleskine entered the online digital market as the company envisaged that the Internet was the future of marketing and the place where the forward-looking businesses would have invested soon their capital. So, the reason why Moleskine is still staying at the forefront in this sector is that the company has been one of the first to invest in social media and partnerships with other companies, especially those that are leaders in the digital space. Hence, technological tools and devices turned out to be what contributed the most to strengthening a brand based on pen and paper. Indeed, Moleskine's proposal has gradually progressed to include an entire ecosystem of objects and services that accompany a creative, productive lifestyle made of complementarity between analogue and digital activities. To date, Moleskine's business has expanded due to changes in market essence and consumer preferences, which have led the company to sell smart notebooks, apps, tools, bags, and other writing accessories. The range of products offered by Moleskine is so variegated that the company can be also defined as a 'platform brand' because for several years now, in addition to notebooks, the firm has also created accessories, books, writing instruments. Moreover, by concentrating on expanding its product offering, Moleskine focused both on innovation in existing categories such as paper, and enlargement to similar categories, with the goal of integrating notebooks to the digital world, so customers can bridge between their notebook and immediately share their notes through an app.

"We have never wanted to create opposition between these worlds, possibly the success is derived from the fact that we have been able to welcome change positively, and exploit the potential that digital offered to completely revise our business model."³, (Lobetti Bodoni⁴, 2018)

³ Since I wanted to quote a source from a language that is different from the one I am writing in, I am also presenting the original passage: *"Non abbiamo mai voluto creare contrapposizione tra questi mondi, forse il successo è derivato dal fatto di aver saputo accogliere il cambiamento con positività, e sfruttare le potenzialità che il digitale offriva per rivedere completamente il nostro modello di business"*.

⁴ Roberto Lobetti Bodoni is Moleskine's Chief Marketing Officer.

To welcome change positively is to leverage what is new and different to create a competitive advantage. What has made the brand successful is its adaptability to market changes. Moleskine promotes and encourages creativity through the implementation of objects, platforms, collaborations, and services to support talent and culture, and above all the dissemination of knowledge. But technological innovation, as is well known, has also been expressed in the transformation of the production and reception of information. The high penetration rate of the network, the transition to an 'onlife' existence (Floridi, 2015) has led people to live in a hyper-connected world where there is no longer a distinction between being online or being offline; a world where everything can be obtained with a click; a world where the most disparate information can be retrieved with a search engine; a world – the virtual one – which acts as a fruitful sea for companies that now fish for new ideas: it is the consumer-innovators who, from below, actively and creatively influence the company's production chain. Nowadays innovation exploitation regimes have changed: companies are working with consumers – who are now playing the role of new producers and, therefore, are renamed 'prosumers' – to renew themselves. Moleskine has been able to exploit crowdsourcing, which is nothing more than drawing on the help of a crowd of people. Nowadays innovation is no longer solely in the hands of the company but is much more distributed. Hence, Moleskine is a brand co-designed and co-developed by its consumers. To sum up, collaborative innovation is different from traditional innovation for the following reasons:

1. It is based on the customer, whereas the previous one is based on companies only. Today there is a strong permeability between the company and the outside world.
2. The role of the client is active, it is a partner in innovation. The consumer is no longer passive.
3. In the direction of two-way interaction, there is a dialogue; the interaction is continuous and not episodic as in the past.
4. The wealth of interaction: companies dedicate time, energy, attention to consumers. They are systematically involved.
5. The change in the scope and range of the audience reached.

As already mentioned in the first chapter, the consumer has become the real fulcrum of the market, a customer who participates dynamically, actively, and makes his/her needs

felt by the company he/she buys. What ensured the company's global success was Moleskine ability to well interpret this market trend. For this reason, Moleskine has aimed to leverage a 'below the line' communication⁵, by intensifying the use of social media and viral communication, and, especially, the expansion of website market coverage, thus increasing the number of visits and market penetration. This type of communication brings production and consumption closer together, making the two affect and influence each other. The closer the company and consumers are in contact with each other, the more intense mutual exchange will be facilitated, which will lead to the growth of the brand. One need only think of the *Moleskinerie* case: after the first lustrum since the creation of the company, the first communities of brand loyal users appeared spontaneously online demonstrating the triple connection existing between Moleskine, its fans, and the digital world. It happened that a Moleskine fan created a fan blog on Flickr, where users started uploading thousands of images. It achieved such popularity that the company assumed control and now runs it. To date, Moleskine manages a Flickr group called with nearly 30,000 members and almost 150,000 uploaded photos. So, the international strength of Moleskine comes from a constant interaction between art and the brand's community. We are gradually getting closer to the typical connotations of Lovemarks. The pieces, one by one, are starting to compose the patchwork. As already said, Moleskine is a cultural icon, a brand that tells a story: indeed, Moleskine represents the history of the most desired and used notebooks by twentieth-century avant-garde artists; the history of the notebooks that have been in the hands and pockets of the leading figures in literature and art in general of the last century. That is why Moleskine notebooks immediately got an aura that transcended the object itself (Boscato, 2019). This "history" inscribes a promise to consumers: a Moleskine product connects the owner to a creative heritage in art, literature and cultural exploration (Alexis, 2017). But also, the idea that there is a *fil rouge* linking past and present, for which Moleskine notebook is automatically a quality product, precisely because it was used in its time, by the great artists and thinkers of the period. And what can people write down in their notebooks? Drawings, thoughts, aphorisms, geographical maps, sketches, and so on and so forth. Indeed, Moleskine is a brand connected to the collection of memories, the organization

⁵ The 'below the line' communication represents all communication activities that do not include the paid and large-scale advertising.

of time and priorities in both individual's working life and leisure time. Moleskine offers a collection of tools to accompany its consumers on their extraordinary journeys. Moleskine collections are trusty companions for meaningful existential experiences. In a sense, Moleskine's products become an integral part of one's personality. In this perspective, Moleskine's strength is associated with the phenomenon of singularization, which is an individuated experience of making meaning from a thing and decommodifying it by integrating it into one's life (Epp, Price, 2010). Moleskine's notebook is a basic, compact, and intelligent accessory.

As far as Moleskine products are concerned, symbolic and practical design elements converge in them, releasing energy and emotions collected over time. Hence, Moleskine made the design its strong suit. In the past, technology was seldom associated with charm and the search for the detail that would make the object even more attractive. With the introduction of Moleskine collections, every product is synonymous with elegance and trend. The marketing strategies and manoeuvres implemented by the company, and that we have examined so far, have guaranteed an exponential, sustainable long-term growth of the business, as can be seen from the statistics shown in Table 3.1.

Moleskine – Key Figures

<i>(EUR million)</i>	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
<i>External revenue</i>	98.8	128.2	145.2	155.4	174.1
<i>Operating result</i>	25.3	34.8	34.0	25.2	28.6
<i>Operating margin</i>	25.6%	27.2%	23.4%	16.2%	16.4%
<i>Result before tax</i>	24.1	34.6	32.9	15.2	18.9
<i>Result after tax</i>	16.5	27.1	23.3	10.1	22.8
<i>Number of stores</i>	41	58	79	87	80
<i>Number of employees</i>	278	359	401	468	491

Table 3.1.: Moleskine's results in the four-year period 2014-2018.⁶

As summarized in Table 3.1., Moleskine is a global brand and a creative company enjoying continued growth, which counts over half a thousand employees and a vast

⁶ The figures given in the table refer to Moleskine' activity report, retrieved from the following url: https://www.dieteren.com/sites/default/files/eng_-_4_-_moleskine-_activity_report_-_2018_-_bdef.pdf

network of partners and professionals. It is a broad-minded company which is located in different countries around the world in over 27,500 points of sale. The company has always framed itself in an international context since the beginning. It has always reasoned globally (Boscato, 2019). That is why the Moleskine Group includes the following wholly-owned subsidiaries: *Moleskine America*, *Moleskine Asia*, *Moleskine Shanghai*, *Moleskine Germany*, and *Moleskine Japan*. One can talk about a global retail market: Moleskine stores – as it will be discussed later in Chapter 3.3.3. – are not just places where it is possible to find and purchase any product of the company's merchandise but, as we will see, a possible universe of values and meanings that the company wants to convey. Opening the door of a Moleskine store is like crossing the threshold and entering another dimension. Moleskine increases its high visibility and imposes its leadership on the market with displays in major retailers around the world, new partnerships, and e-commerce platforms. As far as Moleskine's dominance and competitive advantage on the market are concerned, one cannot but consider the company's impact on B2B.

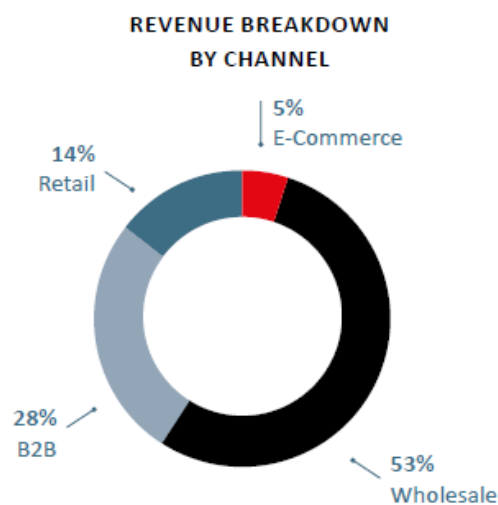


Figure 3.2.: Moleskine's revenue breakdown, 2018.⁷

Although one must be aware that this pie chart dates back to 2018 and in two years the percentage of revenue breakdown has seen a dizzying increase in e-commerce slice, the B2B is still one of the dominant channels. Taking a look at Figure 3.2., it is clear that B2B has become a very important part of Moleskine's manoeuvres and activities,

⁷ *Ibidem*

considering that 28% of the sales were coming from corporate clients. As a matter of fact, B2B is the company's second most important channel in terms of sales and is expected to make a significant contribution to future growth. The B2B segment targeted follows the same characteristics as the B2C segment. Moleskine aims at those corporate clients who appreciate the design and intrinsic values of the brand's collections. Moleskine's B2B business transactions involve companies that want to enhance creativity and innovation or seek exclusive stationery products for upper-level management (Armiñana, Trapp, Aguilar, Ramly, 2013). It is not possible to make too many anticipations on the successful initiatives of the brand – as they will be the focus of the next subchapters – but it is quite predictable that a success like Moleskine's will lead consumers to love all the products associated with the brand. Moleskine has become a Lovemark, which is the leader of the stationery category and the most loved brand by the users. And love makes people do reckless things: it not only mobilizes the senses, but it also inhibits rationality. That is why many people are eagerly awaiting the launch of new collections, lurking outside Moleskine's stores even several days in advance. Although the market offers similar if not better products in the same product category, this only happens with a company as strongly attractive as a Lovemark.

“A Lovemark is a brand that is chosen without making other evaluations, [...] a brand that you love, on which you invest an emotion, and which allows this brand to be more profitable, because it can margin more and spend less since it is already known and consumers will be your brand ambassadors.”⁸, (Lobetti Bodoni, 2018)

Only Moleskine can get people to stand in line for what is, after all, a ‘mere’ notebook. And this is not just a handful of devoted customers, but countless thousands of loyal consumers. These consumers are deeply devoted and strongly attached to the brand; they are scattered all over the world and are willing to do anything to try and own the very latest product released by Moleskine as if they want to show their genuine, unconditional love for the brand. Moleskine's consumers do all this not so much to satisfy a real need,

⁸ Since I wanted to quote a source from a language that is different from the one I am writing in, I am also presenting the original passage: *“Un Lovemark è un brand che viene scelto senza fare altre valutazioni, [...] un brand che ami, sul quale investi un'emozione, e che consente a questa marca di essere più profittevole, perché può marginare di più e spendere di meno perché è già conosciuta e i consumatori saranno i tuoi brand ambassador”*.

their behaviour is not a real necessity, but is the action of human beings driven by irrationality and emotions. Moleskine performs identity work, invites an attachment, provides an entry into a desired identity or practice, and spurs internal reflection (Alexis, 2017). Indeed, the company's communication is not based on material elements or functional characteristics of the product as for the main brands of the stationery sector but, rather, on the intangible values of the brand, that we have seen being culture, personal identity, travel, and so on. Most of the time Moleskine's clients are guided by feelings reflected by the brand and they try to demonstrate their personality and sense of belonging through a brand product. Furthermore, Moleskine has been able to demonstrate its strong authenticity – which is fundamental in the process from branding to bonding, to make consumers love the brand – in two ways: on the one hand, Moleskine does not just show what its product catalogues and lines are, as the company builds an honest and crystal-clear communication with the consumer that goes beyond simply exposing what the brand has to offer; on the other hand, Moleskine manifested its authenticity through the maintenance of the legacy of the past, as Moleskine refers to a past heritage which enables the identification of customers inspired by old values, the same ones that make the consumer perceive the reliability and the professionalism of the company.

3.3. Successful brand initiatives

But then what are those initiatives, those marketing strategies and manoeuvres that have turned out to be brilliant and that have guaranteed the competitive advantage of the brand over other rival companies? How far did the far-sightedness of Moleskine's managers and consultants go? From the contents and the design of a notebook to an inspiring conversation at Moleskine Café; from a smart writing system to a vast, creative community of almost half a million users. The Moleskine website can be considered the essential tool that the brand uses to keep in touch with its consumers. From the site itself, it is possible to learn more about the projects with which the company tries to be close to its customers, through spaces widely dedicated to each of those initiatives. That is why, the website represents the perfect starting point on which the brand has built its community of lovers: a clear, user-friendly, and easily navigable site from which it is possible to find all the useful information. In the following subchapters it will be examined a series of examples of the innovative power of Moleskine products and

initiatives, and the incredible feedback they have in the marketplace, with the unconditional approval of consumers.

3.3.1. *Moleskine+*

In an era where everything surrounding people is electronic, Moleskine has aimed at a return to the pleasures of writing on sheets, having ink on one's fingers, and the tactile and olfactory nature of paper: this has done nothing but exalt, or even sanctify, the act of writing and, consequently, lead to Moleskine's worldwide success. The company decided to invest in the digital world precisely because it wanted to play a decisive role in the connection of the digital and analogue dimensions. In doing so, the brand has shown respect and appreciation for the thoughts and ideas of its customers. Indeed, since handwriting is not a transitory act, Moleskine makes what people write special by producing notebooks where people's art can crystallize eternally. Moleskine notebooks have a kind of permanence, as consumers feel that their writing is being preserved. However, the next step was to make the analogue tools interact with the digital ones: this process enhanced an increase in the creativity of those who use Moleskine products. By doing so, the brand encouraged people to increase their productivity so that they can feel more comfortable when expressing themselves. It is for this reason that the *Moleskine+* collections were born: these collections are designed to integrate perfectly with paper tools and digital devices, thus meeting the most varied needs. The natural integration of analogue and technological elements promoted creativity by helping people to collect, develop, and share their ideas. Indeed, it possible to build a very active community of 'moleskiners' only through a synergistic action that aims to combine two worlds that only apparently appear distinct (Cipriani, 2010). As suggested in Figure 3.3., Moleskine's credo is that integration between these parallel worlds adds wealth to the lives of its consumers. Moreover, proposing hybrid solutions means meeting the consensus of an objectively superior catchment area, since it is possible to receive the approval of both those who are anchored to the paper and ignore the existence of digital and those who, on the contrary, have abandoned the analogue and live, work and enjoy digital tools daily.

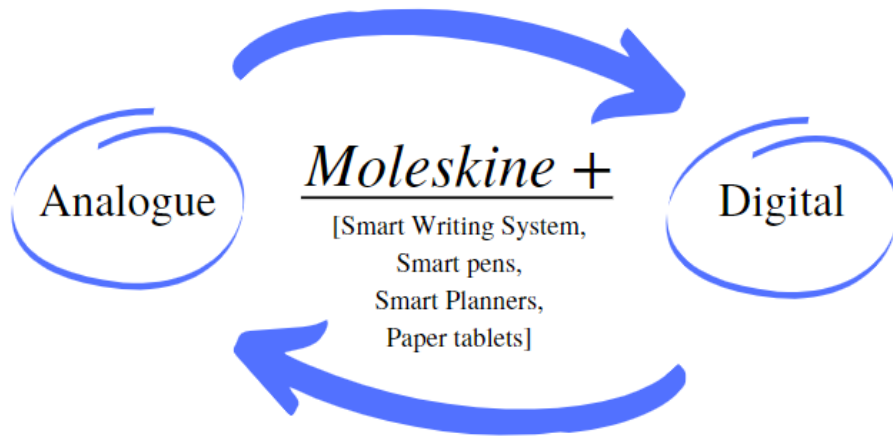


Figure 3.3.: Interaction between analogue and digital dimensions.

Moleskine+ collections are constantly developed and updated, adding tools that make it easy and intuitive to switch from analogue to digital, to allow anyone to write a thought on paper and organize it, modify it and archive it digitally, to sketch a project, image or drawing in the Moleskine notebook and immediately transfer it to their computer or digital device. Handwriting and drawing are the most instinctive creative gestures, without neglecting the convenience of transferring ideas from paper to digital with the touch of a pen. All the tools and devices from *Moleskine+* collections complement each other not only in form but also in functionality. So, a brilliant idea may be recorded on a notebook before being shared and developed online, and then back to the paper in the printed form again. In proof of this, in 2016, Moleskine launched The Smart Writing System, which can automatically transfer notes from the notebook onto a laptop or smartphone. In short, Moleskine intended to launch a smart collection that proposed a set of objects to complement the notebook experience. Expanding the range of application of its purpose, Moleskine made a foray into a market related to its business, but that until then was outside its spectrum (Boscato, 2019).

3.3.2. *MyMoleskine*

The company has been able to market not just a product, or a variety of products, but also a community. It can be assumed that Moleskine sells much more than a notebook (Alexis, 2017). Emblematic is the case of the online community that Moleskine has managed to create over the years: *MyMoleskine* is configured as a virtual platform where artists and scribblers can share their creative works and comment on them mutually. The

Moleskine brand can be defined as a stage onto which people project their hopes and fears about their writing skills and their art in general (Alexis, 2017). With this in mind, *MyMoleskine* represents a multipurpose stage as people gather in that space not only to share their artistic creations but also to interact in a reciprocal way to talk about the brand and their expectations about future Moleskine projects. This place is not only a meeting point for loyal consumers and aspiring artists, but also a source of ideas for Moleskine itself. Not surprisingly, there is the possibility of getting in touch and interact with the company's staff. So, the listening process by the firm plays a fundamental role. The Moleskine company is very attentive to the relationship with the people who are members of its community and is not worried about the direct relationship with its customers. Moleskine must not relinquish its position, on the contrary, it must hold on to the bond it has managed to forge with its consumers over the years. It is precisely through this direct contact between consumer-producer that brand managers and strategists can grasp what the desires and needs of consumers are. And from this input, Moleskine can start to manufacture a product that comes close to the demands of customers. Moleskine has been able to encourage the growth of a community of almost half a million active users – a phenomenon more unique than rare in the present-day marketplace. Indeed, the Moleskine brand is supported by worldwide communities of enthusiasts who write, sketch, paint and draw on Moleskine notebooks. However, those communities often share images of decorated pages through blogs, social networks, or photo and video sharing sites. Hence, after realizing that there were so many people who used Moleskine notebooks as canvases, the company decided to create its own service that would polarize all consumers towards a single centre of aggregation. In short, *MyMoleskine* represents a living library that inspired creations that welcomes illustrations, watercolour sketches, pencilled portraits, and so forth. The act of sharing in socials and communities has made the world more and more homogeneous and it is also for this reason that Moleskine has been able to ride the wave and to be coveted and loved, even by those who use paper only sporadically (Baratto, 2018). Having a solid community that supports the brand in every move, which is always there to buy the very last product that the company cranks out, made Moleskine's fortune. Indeed, to have a competitive advantage that corresponds to an intangible feature protects Moleskine from competitors that try to imitate its market positioning (Boscato, 2019). Moleskine has been able to transform a digital platform into

a playground of creativity, where normal people can show off their works and receive appreciation from all corners of the planet.

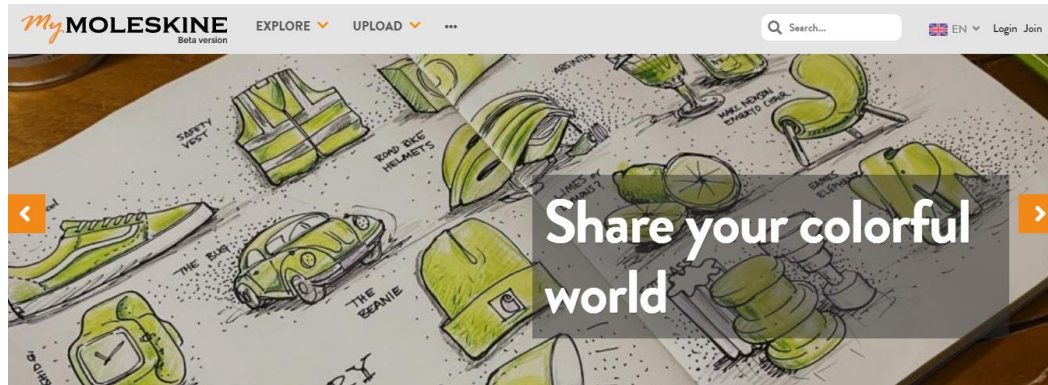


Figure 3.4.: MyMoleskine's homepage.

3.3.3. Moleskine Café

During the company's growth period, Moleskine felt the need to create a physical extension of the brand as a counterbalance to the virtual interactive space I just discussed. A need dictated by the desire to increase the company's degree of growth. The result is an innovative, replicable, and scalable format that exposes consumers to the brand and to the creative content it generates: *Moleskine Café*. This new experiment was launched for the first time in Genève airport, in 2016. The company intended to recreate those spaces which in the past influenced the artistic and literary avant-garde that first made the notebooks famous and then made Moleskine's fortune. Therefore, *Moleskine Cafés* embody the contemporary reinterpretation of the classic *café littéraire* and are designed to be stimulating, appealing, and restful. The *Moleskine Café* is designed to be a mosaic: it is a place that mixes feature of the café, art gallery, and retail store, to provide a set of elements that embrace and pamper the consumer. On one hand, *Moleskine Café* is a place that enables deep thinking and fosters conversations, a place to feed consumers' mind and boosts their creativity, thanks to interactive walls displaying works, drawings and illustrations by designers and professionals from all over the world – in this sense, *Moleskine Cafés* may act like showcases. On the other hand, *Moleskine Cafés* also feature sales corners where guests and visitors can browse the ecosystem of Moleskine objects and purchase their favourite tools and accessories. But let us not forget that we are talking about a place that contains the word *café* in the sign. Indeed, it remains a cafeteria from

the elegant, minimalist design. The high quality of the goods and services offered by Moleskine is also reflected in the quality of what is offered within the Café. In this sense, quality is synonymous with carefully chosen raw materials and attention to eco-sustainability. As a matter of fact, the menu offers products at km0, emphasizing strong ethical attention to food. Moreover, the coffee that is poured into the cups inside *Moleskine Cafés* is that of 7Gr.⁹. Therefore, everything, even coffee, in the Moleskine world is synonymous with high quality. It is astonishing how successful the experiment was, considering that the food and beverage sector was an uncharted territory – that Moleskine has undoubtedly managed to conquer – for a company that for years has focused its effort on producing notebooks. The *Moleskine Café* pay-off says “Somewhere new to talk, write, read, drink, eat”. It suggests that *Moleskine Café* is a place where the identity of the brand takes shape: a new dimension where the consumer's desire to express his/her creativity and the possibility to relax in a restaurant that stimulates art converge – maybe alternating a drawing and a sip of a cup of good coffee.



Figure 3.5.: *Moleskine café*'s entrance and interior design.

⁹ Sevensgrams is an Italian company that aims to relaunch Italian espresso, transforming a simple daily routine into a unique, unforgettable tasting experience.

3.3.4. Moleskine Foundation

The *Moleskine Foundation* is a non-profit organization created in 2016, whose mantra is to provide quality education, as proper schooling is key to producing a positive, significant revolution in society and driving collective future. *Moleskine Foundation* is the heir of Lettera27, which is another non-profit organization founded a decade before, in 2006, with whom Moleskine had a partnership lasted over 10 years. The values of the *Moleskine Foundation* are the same that years ago led to the creation of the company and the development of the brand: in a nutshell, an ambitious cultural project aimed at encouraging everyone's imagination and promote creativity as an engine for positive social change. To date, the goal Moleskine has set itself is to bring those same values to the non-profit sector in order to promote shared creativity that does not form part of the company's annual revenue, but which contributes significantly to social and individual change. The organization can be defined as an unconventional cultural project that has developed several initiatives especially in Africa related to the rights to education and knowledge development. The organization takes under its wing those communities that suffer from high rates of illiteracy and those social realities seriously affected by cultural and social deprivation. In this perspective, the *Moleskine Foundation* is committed to providing the poorest populations, with particular attention to young people, with unconventional educational tools and experiences that help nourish critical thinking and imaginative fantasia. What is important to point out is that the role the company plays in the *Moleskine Foundation* goes beyond mere financial support. Indeed, the Foundation is independent of Moleskine, which provides support to it by financing and covering with its revenues the Foundation's organisational and fixed costs. The company plays an innovative role, as it can combine the strength and the influence of the brand with non-profit initiatives, to attract funding and ideas transparently and effectively. *Moleskine Foundation* presented in 2018 "I Had a Dream", an exhibition in which a series of notebooks made by students who participated in one of the *AtWork* workshops were exposed. *AtWork* was created in 2012 in Dakar by *Moleskine Foundation*, and since then travels the world to inspire a new generation of creative thinkers. The project consists of workshops where participants are involved in a collective debate and individual reflection on issues such as identity, culture, and community. Hence, the workshop ends with the creation by each student of a personalized notebook, the result of the personal elaboration

process activated by the workshop. The notebooks are then displayed in an exhibition co-curated by the participants.



Figure 3.6.: AtWork tour 2018 “I had a dream”.

3.4. Conclusion

We have seen in detail the strategic line of Moleskine that has led the brand to global success and to enter the hearts of consumers. It is possible to conclude by saying that Moleskine’s prosperity is given by the great ability of the company to analyse the market and build a solid business strategy that led the company to maximize profits and enlarge its loyal customer base. The idea of holding a pen and noting one's feelings is an act of love for culture. To grow one's culture is to love oneself and have self-respect. Moleskine's *modus operandi* emphasizes the emotional leverage on which Moleskine bases its entire business, thus gaining a competitive advantage and positioning itself in a premium segment of the stationery industry. Writing leads to lingering, to not take anything for granted, to savour moments lived; the notebook is, therefore, the ideal companion for consumers, who will also find a way to write down places, names, meetings for possible future use. With a notebook in the pocket, every little detail of the surrounding reality becomes an ideal cue for a pause for writing and reflection. Moleskine did not simply produce and market an apparent niche item like the notebook and make it

a cult object. The company has been able to take advantage of its leading position in the stationery sector and has expanded its world, ranging in the most diverse contexts, as we have seen from the initiatives proposed by the company over time. Once established, the company has decided to remain imprinted in the minds of consumers not only for notebooks but through a capillary presence in the lives of those same consumers. Not only shops but also cafeterias and communities that would allow entering more in contact with consumers; initiatives that would also involve people from a human point of view; the goal was to enter people's lives to remain there for an everlasting memory. And once the company has been overbearingly influential in the lives of consumers, the latter can no longer do without it. They have started to love the brand madly, passionately, hopelessly: it is now impossible to imagine a world without Moleskine. In this chapter we have seen the origins, the ascension and the consolidation of a brand that started in Milan and has been able to settle in the hearts of thousands of consumers around the world. Moleskine is now an internationally loved brand. We have only seen some of the initiatives that have made the company a true Lovemark.

In the next chapter, through a corpus analysis of the language used by Moleskine and that permeates its communication in the various social media. Since being a Lovemark means emotionally overwhelming consumers with its own products, instilling a strong emotional charge in the company's dialectic and marketing strategies, it is right to search also from a linguistic point of view in order to find out if Moleskine has made extensive use of all those terms, whether they are constructs, verbs, nouns, and so on, which can significantly mobilize the consumer and induce him to buy Moleskine products repeatedly. I will try to bring to the surface all those textual elements that can lead back to the emotional dimension. The linguistic analysis aims to bring out those terms that can influence the consumer's decision-making process and that reflect gestures of devotion, affection, and attachment to the brand. The intention is to understand if the attachment, love and devotion for a brand and, consequently, what distinguishes the communication of a Lovemark from that of other brands is also due to the influence that the use of the word can have on the consumer. Metaphorically speaking, Lovemarks are also expected to be linguistically persuasive and passionate towards the consumer, just as the sirens tried to bewitch and attract Ulysses and his companions.

CHAPTER IV

Analysis of Moleskine's language

The discourse carried out so far has always considered the economic dimension in which the Lovemark phenomenon has generated and developed. In this final chapter, the intention is to shift the axis towards the linguistic dimension, as economy and language tend to converge. The use of language hides in itself an intrinsic power of attraction, and that is why choosing the right words to use when required has always been crucial. It is no coincidence that the proverb 'the pen is mightier than the sword' reveals the real power, both in positive and negative, of words. For this reason, words must be used with caution in any area of our life: the more cleverly they are used, the more profitable and advantageous will be the result obtained from such use. As well as the *ars oratoria* magnetize the listener, the words used in marketing campaigns, in political debates are not employed randomly, but they are the result of a long thought since they were born from the gestation of more complex strategies, to catalyse the attention of the audience. Therefore, it is possible to notice the strong influence and, consequently, the constant presence of the textual component and its strategic use in business relationships, in advertising, in marketing, in the all-round economic scenario. Since, as seen in the previous chapters, Lovemarks represent a phenomenon strongly linked to the emotional dimension, it is expected that the language spoken by these beloved brands is equally attractive and that it presents many textual elements and linguistic constructs that evoke an engaging, warm, passionate style. Hence, language is used not just to convey facts, but also emotions. Individual moods, emotions and feelings can be influenced by external factors, including, among others, information the listener receives. As a matter of fact, emotion is a subjective feeling triggered by a series of tangible or intangible stimuli such as experiences, products, or information. As far as the commercial and financial scenario is concerned, identifying emotions expressed in advertising, pay-offs, and so on, may have several applications, for instance, customer relation management and measurement of the popularity of a product. Indeed, understanding how companies influence consumers through an emotional language and how it is used by brands to elicit passionate reactions, are just some of the reasons to create and develop a corpus – the notion of the corpus linguistics will be addressed later in 4.2. – for the analysis of Moleskine's

language. Emotion detection can considerably enhance our understanding of companies' marketing manoeuvres. The more the language that is spoken by Moleskine – which can be found both on the brand's website and its social channels – turns out to be emotional and passionate, the more it will have a persuasive, irresistible, and compelling effect on the consumer. It is for this reason that I decided to make a detailed, careful and painstaking analysis of the language spoken by Moleskine; the best methodology to address this case study was the creation of a corpus, as it is certainly the way forward that will be able to offer us concrete results and food for thought.

4.1. The importance of corpus analysis

Before discussing in depth the methodology followed for the study of Moleskine's language, it is important to take a step back and define what corpora are and what corpus analysis consists of. Corpora are bodies of data and are generated with a specific linguistic purpose. So, a corpus can be defined as a collection of segments of language – they may be anything from newspaper articles or advertising, to transcripts of conversations, from pieces of lectures to entire novels. In this sense, corpora tend to be representative of an idiom, through attentive selection, not a randomly collected dataset. Corpora are portions of languages capable of representing their trends or characteristics. A corpus cannot show the totality of one language, since it is impossible to collect all the productions made in one language, but it is possible to store those texts that highlight the behaviour of a language, that is taken as the basis of the investigation (Bernal Chávez, Hincapié Moreno, 2018). The question that should be asked is: when do users turn to the corpus to consult them? When the dictionary does not provide them with the essential data they were looking for. Both paper and online dictionaries are limited in how much they can say. If entries will be too specific or extended, the information will be hard to find, and users will struggle to find what they seek. In a sense, corpora and dictionaries are both language resources placed at the antipodes of the same continuum: a continuum from general to particular; from the raw to the refined (Kilgariff, Marcowitz, Smith, Thomas, 2015). In a corpus-based approach, the researcher has hypotheses and seeks to validate or reject them through the corpus data, the observation of certain patterns or phenomena found in a corpus that leads to the formulation of one or several hypotheses. In general, corpus linguistics puts the researcher in the role of observer and data analyst, as it allows the

researcher to put in place the process of collection, storage, and exploitation of large amounts of documents. Hence, the most important features of corpora are the following:

- The extraction of homogeneous and quantifiable data, which is given by the logical-mathematical component used in the processes for analysis of the information. Any statistical information that can be extracted with the logical-mathematical procedures are frequencies of occurrence, referring to the frequency of morphemes, words, expressions, or grammatical patterns, among others, and of co-occurrences, referring to the frequency of appearance of these elements within a specific context;
- The composition possibility, as corpora can be composed of oral, written, or multimodal materials, that are varied modalities of communication, such as sign language, video recording, and so on. The composition of the corpus depends on the needs and the objective that determined the creation of the corpus itself.
- Digital format: the digitalization of the corpus allows it to increase its size, since the storage capacity is higher and the simpler systematization and analysis processes can be manipulated by a greater number of people, and statistical and linguistic analysis can be carried out with the help of computer tools. Digitization also helps to make the corpus available to a wide group of people, as they are of free use and can be found on the web: by easy access, I do not only refer to the public or private status of the corpus but to the ease of access to the data by different programs.

In general terms, the data contained in a corpus can be used by any researcher interested in the study of languages, to describe and examine linguistic behaviour and establish or corroborate hypotheses from different approaches. With this in mind, the characteristics of the corpus determine the types of investigations and results that can be done and obtained. As already seen, corpora can be oral, textual, or multimodal. And there is more: a corpus may be monolingual, bilingual, and multilingual, according to the number of languages that it contains, which depends on the objective the researcher has; a corpus may be general, whenever it collects diverse and balanced samples, to represent a language or variety in its entirety and the communication, or it can be specialized, as its purpose is to represent a specific type of language or sub-language, such as juridical or scientific language (Bernal Chávez, Hincapié Moreno, 2018). Corpus analysis has

expanded the research spectrum to different areas interested in language, not only linguistics; and it is for this reason that it is increasingly taken into account and, consequently, employed as an efficient method of analysis by researchers.

4.1.1. *Sketch Engine*

One of the reference points of linguists and researchers who are preparing to analyse a corpus is certainly *Sketch Engine*, a leading corpus tool created in 2003 by the lexicographer and research scientist Adam Kilgarriff. This section will give a brief overview of the text analysis software, as it is the tool I have relied on for my case study. The reason why I decided to rely on this tool is its ease of use and its enormous intuitiveness: any person, whether a simple curious person approaching the software for the first time or an experienced researcher, can easily navigate and make optimal use of the tool. An easier use corresponds to better analytical performance. The software is well organized and well structured. It is easily navigable, and each section is clearly exposed and reachable with a click. *Sketch Engine* is an online corpus management service with a high range of functions to build and examine language. The software allows the researcher to build corpora and explore them. Besides, the system also offers analytical techniques to produce frequency statistics, calculate co-occurrence patterns, and so forth. The main functions consist of the following practices:

- *Concordance* allows the researcher to see and sort all of the occurrences of any given word form, lemma, phrase, or part of speech tag in the corpus. This function is displayed in the main part of the screen with the search word shown in the centre and the context of that word shown on either side.
- *Collocation* calculates words that are statistically associated with the query term and allows the lexicographer to generate lists of words that co-occur frequently with the node word; by extension, this function allows us to view the words and terms in context.
- *Word Sketch* generates a one-page summary of a word's grammatical and collocational behaviour: this function allows us to find all the recurring patterns for the searched word, which are organized to facilitate the lexicographer's investigations.

- *Sketch Difference* offers a comparison of two words based on collocations. This function shows the differences and the similarities between the chosen terms: it allows researchers to see which patterns the words they are comparing share, and which are specific to each word. The colour gradation (green/red) indicates how much the term is associated with one word or another. This tool is useful when the lexicographer is undecided whether two terms are synonymous or not.
- *Thesaurus* creates a distributional thesaurus based on semantic distribution. This function is an atypical thesaurus of synonyms. Indeed, it finds words that tend to occur in similar contexts as the word that has been entered. The Thesaurus lists other words that are most similar to it in terms of grammatical and collocational behaviour. To sum up, this tool calculates which terms are based on the same concept and relates them to it: terms that appear in the same context are semantically related.

4.2. Methodology

The overview of corpus linguistics and of tools that enables the study of corpora has made it possible to deepen the discipline underlying the methodology that I used for the analysis of Moleskine's language. The time has come to explore the language of Moleskine, to study it, and to begin the analytical discussion, which is the core of this chapter.

4.2.1. Objectives

As mentioned earlier, one would expect from a brand that over the years has managed to establish itself, to be acclaimed and elevated to the status of Lovemarks, that it would employ a language strongly enthusiastic, instinctive, and romantic.

Even before creating a corpus that will meticulously analyse Moleskine's language, the expectations are to come across a magnetic language that can flirt with the consumer, in a sense. A language that makes consumers feel important, woos, and seduces them constantly, to entice them to the purchase process and its reiteration. The fundamental question that needs to be answered is: why is it so important to choose the right words? Soon said: words are not only mere carriers of meaning. It is an idea that goes beyond the

semiotic concept of signifier and significant.¹⁰ The words employed by any brand reflect the nature of the one who pronounces or writes these words. Accurately choosing the right words is necessary to let the consumers' mind imagine and idealize the essence of the brand that stands out in front of them. This means that Moleskine does not only use a loving and deeply emotional language to increase the degree of attachment and devotion of the consumer towards the brand but also to let the idea that love permeates every move Moleskine makes: love is infused in the products that are created by the brands, in the way they are manufactured, in the way they are packaged, in the places where they are sold. Speaking a language made up of love leads the consumer to reciprocate the feeling, and, consequently, brands to become Lovemarks.

With this in mind, the objective of this case study is to understand if Moleskine has been able to achieve the status of Lovemarks thanks to the use of emotional communication with its client. It is possible that an emotional language corresponds to emotional feedback from the client in terms of love for the brand and, therefore, in terms of influence on the purchase decision of the consumer. In simple terms, what I want to do in this chapter is:

- Answer the question of whether online communication has emotional information that can predict future returns.
- Calculate the frequency in the use of lexica that defines the subjective orientation of words for tasks such as sentiment or subjectivity analysis.
- Understand if the language used by Moleskine is, on balance, really full of emotionally engaging terminology.

4.2.2. Research settings

So first of all, I thought about what was the tool that would allow me to complete my task, and, for the reasons explained in the previous page, I decided to make use of a software that would allow me to quickly create a corpus and to move easily in the system; but also that would be intuitive to use, and that would offer the appropriate functions for my specific linguistic needs. As a matter of fact, *Sketch Engine* allowed me to look at recurring sequences of emotive words or signs, either as sequences of sentences, by

¹⁰ Ferdinand de Saussure, one of the founders of semiotics, introduced the terms *signifié* and *signifiant* as the two main planes of a sign: the former belongs to the 'plane of content', the latter represents the 'plane of expression'.

ranking the words by corpus frequency to analyse the distribution of the vocabulary of the corpus. Moreover, I could also make comparisons between different sub-corpora (website language and social media language).

After that, I thought about what was the language material proposed by Moleskine that I should work on, and I decided to take advantage of the digital world since most of the advertising and communication carried out by the brand passes through virtual channels. At this point, I decided to take two paths and not to choose a single path once I found myself in front of a crossroads. I decided to include both the linguistic content on the website and social media – in particular, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The decision was born from the idea that the two channels, although they share the digital route, involve two different languages: on the one hand, there is the website, characterized by a more specific vocabulary, a more formal language, more illustrative, more in line with the intrinsic objective of a website, that is to inform and give notions in detail; on the other hand, there are social networks, where Moleskine can afford to use a language that is more urban, closer to what are the classic informal conversations, thus thinning the distance between consumer and producer. Emotion analysis can be applied to all kinds of text, but certain domains and modes of communication tend to have more overt expressions of emotions than others. Surely the creation of a corpus from documents collected from the Internet has its benefits in terms of time and practicality: large scale analysis of social media is inexpensive, near real-time, unobtrusive, and gives high coverage. Extracting information from sources such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter is vastly cheaper than manual annotation. In contrast, once the software exists, social media data from tens of millions of users can be obtained and studied at a fraction of the cost.

Furthermore, the use of *Sketch Engine* led to the diminishment of the inferential distance between the context of the phenomena and the context of measurement – and thus decreases the room for systematic distortion of the signal. By annotating expression of emotion within this text, I wanted to measure how often a word expressing positive or negative emotion was captured by the corpus, and how often a word captured by the software as measuring positive or negative emotion was indeed expressing positive or negative emotion. In addition, I wanted to measure variation in psychological states (such as positive or negative affect) and aspects of subjective well-being (such as happiness and

engagement) (Schwartz et al., 2013). Figure 4.1. below briefly shows the constituents of the corpus that I have created, managed, and examined for the case study.

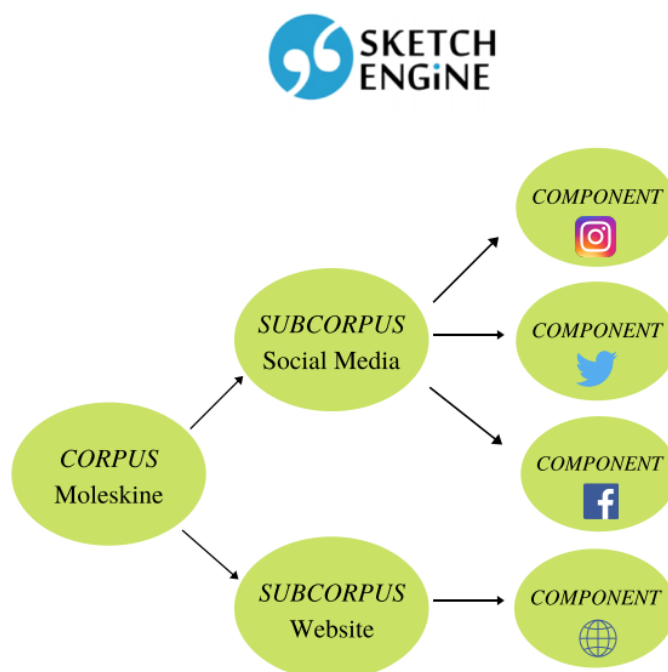


Figure 4.1.: Configuration of the corpus created and analysed in *Sketch Engine*.

As for the textual material that made up the corpus: I have collected all the linguistic material on Moleskine's website and I have inserted them directly by pasting the URL in *Sketch Engine*, a step that has greatly speeded up the process of creating the corpus. As far as tweets and posts are concerned, I had to use a free OCR (Optical Character Recognition) program online that would convert the images into .docx documents so that I could create valid documents suitable for uploading to the software. While, on the one hand, I had no problems collecting linguistic elements belonging to the website, as it was made of a limited and finished amount of text material; on the other hand, gathering data from Moleskine's social networks was more laborious and complex:

- I had to establish a chronological period that I considered during the data extrapolation process since otherwise corpus entries would have been too dispersive. That is why I decided to focus on a chronological span that covers five years from 2015 to the present day.

- I had to pay attention to the repetitions of posts that were shared simultaneously in all three social networks in order to avoid duplications that would have distorted the occurrences count.

Once I made the selection of the linguistic elements to insert inside *Sketch Engine*, I created a corpus, consisting of several components/sub-corpora. In Figure 4.2. it is possible to observe the number of entries of which the corpus and subsections are formed.



RECENTLY USED CORPORA			NEW CORPUS
Moleskine	English	17,507	
Moleskine Website	English	7,264	
Moleskine Instagram	English	3,245	
Moleskine Facebook	English	3,848	
Moleskine Twitter	English	3,150	

Figure 4.2.: Number of entries for each corpus.

The low number of words that constitutes the corpora referring to the language of Moleskine's social media is justified by the fact that the amount of text that can be published in tweets and posts is usually limited – for instance, Twitter's users' post and read that are up to 140 characters long. Therefore, the extrapolation of textual content belonging to the website, which is characterized by a more descriptive language, has led to the creation of a corpus formed by double the words.

4.2.3. Findings

After describing the preparation phases in which I designed the creation of the corpus, I selected the materials to insert in it, and so on, it is time to discuss the results obtained from the data extrapolation. When I analysed the corpus, I first checked the frequency number of each word to see if any words evoked emotions. As can be observed from Figure 4.3., the first column is predictably made up of punctuation marks, pronouns, and prepositions.



WORDLIST Moleskine

word (2,964 items | 20,476 total frequency)

	Word	↓ Absolute Frequency ?	
1	.	930	...
2	the	839	...
3	,	725	...
4	and	708	...
5	to	546	...
6	your	525	...
7	of	446	...
8	a	402	...
9	you	308	...
10	:	298	...
11	with	287	...
12	in	226	...
13	for	220	...

Figure 4.3.: Moleskine corpus frequency list, 1st column.

More interesting information can be collected in the following columns: in Figure 4.4., it is possible to notice how some terms that are not directly related to emotions, but terms that are strongly related to them and that in a certain way can arouse intense emotional feedback, begin to appear with high frequency. This is the case of attractive terms such as ideas (132 occurrences), creativity (122 occurrences), inspiration (103 occurrences), creative (93 occurrences), share (72 occurrences).

Word	↓ Absolute Frequency ?	Word	↓ Absolute Frequency ?
14 hyperlink	216 ...	27 new	97 ...
15 [216 ...	28 are	97 ...
16 on	189 ...	29 we	93 ...
17 is	159 ...	30 creative	93 ...
18 moleskine	142 ...	31 all	91 ...
19 our	136 ...	32 that	86 ...
20 ideas	132 ...	33 be	80 ...
21 creativity	122 ...	34 !	80 ...
22 #moleskine	104 ...	35 notebook	79 ...
23 ?	103 ...	36 by	78 ...
24 inspiration	103 ...	37 can	75 ...
25 it	102 ...	38 as	75 ...
26 or	100 ...	39 share	72 ...

Figure 4.4.: Moleskine corpus frequency list, 2nd and 3rd columns.

Further on, it is possible to find – see Figure 4.5. – other terms that are closely associated with the emotional sphere in an indirect way, such as thoughts (45 occurrences) and imagination (42 occurrences).

62 thoughts	45 ...
63 collection	44 ...
64 smart	43 ...
65 pen	42 ...
66 imagination	42 ...
67 challenge	42 ...
68 tools	41 ...

Figure 4.5.: Frequency figures of other evocative terms.

As far as words associated with emotions – both positive and negative feelings – are concerned, it is possible to highlight a low presence in quantitative terms. Let us start with the term 'love' which has a frequency of 23 occurrences within the corpus.

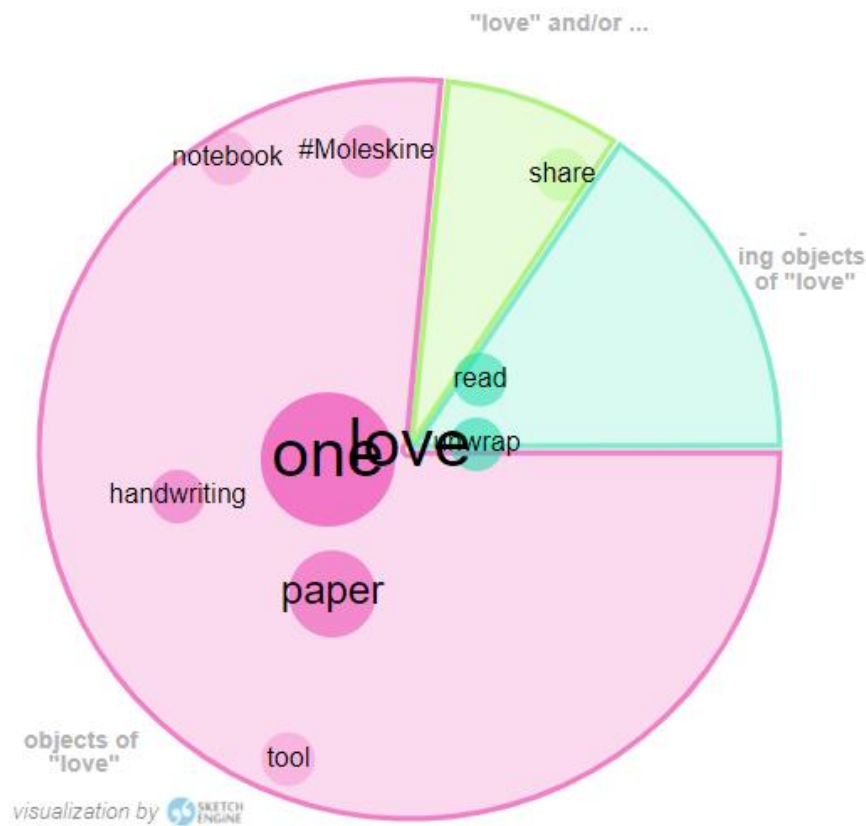


Figure 4.6.: Visualization of the term 'Love'.

As far as the use made of the term 'love' and its linguistic implications are concerned, the focus lies on:

- *Objects of 'love'*: the objects that are related to the term love are all related to the semantic sphere of Moleskine (brand, handwriting, tool, notebook, Moleskine): the brand wants to show how its products would be loved by the consumer once used. → "The Smart Writing System combines the paper you love with the technology you use every day", "Going back to the grind is a pleasure if you love your work tools".
- *-ing objects of 'love'*: 'Reading' belongs to the semantic field of Moleskine's main activity, that is writing; 'Unwrapping' is associated with notebooks → "As much as we love unwrapping a fresh one, archiving a completed notebook is a beautiful thing".
- *'Love' and/or ...*: 'Love' and 'Share' are the two dogmas of the brand and not surprisingly are placed in relation in the same sentence → "Design what you love and share it with the ones you care in real time".

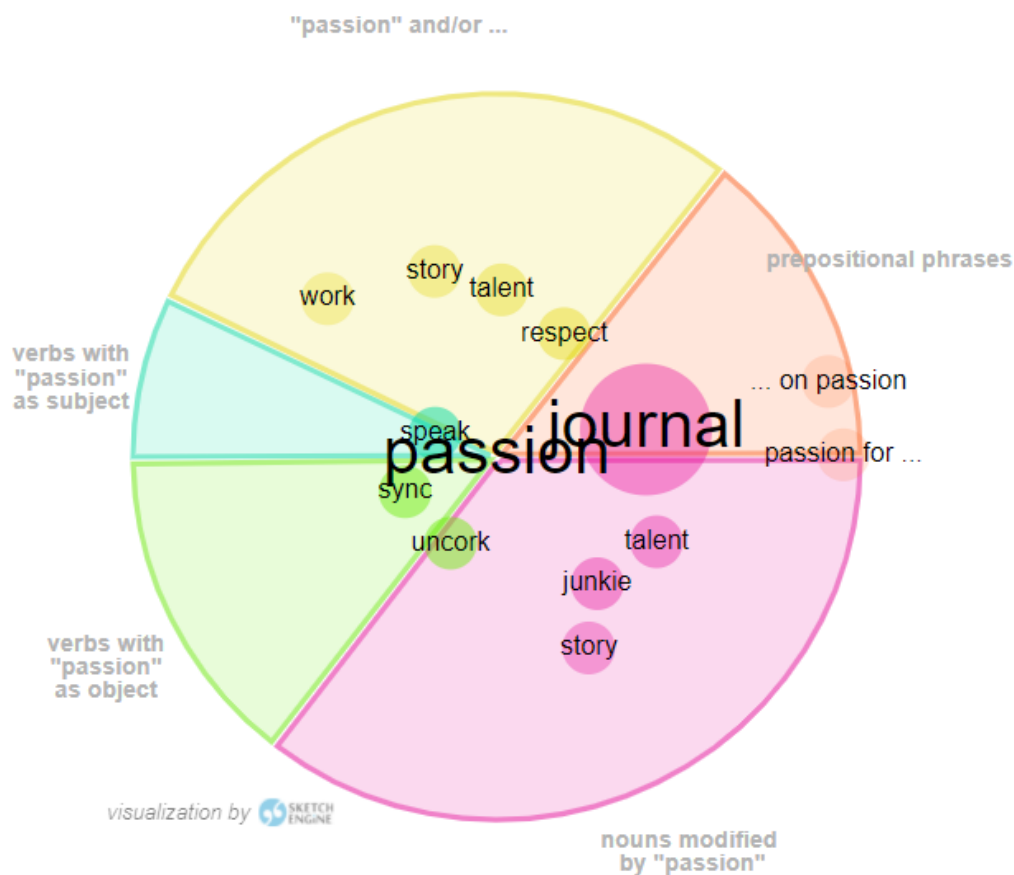


Figure 4.7.: Visualization of the term ‘Passion’.

Afterward, I examined the term ‘passion’ (11 occurrences), from which I collected, as suggested by Figure 4.7., the following information:

- *Verbs with ‘Passion’ as object*: passion is what springs from the use of Moleskine products, it becomes something tangible and, by extension, the object of discourse. → “Sync your passions with Moleskine Smart Writing System”.
- *‘Passion’ and/or...:* the term passion is presented within the same sentence along with other terms representative of the intrinsic value of Moleskine, such as work and stories → “Gift Box, with different passions, stories and covers for creative souls!”, “[...] work and passion speak to the Moleskine core: art and travel”.
- *Prepositional phrases*: passion becomes a value capable of shifting the balance and determining positive consequences → “Arrigo Berni: When communities are built on passions then those communities can be built and managed on a global scale”

- *Nouns modified by 'Passion'*: the term 'Passion' is used to name one of the collections of Moleskine items, to underline how much passions play a crucial role, almost represent the foundations of the Moleskine universe. → "Passion Journals are a creative and fun way to collect and record the things that matter to you, all in one place", "[...] and other notoriously difficult-to-please types who enjoy exploring and cataloguing the finer things in life will all enjoy the Moleskine Passions Journals."

Left context	KWIC	Right context
imagination. </s><s> This holiday season is dedicated to movers of	joy	and anyone who wants to share the gift of inspiration, the
business better than yellow. </s><s> Face the day bringing a little bit of	joy	with you, with new Moleskine colours. </s><s> The secret
life with a minimalist aesthetic. </s><s> Link in bio. </s><s> Spread	joy	around you by sharing the gift of creativity. </s><s> Share
the happy moments with your loved ones. </s><s> How will you share	joy	during this festive season? </s><s> For this myMoleskine
her own way to balance life and work ensuring that every day brings	joy	. </s><s> Link in bio. </s><s> It's time to begin a creative
The year might be ending, but inspiration doesn't. </s><s> Keep the	joy	of writing, add the flexibility to share and edit on mobile c

Figure 4.8.: Concordances of the term 'Joy'.

As can be observed in Figure 4.8., Moleskine wants to persuade the consumer, associating the possibility of experiencing 'Joy' (6 occurrences) with:

- The purchase of a new colourful collection of notebooks.
- The act of writing – Moleskine encourages its consumers to go back to the origins and promote handwriting as it is a determining factor of happiness.
- The sharing of one's own gift of creativity: the more people show off their imagination, the more it will be able to have a positive influence on those around them.

The corpus also offers terms that belong to the emotional sphere, with a tendentially negative value, but which are used within adverse sentences with exhortative purposes:

- The term 'Cry' is used to validate the idea that the consumer, when deprived of a Moleskine product, suffers and that this suffering can stop since that item is back on the market → "Don't cry! #Moleskine Peanuts 18-Month Planners have returned to inspire your 2017/18!"
- The term 'Shy' is not used to highlight the bashful character of the consumer, but to encourage him to perform an action that creates an interaction between the consumer and the brand → "Don't be shy, stack up your old #Moleskine".

- The term ‘Scariest’ is used as a qualifying adjective of an absolute superlative grade of the term ‘Idea’ and it has no negative value, but fulfils the function of challenging the consumer → “It's Halloween: show us your scariest ideas and make us scream!”

As mentioned earlier, from the point of view of frequency, the terms related to the emotional sphere and representing feelings and moods are quantitatively lower than all those terms that are predictive of emotions. The predictability of emotions consists in the idea that the reading by the client of certain terms rather than others can arise within the individual a series of sensations. These terms are used more frequently and constitute a very personal, intimate, enthusiastic language that seduces the reader. They are not used randomly but convey a basic message, that is the set of values that define and distinguish Moleskine. Below is a list of the most frequent terms within the corpus, classified by word classes:

- Nouns: Adventure, Art, Beauty, Creativity, Experience, Idea, Identity, Imagination, Inspiration, Journey, Memories, Moments, Productivity, Story, Thought.
- Verbs: Capture, Celebrate, Connect, Create, Endeavour, Enjoy, Express, Flourish, Inspire, Join, Share, Travel.
- Adjectives: Creative, Deep, Extraordinary, New, Perfect, Personal, Unique.

Hence, I decided to compare the data related to the number of occurrences of the above-mentioned terms for each corpus. This allowed me to understand whether these appeared more frequently on social profiles or the website. In Tables 4.1., Table 4.2. and Table 4.3., I have summarized the collected data, assigning each table to a word class. When calculating the frequencies of the terms in the tables, I also included in the count the forms resulting from inflectional and derivational affixes.

Moreover, it is important to affirm that the words have been counted, taking into account the context, because as the context varies, the semantic value of the word itself changes. For instance, ‘New’ has been counted only when the term indicates novelty that may in some way attract consumers to the brand or enrich their lives, as in the sentences “The paper evolution is gliding in, cutting a new path in how you write and create”, “We're introducing a new system to let you write and stay productive, no matter where you are.”. In so doing, I have excluded from the count the cases in which ‘New’ appears

unrelated to the previous meaning, as in the sentence “We know that "travel more" was on your new year's resolutions list, so let's start planning: where will 2019 bring you?”.

Likewise, the term ‘Idea’ has only been considered in contexts where it means a picture in one’s mind, a mental process that leads to the creation of something, as in the sentences “Share your ideas to move and inspire others”, “Fill the world with ideas, start your personal journey of creativity and collect precious sparks of inspiration along the way”, and not when it means a belief or opinion.

<i>NOUNS</i>	Website	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
<i>Adventure</i>	10	6	4	5
<i>Art</i>	10	9	13	10
<i>Beauty</i>	2	2	4	2
<i>Creativity</i>	19	27	51	25
<i>Experience</i>	5	9	9	5
<i>Idea</i>	41	31	34	32
<i>Identity</i>	/	3	2	3
<i>Imagination</i>	7	13	17	10
<i>Inspiration</i>	17	30	24	32
<i>Journey</i>	18	19	14	17
<i>Memory</i>	3	2	5	3
<i>Moments</i>	12	3	11	1
<i>Productivity</i>	9	8	7	4
<i>Story</i>	5	14	4	3
<i>Thought</i>	14	10	16	8

Table 4.1.: Comparison between sub-corpora of the frequency of evocative nouns.

VERBS	Website	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
<i>Capture</i>	9	6	16	3
<i>Celebrate</i>	5	6	3	3
<i>Connect</i>	12	1	2	4
<i>Create</i>	16	5	8	6
<i>Enjoy</i>	6	5	7	9
<i>Express</i>	6	5	4	3
<i>Flourish</i>	/	/	1	/
<i>Inspire</i>	14	10	17	12
<i>Join</i>	3	8	13	13
<i>Share</i>	19	18	26	16
<i>Travel</i>	6	3	2	1

Table 4.2.: Comparison between sub-corpora of the frequency of evocative verbs.

ADJECTIVES	Website	Facebook	Instagram	Twitter
<i>Creative</i>	25	24	20	20
<i>Deep</i>	1	/	/	/
<i>Extraordinary</i>	1	3	1	1
<i>New</i>	16	30	22	26
<i>Perfect</i>	9	6	6	7
<i>Personal</i>	9	3	1	3
<i>Unique</i>	10	6	3	4

Table 4.3.: Comparison between sub-corpora of the frequency of evocative adjectives.

Looking at the statistics in the tables, it can be deduced that:

- Adding up the number of occurrences of terms that appear in social media – which here have been calculated individually – it is possible to notice that these terms occur more frequently in social channels than on the website. As already pointed out, this is because the language used in the site has an informative purpose and descriptive function to show the collections and lines of products and accessories that the brand offers. To demonstrate this, the data collection suggests that:

- a) Terms such as ‘Productivity’ or ‘Connect’ have a higher incidence number in the corpus related to the website, precisely because they occur more easily. Since the website must introduce and explain the functionality of the products in Moleskine's catalogue, the product description uses terms such as ‘Productivity’, as the quality resulting from the use of the brand's products. At the same time ‘Connect’ has a greater number of occurrences as it is used to explain the technical specifications of products of the Smart Writing System collection; indeed, ‘Connect’ is used to explain the possibility of synchronizing the client's handwritten content on digital devices.
- b) Moleskine has shown that it uses a more evocative, more evocative language when addressing consumers through social channels. The way of conceiving sentences also changes accordingly when the number of usable characters is limited as in the case of Twitter. The messages conveyed through social networks are based on short, impactful sentences that capture users’ attention and move something within them, shake their mood, arouse an emotion. It is precisely for this reason that it is possible to observe a substantial growth in the use of more expressive and symbolic terms, such as ‘Imagination’, ‘Inspiration’ and ‘Creativity’.
- In both cases, it can be assumed that, net of fluctuations in occurrences in certain contexts, Moleskine makes use of an emotional language in all its platforms. This can also be demonstrated by taking a simple look at Figure 4.9., where the general information of the Moleskine’s corpus is shown, allowing us to make a simple estimate.

COUNTS ⓘ	
Tokens	20,476
Words	17,507
Sentences	1,095
Documents	4

Figure 4.9.: Moleskine’s corpus general info.

By making a simple addition of all the terms listed in the three previous tables, the total sum is 1,322 – not to mention those words that literally indicate moods and feelings like ‘Love’, ‘Passion’, Joy’, etc., that raise the figure to almost 1,400. Moreover, estimating an average sentence length of 10 words, it is possible to deduce that:

$$\frac{1,322}{1,095} = 1,207305936073059$$

The division of the number previously mentioned to the total number of sentences produces an incidence of emotional language that recurs with a term each sentence. This implies that each sentence within the corpus is made up, on average, of at least one term about the evocative language. Clearly, the calculation of this average also entails the possibility of sentences that do not present this type of terms and the compensation, on the other hand, of sentences composed of two or more emotional terms.

In light of what has been seen so far, it is possible to assert that a language that is able to arouse an individual’s psychological states does not necessarily have to consist of terms that recall states of mind; indeed, these are very often replaced by satellite terms that orbit around them and with which they share the same semantic value. These terms create mental projections in the consumer and establish well-defined associations:

<i>Love</i>	<i>Adventure, Community, Creativity, Dream, Experience, Fun, Ideas, Imagination, Inspiration, Travel, Self-Expression, Share, ...</i>
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Table 4.4.: Semantic juxtapositions between ‘Love’ and other terms recurring in the corpus.

To love means to have a strong feeling for something. In the case of Moleskine, love comes from the experience of writing, travelling, discovering one's own artistic and creative possibilities. Love comes from the possibility offered by the notebook to express oneself, to show one's talent, to put oneself at stake with reality, noting on paper the experiences one experiences while travelling and leaving one's comfort zone. To love is not only to be overwhelmed by emotions, but it is also to share moments with other people. This is what Moleskine really offers – something immaterial that goes beyond the

tangible product and enriches the heart and soul – and this is what the company has been able to communicate through its online communication.

THESAURUS ⓘ

love as verb 19× ...

	Word	Frequency ?
1	look	15 ...
2	want	24 ...
3	choose	23 ...
4	use	20 ...
5	need	34 ...
6	enjoy	27 ...
7	have	71 ...
8	celebrate	17 ...
9	write	24 ...
10	see	24 ...

Figure 4.10.: List of synonyms of the term ‘Love’.

It is no coincidence that, examining the Thesaurus, which is an automatically generated list of terms belonging to the same semantic field, the terms that are shown – Figure 4.10. – as synonyms of the ‘love’ are precisely those that belong to the world created by Moleskine and the values it conveys. Love is associated with writing, the main practice that the company has managed to relaunch and enhance. Love is associated with the pleasure of using the brand's products: a pleasure so intense that it has become a real need.

In this regard, another reflection can be made when talking about verbs: the most recurrent ones – those that I previously presented in Table 4.2. – are verbs that, by preceding or following nouns, perform a transformative function of the individual's reality and his essence. Indeed, nouns are usually accompanied by verbs that have the same semantic value and the same goal, that is to promote self-improvement, well-being and

personal growth, and psychological maturity. This does nothing but encourages the consumer, who identifies the product offered by Moleskine as a means that guarantees personal development, to get closer to the product itself and, ultimately, to buy it. An example of this is shown in Figure 4.11.

verbs with "creativity" as object	verbs with "idea" as object	verbs with "imagination" as object
wake ... Wake your creativity with the	share ... share ideas	spark ... spark the imagination
believe ... We believe that creativity , critical thinking	develop ... develop your ideas	unfold ... Unfold your imagination and celebrate Origami
empower ... Empowering creativity	keep ... keep ideas in	rouse ... and notebooks to rouse the imagination
let ... Let the creativity	pass ... Capture passing ideas on the page	let ... let your imagination
train ... train your creativity	organize ... organize your ideas	feed ... feed the imagination
rekindle ... rekindle your creativity	capture ... capture your best ideas	fuel ... fuel your imagination
channel ... channel your creativity	get ... Get your ideas	unleash ... unleash your imagination
maximize ... maximize creativity	take ... Take your ideas	awaken ... awaken the imagination
take ... take your creativity	communicate ... communicate ideas	stimulate ... stimulate your imagination
recharge ... recharge your creativity	trigger ... trigger ideas	boost ... boost your imagination
catch ... catch creativity	generate ... generate ideas	meet ... meets the imagination
embrace ... embrace creativity	embody ... embody our ideas	

Figure 4.11.: List of verbs that frequently occur with predictive terms of emotions.

Paying attention to the list presented above, there are three easily identifiable observations:

1. In the figure, I reported only three examples, but they are indicative of a constant behaviour, as these verbs occur in most of the nouns already mentioned during the analysis.
2. Some verbs are used to repeat themselves as in the case of ‘Wake’ and ‘Awaken’.

3. All other verbs that do not repeat themselves, are in most cases synonymous with each other and carry similar meanings: for example, 'Feed'/'Recharge', 'Maximize'/'Rouse', 'Unfold'/'Trigger'.

Being able to analyse a corpus is a great opportunity for the researcher for two reasons: on the one hand, because it guarantees a personal and professional development of the researcher as a lexicographer; on the other hand, because when the researcher starts the examination of a corpus, he immediately realizes that it has much more to offer than what he was initially looking for. Corpus analysis puts the researcher in front of the truth: managing a corpus can give many more answers than the terminological questions and needs that led the researcher to create it. Once the corpus analysis is finished, it turns out that what the researcher thought he or she knew about the language he or she was studying is just the tip of the iceberg. Therefore, investigating a corpus reveals itself to be a fascinating and stimulating practice, which enriches the knowledge of those who do so.

4.3. Limitations

This section refers to the series of obstacles and challenges that may arise during the process of examination of Moleskine's language. The main issue is that the emotional dimension is extremely subjective and personal: for this reason, it is not possible to draw up an absolute truth when talking about feelings. Investigating emotions is like crossing a minefield, as it is very likely to make crucial mistakes at the slightest action. Below is a list of the most challenging tasks which can be encountered during a corpus analysis:

- The way emotions are perceived and experienced is extremely subjective and, therefore, varies constantly from person to person.
- A single emotion can hide within itself a set of consequences in terms of reactions, conflicting feelings, and thoughts. That is why emotion detection may provide incomplete information.
- Incorrect information can also come from an analysis of emotions that is simply quantitative: when the emotion is considered as a mere word to count and is extrapolated from its context, false results are obtained. Indeed, words can appear in different contexts and take on different meanings. Decontextualizing means reaching hasty conclusions. The word count method, where one simply counts occurrences of terms, can often produce inaccurate estimates of expressions of

psychological states: when counting words without considering context, unintended parts-of-speech or word senses may determine ambiguities and errors. (Schwartz et al., 2013)

- Some emotions can co-occur with greater predictability and flexibility. Co-existence of emotions differs based on their type: for instance, it is infrequent for emotions such as joy and fear to co-occur within the same sentence.

But the limitations are also due to the corpus itself:

- The corpus analysis shows us from a quantitative point of view the number of occurrences of terms that are predictive of passion-driven behaviours but it cannot calculate or estimate whether the use of certain terms in certain contexts necessarily triggers a positive attitude.

4.4. Final discussion

In light of what has been presented in this chapter, I can express my satisfaction with the research that I carried out. The decision to investigate and study the language used by Moleskine in online communication through the creation and management of a corpus, and its analysis, has been quite fruitful. I progressively got acquainted with *Sketch Engine*, and the navigation within the software has been fast, intuitive and, therefore, considerably time-saving. The results that I obtained from corpus analysis describes that Moleskine makes extensive use of an intense, passionate language in its online communication. This is not given purely by terms that literally correspond to states of mind – although it has been found a presence of some of them, such as 'passion' or 'love' in many textual contexts –; on the contrary, very often psychological states are conveyed by other nouns, verbs or adjectives that are somewhat predictive of attitudes of attachment, devotion and attraction towards the brand. The company, through a recurring use of this type of terms, stimulates positive passion-driven behaviours in the consumer. To sum up, it is possible to say that the massive presence of terminology specific to the emotional dimension is not casual: on the contrary, Moleskine's communication is well planned to move the consumer's soul.

I feel I have come full circle with this corpus analysis: the discussion started from the economic perspective, to slowly turn towards the linguistic one, only to realize that economy and linguistics are two apparently distant worlds, but that share more than can be imagined. The common denominator is the word, a simple set of letters that can

influence people's daily actions; and when the latent power of words is used proficiently by companies, they can only benefit from it. It is for this reason that communicating is an art that must necessarily be mastered if a company wants to take advantage of it. Moleskine understood, along with a few other companies, that what really matters in people's existence is collecting experiences that are worth living. Experiences are those moments that have a specific weight on people and influence their mood, and that is what people are constantly looking for: experiences that can enrich their hearts and spirits and move them. Moleskine has exploited the value of words and their strong impact on the psychological state of the individual, making its communication a dual experience: the dualism is explained by the idea that experiences no longer consist only in buying and using the tangible product, but also in being emotionally moved by the communication which packages the product itself. This is precisely what distinguishes Lovemarks from other brands: Lovemarks put emotions on a pedestal. Lovemarks do not focus solely on the product, but also on the sentiments that consumers can feel by purchasing it. It is no coincidence that the corpus analysis demonstrated that Moleskine communication is characterized by intensity and passion in language. In order to love a brand and the products it sells, consumers should be first seduced by the company; in so doing, the business makes its customers have butterflies in their stomachs. Economic growth is not only given by a series of commercial strategies: global success is achieved whenever a business reaches its consumers' hearts. In conclusion, the terminological research presented in this chapter has fulfilled the initial expectations, demonstrating how the brand examined in the case study receives love – intended as positive consents, attitudes of affection towards the company, brand loyalty, and reiteration of the purchasing process – from consumers in a way directly proportional to the romanticism – intended as a high occurrence of predictive terms of positive psychological behaviours – that the brand itself infuses in its communication with the consumer. For everything shown so far, it is possible to affirm that the *fil rouge* that links language and marketing is extremely important, and it should not be underestimated. The awareness of this allows companies to beat the international competition and to make the economic and linguistic dimensions converge, as the former can benefit from the latter. Moleskine has successfully amalgamated the two realities, which is why it has gained the status of Lovemark.

CONCLUSION

In recent decades, the economic environment has undergone a progressive process of transformation that has changed its paradigms and mechanisms. It is important to pause and reflect on this evolution because, as seen in previous chapters, it is dictated by changes in society itself. Therefore, reflecting on the economic sphere helps to understand something about ourselves as individuals and as consumers. Companies may cease to exist if they do not meet the needs of consumers, and that is why they have to draw inspiration from them to offer appealing products that encourage them to open their wallets. In the last years, frantic and compulsive consumerism has transformed the purchasing process into an obsessive, alienating act. As a result, customers began to gradually develop an awareness of the emptiness of the buying experience. This awareness can be considered the catharsis of the individual who frees himself and purifies himself from contaminated, frivolous marketing. It is in this way that the recovered purity of the individual finds refuge in the intimacy of feelings, in the emotional sphere that he or she carries within.

These are the perfect prerequisites for a new, undefiled type of economy, that of Experience Marketing. The causes of its emergence and its characteristics have been discussed thoroughly in the first chapter. In the first section of the paper, the importance of changes external to the economic sphere that indirectly affected its transformation has been examined: more specifically, the advent of the Internet and the rapid globalization of markets are being discussed. These contingencies have radically changed how any kind of ideas or information is spread and exchanged. The possibility of receiving and providing information with such simplicity and promptness has contributed to change the role of the consumer, who is no longer passive towards the production chain, but rather he/she is an active figure in his interaction with the producer, with whom he or she no longer has a subordinate position.

Now, 'prosumers' contribute with their own ideas to the creation of the products that they will consume in the future. Since customers are now oriented in a holistic sense and are looking for strong emotions, companies have begun to create products whose added value is to make them live unforgettable, incomparable experiences while consuming the product itself. In order to live experiences that are indissolubly etched in the memory,

companies had to invest in well-designed retail stores. Indeed, a store can be set up in a contrived way to stimulate the senses of consumers who cross the threshold. The mobilization of all five senses is a phenomenon called 'synesthesia' and it is what companies aim to arouse to attract potential customers to their brand. If a company, in this way, successfully catalyse the attention of consumers, they awaken positive behaviours towards the brand that involve the psychological dimension. This is what was presented in the second chapter. Here, there has been a progressive investigation of the emotions that consumers can feel towards the brand and, depending on the degree of the positive effect of the emotion felt by them, companies can be perceived in different ways. Brands started being more creative, more interesting to compete adequately in the marketplace, and to establish a long-lasting relational bond with consumers. As the emotional dimension comes into play, brands have begun to be perceived by consumers according to psychological instincts: therefore, brands have begun to be cool icons that might be admired and respected.

As far as respect is concerned, it is the secret ingredient of the main course of Experience Marketing: Lovemarks, in fact, do not exist without respect, as it contains important and indivisible emotional baggage which makes consumers look up to brands and hold them in high regard. Only when respected, brands can aspire to become Lovemarks. As a matter of fact, there is no love without respect. And it is love, the truest, most intense, and pure emotion, the main objective that companies aim to achieve. If consumers love the brand, it will create a long-lasting loyalty that will bind them to the company for many years to come.

The most effective way to make a brand loved is through the personalization of the experience: consumers tend to demand action from brands, in particular, relevant content and customized offers. Once companies manage to consecrate their brand and begin to be loved, the transition to Lovemarks happens. Lovemarks is an elitist group, of which it is difficult to become a member, as it requires specific characteristics: firstly, brands must create an aura of mystery around them, to keep the flame of desire and curiosity in consumers always burning; secondly, brands must be aware of the importance of the sensory stimulation – which I discussed a little while ago – in human decision making in order to be sensual, as these kinds of stimuli may have a significant impact on consumer behaviour, cognition, and affect; finally, Lovemarks must aim to create an intimate,

confidential interaction with consumers without being intrusive, as intimacy can be defined as a warm counterbalance to the amazement and wonder provided by the previous features.

The first half of the dissertation was very theoretical, introductory, rich in notions offered by the previous bibliography. In the third chapter, I wanted to probe the Lovemarks' territory and examine a concrete example of a brand that from scratch has managed to establish itself internationally. I decided to examine Moleskine's evolutionary path from its foundation to its success, as a shining example of how crucial the sensations experienced by consumers are to the success of the company. Indeed, Moleskine does not offer a product that is essential, unavoidable in people's homes and lives. The peculiarity of Moleskine's success lies in the fact that it has not obtained the respect and love of consumers for a functional characteristic of its products that would satisfy essential everyday needs, but rather because the products offered are emotionally stimulating and inspiring. The commercial proposal of Lovemarks is divided into numerous collections and lines of notebooks, devices, accessories, and projects that bring back in vogue the beauty of handwriting and creativity, sometimes forgotten in the frenzy of modern society. Moreover, in the case of *Moleskine Café*, the sensual aspect of the Lovemark emerges with the specific designs and layouts of the café which are planned to stimulate the five senses of the customers; while, in the case of *Moleskine Foundation*, the Lovemarks' intimacy emerges as empathy with the neediest and excluded represents the *leitmotiv* of the operations non-profit organization. These projects are positively welcomed by consumers as Moleskine's offers embody deeply human activities. The Milanese company started from a small, local reality and has reached a worldwide catchment area precisely because feelings are common to all human beings.

That of emotions is a universal language. And language represents the starting point of my case study, which I discussed in the fourth and final chapter. Indeed, in this last section of the paper I wanted to examine Moleskine's language to verify whether it was brimming with terms that refer to the emotional dimension, so as to answer a fundamental question: can love for brands be positively influenced and enhanced by a marketing communication made of an emotional and passionate language? The practical skills acquired on corpus analysis during my academic career proved to be fundamental for the investigation of Moleskine's language. Indeed, I have already had the opportunity to work

with *Sketch Engine*, a tool that allows the creation of corpus and the management and consultation of its results. This prior acquaintance with the system has allowed me to speed up the analysis process and to move easily within the software.

The results obtained reveal that the language used by Moleskine in its virtual platforms such as social networks and website – I cannot make a generic speech for all Lovemarks – makes extensive use of terms that recall the semantic field of feelings, such as love, joy, and happiness. Surprisingly, those terms that orbit around the emotional dimension, to which they do not belong directly, but which are predictive of psychological states and moods, have proved to be numerically superior. As a matter of fact, terms such as adventure, beauty, creativity, dream, journey, inspiration, imagination, and so on, may arouse in the consumer feelings that evoke dusty moments of remote time, when creativity was a secret wish; Moleskine, through its products and, even before, its communication, stimulates the creative vein of its customers, for so long slumbered, which now can return to express itself more freely. The last chapter has allowed me to demonstrate that the economic and the linguistic world are two apparently detached and opposite realities that very often converge. Marketing can, indeed, benefit financially from the clever use of words. Metaphorically speaking, making strategic use of language means being able to be convincing and persuasive towards the consumer, who will remain stuck in the sticky marketing manoeuvres of a company, like a prey in a spider's web.

In conclusion, taking stock and reflecting on what has been discussed so far, I can affirm that the objectives and the questions raised at the beginning of my research have been largely achieved. The study of phenomena, whatever their nature, must take into account the changes that will affect them irrevocably. In order to investigate Lovemarks, it was necessary to take into consideration the economic scenario of Experience Marketing which, in turn, required painstaking analysis of the transformations of the surrounding world that generated it. In this paper, I wanted to extract the phenomenon of Lovemarks from the dictates of time and crystallize it, to place a magnifying glass as sharp as possible on it. It is impossible to predict how much life Experience Marketing will have, or if Lovemarks represent a temporary phenomenon. What is desirable is that love will remain for many years to come not only the basis of economic choices but of those of any sphere of our existence.

Lovemarks have understood the compelling and engaging power of love, and, for this reason, they have made it their key to success. In this sense, it is important to take inspiration from Lovemarks and try to let love enter our lives, our choices, our gestures, even the most irrelevant ones. Maybe, adopting love as a method of evaluation will one day prove to be fundamental to achieve our daily goals. Lovemarks demonstrate that there is no need for lavish products, intrusive advertising, unbridled consumerism. Metaphorically speaking, while the competing companies aspired to pack the most eye-catching products and to spectacularize their offer, Lovemarks forged a key that would ensure that the product they manufactured would be locked into consumers' hearts.

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RIASSUNTO IN ITALIANO

L'intento del seguente elaborato è di analizzare l'importanza della dimensione emotiva e, in particolar modo, la misura in cui gli stati d'animo e i sentimenti possono influenzare le decisioni d'acquisto dei consumatori. Le emozioni giocano un ruolo sempre più decisivo nella quotidianità delle persone: provare emozioni intense è la costante ambizione degli esseri umani, poiché li fa sentire vivi. La discussione parte da un presupposto ben preciso: lo scenario economico che si è venuto a delineare negli ultimi anni ha soppiantato un'economia materialistica, che non prendeva in considerazione le emozioni e il loro valore intrinseco. Difatti, la sfera cognitiva è stata implementata nel marketing solo in un secondo momento. L'economia era precedentemente contraddistinta da un consumismo sfrenato, bulimico, in cui le persone fagocitavano qualsiasi tipologia di prodotto senza assaporarne l'essenza e goderne il momento. L'ubertà dell'offerta era sinonima di produzione indistinta, giacché la merce proposta e venduta era fortemente standardizzata, priva di qualsiasi connotato particolare che la valorizzasse o la facesse risaltare rispetto ai prodotti delle aziende rivali. È in quest'ottica che nasce l'*Experience Marketing*, ossia come un'esigenza necessaria da parte delle imprese produttrici di reinventare la propria offerta al fine di differenziarla: quest'ultima è ora improntata sull'esperienza, sulla possibilità di far vivere un'emozione unica, irripetibile al consumatore, un ricordo indissolubilmente scalfito nella sua memoria. L'analisi dell'*Experience Marketing* è solo uno degli obiettivi della seguente disamina: qui, verranno esaminati i *Lovemarks*, massima espressione di un mercato nuovo, orientato alle esperienze e alle passioni che ne derivano. Infatti, con il termine *Lovemarks* si esprime un concetto che racchiude quell'insieme di brand che sono riusciti a intercettare gli stimoli provenienti dall'esterno e, così facendo, a imporsi nel marketing esperienziale. Sono poche le realtà commerciali che sono riuscite a ottenere questo status alquanto elitario, dal momento che raggiungere tale obiettivo risulta essere estremamente difficile. Come suggerisce il nome, questi brand sono stati in grado di suscitare l'ammirazione e l'amore nei consumatori proponendo prodotti che non assolvono solamente alla funzione utilitaristica, ma che soddisfano anche esigenze intangibili e offrono cibo per la mente, saziando anima e cuore. La discussione è divisa idealmente in due parti: la prima metà è più introduttiva e nozionistica, in quanto è importante contestualizzare il fenomeno dei *Lovemarks*, spiegando nel dettaglio lo

scenario economico in cui questi si sono venuti a creare; pertanto, verranno presentate le caratteristiche dell'*Experience Marketing* e le differenze con l'assetto economico precedente. In seguito, verrà approfondita la connotazione emotiva di cui è in grado di ammantarsi l'immagine di un'azienda. Quanto più un brand riesce a farsi amare dal consumatore, tanto più il legame tra i due sarà duraturo, traducendosi in lealtà verso il marchio e in reiterazione dell'acquisto di uno o più prodotti di quello stesso marchio. Nella seconda parte dell'elaborato, verrà preso in esame un esempio concreto di *Lovemark*: nello specifico verrà fatta una panoramica sul brand *Moleskine*, dalla sua fondazione alla sua ascesa, in quanto rappresenta in maniera lampante l'idea di azienda che è partita da una piccola realtà locale, come quella milanese, per poi riuscire ad affermarsi a livello internazionale. Tutto ciò, in un settore di nicchia come quello della cartoleria, riuscendo a riportare in auge i taccuini e la sacralità della scrittura con carta e penna. È proprio grazie a una comunicazione che esalta le passioni e smuove le emozioni che *Moleskine* è riuscita a farsi amare incondizionatamente, benché l'offerta fosse in contrapposizione rispetto alla realtà attuale: è estremamente arduo ottenere consensi e successo mondiale grazie al cartaceo, in un mondo sempre più connesso, digitalizzato, in cui ogni minimo gesto quotidiano prevede un monitor che ne faciliti l'esecuzione. Successivamente, verrà analizzato il linguaggio utilizzato dall'azienda milanese nella sua comunicazione online, per comprendere se ci sia una correlazione tra la sfera economica e la sfera linguistica: l'amore che un consumatore può provare nei confronti di un brand dipende dal numero di elementi testuali pregni di emotività presenti nella sua comunicazione? Per poter rispondere a questa domanda verrà effettuata una analisi del corpus, basato sul materiale linguistico estrapolato dal sito web dell'azienda e dai suoi profili social, nello specifico dai social network Facebook, Instagram e Twitter. La creazione, la gestione e l'analisi del corpus è avvenuta tramite *Sketch Engine*, software che si è rivelato essenziale per il mio elaborato finale.

Come anticipato poc'anzi, il primo capitolo risulta essere introduttivo, largamente nozionistico e serve a contestualizzare e definire l'assetto economico in cui si sono venuti a generare i *Lovemarks*. Prima di tutto, bisogna definire cos'è un brand: la natura etimologica del termine suggerisce che questo derivi dall'antica pratica di marchiare a fuoco gli animali per contraddistinguerli e renderli identificabili in termini di proprietà. Quindi il brand, traslando quanto detto dal mondo agricolo a quello economico, è

definibile come qualsivoglia immagine, logo e/o suono che identifichi un bene o servizio di un produttore da quello dei competitors. Il marchio, in questo senso, pone la propria firma su un prodotto, automaticamente garantendone qualità: comprare un prodotto di marca equivale – non sempre a ragione – a comprare un prodotto di qualità. Inoltre, la marca, rendendosi identificabile rispetto agli altri prodotti, assolve alla funzione di orientamento del consumatore durante il processo d'acquisto, il quale viene ottimizzato in termini di tempo (non è un caso che, prendendo in considerazione una categoria merceologica come quella della pasta, nella mente del consumatore appaiono immediatamente le immagini dei soliti 4-5 brand, quali *Barilla*, *De Cecco*, e così via). Una volta spiegato cos'è un brand, è fondamentale scandagliare l'assetto economico post-moderno che caratterizza l'*Experience Marketing*. È importante affermare che una condizione presente non è altro che il risultato di un processo trasformativo da una condizione passata: risulta, quindi, cruciale investigare il passato per poter comprendere a pieno il presente. La nuova composizione economica nasce da un cambiamento radicale nei suoi paradigmi fondanti: quindi, come nasce l'*Experience Marketing*? L'economia antecedente era votata a un consumismo irrefrenabile, impulsivo, vacuo, garantito da una produzione massiccia. I consumatori erano vittime passive, frastornate e confuse dalle offerte costantemente in esubero, che acquistavano indistintamente tutto ciò che venisse proposto sul mercato dalle aziende. Questa condizione gravava sulla figura del consumatore, il quale ha cominciato gradualmente a prendere coscienza della propria posizione e dell'importanza del proprio ruolo negli ingranaggi dell'economia. Se il consumatore non acquista, il ciclo si spezza. Pertanto, perché non alterare tale meccanismo incontrovertibile? Il malcontento del consumatore era principalmente dato dal fatto che i prodotti che acquistava non lo arricchivano spiritualmente, erano artificiosi, fallaci, privi di autenticità, votati solo all'accumulo di denaro nelle tasche dei produttori. Le imprese godevano di uno stato di superiorità nei confronti del cliente, relegato alla spirale della subalternità. Così, i consumatori iniziano lentamente a ridestarsi dallo stordimento che li ha anchilosati per molto tempo e iniziano a influenzare quella che si rivelerà essere il preludio dell'economia esperienziale. La nuova economia, infatti, parte anche dal consumatore, che ora diventa orientato in senso olistico, ricerca valori intangibili nei prodotti che acquista: non se ne fa nulla di un prodotto che offre benefici funzionali, se, oltre a ciò, quest'ultimo non è ammantato di significato semantico. Così

facendo, il consumatore diventa molto più selettivo nei confronti dell'offerta e, di contro, diventa più difficile da parte dei brand soddisfare le esigenze dei propri clienti. Questo ha fatto sì che i produttori iniziassero a rivolgersi agli stessi clienti, ora non più subordinati alla catena produttiva, bensì partner dei produttori. Il consumatore, ora *prosumer*, guadagna sempre maggior potere decisionale sulla realizzazione dei prodotti che in seguito acquisterà, giacché nella nuova economia le aziende, una volta tanto accecate dalla ricerca di guadagni ingenti da non comprendere l'importanza dei consumatori, diventano più accoglienti nei confronti delle idee da loro portate. A questo cambiamento radicale, si aggiungono delle discontinuità che hanno contribuito in maniera decisiva all'ascesa del consum-attore, ma, soprattutto, alla configurazione dell'*Experience Marketing*. In primo luogo, l'avanzamento tecnologico ha giocato un ruolo cruciale perché ha permesso di velocizzare e facilitare la produzione e la ricezione di informazioni, ora alla portata di un click. Il tasso di penetrazione della rete ha raggiunto un livello tanto elevato da rendere gli individui connessi virtualmente in ogni momento della propria esistenza, passando da un'idea di online a *onlife* (Floridi, 2015). Connettersi però non significa solo avere accesso al mondo digitale, ma anche entrare in contatto con altre persone. La nascita di community in cui i clienti possono confrontarsi sui prodotti, scambiarsi idee, pareri, raccogliere informazioni su un prodotto di un determinato brand, ha contribuito alla presa di coscienza del consumatore. Internet ha concesso ai consumatori di avere una maggiore visione d'insieme sul mondo economico in cui erano passivamente coinvolti, rendendoli più consapevoli e oculati durante il processo d'acquisto. Inoltre, il mondo virtuale si è dimostrato essere anche la piattaforma ideale per l'avvicinamento tra consumatori e produttori e la loro collaborazione reciproca: difatti, Internet rappresenta un ambiente favorevole per i consumatori, che mettono in luce la propria creatività facendo partire sempre più idee dal basso, le quali possono essere prese in considerazione dalle aziende per possibili proposte commerciali future. A questa discontinuità si lega a doppio nodo quella della globalizzazione, che non ha solo avuto ripercussioni sul mercato, con l'aumento delle pratiche di *offshoring* e *outsourcing*, ma ha anche contribuito al ricircolo di idee: il merito principale della globalizzazione, umanamente parlando, è stato quello di promuovere l'interazione tra individui provenienti da culture lontane ed estrazioni sociali diverse, favorendo una ventata d'aria fresca in termini di nuove idee e ideologie. È da queste trasformazioni della realtà

circostante che avviene il graduale avvicinamento dell'economia alla dimensione esperienziale. È proprio l'esperienza la merce di scambio di questa nuova struttura economica: i consumatori non comprano più un prodotto per beneficiare delle sue funzionalità, bensì per poter vivere un momento unico e incomparabile, che è possibile esperire prima, durante e dopo l'acquisto del prodotto stesso. Si può dedurre che l'obiettivo principale delle realtà aziendali moderne sia diventato quello di stimolare sentimenti, e di ipnotizzare e attrarre il consumatore alla soglia d'ingresso del proprio negozio. Così il mondo del retail diventa una componente fondamentale poiché, se pianificato in maniera congegnale, il design dei negozi è in grado di mobilitare i sensi del consumatore e mutare la sua percezione della realtà. È qui che il fenomeno della sinestesia prende vita. Affinché i consumatori provino emozioni intense, vi deve essere un coinvolgimento sensoriale a 360 gradi: l'esperienza che il consumatore può vivere e che innesca reazioni psicologiche passa proprio per vista, udito, olfatto, gusto e tatto. Il brand può allestire i propri negozi fisici come dei micro-universi all'interno dei quali tutto è accuratamente progettato nei minimi particolari: la disposizione e la colorazione dell'arredo può essere organizzata in maniera tale da soddisfare la vista e veicolare il cliente verso determinati scaffali o reparti; la selezione della musica all'interno del negozio può influenzare il consumatore, il quale può essere maggiormente sollecitato all'acquisto mentre ascolta della musica più rilassante; gli odori possono inebriare il consumatore, catturarlo e indirizzarlo verso le porte del negozio facendo leva sulla memoria di odori annusati in tempi remoti; le degustazioni all'interno del locale possono soddisfare il palato, la cui sensibilità è capace di rievocare vecchi ricordi; il tatto è stimolato facilmente dai materiali di cui sono composti l'arredo, i prodotti venduti nel negozio e tutti quegli oggetti con cui possono entrare in contatto le mani del potenziale acquirente. La mobilitazione sensoriale è una corsia preferenziale che giunge dritta al cuore, essendo in grado di smuovere qualcosa di inspiegabile anche per il consumatore stesso. In questa nuova economia delle esperienze le aziende non producono più beni e servizi indistinti, bensì cercano di teatralizzare (Pine, Gilmore, 2000) la propria offerta, al fine di sfuggire alla standardizzazione dei prodotti. La spettacolarizzazione dei prodotti implica che questi idealmente rappresentano solo l'epilogo di una *pièce de théâtre*, in cui ancor prima della fine, ossia dell'acquisto, il consumatore vive un'esperienza esclusiva e semanticamente significativa. Quanto esposto fino ad ora è servito a rappresentare il

passaggio da un'economia consumistica a una esperienziale. Questo processo di mutamento, in cui si sono dovute barcamenare le aziende, ha portato le imprese a rinnovarsi e a ridefinire il proprio *modus operandi*, giacché nuovi stimoli non possono essere soddisfatti da vecchi moduli.

Il secondo capitolo sposta l'attenzione verso il fulcro del discorso, ossia i *Lovemarks*. Per poter descrivere questo fenomeno in ogni sua sfaccettatura, è essenziale fare un passo indietro per poter capire come i sentimenti possano modificare la percezione che un consumatore ha di un determinato marchio. Dal momento che l'economia non è più basata su scambi e transazioni, ma su relazioni emotive, le considerazioni che un consumatore ha di un brand danno vita a una serie di nozioni in cui è lampante la convergenza della dimensione psicologica e quella prettamente commerciale. Dall'amalgama di queste due sfere, apparentemente agli antipodi, nascono concetti come *Brand coolness*, *Brand admiration* e *Brand love*. Per poter spiegare tutto ciò, si parte da un semplice presupposto: in questa nuova economia i brand acquistano connotati 'umani'. Le aziende, attraverso la stimolazione sensoriale di cui abbiamo parlato poc'anzi, devono essere in grado di instillare nella mente del consumatore l'idea che il brand abbia una determinata natura. È per questo che l'ambizione principale delle aziende adesso è quello di trasmettere l'immagine di un brand che sia originale, ribelle, autentico, potente, esteticamente attraente. Un brand che dimostra di avere determinate caratteristiche, come quelle menzionate, riesce nel lungo periodo ad affermarsi e a diventare popolare e iconico tra i consumatori. Naturale conseguenza di ciò è che le aziende che conseguono questo obiettivo, verranno maggiormente ammirate e venerate. L'ammirazione del brand è uno status fondamentale poiché porta con sé dei vantaggi per l'azienda. Quando i consumatori dimostrano un'alta considerazione del brand: aumenta la loro fedeltà verso quest'ultimo; vengono più facilmente venduti altri prodotti relativi allo stesso brand; i consumatori tendono a sorvolare e giustificare difetti oggettivi di un prodotto di quel brand; l'azienda può permettersi di aumentare il prezzo dei propri prodotti, e di conseguenza allargare il margine di guadagno, con il rischio minimo di perdere il cliente. Quando un'azienda è in grado di incentivare atteggiamenti positivi verso il brand, il consumatore sviluppa una forte identificazione con il brand stesso, e comincia ad avvertire un senso di attaccamento simile all'amore interpersonale tra due persone. Quando un consumatore ama in maniera incodizionata e spasmodica un brand, entrano in gioco una serie di elementi quali piacere,

fiducia, soddisfazione e rispetto che determinano la volontà del consumatore di fare uso reiterato dei prodotti di quello stesso brand. Quando il legame è tanto profondo, il consumatore si innamora del brand e dei valori che esso incarna. Quanto esposto finora è tappa obbligata, rappresenta idealmente un ponte di passaggio che collega il mondo dei brand a quello dei *Lovemarks*. L'amore è il più alto dei sentimenti, il più puro delle emozioni. È difficile instaurare un legame tanto viscerale con il consumatore, ma una volta che ciò accade, come abbiamo visto, l'azienda non può che beneficiarne. È importante ricordare che per quanto difficile possa essere imporre sul mercato il proprio brand, ancora più difficile sarà poi scalzarlo, poiché si sedimenterà non solo nella leadership del proprio settore, ma anche nella mente e nel cuore dei consumatori. Quello dei *Lovemarks* è un gruppo alquanto elitario, a cui appartengono la minoranza delle imprese che siamo soliti conoscere. Ciò che li differenzia dalle altre realtà aziendali sono, nello specifico, tre caratteristiche: mistero, sensualità e intimità. I *Lovemarks* devono essere capaci di catalizzare costantemente l'attenzione dei consumatori, creando un alone di mistero che celi i propri prodotti dietro una fitta coltre di nebbia. Un brand non può dimostrarsi banale e scontato, piuttosto deve sapere stimolare la curiosità del consumatore, deve intrigarlo costantemente per poterlo attrarre a sé. Per quanto riguarda la sensualità, questa caratteristica deriva specialmente dal fattore estetico dato dal retail: come visto nel primo capitolo, il design che contraddistingue i negozi dei *Lovemarks* non sono lasciati al caso; sono studiati nei minimi dettagli, dalla pianificata organizzazione interna, all'appariscenza esterna. La sensualità del brand si traduce nel suo essere esteticamente desiderabile e irresistibile, nel saper corteggiare i sensi dei consumatori e stravolgere le loro percezioni. Infine, l'intimità è il terzo tassello del puzzle che compone e definisce i *Lovemarks* e che, in un certo senso, controbilancia le due componenti precedenti: il brand deve essere sì provocante nel corteggiamento, ma deve anche saper essere empatico, deve saper ascoltare in silenzio i bisogni e le esigenze dei propri clienti. L'amore non è fatto solo di trasporto emotivo del consumatore nei confronti del brand, ma anche di attenzioni del brand nei confronti nel consumatore. L'amore, così nelle relazioni interpersonali come in quelle economiche, è bidirezionale. È proprio questo dettaglio che eleva i *Lovemarks*: un brand ottiene questo status proprio perché sfugge alla de-umanizzazione che caratterizza un mercato frivolo, privo di contenuti e di valori. È

esattamente questo che fa perdere la testa ai consumatori: i *Lovemarks* offrono tutto ciò che non riescono a trovare in nessun altro brand.

Il terzo capitolo rappresenta uno spartiacque che divide l'elaborato in due parti distinte, e segna l'inizio di un'analisi più specifica. Qui viene preso in considerazione un esempio concreto di un brand che ha saputo affermarsi nel marketing esperienziale ed è entrato a far parte di quella cerchia ristretta tanto ambita. *Moleskine* è un'azienda fondata nel 1997 con l'intento di rilanciare i famosi taccuini, da cui l'azienda prende il nome, di cui lo scrittore Bruce Chatwin tesse le lodi nella sua opera del 1987, *The Songlines*. Come l'autore stesso riporta, egli non poteva fare a meno di annotare i propri pensieri, appunti, schizzi all'interno dei taccuini; ma quando l'azienda a conduzione familiare francese che li produceva cessò l'attività, per lui fu una catastrofe dover rinunciare ai taccuini, ormai compagni di vita. Da questo aneddoto letterario è possibile dedurre che l'intento dell'azienda milanese fosse proprio quello di invitare le persone a sporcarsi le dita d'inchiostro e riportare in auge la scrittura a mano, in un momento storico in cui la tecnologia e l'avvento del digitale hanno soppiantato irrimediabilmente il cartaceo. La sfida dell'azienda è certamente ambiziosa: riuscire a convincere le persone, ormai abituate alla comodità dei dispositivi elettronici e alla pigrizia che questi inducono, a scarabocchiare un taccuino non è cosa da poco. *Moleskine*, attraverso le sue numerose iniziative, è riuscito a ottenere un successo a livello mondiale perché è stato in grado di rievocare nella mente e nel cuore dei suoi consumatori la bellezza della scrittura e non solo. Infatti, l'azienda sprona i clienti a mettere in mostra la propria vena creativa, li esorta a esprimere sé stessi e promuove l'interazione reciproca all'interno di una vasta community di appassionati. I consumatori si sono sostanzialmente innamorati di un brand che vuole sostenere la loro immaginazione e incanalare tale fantasia nei loro taccuini, come valvola di sfogo analogica in una società ipertecnologica. Molteplici sono i progetti e le attività che ha portato avanti l'azienda, di cui degni di nota: *Moleskine +* è una linea di soluzioni ibride che puntano a fare da ponte tra cartaceo e digitale, proponendo collezioni di prodotti che consentono di integrare il passato alla modernità. *MyMoleskine* è una piattaforma virtuale che mette in relazione migliaia di clienti, in cui vige la libertà di espressione, in cui ognuno può di mettere in mostra la propria creatività e le proprie doti artistiche; *Moleskine Café* definisce la volontà dell'azienda di creare un luogo, dal design progettato al dettaglio, che sia un'estensione fisica di tutti i valori che incarna

l'azienda. Il locale è diviso in una parte in cui è possibile acquistare prodotti del brand, un'altra sezione destinata alla caffetteria e un'altra fatta di display che proiettano i progetti artistici dei membri della community appena presentata. Un locale per tutti i gusti dalle cui pareti trasudano tutti i principi fondanti dell'azienda. *Moleskine Foundation* è, invece, un progetto con cui l'azienda ha dato vita a un'organizzazione non-profit che ha lo scopo di ridestare la coscienza collettiva e individuale di quelle realtà sociali in cui le difficoltà di natura economica, politica e culturale impediscono alla creatività e all'immaginazione di proliferare. Analizzando la natura di queste iniziative è possibile rendersi conto che ciò che è di primaria importanza per l'azienda non è di natura capitalistica, è avulsa alla dimensione tangibile. Difatti, ciò che vuole veicolare *Moleskine* è il valore dell'ispirazione, del viaggio come incontro con il diverso, dell'arte. In un mondo frenetico in cui la bellezza è oramai dettata dall'apparenza, e non più dall'essenza, l'azienda invita le persone a riflettere, a guardarsi dentro, affinché comprendano che ciò che conta davvero è stato a lungo tempo represso e non ha avuto ancora modo di esprimersi. *Moleskine* dà, così, la possibilità alle persone di rivelare la propria natura e di sfuggire ai preconetti della società odierna, semplicemente scarabocchiando le pagine di un taccuino. È questa empatia e questa vicinanza da sempre dimostrata dall'azienda milanese verso i propri clienti che la contraddistingue dalla concorrenza, la eleva e la trasforma in un *Lovemark*.

Nell'ultimo capitolo ho voluto investigare il grado di dipendenza tra economia e linguistica, andando ad analizzare il linguaggio utilizzato nella comunicazione online da *Moleskine*. L'obiettivo è quello di capire se il processo trasformativo del brand in *Lovemark* è dipesa esclusivamente da manovre e strategie di marketing o se un uso sapiente di un linguaggio evocativo, persuasivo e carico di emotività possa incidere nell'esito del mutamento. Questa convergenza tra due dimensioni solo superficialmente agli antipodi rispecchia il mio percorso universitario in cui si sono alternate discipline prettamente linguistiche ad altre più economiche. Per poter rispondere al quesito, ho fatto ricorso alla linguistica dei corpus: ho utilizzato *Sketch Engine*, con il quale avevo già familiarità, per creare e gestire il corpus ed esaminare i risultati ottenuti dal programma. Il corpus fa riferimento al linguaggio utilizzato dall'azienda nella comunicazione online con il consumatore, ed è costituito da vari sub-corpora, uno relativo al sito web, e altri tre riferiti agli altrettanti social media che ho voluto prendere in esame, Facebook, Instagram

e Twitter. I risultati ottenuti dimostrano che il linguaggio del sito web sia un linguaggio più descrittivo, dato dall'obiettivo di un sito web, ossia di informare i consumatori sui prodotti. Ciononostante, vi è un'alta frequenza di materiale testuale dal carattere emotivo. Al contrario, i profili social sono costituiti da porzioni di testo inferiore, ma sono densi di contenuto linguistico emotivo, poiché il linguaggio utilizzato è, ovviamente, un linguaggio diverso, più vicino al cliente, più colloquiale. Ciò che caratterizza in maniera indistinta il linguaggio di *Moleskine* è sì la presenza di termini che appartengono alla sfera emotiva o che richiamano stati psicologici come *Love, Passion, Joy, Happiness*, ma ancor più frequenti si sono rivelati essere una serie di termini che sono predittivi di ipotetici stati d'animo. Infatti, da un punto di vista quantitativo, molto più numerosi sono stati termini che non appartengono direttamente alla dimensione emotiva, ma che vi orbitano attorno, giacché possono influenzare il mood dell'individuo e stimolare atteggiamenti positivi verso il brand. I termini in questione, individuati in base alla lista delle occorrenze, sono: sostantivi come *Creativity, Dream, Experience, Ideas, Imagination, Inspiration, Journey, Memory*; verbi come *Capture, Connect, Enjoy, Express, Share*; aggettivi come *Deep, New, Personal, Unique*. Facendo una semplice divisione basata sui dati forniti dal corpus, scopriamo che questo tipo di termini occorre con una frequenza di 1.2 parole per ogni frase. Il risultato rappresenta una stima generica, pertanto potrebbero esserci frasi con una densità maggiore e altri in cui non appaiono termini di questo genere. Inoltre, andando a ricercare nel *Thesaurus* la lista di sinonimi della parola amore, la tabella mostra che l'amore sia associato alla scrittura incoraggiata dal brand (*Writing*), alla necessità di rivolgersi al brand per poter esprimere sé stessi (*Need*), al piacere di usufruire di un prodotto *Moleskine* (*Enjoy*). In ultima istanza, analizzando il comportamento dei verbi presenti nel corpus che accompagnano i termini predittivi di atteggiamenti positivi verso il brand, si nota facilmente la costante ricorrenza di alcuni di essi *Wake-Awaken*, e che molti di essi sono portatori di medesimo significato *Feed, Recharge, Maximize, Rouse, Unfold, Trigger*. In definitiva, l'analisi del linguaggio di *Moleskine* non può essere presa come verità assoluta e certa per tutti i *Lovemarks*, ma consente di affermare che, quantomeno nel caso specifico di quest'azienda, la comunicazione utilizzata nei suoi canali virtuali è densa di elementi linguistici appartenenti alla stessa sfera semantica dell'emotività, che possono guidare le passioni

dei consumatori, stimolare i loro sentimenti e indurli all'acquisto reiterato di uno o più prodotti di quel brand.

Per concludere, benché l'exkursus sul marketing esperienziale e sul fenomeno dei *Lovemarks*, con particolare attenzione all'ascesa del brand *Moleskine*, rappresenti l'obiettivo, il punto nevralgico del mio elaborato, questi non è altro che un pretesto per poter riflettere su un discorso più profondo, basato sulla rilevanza delle emozioni. Infatti, alla luce di quanto riportato nei quattro capitoli, è auspicabile che il lettore mediti sull'importanza delle emozioni e sul peso che queste hanno non solo nella sfera privata dell'individuo ma in ogni ambito della sua vita. Le emozioni hanno un peso specifico che non è stato sottovalutato dalle aziende, ed è per questo che sono alla base dell'*Experience Marketing*. Le emozioni spingono le persone a compiere gesti che travalicano la razionalità. Laddove la logica frena le persone, l'istinto le induce all'azione. È questo che hanno compreso diverse aziende, che si sono rimodellate, hanno ridefinito i propri meccanismi per poter proporre un'offerta tutta nuova in concomitanza con la nascita della nuova economia. Il prodotto non si configura più come mero insieme di funzionalità da cui il consumatore trae beneficio, ma, metaforicamente parlando, diventa un vero e proprio passaporto che consente al consumatore di raggiungere quel mondo possibile, costituito *ad hoc* dai brand, fatto di valori, esperienze, principi bramati da ogni singolo consumatore. Spettacolarizzazione dell'offerta ed emotività del linguaggio si fondono insieme, si conglobano per diventare non solo punti di forza dei *Lovemarks*, ma anche la chiave con cui aprire la serratura, entrare nel cuore dei consumatori e rimanervi a imperitura memoria.