Cinderella and Sleeping Beauty: Conscious and Unconscious Evaluation of Archetypes Used in Advertising and Movies - Results From an Experimental Study

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This paper describes the principles and assumptions of Jung’s archetypal psychology, and analyzes the question of whether the use of archetypes influences the conscious assessment of commercials, brands, movies and unconscious approach reactions. Furthermore, gender differences are discussed and the question of whether different personality types vary in the degree to which they are attracted by advertising and movies using typical archetypes. A laboratory experiment was conducted to test our hypothesis. In order to gain insight into the unconscious reactions of test persons, we also measured electrodermal reactions to explore arousal evoked by archetypal commercials and movies.

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EXTENDED ABSTRACT

In the consumer behaviour literature, there are already several articles dealing with Jungian archetypes from a qualitative research perspective. By contrast, we investigate Jung’s theory from a positivist research perspective. The key issue is whether archetypes influence the conscious assessment of commercials, brands, and movies as well as unconscious approach reactions. Do men and women react similarly to the exposure and do different personality types vary in the degree to which they are attracted by archetypal advertising and movies?

Jung’s theory considers the so-called “collective unconscious” as one part of the psyche and this makes his theory stand out from others. The collective unconscious can be characterized as the body of knowledge with which all human beings are born. This knowledge is characterized by so-called “archetypes” that represent inborn and universal ways of perceiving the world. Therefore, archetypes are reflected in fairy tales and myths.

Jung describes a substantial variety of archetypal images (Jung 1954/1959a,b), but in our empirical study, we devoted special attention to fairy tale archetypes and especially from both a male and female perspective. The male perspective concerns the hero, who is characterized as a man who can master all challenges in life and is able to rescue an unhappy or threatened woman. The female perspective considers the Cinderella-archetype, the young, innocent and beautiful woman, who is in distress or misery and is rescued by a gallant prince who promises her a wonderful life free of worry and care.

Archetypes have an instinctive or biological function and activate behaviour. In order to gain insight into the (un)conscious activation reactions of test persons, we measured electrodermal reactions (EDR) so as to explore the phasic arousal (Boucsein 1992) evoked by archetypal stimuli. Archetypal advertising resonates from innate human universals and focuses on innate needs. This would suggest that a message that is compatible with innate desires or desired behaviour will be more effective (in terms of approach behaviour towards this special message) than one that is less focused on these innate drives. That means that a TV-commercial which uses a typical fairy tale archetype will evoke higher phasic arousal reactions than commercials without such an archetype.

In order to analyse this issue, we conducted an empirical study that compares an archetypal TV-commercial with four other non-archetypal commercials and demonstrates significantly higher arousal for the archetypal spot. A fundamental result is that archetypes are clearly valuable tools for appealing to consumers in advertising.

Furthermore, the popularity of archetype-oriented movies is particularly relevant in this context. Movies portraying genuinely meaningful archetypal figures create living icons that are used by consumers as important personal anchors (Hirschman 2000). Hence, we propose that movies presenting typical Cinderella-archetypes as characters will generally evoke higher phasic arousal and be evaluated more positively than films presenting brave, aggressive and selfish female characters. To examine this question empirically, we compared “Pretty Woman” as a typical archetype-oriented movie with “Gone With The Wind” which presents Scarlett O’Hara as brave woman. The results show significantly higher arousal and a more favourable attitude towards the movie presenting the Cinderella-archetype.

However, feminists (Lauter and Rupprecht 1985) argue that Jung’s concepts have helped men enhance patriarchal myths and undervalue the merits of women as well as their experience and power. Furthermore, archetypes (though principally stable over time and culture) are nevertheless embedded in socialization processes. Therefore, we could question whether typical archetypes like “Cinderella” or “Sleeping Beauty” really reflect men’s and women’s present ideals.

From a male perspective, we could question whether men are still attracted by the hero-scheme. Does a man always feel capable of mastering all obstacles and is he really keen on assuming responsibility for his wife and family or does the hero concept lead to a feeling of being burdened? We found no gender differences with respect to the effects of the commercials and the movies. This might indicate that men can indeed identify with the hero, and women with the rescued maiden.

From a female perspective, we propose that self-concept clarity (Campbell et al. 1996) and romanticism (Holbrook and Olney 1995) also impact on the evaluation of typical archetypes. We further assume that females who perceive themselves as romantic characters and who have unclear self-concepts will be more attracted by Cinderella-archetypal figures, because these fairy tales give a source of hope by showing how life could improve. We found support for this hypothesis.

Because archetypes refer to deep structures of the human mind, they act as organizing principles. Thus, we propose that the response to archetypal stimuli is consistent, regardless of whether they appear as commercials or movies. Therefore, we assume consistency: consumers who show high phasic arousal reactions towards the archetypal TV-commercial will also be highly activated by the archetypal movie. Therefore, we analysed the correlation between arousal parameters of the archetypal commercial on the one hand, and the archetypal movie on the other hand, and found highly significant correlations.

Further research should control whether the arousal reactions of the TV-commercial are evoked because of the product category (sweets) or because of the well-known brand name or solely by the archetype-theme. In addition, a potential “Julia Roberts artefact” should be controlled. In our study, we chose the movie “Gone With The Wind”, because Scarlett O’Hara is probably one of the most prominent examples of a fearless female character. However, “Gone With The Wind” was shot before World War II and is set during the American Civil War, whereas “Pretty Woman” was produced in 1990 and features a modern “zeitgeist”. Furthermore, Julia Roberts is one of the most popular actresses in Hollywood and the arousal reaction to “Pretty Woman” might simply be due to her fresh and contemporary charisma. However, the initial results of a second experiment, in which we compared “Pretty Woman” to another movie starring Julia Roberts, this time not in a “Cinderella” role but in that of an emancipated woman, support the findings of the first study.

Some limitations of our empirical results should be mentioned. Firstly, our findings are based on relatively small sample sizes. This is due mainly to the intricate EDA measurement process.
Furthermore, our study was conducted only with students. Thus, it should be replicated with men and women from all age and income groups. Last but not least, it would also be useful to investigate our archetypal stimuli from a qualitative research perspective and to combine the qualitative and quantitative results.

**SELECTED REFERENCES**


Are Recommendations of Venturers Valuable?–A Study of Word-of-Mouth Communication Behavior of Variety-Seeking Tourists and Opinion Leaders
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EXTENDED ABSTRACT
In tourism research, personality types of tourists are interpreted as a major influence on travel patterns and preferences. This typology goes back to Plog’s (1974) classification of the U.S. population along a psychographic continuum. Dependables or psychocentrics prefer to avoid risks and are likely to return to a destination again and again. On the other end of the spectrum, venturers or allocentrics are people who tend to seek new destinations for each vacation. Changing service providers very frequently, in this case destinations, is also referred to as variety-seeking behavior (e.g. Hoyer and Ridgway 1984; McAlister and Pessemer 1982). For destination management organizations or hotels, restaurants and other tourism service providers, variety-seeking tourists are problematic. Even if they are very satisfied, they do not come back. Previous research revealed that variety-seeking behavior often occurs when consumers derive great hedonic choice from a product or service category which is certainly true for vacations (Inman 2001; Inman 2003; van Trijp, Hoyer and Inman 1996). In addition, the choice of a vacation destination is often driven by considering it as a means for self-expression. Consumers can demonstrate what they are or what they want to be by their choice of a destination. Considering a choice as an act of self-expression has also been found to be closely connected to the tendency to seek variety (Kim and Drolet 2003). Therefore, in tourism variety-seeking behavior is very likely to occur.

As a result, profits are negatively affected and the acquisition of new customers becomes essential. However, highly satisfied customers are likely to engage in positive word-of-mouth communication (Anderson 1998; Bone 1992). Word-of-mouth communication is generally seen as particularly influential in the acquisition of new customers (Bansal and Voyer 2000; Bristor 1990). Variety-seekers might not come back, but they might recommend the destination to others because they have been satisfied. Therefore, customer satisfaction is central for initiating positive word-of-mouth and hence, for realizing profits (Woratschek and Horbel 2003).

However, in order to use word-of-mouth communication efficiently for the achievement of the firm’s goals, it must become clear how it can be initiated and supported. For that reason, service providers need to know which customers are influential providers of word-of-mouth information and how they can be identified and encouraged to tell potential customers about their experiences. Recommendations of opinion leaders are assumed to have great influence on other consumers’ decisions. As opinion leaders often have great knowledge of the subject, they are perceived as credible sources by the recipients (Gilly et al. 1998). Research on opinion leadership further supports the proposition that they have greater product or service experience and therefore greater knowledge about product or service alternatives (Mitchell and Dacin 1996). Further it has been shown that they have high enduring product involvement (Bloch and Richins 1983; Jacoby and Hoyer 1981).

It becomes obvious that these characteristics show some parallels to venturers and variety-seeking tourists, respectively. They have great experience because they travel a lot and like to travel to many different destinations. Traveling occupies an important place in their lives indicating that their involvement in the subject is probably high. They are outgoing, inquisitive, curious and enjoy communicating with people (Goeldner and Ritchie 2003). Thus, it makes sense that they are willing to share their knowledge and experience with other people.

Taking these insights into account, it seems plausible, that variety-seeking tourists are often also opinion leaders. Opinion leaders mainly exert influence on people in their own social network because they frequently talk to friends, family, colleagues, etc. about service providers (King and Summers 1970). As these people are potential customers of the service provider, opinion leaders are the service provider’s gateway to this social network. Opinion leaders act as a sales force for the service provider because they enable the acquisition of new customers, which has a positive effect on the firm’s profits. The service provider’s profits are also positively affected by an increase of its reputation based on word-of-mouth communication in the network of relationships between old and new customers.

Opinion leaders must be identified by service providers and encouraged to tell others about their experience. Identifying opinion leaders is not simple (Yale and Gilly 1995). As we propose that parallels between variety-seekers and opinion leaders might exist, opinion leaders could be addressed by identifying variety-seekers. In tourism this should be comparably easy as there is often close interaction between tourists and the service providers, so that they can be encouraged to give word-of-mouth information to others.

An empirical study consisting of 136 in-depth interviews with tourists in three vacation destinations in Germany and Switzerland was conducted in order to find out which people give influential recommendations and whether variety-seeking tourists are opinion leaders. We decided to focus on the recipients’ perceptions of the information provider because the receiver is the person who can tell whether the information had an effect on his actual behavior. We then asked them to describe the information source in more detail, particularly concerning their personal characteristics and their knowledge in the field.

The study revealed that information seekers prefer venturers who travel to many different places as information sources. A comparison of word-of-mouth information given by venturers on the one hand and dependables on the other, supports the assumption that venturers are more likely to be opinion leaders than are repeat visitors of only one destination. Our study demonstrated that information sources who are venturers are more often perceived to have great knowledge on travel and destinations. Also, recipients of word-of-mouth information more often described venturers as individuals who have great interest on traveling compared to other people. Further, venturers seem more often to be highly involved in tourism, as recipients of word-of-mouth sources who are venturers reported that their sources gather a lot of information before they decide on a vacation destination themselves. Hence, venturers should be encouraged to engage in word-of-mouth communication.

Consequently, initiating and maintaining relationships with venturers is worthwhile as they are important sources of word-of-mouth information. Therefore, it is no longer sufficient to put effort in getting and keeping customers or trying to get them back. In order to encourage variety-seekers to provide word-of-mouth information to potential customers, a new dimension should be added to
relationship marketing: establishing and maintaining relationships with customers who will not come back.

REFERENCES