

Consumer Practices of «Brand Meaning Contestation»



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Theoretical Background

Transformative Forces

Consumer Empowerment
(Füller et al., 2009)

Technological Progress
(Houle & Shapiro, 2014)

Cultural Shifts
(Allen, Fournier and Miller, 2008)

- **Changing Communication Habits:** Interactions become multi-directional, dynamic, and ambiguous (Holt, 2016).
- **Changing Consumption Practices:** Market participants establish and propagandise self-imposed brand meanings (Heding, Knudtzen, & Bjerre, 2008).
- **Changing Power Relations:** Brands are no longer under the exclusive control of marketers.

Research Objectives and Methodology



Research Objectives

- Theoretical conceptualization of «Brand Meaning Contestation»
- Development of a systematic understanding on how contested brand meanings emerge and by which means they are negotiated among competing consumers
- Identification of corresponding consumption practices



Theoretical Lens

- A *practice-theoretical perspective* enables to analyse the underlying socio-cultural processes (Feldman & Orlikowski, 2011)
- Investigation of brand-related market practices to understand how different stakeholders establish and propagandizing their individual brand perceptions



Data Collection

- 25 *phenomenological interviews* (semi-structured; in person with graduated college students; ~ 1 h)
- *Netnographic analysis* of two contrasting brand contestations: *Birkenstock* and *New Balance*
- Audio-records and field notes are transcribed verbatim, coded, and structured to frame a grounded theory (Strauss and Corbin, 1998)

Current Research Findings

A brand becomes contested, if ...

- (1) different stakeholders claim interest on the brand
- (2) by publicly practicing and propagandizing discrete brand meanings/ associations
- (3) and, thus, influencing the brand's perception by third party market actors.

Category	Consumer Practices	Specification
Perception of Brand Meanings	Observing	Observing consumption habits (online and offline) of other market participants is essential for
	Informing	Brand-related information are commonly drawn via social media content, peer reviews, and own experiences. Marketing is less relevant.
	Debating	Perceptions are often formed and adjusted by debating brand meanings with trustworthy market participants and social peers.
Transformation of Brand Meanings	Identifying	Consumers utilize brands for self-construction. This identification process can provoke the emergence of consumer stereotypes.
	Signalling	Public brand consumption is frequently performed to signal status, values, identities, or the affiliation to certain social groupings.
	Sharing	By sharing idiosyncratic brand meanings consumers often oppose the brand perceptions of others and thus disrupt meanings.
Response to Contested Brand Meanings	Passivating	In case of low self-brand connection, the cognition of undesired brand utilization by other market actors can cause passive brand withdrawal.
	Resisting	For high self-brand connection, meaning contestation usually releases some kind of resistance behaviour (e.g. boycott or retaliation).
	Promoting	Upon brand meaning contestation some consumers tend to promote their own brand perception by gaining social and public attention.

BIRKENSTOCK

B
new balance