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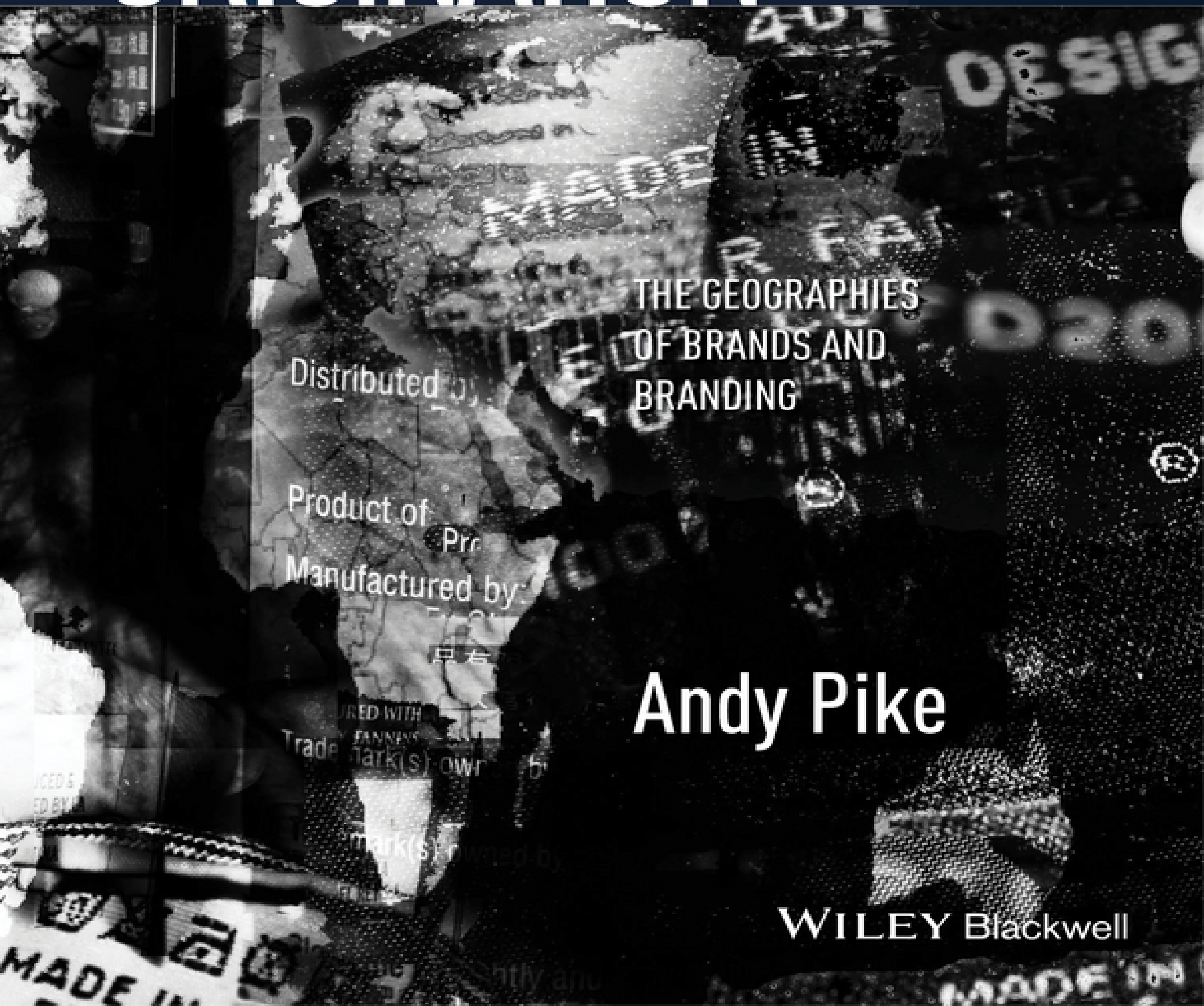

THE GEOGRAPHIES OF BRANDS AND BRANDING

Andy Pike

WILEY Blackwell

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Introduction: Where are goods and services commodities from and why does it matter?

From the regional heyday of producing a quarter of the world's ships in the opening decade of the twentieth century (Hudson 1989), Tyneside in north east England established a reputation for engineering innovation and manufacturing prowess. The 'carboniferous capitalism' of coal, iron and steel underpinned specialization and international technological leadership in heavy engineering in Britain's imperial markets (Tomaney 2006). Industrial pioneers such as William Armstrong, Charles Parsons and George Stephenson in concert with skilled and unionized urban labour meant 'Made in Tyneside' was commercially meaningful and valuable (Middlebrook 1968). During the 1950s and 1960s, Historian Paul Kennedy described this time and place as:

> A world of great noise and much dirt… [where] … There was a deep satisfaction about making things … among all of those that had supplied the services, whether it was the local bankers with credit; whether it was the local design firms. When a ship was launched at Swan Hunter [Wallsend, North Tyneside] all the kids at the local school went to see the thing our fathers had put together and when we looked down from the cross-wired fence, tried to find Uncle Mick, Uncle Jim or your dad, this notion of an integrated, productive community was quite astonishing.
>
> (quoted in Chakrabortty 2011: 1)

Vessels, such as HMS York (Figure 1.1), were made in the shipyards of Hebburn, Walker and Wallsend, and, once departed from the slipway, travelled the world as functional commodities embodying the meaning and commercially valuable reputation of where they were from and who built them.

Figure 1.1 HMS York.

Source: Newcastle Libraries & Information Service.

Although Tyneside has since been ravaged by waves of deindustrialization and a highly socially and spatially uneven transition to a service-dominated economy (Pike *et al*. 2006), the geographical associations in what a place is known for live on in certain specialist market niches. In the kinds of connections, for example, made in the corporate logo of Tyneside Safety Glass, including a silhouette of the Tyne Bridge, and the marking of some of its products with the slogan 'Tyneside Toughened'. Tyneside Safety Glass is a privately owned specialist glass processor established in 1937 with its headquarters in the Team Valley south of the river Tyne in Gateshead. It employs around 200 people and operates three factories in north east England. The company articulates authentic claims to provenance as part of its creation and communication of meaning and value for its customers in international architectural, automotive, defence and security markets. There are no intrinsic ties that mean such goods and services commodities could not technically be produced elsewhere beyond Tyneside in north east England. But commercial advantage is being sought by the owners through the company name, logo and slogan making strong and geographical connections to the historical traditions, character and reputation of the place of Tyneside for engineering ingenuity, technological innovation and manufacturing precision.

As Tyneside Safety Glass demonstrates, where goods and services commodities are from and are associated with – and, crucially, are *perceived* to be from and associated with – and why is important. Raising such issues encourages reflection upon how we understand and explain critical spatial concerns about the geographies of economy and their organization and dynamics: the call centres, design studios, factories, laboratories, logistics hubs, market stalls, offices, shops, trading floors, warehouses and the investments, jobs, incomes, livelihoods and identities in cities, localities, regions and countries with which they are entwined. Such concerns make us think about how, why, where and by whom goods and services commodities are associated with specific and particular geographical attributes and characteristics of spaces and places as part of attempts by myriad actors to create meaning and value.

Longstanding connections and connotations are evident especially where the geographical associations of goods and services commodities are strong, enduring and decisive commercial and trade advantages. Well known examples include ‘Danish furniture, Florentine leather goods, Parisian *haute couture*, Champagne wines, London theatre, Swiss watches before digitization, Thai silks, recorded music from Nashville … Hollywood films’ (Scott 1998: 109). The list could go on. For over four decades, researchers in the discipline of marketing have recognized this phenomenon and call it the ‘*Country* of Origin’ effect (Bass and Wilkie 1973). By this, they mean the consumer views of the different capabilities and historical reputations of countries for particular goods and services. These perceptions influence consumer assessments of attributes such as quality, style and taste, and interpretation of meaning and value that shapes their purchasing decisions (Phau and Prendergast 2000). Importantly, these geographical associations and reputations tend to be sticky, slow changing and, once accumulated, can become difficult to change or dislodge. As Harvey Molotch (2002: 677) puts it, ‘perfume should come from Paris not Peoria, watches from Geneva not Gdansk’. Such geographical associations are powerful in the ways in which they create – and potentially destroy – meaning and value through what they explicitly demonstrate or imply for specific goods and services commodities in particular spatial and temporal market contexts.

The origins of brands and branding

Historically, goods and later services commodities bore marks or brands as means of distinction from competitors and signs of quality and reliability (Room 1998). Artisanal producers in ancient Greece and Rome marked their goods such as pottery with distinctive signs to communicate their origin and quality (Lindemann 2010). Individual marks or seals that identified particular craft producers or traders were evident c.300 BC. Merchants initially used generic symbols to communicate the business in which they traded, including ‘a ham for butchers, a cow for creameries’ (Chevalier and Mazzolovo 2004: 15). Makers’ marks began evolving into brands and became more evident and important during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. This development involved especially craft goods such as furniture, porcelain and tapestries, particularly when travelling for sale beyond face-to-face transactions in localized markets (Room 1998). As David Wengrow (2008: 21) argues, ‘commodity branding’:

> has been a long-term feature of human cultural development, acting within multiple ideological and institutional contexts including those of sacred hierarchies and sacrificial economies of a certain scale. What *has* varied significantly over time and space is the nexus of authenticity, quality control, and desire from which brand economies draw their authority; the web of agencies (real or imagined) through which homogeneous goods must be seen to pass in order to be consumed, be they the bodies of the ancestral dead, the gods, heads of state, secular business gurus, media celebrities, or that core fetish of post-modernity, the body of the sovereign consumer citizen in the act of self-fashioning (emphasis in original).

Industrialization and mass production in the nineteenth century underpinned and reinforced the commercial value and meaning of branding, especially for packaged goods: ‘Through industrialization the production of many household items, such as soap, moved from local production to centralized factories. As the distance between buyer and supplier widened the communication of origin and quality became more important’ (Lindemann 2010: 3). The naming of ‘Platt’s *Brand* Raw Oysters’ and the explicit use of the term brand in the advertising of ‘Jackson Square Cigar –

America’s Standard 5¢ *Brand*’ as particular kinds of commodities demonstrate the early and explicit incorporation of the term ‘brand’ into product names and their circulation and promotion (Figure 1.2). Mass production and distribution generated economies of scale and lowered production costs, but required mass markets and the communication and demonstration of superior quality to dislodge local consumer preferences for local producers.

Figure 1.2 ‘Platt’s Brand Raw Oysters’ and ‘Jackson Square Cigar – America’s Standard 5¢ Brand’.

Source: Historical images from Baltimore Museum of Industry.

The etymological roots of the word brand as a noun lie in several linguistic traditions. These refer commonly to a fire or flame as well as firebrand, piece of burning wood and torch: the Old English of *brand* and *brond*; the Old Norse *brandr*; the Old High German *brant*; the Old Frisian *brond* and the German *brand* (Collins Concise Dictionary Plus

1989). Historically, from around the 1550s, as a noun a brand was defined as an identifying mark to signify ownership burned on livestock as well as criminals and slaves with a branding iron. With the emergence of craft production and later industrialization, brand became defined as a type or kind of good or service from a specific company sold under a particular name, often referred to as its ‘brand name’ and encapsulating a particular design, identity and/or image. As a verb, from the 1400s, to brand meant to mark, to cauterize – often wounds – and to stigmatize typically criminals and slaves. From the 1580s, the meaning of the verb evolved to refer to the marking of property and ownership.

Branding emerged as a process that tries to articulate, integrate and enhance the attributes embodied and connected in brands in meaningful and valuable ways. Jan Lindemann (2010: 3) describes how:

> Although the initial purpose of branding was to demonstrate the origin of an animal it quickly grew into a means of differentiation. Over time a farmer would establish a certain reputation for the quality of his cattle expressed by the branded mark on the animal. This enabled buyers quickly to assess the quality of the cattle and the price they were willing to pay for it.

Branding developed rapidly to become part of connecting meaning and value through associations across a wider range of goods and services. Branding has underpinned the process of brand extension by actors into certain spatial and temporal market settings. Examples include Italian fashion house Prada’s excursion into the mobile phone business with LG, and UK supermarket Tesco’s development of Tesco Bank financial services (Figure 1.3). In the era of industrialization and mass production and consumption, branding sat within Raymond Williams’ (1980: 184) broader definition of advertising as ‘a highly organized and professional system of magical inducements and satisfactions, functionally very similar to magical systems in simpler societies, but rather strangely co-existent with a highly developed scientific technology’.

Figure 1.3 Brand extension: Prada and LG mobile phone and Tesco Bank financial services.

Source: Prada SA; Tesco Bank.

The rise of brands and branding

In the transition from a producer to a consumer-dominated economy, society, culture, ecology and polity (Bauman 2007), the brands and branding of goods and services commodities have risen to prominence in dramatic fashion. Brands and branding have proliferated. In the United Kingdom alone, the number of brands has risen from an estimated 2 million in 1997 to over 8 million in 2011 in a marketing context in which ‘80% of categories are seen as increasingly homogenous’; amidst the proliferation of media channels in the digital era consumers are being ‘bombarded with up to

5,000 marketing messages every day' (Noble 2011: 29). Brands were traditionally treated in accounting as 'goodwill': the difference between the purchase price of a business and the book value of its assets (Lindemann 2010). Brands have now increased sufficiently in importance to become explicitly recognized as economic entities necessitating calculation of their financial value and incorporation into corporate accounts. As Jan Lindemann (2010: 5) explains:

> In financial terms, the brand constitutes an intangible asset that provides its owners with an identifiable and ownable cash flow over the time of its useful economic life. This can span more than 100 years as evidenced by brands such Coca-Cola, Nokia, and Goldman Sachs. The brand is an economic asset that creates cash flows on a stand-alone basis (e.g. licensing) or integrated with other tangible and intangible assets. The mental impact of branding is only economically relevant if it results in a positive financial return for the user or owner of the brand that outstrips the investments into the brand. The impact of brands on shareholder value is substantial and can amount up to 80 per cent of shareholder value.

In acquisition, merger and takeover activities, the difference between the purchase price of the company and the value of its material or tangible assets has been attributed to the intangible asset of the brand (Lindemann 2010). Brands and branding have become critical sources of often enduring economic meaning and value, integral to shaping the agency of actors involved in corporate and industrial strategies internationally.

Amidst competition amongst consultancies offering proprietary methodologies, brands are now valued and ranked. Specific techniques such as Interbrand's 'Best Global Brand', Millward Brown's 'Brand Dynamics/BrandZ', Brand Finance's 'Brand Valuation' and Young and Rubicam's 'BrandAsset Evaluator' attribute different values to particular brands (Table 1.1) (Lindemann 2010). Derided as the ‘professional persuaders’ in Vance Packard’s (1980: 31) classic book, media holding companies providing assorted advertising, branding and media planning services are now amongst the world’s largest companies. Market leader the WPP group grossed over $14 billion in sales revenues in 2010 (Figure 1.4) (see Faulconbridge *et al*. 2011). As the media landscape has fragmented, splintered and proliferated across emergent technologies and multiple channels (e.g. billboard, on-line, print, radio, social media, TV), media planning companies working with brand owners and managers to place and position their brands have grown in importance, size and value (Kornberger 2010). While it is difficult accurately to count the complete volume and value of activity in the world of brands and branding, Liz Moor’s (2008: 413) analysis concludes that ‘branding is an increasingly significant component of the design industry in Britain, while design itself is one of the largest sectors within the “creative industries”’. Liz Moor (2008: 415, emphasis in original) further notes how ‘Part of what distinguishes branding from advertising is its extended spatial scope and broad conception of the potential *media* for commercial communication’ such that ‘corporate identity and branding consultancies had finally come close to realizing James Pilditch’s original aspiration of becoming not simply an adjunct of advertising, but rather “the new total”’.

Table 1.1 Brand valuation methodologies, 2009 ($m)

Source: Adapted from Lindemann (2010: 10).

Brand	***Business Week Interbrand***	***Milward Brown***	***Brand finance***	***Brand value average***	***% of market capital***
Coca-Cola	68 734	67 625	32 728	56 362	49
IBM	60 211	66 662	31 530	52 801	34
GE	47 777	59 793	26 654	44 741	30
Nokia	34 864	35 163	19 889	29 972	74
Apple	15 433	63 113	13 648	30 731	21
McDonald's	32 275	66 575	200 003	39 618	65
HSBC	10 510	19 079	25 364	18 318	17
American Express	14 971	14 963	9944	13 293	37
Google	31 980	100 039	29 261	53 760	38
Nike	13 179	11 999	14 583	13 254	48

Note: [a]Nominal prices.

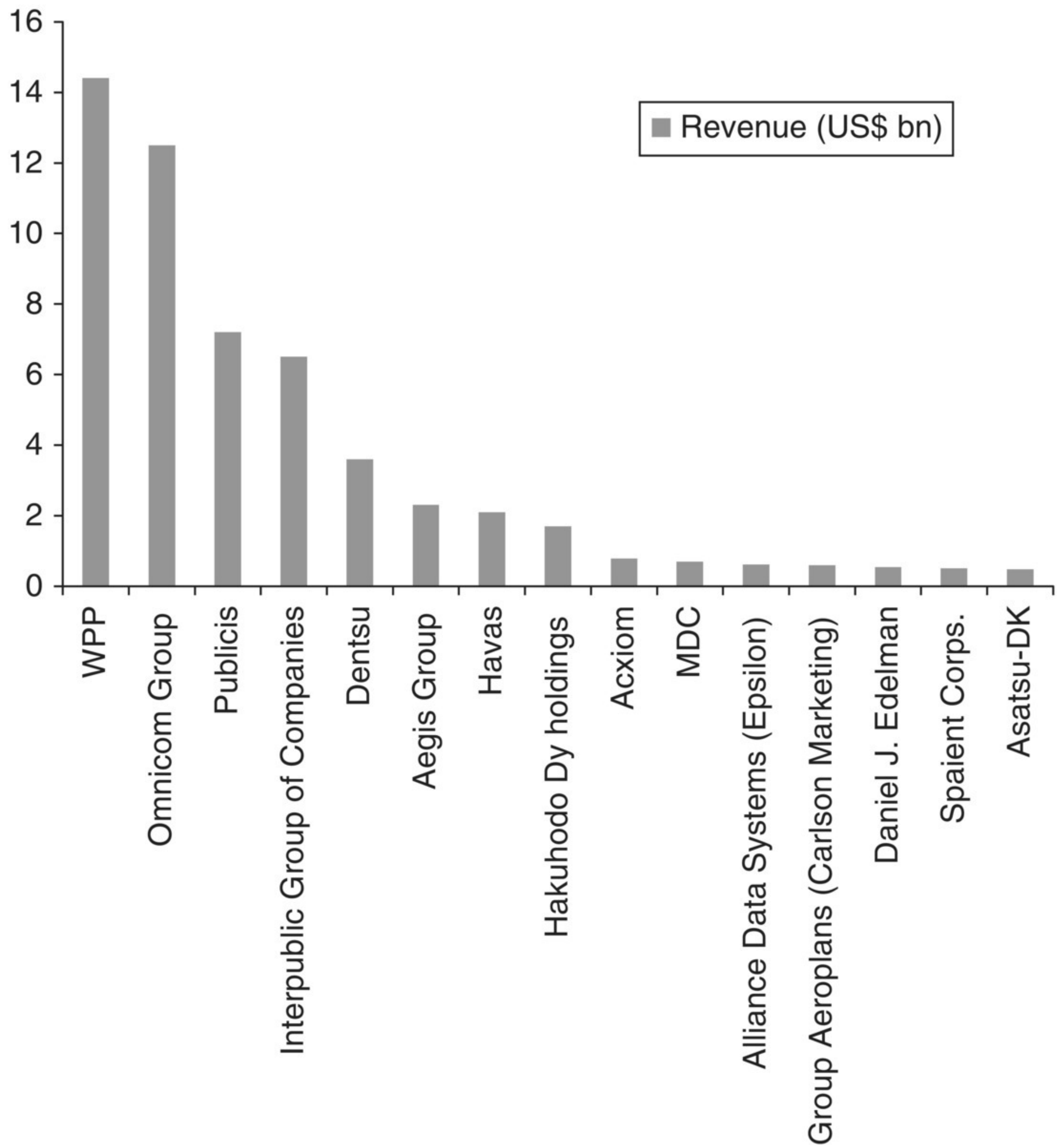

Figure 1.4 Global advertising agencies by revenue (US$bn), 2010.

Source: Calculated from AdAge data.

Note: [a]Nominal prices.

The dramatic rise, pervasiveness and importance of brands and branding in contemporary economy, society, culture, ecology and polity has been widely recognized. Martin Kornberger (2010: xi) interprets the emergence of a ‘brand society’ wherein brands as ‘ready-made identities’ are ‘so mashed up with our social world that they have become a powerful life-shaping force’. He goes on to claim that brands may be ‘the most ubiquitous and pervasive cultural form in our society’ that are ‘rapidly becoming one of the most powerful of the phenomena transforming the way we manage organizations and live our lives’ (Kornberger 2010: xii, 23). Adam Arvidsson (2005: 236) too interprets ‘a well nigh all-encompassing brand space’. Søren Askegaard (2006: 93) even argues that:

> in the face of growing competition in global markets and rising costs and clutter in mass-media advertising, leading to demands for efficiency, integrated communication and a search for alternative communication vehicles, the presence and importance of brands has arguably never been greater globally.

For practitioners working in the world of brands and branding, ‘Brand is much more than a name or a logo. Brand is everything, and everything is brand’ (Pallota 2011: 1) and ‘there is no such thing as a world without brands’ (Chevalier and Mazzolovo 2004: 3). Brand gurus, such as Wally Olins (2003: 7), see ‘that what marketing, branding and all the rest of it are about is persuading, seducing and attempting to manipulate people into buying products and services. In companies that seduce, the brand is the focus of corporate life. Branding is everything.’ For Naomi Klein (2000: 196) in her influential and popular political-economic critique, *No Logo*, brand consultancies have become the new ‘brand factories, hammering out what is of true value: the idea, the lifestyle, the attitude. Brand builders are the new primary producers in our so-called knowledge economy.’ In academic social-scientific accounts, brands are now seen to constitute ‘a central feature of contemporary economic life’ (Lury 2004:

27), branding is a ‘core activity of capitalism’ (Holt 2006a: 300), and their prevalence and importance in shaping the organization and dynamics of the economy in space and time signals ‘a major change in the character of contemporary accumulation’ (Hudson 2005: 68). Given such claims and views of the role and importance of brands and branding in economy, society, culture, polity and ecology, critical study of their geographies is overdue.

The missing geographies of brands and branding

Despite their dramatic rise, pervasiveness and importance, the ways in which the geographies of space and place are inescapably intertwined with brands and branding have been unevenly recognized and under-investigated. There are at least several reasons for this relative neglect. First, the field of brands and branding is longstanding but recently fashionable and increasingly crowded in the academic, practitioner and popular literatures. Despite differences in meaning and usage, a simple count of articles with ‘brand’ and/or ‘branding’ in their title published between 1969 and 2009 demonstrates the dramatic growth in academic research since the late 1990s (Figure 1.5). This research effort has proceeded across numerous disciplines including architecture (e.g. Klingman 2007), business studies (e.g. Buzzell *et al*. 1994), economics (e.g. Casson 1994), economic history (e.g. da Silva Lopes and Duguid 2010), geography (e.g. Pike 2011b), international relations (e.g. Anholt 2006), marketing (e.g. de Chernatony 2010; Holt 2006a), communication and media studies (e.g. Aronczyk and Powers 2010; Aronczyk 2013), planning (e.g. Ashworth and Voogd 1990), political science (e.g. van Ham 2008), tourism studies (e.g. Hankinson 2004), sociology (e.g. Arvidsson 2006; Lury 2004) and urban studies (e.g. Greenberg 2010; Hannigan 2004).

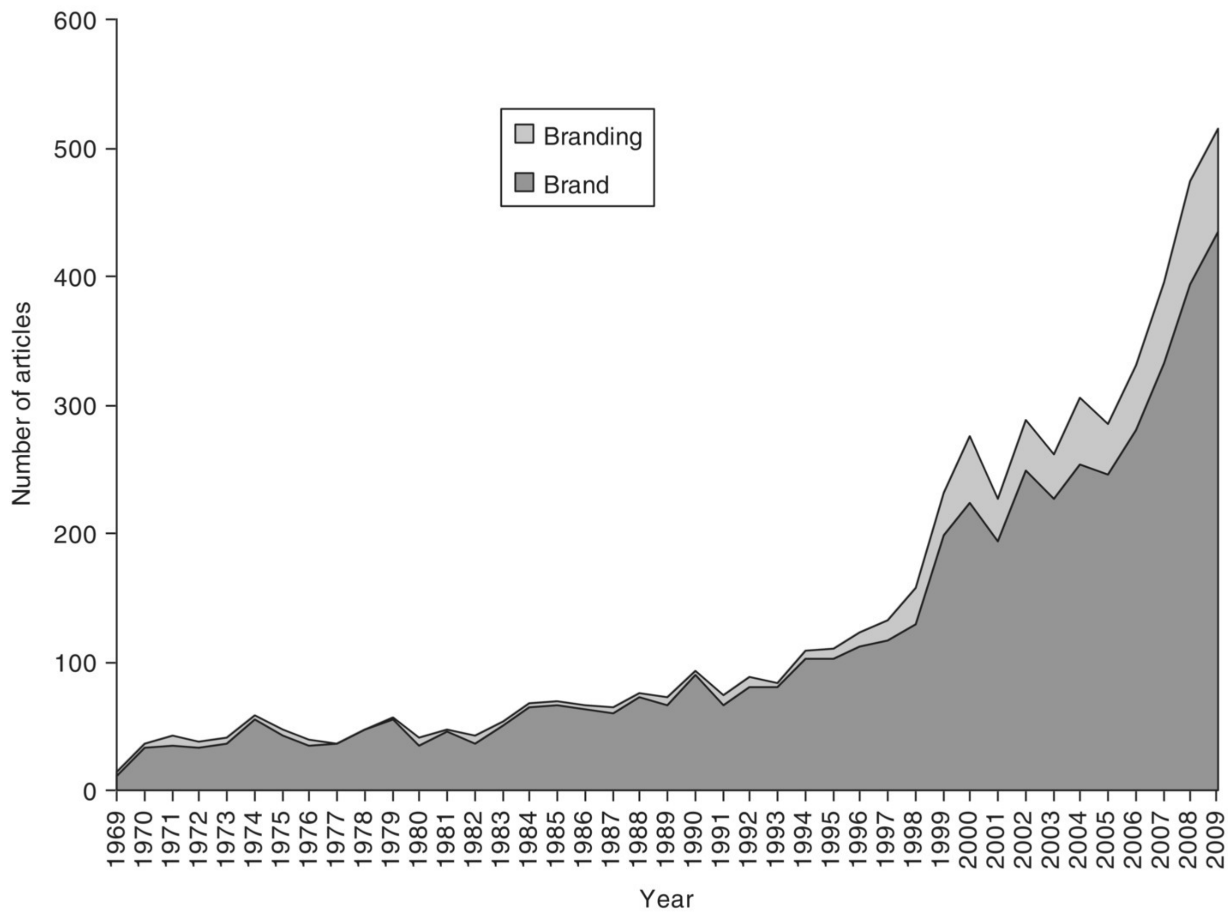

Figure 1.5 Number of articles with ‘brand’ and/or ‘branding’ in their title, 1969–2009.

Source: Calculated from ISI Web of Knowledge data.

Echoing the importance of what Nigel Thrift (2005) termed the cultural circuit of capital and the soft infrastructure of knowledge creation and circulation, the work on brands and branding is undertaken too by a burgeoning industry generating a multitude of prescriptive guides and analytical frameworks from gurus and practitioners (e.g. Anholt 2006; Hart and Murphy 1998; Olins 2003) as well as academics who also provide services as consultants (e.g. de Chernatony 2010; Kapferer 2005). Texts range from influential and multi-edition analyses (e.g. David Aaker’s (1996) *Building Strong Brands*) through current or former practitioner reflections (e.g. Saatchi and Saatchi’s Kevin Roberts’ (2005) *Lovemarks*) to more populist business advice accounts (e.g. Al and Laura Ries’ (1998) *The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding*) and even self-help-style manuals (e.g. Tom Peters’ (1999) *The Brand You 50*). Books about brands and branding have proven popular and regularly feature amongst the best-selling business books (Table 1.2).

Table 1.2 Top five marketing books on branding, 2012

Source: Top 5 Marketing Books on Branding, http://marketing.about.com/od/brandstrategy/tp/top5branding.htm, accessed 14 November 2014.

Title	***Author(s)***
1. *Emotional Branding: The New Paradigm for Connecting Brands to People*	Marc Gobé
2. *The 22 Immutable Laws of Branding*	Al and Laura Ries
3. *Unleashing the IdeaVirus*	Seth Godin
4. *Experiential Marketing: How to Get Customers to Sense, Feel, Think, Act, and Relate to Your Company and Brands*	Berndt H. Schmitt
5. *Building Strong Brands*	David A. Aaker

International consultancy groups – such as Brand Finance, Futurebrand, Interbrand, Landor, Place Branding, Saffron and Wolff Olins – are also active knowledge producers. Their businesses focus upon developing and communicating proprietary branded services such as strategic advice and valuation methodologies, contact networks and commentary and analysis of the world of brands and branding (Aronczyk 2013; Moor 2008). As André Spicer (2010: 1736) points out:

> a remarkable amount of collective cognitive effort is committed to ruminating about brands. … There are a lot of people lurking in the lofts of our creative cities who devote their days to thinking about brands. The postmodern workforce is now glutted with brand workers who do everything from devising clever advertising campaigns to designing packaging or writing service scripts to be mouthed by bored teenagers working in a mall somewhere in nowheresville.

Specialized community building, networking events and media channels have blossomed too, including global conferences, web sites and community blogs organized by networks including *Brand Channel* and *Brand Republic*. Brands and branding are covered regularly in the wider business and financial press as well such as *Business Week*'s annual Top 100 Global Brands ranking produced jointly with Interbrand, *The Economist*'s (2009) edited collection on brands and branding and its periodic articles, surveys and futures pieces, and *The Financial Times* annual Global Brands Survey.

The world of brands and branding is, then, 'a young fledgling field … still in the making, on the move, influenced by agencies and consultancies as much as by scholarship and research. The boundary between truth, half-knowledge, common sense and sales talk is often hard to draw' (Kornberger 2010: 5). The increased production of knowledge about brands and branding can be divided between two broad, sometimes overlapping, camps. In one, exponents are focused on prescriptive work concerned with developing specific definitions, frameworks and methodologies for brands and branding, and advising commercial practitioners how to improve their effectiveness and impact. In the other, protagonists are engaged in more reflective and sometimes critical studies seeking to conceptualize, theorize and question the specific and wider purpose, value and effects of brands and branding. The diversity and variety in the approaches, purposes, sources and ways of thinking about brands and branding in these two broad camps have fostered only limited, partial and fragmented engagement with their geographies.

Second, the ways in which actors conceive of and use brands and branding have become more sophisticated in their interrelationships with goods and services commodities, complicating the task of interpreting their geographies. The traditional 'social engineering' paradigm in marketing from the 1950s has fragmented and been replaced by the growing sophistication and variety of branding strategies of brand owners and specialized consultants (Arvidsson 2006; Holt 2004). The initial 'product-plus-brand' approach has evolved into a wider and more holistic notion of 'brand-as-concept' (de Chernatony and McDonald 1998). In this perspective, actors frame brands as 'the tools used to detach "things" from the limited functionality of products and make them the engine of an endless desire for self-actualization and lifestyle' (Kornberger 2010: 9). Branding practices have been extended and deepened beyond specific products to encompass wider and interconnected ranges of individual goods and services brands. Actors have sought to appropriate value through the construction of meanings in brands. This technique is an attempt to forge longer lasting relationships to lifestyles and social identities that appeal to sophisticated, aesthetically aware and reflexive consumers, especially from affluent and elite social groups (Kornberger 2010; Urry 1995). This rise and intensification of branding during the 1990s heralded a closer interrelationship with brands because:

> Almost all accounts produced at this time saw brands as incorporating far more than simply a name, trademark and associated badge or logo, and assumed instead that brands should embody ‘relationships’, ‘values’ and ‘feelings’, to be expressed through an expanded range of ‘executional elements’ and ‘visual indicators’.
>
> (Moor 2007: 6).

Growing saturation, competition and sophistication in especially advanced western consumer markets (Streeck 2012) coupled with the emergence of new forms of market research, consumer behaviour and media prompted the search for deeper and stronger brand attributes. This activity is focused upon constructing especially ‘intangible ideals’ (Holt 2006a: 299) that were not easily replicable or substitutable because ‘differentiation in terms of function is less and less often able to sustain competitive advantage (because it can be imitated so quickly)’ (Lury 2004: 28). The worth, visibility and burgeoning demand internationally for ‘western’ brands in emergent and faster growing economies and their nascent capitalist consumer societies further fuelled the logics of market segmentation, differentiated branding and the encouragement of brand literacy and loyalty (Ermann 2011). Brands and branding now pervade post-socialist transition economies such as Russia as well as emerging economies such as Brazil (Figure 1.6).


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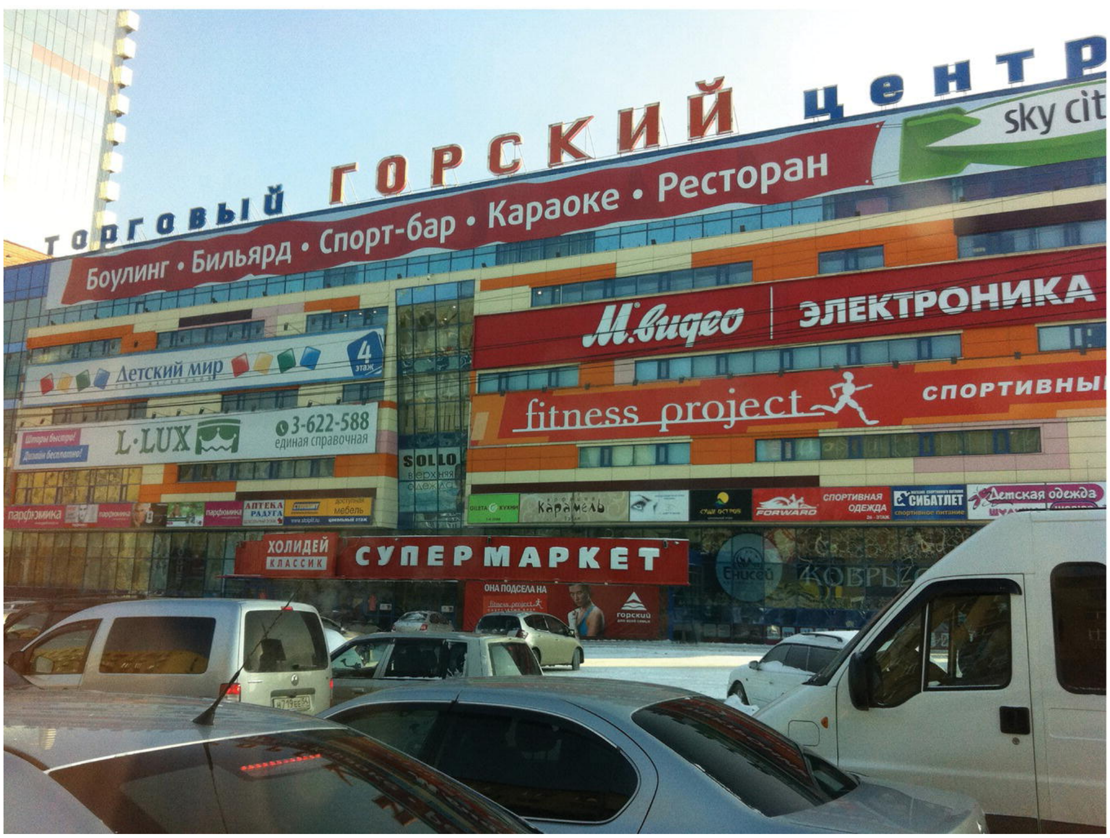
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