The construction and controlling effect of a moral brand

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Abstract

This paper explores the control effect of a moral brand through its brand culture. The moral brand culture distinguishes itself from other brand cultures by drawing on external claims for legitimacy. In this case, the brand drew upon a strong brand community, moral narratives in society, and the participative engagement with its values by many employees. As a consequence of these multiple and often external means of brand creation, managers were able to distance themselves from the process of brand and cultural management. Indeed such distancing was required for its effective enactment. The co-creation of the moral brand and the idea of 'doing the right thing' deflected attention from the controlling effect of the brand culture.

Keywords: Anti-corporate, Authenticity, Brand culture, Brand work, Ethical organization, Moral brand, Normative control.

The construction and controlling effect of a moral brand

Introduction

This paper seeks to explore the control effect of a 'moral' brand (a brand that communicates moral or ethical issues) through brand culture. Brand cultures contrast with cultures that are focused on the organisation: internal cultures that may or may not be evident to consumers and the public more broadly and are thus primarily influenced by actors within the organisation and are not necessarily displayed without. A brand culture, in which brand values embody or become the organisational culture (Kornberger, 2010), is a culture in which agents external to the organisation, such as brand communities, have a more immediate involvement in its creation, alongside managers and employees, who are expected to embody the brand values. Brands, cultures, and brand cultures need to be understood in their socio-economic, historical, and political contexts in terms of their creation, embodiment and attributed meaning. Moral brands and brand cultures which draw on the moral and ethical issues of the day are particularly so influenced, whereby multiple discourse are drawn upon to create, and employed to scrutinise, the brand. A moral brand culture can be identified by its tendency to be co-created (and lived) within and beyond the organisational boundary (including, for examples, managers, employees and brand communities), by the immediacy and intensity of the effect of context on its meaning (whilst all cultures are meaningful in context, a brand culture is dependent on its being recognised and meaningful in society more widely), and in particular by the nature and intensity of the morals, debates and concerns of the time reflected in the culture.

It is argued here that a moral brand culture poses interesting questions about organisational control. In particular, the strength of discourse and agency external to the organisation in creating the brand culture raise issues about its nature, enactment and control. Here, brands and thus brand cultures are both managed by and beyond the control of management in more explicit ways than organisational cultures. Moral brand cultures, by becoming meaningful in the context of prevailing moral concerns, derive much of their legitimacy (and scrutiny) from external sources including moral discourse and consumers/ brand communities. As with organisational cultures, they are also created, enacted, subverted and resisted by employees within the organisation. The overt nature of this managerial limit on control allows managers to deny or distance themselves from brand management and brand culture. In one sense, the diffuse base of brand creation enables a more

democratic process of brand creation and brand culture. However it also gives rise to concerns about the nature and management of the brand culture and the effects of, and responsibility for, brand cultural control (and the end it serves, Smircich, 1983) as shared between managers, employees, brand communities and so on.

This paper explores the nature of a co-created brand in the context of a company with strong claims to being 'ethical' and 'anti-corporate'. The moral dimension to brand identity forms an increasingly important part of the retail landscape and draws attention to brand cultures that are shaped by the powerful discourse of 'doing the right thing'. In exploring this case it is argued that something distinct from cultures demanding extra-contractual presenteeism or high-commitment identity work (Casey, 1995; Kunda, 1992), and organisations' utilisation of aspects of the private lives of employees to lend authenticity and credibility to an organisation's identity and/or brand (Fleming, 2009; Fleming & Spicer, 2004; Fleming & Sturdy, 2011; Garrety, 2008; Land & Taylor, 2010) is evident. It demonstrates how employees control, and are controlled by the moral brand, and how it gives meaning to their lives at the same time as exhibiting characteristics of a totalistic cultural control, demonstrating Willmott's (1993) notion of 'doublethink'. The account given of moral brand cultural control highlights its complexity. The moral brand stands for more than the organisation, and includes moral narratives and personal beliefs. The brand culture extends the scope of managerial control (Alvesson 1990) but for a 'good cause' that goes beyond the success of the organisation, and includes employees' own desires. Consequently, it is argued, managers are able to distance themselves from the process of control to a greater degree than with organisational culture.

What follows is a review of the branding literature and the role of brands in employee control. Subsequently the moral brand culture case study will be introduced, and the research methods employed will be discussed before the data is presented and analysed. The paper will conclude with discussions and conclusions, as well as highlighting limitations to the research.

Brands, brand values and brand cultures
A brand creates meaning (Kay, 2006). Much of the brand literature has been focused on building and managing brands (Aaker, 1996; Fournier, 1998; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Ind, 1996; Kapferer, 1992; Kay, 2006; King, 1991), measuring brand experience (Brakus, Schmitt, & Zarantonello, 2009) and commitment (Fournier, 1998), understanding brand symbolism (Elliott, 1994) and visual identity (Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004), and distinctions between brand identity, corporate and organisational identity, and visual identity (Balmer, 2001). Most developments in the field are based

on 'big brand' case studies (Kay, 2006). These approaches typically focus on brands as part of the managerial tool box (Kornberger, 2010). The following quote reflects the typical understanding of a corporate brand:

A corporate brand involves the conscious decision by senior management to distil and make known the attributes of the organisation's identity in the form of a clearly defined branding proposition. This proposition underpins organisational efforts to communicate, differentiate, and enhance the brand vis-á-vis key stakeholder groups and networks (Balmer, 2001: 281).

A growing body of literature challenges the extent of corporate authorship and focuses on the role of consumers in shaping the brand. This field of work focuses on their relationships with brands and how brands are used to give meaning to their lives, and form part of their identity (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Fournier, 1998; Holt, 2002, 2004; Humphreys & Grayson, 2008). This is perhaps best exemplified by the emergence of brand communities (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Fournier & Lee, 2009; Luedicke, 2006; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). However brand management has had to contend with an increasingly well informed, questioning, oftentimes cynical consumer community (Mohr, Eroglu, & Ellen, 1998) that could be described as 'anti-branding' (Cromie & Ewing, 2009; Hollenbeck & Zinkhan, 2006; Klein, 1999; Lasn, 2000) in seeking to resist branding efforts by eschewing brands or taking more reflexive approaches to consumption and branded identity work (Cherrier, 2009; Firat & Venkatesh, 1995; Holt, 2002). Consumers and critics are not just passive receivers of the brand but are active in shaping, resisting and subverting brands (Holt, 2002; Kates, 2004; Ligas & Cotte, 1999; Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004).

Under the watchful eye of the critical consumer, companies have become increasingly conscious of the need to appear genuine in their claims, 'raising the bar on what is considered authentic' (Holt, 2002: 85). Brands lack credibility if the corporate activities are not congruent with their claims (Kay, 2006). Indeed many writing on brand and brand management refer to the need for 'authenticity' (Hatch & Schultz, 2003) and the consequences of inauthentic brand meanings (Thompson & Arsel, 2004; Thompson, Rindfleisch, & Arsel, 2006). Such concerns are heightened when espoused values have a 'moral' (typically green, sustainable, or socially responsible) dimension (Brunk, 2010); part of the growing market where social good and consumption is connected (Fontenelle, 2010; Kotler & Lee, 2005). In these cases the values can have a significant effect on "the expectations, choices, behaviors, and the lifestyles of their core consumers" (Kay, 2006: 754) through their strong values and 'missionary ideology' (see Mintzberg, 1989). These values need to be seen as authentic to avoid charges of cynical associations between corporate social responsibility and purely value-adding

activities (Banerjee, 2008; Hoeffler & Keller, 2003; Kay, 2006). But in any case corporations (socially good or otherwise) have had to grapple with the need to distance themselves from appearing too 'corporate' by feigning some disinterestedness in their brand *as a brand* and focusing on the myths, values and experiences *of others* (Holt, 2002). Holt (2002) describes this in the context of Harley-Davidson:

The Harley-Davidson Company is a master of life world emplacement, working both the history and the subculture angles to enhance the perception that Harley's value stems from authentic sources. Harley managers have used product design, staged events, and sponsorship to create for their customers the idea that Harley is an anachronistic company whose heart remains in the 1950s. … This authenticity work allows the company to camouflage aggressive commercial intentions, as evidenced by the brand's frenetic trademark licensing and the Harley cafes and fashion showrooms that now dot the country (p. 85).

Brand communities, by virtue of their interest in the brand have both loyalty towards the brand, but also a vested interest in ensuring the brand remains true to its values (McAlexander, Schouten, & Koenig, 2002; Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). In extremis, brand communities have been described as the 'owner of the brand' (Fournier & Lee, 2009) and act as a guardian of the brand's legitimacy (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001). Brand communities can, therefore, be challenging to, but also useful for managers.

Brand values are not just communicated in marketing efforts, but need to be embedded, requiring commitment throughout the organisation (Balmer, 2001). Employees are crucial in building brand relationships (Berry, 2000; Bettencourt, Brown, & MacKenzie, 2005; Bitner, Booms, & Mohr, 1994; de Chernatony, Drury, & Segal-Horn, 2003; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Miles & Mangold, 2004; Morhart, Herzog, & Tomczak, 2009; Parasuraman, Zeithaml, & Berry, 1985; Wilson, 2001). As McAlexander and colleagues note, "employees can provide customers a human manifestation of the company at a time when many corporations are perceived as impersonal and unfeeling bureaucracies" (2002: 50). This demands authenticity of employees such that they live the brand, lending it depth and credence (Fournier & Lee, 2009). If a brand communicates a 'promise' (Balmer, 2001; Grassl, 1999) then it's the consumer-facing employees who will typically be the ones ensuring that it is fulfilled (as well as created) through authentic brand work (Pettinger, 2004).

Employees have been described as the 'being' of the brand or its soul; here, the brand is equated with employee behaviour (Kornberger, 2010). In some cases these employees form part of the brand community (McAlexander, et al., 2002). The effectiveness of a strong brand strategy relies on mobilising the brand work of employees. Consequently employee retention (stabilising and building

on the relationship between brand worker and consumer); in-role brand work where the brand message is consistently communicated; and extra-role brand work where employees supplement the required brand work with discretionary activities or support it with consistent messages (or advocacy for the brand) off the job (Morhart, et al., 2009) forms an important part of the strategy for achieving this authenticity (see Shamir, 2004 for a discussion of this as normative control in CSR projects). Employees should ideally be "authentically "living" the brand values", demonstrating their personal involvement, pride, and engagement in communicating the brand promise (Morhart, et al., 2009: 123) which goes beyond their alignment with the values (Borgerson, et al., 2009). This could be accomplished through an employee's consumption, or in broader terms of their lifestyle – leisure activities, activism and so on. Authenticity as a means of control draws on multiple aspects of employee identity and activity to give depth and substance to claims of brand authenticity. At the same time employees, like consumers, can become branded and shaped according to the brand values. Branding is thus not just an externally focused exercise, and can also play a key role inside of the organisation (Kärreman & Rylander, 2008; Kay, 2006; Kornberger, 2010; Morhart, et al., 2009) constituting what Kornberger (2010) has described as a brand culture – a device for rendering visible many of the norms and values.

In brand culture, the brand and culture become inextricably related and mutually constitutive (Kornberger, 2010).The brand communicates what is at the heart of the organisation in terms of what the culture is and an idealised sense of what it could become. But unlike culture, the brand has much stronger links beyond the organisational boundary and can be seen as more substantively constructed from within *and beyond* the organisation. As Schroeder and Salzer-Mörling (2006) note, "cultural codes constrain how brands work to produce meaning" (p. 1). As a result, managers can distance themselves from the requirement of authenticity by drawing attention to the activities of brand communities, the brand workers, and the resulting co-created (rather than managerially determined) brand. Another means of distancing is accomplished through the nature of the brand logic. Here the focus is not on the coherence and consistency of the brand message, but its position within society – the 'rightness' of the brand values. Brands that tap into the imagination of consumers can also inspire those within the organisation. This may be at its most potent when the values are ostensibly moral ones, such as those pertaining to social and environmental responsibility, or where a brand derives its legitimacy from being 'marginal' in the market place (Muñiz & O'Guinn, 2001; Schau, Muñiz Jr, & Arnould, 2009). Done effectively, the consumption of the brand enables consumers to live the values. The same can be true for employees (Kotler & Lee, 2005). An authentic anti-corporate brand (an 'anti-brand' brand) can draw on the anti-branding sentiment

from outside the organisation to make a compelling case for the brand and brand work required to accomplish this within the organisation.

The extent to which a brand can be managed should not be overstated as the branding process always exceeds the direct influence of management (Arvidsson, 2006; Hatch & Schultz, 2003; Salzer-Mörling & Strannegård, 2004). Drawing on an interpretative perspective, the brand can be understood as a social construction and the result of a negotiated process involving different stakeholders (Gregory, 2007). The role of customers in shaping brand values as part of a 'dynamic dialectical relationship' (Holt, 2002), and the growing focus on prosumption (Humphreys & Grayson, 2008) whereby consumers are involved in creating brand value, reducing the traditional distinction between customer and employee in creating brand value (Cardador & Pratt, 2006) and brand meaning (Cova & Pace, 2006) attest to this; as well as the capacity by which employees can also resist or sabotage a brand (van Rekom, 1997). Brands, like identities, are seen from a functionalist (manageable), socially constructed, and post-modern perspective (as a consequence of power-relationships), though typically not at the same time (Balmer, 2001). Crucially it is argued here, a brand should be understood as socially constructed, but in which identity exists (even if challenged/ contested) that reflects the dominance of certain interests over others in the creation of the brand, and which can also be found in its effects. Managers can do much to influence brand identity through a focus on organisational history, storytelling, and symbolic behaviours (Hatch & Schultz, 2003; McCracken, 1986) therefore their role in managing the brand, and using it to control behaviour, should not be overlooked.

The case study that follows explores the essential role that employees and their authentic brand engagement played in creating a successful moral brand and brand culture, and how this engagement was encouraged and managed through their love of the product, the brand, and the sense of moral purpose. This case involves an organisation with a strong brand community, founder-member management, and a highly committed workforce. As a consequence it enables the analysis of an organisation in which meaningful (moral) brand co-creation can be enacted.

The case study

Juicy (a pseudonym, as are all personal names) is a medium sized organisation which was founded in the UK in the mid nineties, operating over 600 stores worldwide. The company manufactures and sells its own brand of cosmetic and toiletry products. The Juicy brand draws on a number of characteristics, including its environmental and ethical values, quality of product, customer focus

and a sense of fun (including the freedom of self-expression). Central to the credibility of the brand is the attention given to the whole production process, from sourcing ethical and sustainable supplies of ingredients, manufacturing in an environmentally sensitive manner, and minimising and recycling packaging. Alongside its ethical and green credentials, Juicy emphasises the handmade nature of the products, quality of ingredients and the service experience that focuses on finding the right products for its customers without the hard sell. Juicy offers consumers an alternative 'brandscape' (Thompson & Arsel, 2004) through which they can resist the typical high-street experience, by offering a personalised service for its customers. The products are considered value for money when the high production costs are taken into consideration; an honest or fair price for the product, providing an "authentic utility" (Holt, 2002: 75).

The notion of a Juicy 'brand' is contested within the organisation, not only in terms of the nature of the brand, but whether there is a brand of which to speak. Some staff within the company rejected the idea of there being a Juicy brand as that might be seen as 'corporate'. Many of Juicy's decisions reflect an 'anti-branding' stance, for example its lack of paid advertising. However, others were more comfortable with the idea of a brand, and even saw the brand as a way to promote the values of the company more widely in society. The company history was often invoked, and included the sacrifices made by the founders to launch the company and the passion with which they have stuck to their values and, latterly, the values of their brand community. Within hours of entering Juicy I became aware of its importance, not least because of the frequency with which aspects of its history were employed in conversation.

Juicy was targeted as a company with a strong 'ethical' brand however the research retained the case study (broadly speaking) as the primary focus (see: Stake, 2005).   Prior to the study I had some familiarity with the company, and awareness of its values, but no long-term, well-established customer relationship or insight that would influence the research process.   Access was gained through an indirect personal contact and negotiated over a five-month period. The data presented in this paper was collected over a nine-month period.

The data presented below is drawn from a number of visits to the organisation, including time spent on the factory and shop floor, attending meetings and training sessions and observations in and around the workspaces (seven non-consecutive weeks were spent in the organisation). Interviews (forty) and numerous informal conversations were also recorded (in the latter case through written notes taking during and after the event) and supplemented by the company's literature, visual

identity, and other artefacts inside the organisation, web-based material and external accounts of Juicy in desire to achieve a 'thick description' (Geertz, 1973). Analysis was undertaken alongside data collection allowing refinements to the data collection process (Strauss & Corbin, 1990) reflecting the need for much of the verification and analysis to be conducted whilst in the field (Van Maanen, 1979).

In the context of more in-depth ethnographic studies, ethical issues often become heightened, particularly with regards relationships of trust and informed consent and the need to balance the relationship of 'friend' and 'stranger' (Powdermaker, 1966). At all times, people were informed of the project and the purpose of my presence. Researching an organisation in which values were prominent and often congruent with the researcher's own risks the loss of 'distance' required for analysis (Czarniawska-Joerges, 1992; Hammersley & Atkinson, 1995; Neyland, 2008). In light of the concerns of 'closeness' to the field, the data was discussed with colleagues who challenged and critiqued the interpretations and encouraged a reflexive approach to the influence of values (including a tendency on the part of the researcher to adopt a 'critical' perspective) on the subsequent analysis, recognising that any interpretation (and 'imagination' – see Cunliffe, 2010) remains open to reinterpretation (Van Maanen, 1979). Themes were drawn from reflections in the field, preliminary data analysis, discussions with colleagues and the literature and were used to develop the coding structure for the subsequent analysis. Many events received multiple codings, reflecting the complex nature of data interpretation. The field notes and extracts from interviews form the basis of the description and analysis. At times the notes are quoted verbatim, and at other times they are subsumed into the account. Quotations from participants are in double quotation marks.

Being Juicy: how the brand becomes the culture

Upon entering Juicy it was clear there was a strong collective sense of identity, captured by employees' frequent reference to a "*(Juicy) life*". This was most clearly evident in the head office and retail. Here it was assumed that staff would buy-in to the company values (or at least some of them), and unsurprisingly many were attracted to working for the company because of the nature of the products or the underpinning values. The nature of the Juicy life (the enactment of the brand values in everyday life, such as having fun, freedom of self-expression, 'greening' their lives, or using 'high quality, handmade and fairly priced' products) corresponded with the nature of Juicy products such that it was difficult to distinguish between the corporate brand and product range brand: a Juicy product was the material manifestation of the Juicy values, in much the same way that the

living of the Juicy life was the logical consequence of believing in the Juicy values. If you believed in the values you would buy the products: "*everything comes down to the products*". When asked, most respondents did not differentiate between the brand as the company or the product range.

The Juicy life was manifest in the way in which employees spoke enthusiastically about the Juicy brand (and moved interchangeably between the products and company when doing so), their personal image, their green values, and 'fun' ways of working. There was visual evidence for the curiously homogenising nature of the Juicy life in which the freedom of self-expression resulted in a Juicy 'look'. Juicy prided itself on allowing people to dress and present themselves as they wished. Within the stores there was a little more regulation of the attire (an informal uniform) but autonomy otherwise. One interviewee noted *"one of the things I really love about the organisation is it doesn't judge people by their looks"*. This was confirmed by others, and was supported by my own observations of the appearances of the shop managers at the management meetings as well as staff in the stores. In my notes I reflect: *If anything there is a code to be different – the sameness of the Juicy workforce is that they are 'different' from everyone else*. Shop-floor staff were typically under the age of 30 (managers usually under 40), and either 'cool' or 'alternative' in look. It was not unusual to find staff with a number of body piercings, brightly coloured hair, dreadlocks, or tattoos; stores also often had their own look (cool or alternative). There was what Fleming has called 'a private (yet visible) individualism' (2009: 8).

The enthusiasm for (and identification with) the Juicy brand was cultivated within Juicy. Prospective shop staff underwent a shop-floor trial to assess their ability to engage with customers, including their warmth of manner, sense of fun and so on (but not necessarily their knowledge of the company[1]). Once accepted into post, employees were given a one-day orientation course introducing them to the history and values of the organisation,[2] and were expected to develop an in-depth understanding of the products (samples were sent to their home), including the ingredients, their (ethical) sourcing, and what it was like to utilise the products. It was expected that staff would become customers (influencing their private consumption) to enhance their product knowledge and give genuine accounts 'as a fellow user'. Staff received a generous discount on Juicy products, and these till receipts were recorded separately and could be identified with the staff member concerned. As one shop worker commented "*I don't trust those [colleagues] who don't buy the products*". This sentiment was echoed by others.

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[1] A number of retail staff confirmed this in the interviews.
[2] Even temporary workers, such as those employed over the Christmas period received a half-day induction.

Juicy called upon its shop-based employees to 'be themselves' but at the same time adopt the 'Juicy way' of selling (see also: Fleming, 2009). Some stores were more explicit about how the Juicy way could be achieved. The desire to get sales staff to 'be themselves' was claimed to be genuine by staff and managers, and there was no specific script, though in staff-only areas of the stores there were often guidelines or hints written by the managers as to how to engage with customers. As one employee commented '*what I like about (Juicy) is that you can be yourself*'. Despite the autonomy, there was also consistency in behaviour. Fun was a regular part of the sales performance. On many occasions, and in different stores, I witnessed staff laughing and joking with each other or customers, dancing, singing or engaging in elaborate and entertaining product demonstrations. The 'fun' Juicy culture was embodied in their everyday working practices. There was a sense of real enthusiasm for working at Juicy: *'I love it here'; 'I approached (Juicy) because I loved the products'* were recorded in my notes (although there were also criticisms raised about the pay structure[3]). The fun, jokey on-floor persona was replicated behind the scenes. The success of the sales technique relied upon a 'naturalness' or perceived authenticity in the actions of the shop staff. In this sense 'being oneself' was useful to the organisation, visually, and behaviourally.

Many staff reported being affected by the brand values in a way that went beyond the working environment; it changed their outlook on life and everyday practice - most often with respect to recycling at home, patterns of (more enlightened) consumption and an awareness of social and environmental issues. Others became involved in campaigns or local environmental projects, such as beach clean-ups, which was encouraged in Juicy (involving both a temporal and spatial work boundary transgression). The effect on lifestyles demonstrates the extent of the potential work life/private life boundary transgression: the impact of the Juicy values on the 'person' not just the 'employee'. Outside of work, many Juicy employees reported being a *"(Juicy) bore"* as they would talk frequently about the brand values, and in turn brand themselves as being 'Juicy' or as living the Juicy life. At the heart of the Juicy culture was the product. Even the company history was closely tied to product development.

Evidently many were passionate about Juicy and the organisation gave them the freedom for self-expression in a manner that may not be possible in other companies. At the same time, the

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[3] Remuneration consisted of a minimum wage coupled with a bonus structure based on shop-level (not individual) sales performance. Shops were also ranked and these details circulated, promoting a competitive edge, and rewarding accordingly.

consistency of these range of behaviours betrayed the effects of internal branding; to progress in Juicy you needed to 'get' Juicy and live the Juicy life. The strong brand culture was accomplished through a mixture of peer-to-peer pressure, personal commitment, and the cultivation of the Juicy brand culture (aligning, capturing and encouraging engagement with the Juicy brand culture).

'Becoming' Juicy: aligning the values

The pressure to conform was reflected in the behaviour of a new member of staff, having joined only a matter of days prior to the accounts outlined below. The event below, shortly before dinner at the 3-day managers' meeting, reflects the pressure felt to live by Juicy values.

The four of us are in the room. I am sat by the window facing inward and Lucy is by the door. Melanie and Christina are getting ready. Melanie is checking the fit of her dress in the mirror and Christina is sat down doing her make-up. Lucy, the new girl, opens up her toiletry bag which contains a bottle of..(.)..moisturiser – a brand which is marketed on the basis of its lack of perfume, artificial ingredients and so on. Lucy makes a reference to it and Christina stops what she is doing. 'It's just marketing, it's all greenwash, it's not really good for you. You'll have to stop using it and use (Juicy) products'..."you're a part of (Juicy) now". Lucy quickly distances herself from the products, saying she will use Juicy products from now on 'as soon as I am paid I am only going to buy (Juicy) products'.

Here we can see that it was not just a matter of company loyalty but brand loyalty – that by using the products you were demonstrating your commitment to the values. Lucy's experiences as a newcomer made more apparent – verbalised – the underlying narrative that was often unspoken of what it meant to live a Juicy life.

Not everyone lived by all of the Juicy values. I witnessed, and had my attention drawn to, staff who brought in plastic bottles of water, used plastic (rather than reusable) bags, and ate meat in the office (Juicy only used vegetarian ingredients and was often described as a 'vegetarian company'). The freedom to be yourself in this regard was contested. One story related told of a member of staff who would let a door go, rather than hold it open, if the person following had a chicken sandwich. This was laughed off as a quirkiness of character and acceptable within the context.

Capturing the values

The environmentalism was more evident in Juicy head office where some of the most passionate advocates for the brand worked. A significant number of staff were active in pursuing their beliefs

(environmental, animal welfare, social), and many were vegetarian. There was real passion held by some for the values that Juicy was seen to uphold. Christina, who worked in retail described herself as an "eco-nazi". Andrea was more passionate about the values of the organisation than most and was aware that she might influence others: *'I know I put pressure – not intentionally - on people to be vegetarian. I am passionate about the cause..[.]..I think I am...if I have a role in this it's because I really live the green life so people believe me'.*

The managing director was described as a "collector of people". This collection included people who not only embodied the brand but also developed it – pushing the range of practices in which Juicy engaged and which reinforced the values (or qualified them in new ways). For example, Andrea led on the greening of the organisation after being recognised from within the retail team as someone who was passionately committed to green issues. Andrea had developed and extended the green agenda and sustainable practices within Juicy and now had a team of like-minded people supporting her work. There were many other stories of employees being recognised within the organisation for their passion for Juicy values. Edward, in contrast, was persuaded to join Juicy to lead on their social and environmental activities. Both Andrea and Edward described Juicy as a "platform" for their values, indicating that they could not imagine working for another business. In such cases the need to persuade them of the Juicy way of life was unnecessary, but they proved to be instrumental in persuading others to live the Juicy life (see also: Pettinger, 2004; Sinclair, 1992). Employees like Edward and Andrea were viewed as champions of the values.

'Doing the Right Thing' – encouraging the values

Living the Juicy life was not explicitly sanctioned by the management team, many of whom seemed to make a point about being ambivalent as to how people lived their lives on the grounds that employees would leave if they did not fit in: "people either leave really quickly or they stay a long time[4]". Their apparent 'disinterestedness' was reinforced by the fact that many staff stayed with Juicy for many years, and some who left returned – as was highlighted by one of the founders in a retail managers' meeting in the manner of: 'so we must be doing something right'. However the conditions of its possibility were created by the founders, and communicated through the company history which was used as a rhetorical device to demonstrate their commitment and explicate (and legitimate) the brand *('great products, innovation, service'*), and call upon others for their engagement *('we give you unique products – you give the service').*   One of the key mediums through which the brand culture was demonstrated was the regular retail manager meetings. The following extract reflects some of the tone of the meeting taken from field notes:

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[4] It is also worth noting that people who did not identify with the Juicy culture were often made to feel uncomfortable. As one interviewee noted, it was possible to be ostracised when you did something wrong.

The talk intertwines strands of narrative that are motivational, self-congratulatory and crying out 'look how good we are', but also 'we' must do better (we're [by implication: the inventors/manufacturers] doing our bit (great products) so you need to do yours)..[..]..The idea of perseverance, and particularly the case of an exemplar store, demonstrated the expectation that staff should go the extra mile..[..]..Matthew (senior manager) focused on the products / experiences and the values that they were trying to communicate..[..]..Matthew peppers the presentation with stories, anecdotes, many I suspect are well-know given the use of phrases such as: "as you'll know because I've said this many times before..".

The meetings brought together all of the UK-based, and many of the international store managers, and were run over three days. In total there were about 300 participants, and the proceedings were filmed. The lavish event with a number of rituals and traditions (or regular stories, as indicated in the quote above) that exemplified the culture (Kunda, 1992) covered an update on performance, new products, 'green' developments, charitable activities, updates on the sourcing of ingredients and so on. The event was infused with jokes and fun and it was clear that the senior managers enjoyed this means of communication. Many presentations involved people dressing up and acting (new product ranges were launched through the medium of skits). At the same time, important messages were being communicated, and the presentations were designed to inform and impassion, encouraging staff to internalise their brand commitment by presenting it as doing the right thing. The event was a rallying cry; one presentation ended with the speaker calling out "*are you guys up for it?"* To which the audience replied with an emphatic *'yeah'*!

These events were seen as an important means of systematically communicating to the staff what was expected of them, and keeping them motivated (the event was recorded and copies sent to the homes of all Juicy shop-workers). Underlying the messages were the core brand values of quality products, honestly sold and a good consumer experience; being green, sustainable and caring; and having fun. The legitimacy of these messages lay with the rightness of the brand values in 'moral' terms (who would argue against honesty, caring, sustainability and so on?) and also in their focus on the consumer (it was about serving the customer, not the organisation). It was not about Juicy, but about doing the right thing, and being right for the consumer.

"Doing the right thing" (a phrase used repeatedly by one of the founders) not only related to the social and environmental values, but also the focus on the customer as 'always right'. The customer experience was important in terms of the product and the way in which it was sold and the values communicated. There was a strong brand community many of whom were passionate about the brand and played a role in shaping and endorsing it (enabling managers to distance themselves from overt branding, see Holt 2002). They were characteristically described by an employee as "even

more into Juicy than we are!" Many of the senior managerial staff had regular contact with the community via a web-based interface and their comments were discussed in management meetings and played a role in influencing decisions in, for example, product development (including 'greening' the products) and product retention; as one retail employee commented (echoed by others): "customers are listened to more than we are", lending credence to the notion that Juicy was about, and for, its customers.

Discussion

The Juicy case presents a complex picture of personal engagement (where employees share the values, or even see Juicy as a platform for their views), and persuasion – either directly through peer pressure, or indirectly through the climate created, legitimised and systematically cultivated (see Willmott, 1993) by the management team. The engagement with the brand extended beyond the boundary of work and trespassed into the private lives of employees (spatially, temporally, and also in terms of values and lifestyles). Even those for whom Juicy offered an opportunity for self-expression (a platform for their values) brought Juicy back into their lives which in turn lent authenticity to brand performativity. The private lives of the employees were being harnessed through their being credible ambassadors for the brand, resulting in a "commodification of aspects of (private) life" (Spicer, 2011: 50). The engaged employees who lived and embodied the Juicy life (see: Lazzarato, 2004) added value to the brand through their authentic engagement with the brand (Gilmore & Pine, 2007) and in the case of some employees, developed and shaped the brand. The brand captured and mobilized the passions and values of these staff, but it also regulated (both through peer-pressure and founder-led brand story creation) and produced the authentic Juicy employee (see: Deleuze & Guattari, 1983 on the social machine). The employees not only expressed the substance of the Juicy brand, but were also called upon to create it – drawing on their individuality (see: Pedersen, 2011) but in ways that were safe for Juicy. It was never the case that 'anything goes' (Fleming, 2009) for the moral brand. The employees co-created the brand, but in doing so also created the conditions for their own control; their autonomy for self-expression came from their identification with and enactment of the brand culture values (Willmott, 1993). The managers, and in particular the company founders, provided the conditions or 'platform' for this possibility with a strong, legitimised articulation of the brand meaning. At the same time the moral platform also enabled managers to distance themselves from its creation and management, which in turn facilitated control requiring autonomy but ultimately (as a result of the brand culture) remaining closely aligned to the founders' intentions.

The creative brand work of certain staff and the involvement of the brand community in co-creating the brand diluted managerial responsibility for the brand culture but also afforded opportunities for those wishing to pursue their own sympathetic values (which in turn lent further credence to the attitude of managerial 'distance'). Further, the oftentimes passionate peer pressure (see Barker, 1993; Sinclair, 1992) from within the organisation and the strongly held values enabled the managers to distance themselves from the overt management of employees (also achieved through the embedding of the company history in the collective consciousness). The founders relied on the fact that employees either 'got it' or failed to engage and left the organisation allowing an apparent 'disinterestedness' in the management of the brand culture, or in some cases the idea of a brand at all, as if self selection would suffice or the values 'spoke for themselves'. Yet management practices played a sometimes subtle but nonetheless decisive role by providing this platform and encouraging this behaviour. We can see this in what Holt (2002) has termed 'stealth branding' where corporations achieve distance between their actions and consumption patterns through indirect branding efforts that shape the context but do not push the brand directly, and thereby achieving the appearance of 'disinterestedness' (see also: Fournier & Lee, 2009). Similarly, this 'disinterestedness' can be used within the organisation to manage employees, in this case for example through the articulation of ambivalence to employees' interest in the brand values and freedom for them to 'be themselves' whilst concurrently embedding the history, articulating the responsibilities, recruiting key value champions and drawing on an ethical discourse to encourage commitment to 'doing the right thing'. Further, their apparent lack of direct interest in shaping staff behaviour provided the space for employee-led control, whether through peer pressure, or more formal mechanisms such as individual shop-based guidelines. The notion of 'doing the right thing' could rely upon an external legitimacy for its brand logic, obscuring the preferences and passions of the founders in creating and managing the organisation and determining what is 'right'. Indeed explicit management of the brand would undermine its values and the need for authenticity. As a consequence Juicy both drew upon the individuality of its employees and influenced their lifestyle (especially in terms of consumption and 'green' behaviour) to accomplish the Juicy subject who lived the Juicy life.

The case of Juicy raises interesting questions regarding a strong brand culture and the role of employees in accomplishing, and being controlled, by the brand culture. The case also demonstrates the complex nature of a brand culture that is performed authentically. A credible authenticity requires autonomy. An excess of guidelines informing employees how to behave would ensure brand work would appear as inauthentic (Morhart, et al., 2009). Authentic engagement was

encouraged by the perceived legitimacy of the brand values embedded in the company history, brand culture champions and their passionate followers throughout the organisations (such as the 'eco-nazi') for whom the ambitions of the company aligned with their personal ambitions (Lazzarato, 2004). The brand work undertaken was both intensive and extensive; intensive in the degree of emotional commitment and extensive in involving the lives of employees beyond their paid work roles (Fleming & Sturdy, 2011; Land & Taylor, 2010). Yet the authenticity was not free from regulation, but subject to the discursive power of environmentalism and sustainability, and the disciplinary effects of the Juicy life. The freedom from a detailed script, therefore, cannot be divorced from the controls in operation and the influence of the brand culture; the brand served as a meta-script, or 'frame of action' (Arvidsson, 2006, p. 8) which was personalised through its enactment. The strong brand culture was created by the commitment and authenticity of the employees who simultaneously internalised the values, created the brand through their work, and became a Juicy subject. This was achieved through a process of encouragement, alignment and capture which subtly managed the brand culture by leaving few alternatives aside from exiting the organisation. The apparently democratic rather than managed nature of the brand (and culture) meant that resistance would not be against management, but the co-created, morally infused, Juicy brand values.

There are some limitations to this study. As with any case study, the focus on depth and engagement with the particularities of the circumstances does not allow for generalised conclusions to be drawn and also prevents direction replication of the study. Furthermore, the fact that Juicy has strong ethical values means that any conclusions drawn from this study may have more relevance for so-called ethical companies than other, ostensibly more 'corporate' organisations. The study also focuses on those parts of the organisation where these values were most evident and perhaps of most productive value to the organisation externally (by focusing on the customer-facing staff) and internally (by focusing on value champions). Whilst the values were also strongly held by many staff working throughout the organisation, they were not as consistently or strongly held by all staff, especially in the manufacturing side of the organisations (yet these departments were by no means bereft of employees who articulated a strong identification with the brand). The pockets of resistance to the brand values (though these were not often witnessed first-hand, accounts of such resistance were given) also demonstrate the partial nature of the account.

Conclusion

Arvidsson (2006) argues that brands are not primarily disciplining, but enabling – working with consumer freedom and empowering consumers "in particular directions" (p. 8). This paper points to the importance of the enabling effect – for consumers, but also for employees, in terms of what they can accomplish. It highlights their role in creating, consuming, and embodying the brand. The case also demonstrates the strong disciplining effects of the 'particular directions', suggesting the enabling effect, and the autonomy it presumes, may be overstated. In the case of a moral brand culture, the moral narrative reduces and devalues alternatives and resistance to the brand, leaving the freedom to 'do the right thing' (or leave). This narrative, and the co-created nature of the moral brand, enables a claim of managerial distance from its management but does not mean that it is free from subtle and powerful controls. The co-created brand culture, its moral values, and managerial distance provide insight into brand management and brand culture, and the diffuse and complex nature of its controlling effect.

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