Telling stories: The role of graphic design and branding in the creation of 'authenticity' within food packaging

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Abstract

Food is increasingly sold with a story, and the majority of those writing about the branding process within industry agree that this story should be 'authentic'; a 'true' representation of a brand's value or personality. Across the broader field of branding, 'authenticity' has become key to a product's marketing. However, much of the language

used to describe and market food is very difficult to define or standardize – terms such as 'local', 'quality', 'authentic' and 'premium' remain confusing for the customer. Furthermore, in the context of branding and marketing, multiple genres of authenticity have been defined. Therefore, the food and design industries can use this lack of clarity to their advantage, emphasizing and embellishing some aspects of a product, and perhaps even deliberately omitting others. In doing so, they develop the narrative that will best connect with their audience. In this sense, the 'authenticity' of the brand or product is interpreted through this interaction and can be framed as a social construction. These issues are discussed in the context of a short UK-based case study focusing on the supermarket Tesco's 'fake farm' brands that utilize the design and branding of the packaging to evoke specific aspects of 'authenticity'. The visual material is analysed using a social semiotic approach enabling a discussion of issues relating to the communication of 'authenticity' in the practice of graphic design and branding, and the marketing of food with a story.

Keywords

graphic design

branding

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Introduction

Within the food industry, some terms are notoriously difficult to define. 'Localness', for example, can relate to various seemingly arbitrary distances from the point of sale, or be defined via geographical borders linked to counties and regions, or even countries. For the consumer, the inherent slipperiness of such terms can make it difficult to fully understand what they are purchasing. For those involved in the marketing of food, this offers an opportunity to use terms like local, alongside others such as 'premium', 'handmade', 'quality' or 'fresh', in ways that might best be described as 'creative'. This approach extends to terms like 'provenance', and in particular to 'authenticity', which has become one of the key drivers not only within the food industry, but in marketing generally. In a study of 'authenticity' in relation to consumption, Gilmore and Pine (2007) identify five genres: natural, original, exceptional, referential and influential. In a more specific study of Belgian beer packaging by Beverland et al. (2008), 'authenticity' is defined in three forms: 'pure (literal) authenticity', 'approximate authenticity' and 'moral authenticity'. This differentiation between terms – for example, natural and referential or pure and approximate – suggests those involved in the design, branding and marketing of products deliberately exploit ideas of 'authenticity' in order to prompt a particular narrative to consumers. This prompt, if successful, enables a co-produced experience of 'authenticity' between the consumer and packaging designers, thus framing it as socially constructed (Maffei 2016: 211).

Brand strategists suggest that 'authenticity' is integral to consumer trust and, therefore, the success of a brand or product. Contemporary branding is vastly different from its origins, which focused solely on ownership, and it is now seen as a practice that articulates the values or personality of a company or product. Narrative or 'storytelling'

has become central to this, and consumers have begun to develop more emotional relationships with brands, which encompass notions of belonging. However, this emotional connection and sense of belonging can be disrupted if the brand acts in ways that do not correspond with the audience's perception of their values. The consumer engages with the narratives of a brand through each touch point – which have been produced by a graphic designer. The functions of graphic design in this context, according to Barnard (2005), include information, persuasion, decoration and 'magic'. In contemporary branding, it is the magical function that, in the process of interaction between the consumer and packaging, 'conjures up' these ideas of values and personality.

Graphic design does not just use visual means to communicate; it also utilizes copywriting, which is distinctly different from factual content such as lists of ingredients or nutritional information. This type of copy is a further creative way of engaging the consumer with a tone of voice that reflects the brand's personality, often making a more informal, personal connection. However, there is confusion around many of the terms used to describe food, and the idea of 'authenticity' is constructed not only by the designer, but also by the consumer. It is therefore perhaps less likely that an audience may be 'misled' by graphic design that deliberately attempts to create stories of 'authenticity' (Beverland et al. 2008), rather that this interaction between the consumer and brand results in belief (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 109–10).

The article is contextualized by a short UK-based case study of the supermarket Tesco's 'fake farm' brands. The visual material is analysed using a social semiotic methodology (van Leeuwen 2005). This approach emphasizes the multimodality of the branding and communication strategies, and includes analysis of image, text, typography,

composition, format, media and retail experience design. This case study enables a discussion of issues relating to the communication of 'authenticity' in the practice of graphic design and branding, and the marketing of food with a story.

'Authenticity', 'localness' and provenance

Previously, within the service economy, the imperative for brands and products was to compete through enhanced quality. However, in today's market, the management of customer perceptions of 'authenticity' is where competitive advantage is leveraged (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 3). 'Authenticity' has become a marketing buzzword and is sought by consumers both in terms of experience and product, with people increasingly making purchase decisions 'based on how real or fake they perceive various offerings' (Gilmore and Pine 2007: xi). More recently, 'authenticity' has become synonymous with the 'hipster' and his – for they are largely male – carefully curated lifestyle (Michael 2015). However, 'practically all consumers desire authenticity' regardless of whether they frequent large chain stores or independent shops (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 4). The concept of 'authenticity' seems particularly important in the food and drink sector, perhaps because in consuming food we literally ingest it. This raises concerns about one's own health and well-being, rather than broader social, economic or political ones that are less obviously or immediately personal. Therefore, in the context of food-related 'authenticity', there is a separation between moral concerns, which are largely about the self, and ethical concerns that are largely about others (de Solier 2013: 5). In relation to food, 'authenticity' is often discussed in tandem with ideas of provenance and locality. However, these terms are difficult to define and often used without specificity. For

example, DEFRA define local food as '[…] food produced, processed, traded and sold within a defined geographic radius, often 30 miles', but also acknowledge that definitions of local depend variously on the producers, consumers and their expectations (DEFRA 2003). The UK Food Standards Agency (FSA) commissioned a report in 2007, finding that 40% of respondents identified local food as produced within a ten-mile radius of their home. However, 20% defined local as being produced within their county, 15% as from their county or a neighbouring county and a further 20% defined it as being produced within the region (FSA 2007).

Whilst localness may be contested, it seems clear that where something comes from – its provenance – is important to consumers. EU regulations require country of origin details to be given for a range of food products, primarily unprocessed meat, and fruit and vegetables. Article 26.2 also decrees that the country of origin must be provided so as not to mislead the consumer that the food has a different place of provenance (Food Drink Europe 2013: 51). In the United Kingdom, this legislation and a voluntary initiative across the food and drink industry facilitated by DEFRA has led to all fresh meat, poultry and fish carrying origin details, highlighting British provenance if applicable. DEFRA found that 38 per cent of British consumers say that food using only British ingredients 'encourages their trust in a product' (2016: 55) – though the report is unclear as to what 'trust' means in this context. However, from a marketing perspective, labelling something as British seems to be a strategy worth pursuing. Given the relatively recent food security anxieties around Bovine Spongiform Encephalopathy and foot and mouth disease, this seems contradictory if the idea of 'trust' were related to health and hygiene concerns. However, in the current post-Brexit, Euro-sceptic climate, there is

likely to be a renewed impetus for this type of approach in a branding context, and it would seem that 'localness' may be said to encompass national borders, not just regional.

'Authenticity' has become increasingly important to the food industry in recent years. In 2014, the FSA found that consumers' concerns over 'authenticity' were one of three priorities for the industry. Broadly speaking, the concept of 'authenticity' relates to an idea of truthfulness and a sense that something can be verified as what it purports to be (Newman and Smith 2016: 610). Gilmore and Pine (2007: 49–50) propose five genres of 'authenticity' in relation to consumers and consumption – natural, original, exceptional, referential and influential. Two are of particular interest in the context of this article: 'natural authenticity', which is not artificial or synthetic, for example organic food, and 'referential authenticity', which refers to another context, though is not derivative and perhaps taps into our shared memories and longings. Beverland et al. position the concept of 'authenticity' as one that has developed from its original use as a reassurance to customers 'of a genuine article' to a marketing descriptor that imbues a 'set of values that differentiate it from other more commercialized brands' (2008: 5). Within this shift, they define three different consumer perceptions of 'authenticity': 'pure (literal) authenticity', 'approximate authenticity' and 'moral authenticity'. The definitions were developed from interviews with twelve consumers who each responded to the advertising, labelling and packaging of 24 different Trappist and Abbey beer brands. 'Pure (literal) authenticity' relates to definitions of the 'genuine article', with marketing drawing on specific links to a place of origin and traditions in terms of production (Beverland et al. 2008: 7). 'Approximate authenticity' defines a relationship with a product that focuses on an emotional impression of tradition and history, rather than proof of it, with marketing

effectively creating an 'authenticity' that approximates the literal definition of 'authenticity' (Beverland et al. 2008: 10, see also 'applied authenticity' in York 2014: 7). 'Moral authenticity' is defined as involving a moral judgement on the part of the consumer, who believes that traditional craft processes and small-scale, artisanal production that bear the mark of the craftsperson are superior to mass produced items (Beverland et al. 2008: 11–12).

Regardless of the difficulties in defining 'authenticity', there is no doubt it has become a key driver within the contemporary marketplace, with Beverland et al. (2008: 5) suggesting that 'authenticity is a cornerstone of contemporary marketing' and Gilmore and Pine (2007: 1) stating that 'consumers choose to buy or not to buy based on how *real* they perceive an offering to be'. In the context of current branding practices, 'authenticity' is also key to conveying the brand story in a way that ensures trust. However, as 'food is increasingly "sold with a story", using branding to provide positive messages about a product that go far beyond its actual material properties' (Jackson 2016: n.pag.), these two positions seem paradoxical.

Branding and 'storytelling'

Contemporary branding has its roots in ownership and the farmers' practice of branding livestock with a graphic mark to ensure that when they roamed they could tell which animals were theirs. The practice of visibly marking ownership spread to manufacturers, who began to include signatures on the corners of packaging. In January 1876, the Trade Mark Registration Act came into effect in the United Kingdom, and companies began to formalize how they presented their brand names or symbols (Johnson 2016: 13–14). By

the mid-twentieth century, this type of design became known as 'corporate identity', with the focus primarily on developing a consistent system of application of a company's visual identity through logo, typeface and colours (Johnson 2016: 14), and in the 1980s many design agencies renamed themselves as 'corporate identity consultancies' (Moor 2007: 9). The term 'branding' became prominent in the 1990s, with contemporary practice moving 'away from the simple application of a name and logo in the packaging and advertising of products' (Moor 2007: 3) with 'values', 'feelings' and 'relationships' becoming key (Moor 2007: 6). Similarly, the industry consensus is that branding endeavours to communicate the values or personality of a company, with designers focusing on articulating the 'story' of the brand in a way that engages the consumer.

While visual consistency in terms of logos and usage is no longer the focus of branding, consistency in terms of message is, and more importantly, consistency in the 'authenticity' of that message (Olins 2014: 43–47). If there is a 'mismatch' between the communication of a brand's message and the perceived reality of its values or ethos, the brand is likely to fail. For example, in 2004 Coca-Cola launched the bottled water 'Dasani' in the United Kingdom. Problems emerged when the mainstream media discovered the water, which was being marketed as 'pure', was actually treated tap water from the mains supply in their factory in Kent (BBC 2004: n.pag.). Ultimately, Coca-Cola withdrew Dasani from the UK market, yet it continues to be marketed elsewhere. This incident evidences that whilst a brand is legally owned by a corporation, it is 'emotionally owned' by the consumer (Balmer 2006: 38). Essentially, the 'meaning creation process of a brand depends on the creation of a social consensus within a community of brand users', and it is that groups' experiences of a particular brand that

give it meaning. Therefore, brand users can effectively decide the success or otherwise of a brand (Anon 2013: 461). Whilst the consumer ultimately makes this meaning, they do so in concert with touch points that have been developed by graphic designers.

Graphic design and packaging

Branding is not only a conceptual exercise, it is also a performative and material one (Moor 2007: 9) and much of the consumer engagement with a brand or product is via graphic design – through packaging, point of sale, logos and copywriting, for example. The function of graphic design, in basic terms, is to communicate by giving visual form to content, with the graphic designer using typography, colour, image, media and format to produce a visual statement that meets the requirements of the client's desired message. Barnard (2005) identifies four specific functions beyond this broad definition: information, persuasion, decoration and magic. The information function is to impart knowledge or intelligence. In relation to branding this could include the logo conveying the company name or with packaging it might be a list of ingredients. The persuasive function is to convince or to provoke a change in someone's thinking or behavior. In the context of branding and packaging, this would include choosing one particular product over another. The decorative or aesthetic function relates to aspects of the design that give pleasure, and the magical function suggests that one thing can be transformed into another, that absent things can be 'conjured up' (Barnard 2005: 14–16). Contemporary branding is a perfect example of this magical function as the aim of the designed elements is to reflect or 'conjure up' the bigger story of brand values and personality.

It would seem that the rhetorical dimension is key in this transformation. Buchanan (1989: 92) suggests that in terms of audience, or in this case the consumer, the goal is to induce 'some belief about the past […], present […], or future'. The use of rhetoric enables the audience to become a 'dynamic participant' as the designer persuades through argument rather than statement (Tyler 1992: 22). This would suggest the rhetorical dimension is implicit in the magical dimension, as it is through the interaction between audience and design that meaning is made. In the context of this rhetorical dimension, metaphor plays a key role. Metaphors are conceptual in nature and play a central role in our construction of reality (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 159). Whilst Lakoff and Johnson primarily discuss metaphor in a linguistic context, Kress (2010: 55) agrees that all types of signs are effectively metaphors and are always newly made. Given this persuasive, magical approach relies predominantly on metaphor, effectively there can be 'no fully objective, unconditional, or absolute truth' (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 184). Rather, what is important is how we then act on the inferences we construct (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 158) – in other words, whether we believe the brand to be 'authentic' and follow through with a purchase.

However, as with any kind of value judgement, subjective interpretations are rarely consistent across a broad range of consumers – one person's idea of authentic, is another's fake. Any 'fake' implicitly preserves, and proactively utilizes, particular properties of that which is 'authentic' in its design (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 121). A judgement as to whether something is 'fake' or 'real' is informed by a consumer's prior experience of similar contexts. In objective terms, something can be understood in terms of its inherent properties (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 122), but is also understood through

subjective experience, which enables the categorization of something by the highlighting of certain properties and downplaying of others (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 163). Therefore 'reality' or 'truth' is always relative to any understanding in a given context (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 164). This understanding bypasses the binary oppositions of objective and subjective, offering an 'experientialist account of understanding and truth' (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 192), which utilizes *both* reason and imagination, positioning metaphor as 'imaginative rationality' (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 193). This experientialist process and the concept of imaginative rationality mirror the integration of the information, persuasion and magical functions in Barnard's (2005) conception of graphic design.

Copywriting and the language of food

Designers also engage with words, and within food packaging there is a great deal for the consumer to negotiate between facts and rhetoric. As with the debate about localness, there is also a lack of clarity around much of the language used in the description of food. In 2001, the Food Advisory Committee (FAC) investigated the terms fresh, original, natural, authentic, pure, homemade, traditional and farmhouse, in relation to their misuse. They found that 'terms were being used to convey messages that had in some cases become far-removed from their generally accepted meanings' (FSA 2008: 4). However, language – particularly that which is used in branding to tell the stories of food – does not remain constant, and in 2006, further research was commissioned that included nine more terms: handmade, selected, quality, premium, finest, best, seasonal, style and wild. In 2008, the FSA produced its guidance document entitled *Criteria for the use of the terms*

fresh, pure, natural etc. in food labelling, however, whilst various European regulations, and the Food Safety Act 1990 amongst others, all make statements about labelling in relation to not misleading the customer, the document states that 'Beyond the general requirements on false or misleading labelling there is little specific legislation on the use of the terms covered in this best practice guidance' (FSA 2008: 7). Even in the sections that cover specific guidance for terms like 'fresh', the slippery nature of language inevitably means there are several contexts in which the term might be considered appropriate. In relation to branding, Wally Olins states that 'copy is a bit tendentious and misleading. It often is. That's part of the tradition' (2014: 13), and Moore (2003: 107) suggests that 'the degree of adaptation has reached extraordinary levels, to the point where words start to lose their meaning altogether'.

According to Gilmore and Pine (2007: 141), designers need to be particularly careful when it comes to 'rendering' 'authenticity', suggesting that it is not as simple as placing the words 'real' or 'authentic' on the packaging. They list five axioms of authenticity:

> If you *are* authentic, then you don't have to say you're authentic.
>
> If you say you're authentic, then you'd better *be* authentic.
>
> It's easier to *be* authentic if you don't *say* you're authentic
>
> It's easier to *render* offerings authentic, if you acknowledge they're inauthentic.
>
> You don't have to say your offerings are inauthentic, if you *render* them authentic.
>
> (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 90; original emphasis)

The majority of these are deliberately paradoxical, and though businesses must 'earn the privilege of being deemed authentic only through the act of rendering' (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 90), doing so requires embracing this paradox: 'all human enterprise is

ontologically fake', but 'output from that enterprise can be phenomenologically real' (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 89). In other words, it can be *perceived* as authentic by the individuals who buy it – underlining once again that 'authenticity' is a social construction. So, rather than consumers being misled by claims of 'authenticity' (Beverland et al. 2008), the proactive role the consumer plays in the interaction with the brand actually *creates* belief (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 109–10).

In the context of branding, copywriting is another way of communicating brand personality. It is an opportunity to 'speak' to the audience using the brand's 'tone of voice'. Since the brand *Innocent* included witty, quirky and seemingly unrelated bits of copy on their smoothie packaging, this approach has been followed by countless other brands. Whilst this type of copy may seem irrelevant to the food itself, it is key to conveying the brand's story and making a personal connection with the consumer in the way pure information like ingredients and nutritional information cannot. *Innocent* use humour to generate an emotional connection with the consumer, which is perhaps as close as they can get to the kind of connection that is forged when engaging with producers in the context of a farmers' market or similar.

Shopping at a farmers' market offers the consumer a personal connection, making the producer a visible, tangible being, adding not only 'authenticity' to the experience (Murphy 2011: 585), but also ideas of provenance. It also attaches a personal story to the goods and the exchange, which is something that a supermarket finds hard to replicate through their uniform aisles and uniformed staff – as Gilmore and Pine have suggested, 'nothing kills authenticity like ubiquity' (2007: 2). To try and combat this, supermarket brands now often use copywriting in an attempt to connect the consumer with the product

in more sociable, personal ways. For example, pre-packed vegetables or meat often includes copy that references a particular farm, or even farmer.

Social semiotics

As we have seen, 'authenticity' can be defined in multiple ways and in the following case study, the designers' approach to the branding and packaging of the Tesco 'fake farms' range is analysed in the context of these different genres of 'authenticity'. The analysis is undertaken via a social semiotic approach that focuses on how meaning is constructed and interpreted, through the use of 'semiotic resources' in specific social situations and practices (van Leeuwen 2005: xi). van Leeuwen describes semiotic resources as 'the actions and artefacts we use to communicate' (2005: 3). Social semiotics emphasizes the idea of multimodality – an approach that understands communication and representation as being about more than just language or writing (Jewitt 2009: 14). The analysis therefore addresses how Tesco design and use particular semiotic resources in an integrated way to form cohesive multimodal texts and communicative events. This includes the use of image, text, typography, layout and media/materials, each of which contributes to meaning (Jewitt 2009: 14), as well as the specific point of sale experience within Tesco – the social setting that is an integral part of meaning-making process (Kress 2010: 62). Communication is a two-stage process; in stage one the 'rhetor' and designer are keys (in contemporary branding these are often one and the same) in shaping the 'prompt' through an analysis of the most appropriate resources in relation to their understanding of the audience's interest, characteristics and likely responses. In stage two, the consumer understands that message as a prompt and makes meaning from both

the semiotic resources used and the wider social, cultural and aesthetic understandings they bring to the interaction (Kress 2010: 44, see also Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 227). This includes their experience of previous signs of a similar nature, which have 'become part of the semiotic resources of a culture' (Kress 2010: 55). The dimensions of the semiotic analysis therefore relate to discourse – how meaning is created through the representations constructed; style – how semiotic resources are used to 'perform' genres and to express their identities and values; and modality – how semiotic resources are used to create truth and reality, and communicate whether they are to be read as fact or fiction (van Leeuwen 2005: 91). However, the role of social semiotics in this context is not to ask whether something is true, but to analyse the representation in the context of how truthful it seems (van Leeuwen 2005: 160)

Tesco's 'fake' farms

In 2016, Tesco replaced one fresh food section of its 'Everyday Value range' with a range of brands named after traditional English sounding farms. Vegetables were branded under the guise of Redmere Farms, pork under Woodside Farms, salad under Nightingale Farms, beef under Boswell Farms, berries, apples and pears under Rosedene Farms, chicken under Willow Farms and imported fruit under Suntrail Farms. Originally launched in 2012, the Everyday Value range was targeted at the 'segment of the shopper population who want keenly priced everyday products without having to sacrifice too much on quality' (Lawson 2012: n.pag.). The 2016 rebrand was designed to compete with emerging powers in the UK supermarket landscape, Aldi and Lidl, and continued to offer the economy-priced products 'but with more appealing packaging and a promise of

higher standards' (Gwynn 2016). However, shortly after their launch, the farms were revealed by the media to be fake. For example, an Internet search for the farm names reveals Woodside Farm as a destination for families and school parties to meet farm, exotic and zoo animals, with other on-site attractions such as a mini fun fair, crazy golf and indoor soft play area, and identifies Boswell Farm as offering holiday cottages, retreats and pilates classes. Perhaps unsurprisingly Tesco's approach created quite a media storm, particularly as some meat in the newly branded packs was found to come from Holland, Denmark and Ireland (Fredenburgh 2016). The National Farmers' Union (NFU) responded by lodging a complaint with trading standards suggesting that consumers may be misled into thinking the produce is from the United Kingdom (Ghosh 2016). However, Tesco are not alone in this, and the NFU have accused other UK supermarkets Morrisons, Aldi, Lidl and Waitrose of similar practices (Hardy 2016).

Marketing and branding professionals interviewed in conjunction with the story have almost all described it as short sighted, and as Tesco have recently been under media scrutiny in relation to the 'horse meat scandal' (Neate and Moulds 2013), it seems strange to so obviously go against contemporary brand industry thinking again. Indeed, initial figures suggested that the introduction of the 'fake brands' had a negative impact on sales of approximately 0.7 per cent (Gwynn 2016). However, if we return to ideas of rendering referential or approximate 'authenticity' and experientialist accounts of understanding that employ *both* reason and imagination, perhaps the strategy is less clearly misplaced. The 'fake farm' packaging has been specifically designed with the interaction with the consumer in mind. In social semiotic terms, the packaging is multimodal in approach and includes the naming of the brands, copywriting and visual

imagery. What follows is an analysis of the key visual and typographic elements of the packaging. This enables the identification of the different approaches the designer has taken with imagery and copy to facilitate the construction of the concept of 'authenticity' via the consumer's experientialist understanding at the point of interaction with the packaging.

The graphics for each brand are contained within a printed shape on the front of each package that mimics a label, with each having its own shape and utilizing an individual mix of two or three colours. Within this shape, the designed elements employed are typography, an illustration, decorative graphic line elements and the occasional use of the Union Jack. The shape of several of the 'labels' calls to mind the round, frilly rosettes given out to award winning produce at county shows or name plates used on front doors or farm gates (see Figures 1 and 4). The design decisions taken here begin to reveal the attempt to transport the consumers' imagination from the supermarket aisle to the more 'authentic' farming territory of the countryside.

The farm brand names facilitate an immediately apparent shift from the range's prior name, Everyday Value. They tell a very different, more evocative, brand 'story' and for the consumer they are designed to conjure up bucolic images of pastoral English scenes where cows roam, and fruit and vegetables grow. They enable the rendering of 'referential authenticity' as they 'refer back to times when life was simpler, slower paced, and, seemingly at least, more authentic' (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 131). Naming also has connections with ideas of provenance (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 136), and in this case, the farms suggest a particular site which the produce is from, and with that perhaps an incumbent set of values – the key one being 'Britishness'.

Positioned at the top left of each label is a circular 'stamped' type of graphic that states 'Exclusively for Tesco', in capitals and in a contrasting colour to the background so it stands out (see Figures 1–8). Exclusivity brings connotations far removed from notions of 'everyday value', suggesting that the produce has been specifically grown for Tesco. This crystalizes a link to farms and farmers, reinforcing the connection between the site of production and the supermarket context. In basic terms, it also suggests this product is unavailable elsewhere. Two of the meat brands include a further line of copy – for Boswell Farms, this reads 'Butcher's quality cuts' (see Figure 3) and for Woodside Farms, 'Butcher's quality' (see Figure 1).

Clockwise from top left: Figure 1: Woodside Farms label, Figure 2: Willow Farms label, Figure 3: Boswell Farms label and Figure 4: Redmere Farms label.

This aligns the produce not just with the farm and farmer, but also the butcher – another attempt to suggest a personal connection, and therefore perhaps also ideas of 'moral authenticity', to the consumer. In terms of the descriptive language used, the other brands follow a similar path, with Redmere Farms and Nightingale Farms stating 'Fresh quality' (see Figure 4) and 'Freshest quality' (see Figure 5), respectively, whilst Rosedene Farms asserts that it is 'Quality picked fruit' (see Figure 6) and Suntrail Farms, 'Quality produce' (see Figure 7). Consumers are likely to interpret words like 'quality' and 'exclusive', as identifying a range that is of higher quality than usual. As we have seen, such words are open to misinterpretation and difficult to 'police' in terms of use and context, but they also have a 'legitimatory' function and are now used so regularly they

have become the accepted norm. So the use of the word 'quality' on its own is sufficient to trigger the understanding that this is a 'high end' product (see van Leeuwen 2005: 105) – a further attempt to shift perceptions of the product away from the previous Everyday Value range.

A Union Jack graphic is also used on occasion – in the two apple packs shown (see Figures 6 and 8), one is branded with a Union Jack and the other is not. Presumably the use of the Union Jack signifies British produce and, the lack of it, products that have been imported. However, Suntrail Farms adds a further line of copy at the foot of the label, stating 'Imported from around the world' (see Figure 7) – giving the consumer a more obvious reference to the origin of the produce and the first clear suggestion that all may not be as it seems with these 'local', 'authentic' sounding 'farms'. However, this copy is the smallest element on the 'label'. Both the Union Jack and the Suntrail copy regarding the imported fruit are within the 'frame' of the label. Kress (2010: 153) describes the use of frames as both holding together and separating or segmenting. In the context of the fake farms, the 'labels' create the frame and the consumer will view the names, illustration and copy within these as a coherent message. However, in the meat brands, the copy referring to origin is placed outside of the label and therefore out of the frame. Here, the main label is clearly foregrounded and carries the 'major intentional weight' or 'functional load' (Kress 2010: 60). This means the audience are likely to engage primarily with the fake farm brand and the sense of 'authenticity' rather than the origin of the product.

Clockwise from top left: Figure 5: Nightingale Farms label, Figure 6: Rosedene Farms label (no Union Jack), Figure 7: Suntrail Farms label and Figure 8: Rosedene Farms label (Union Jack).

Each brand uses a different typeface for the name. Willow Farms uses a font that evokes an art deco feel (see Figure 2), perhaps an attempt to hark back to earlier times, when factory farming had yet to emerge. The two other meat brands use simple, bold sans serif typefaces (see Figures 1 and 3), and the fruit and vegetables use a range of different serif and sans serif typefaces (see Figures 4–7). Here, the choice of different typefaces signifies 'authenticity' in terms of the farms being different entities and brands; however, the typefaces are not modally active in terms of prompting a sense of 'authenticity' related to the practice of farming. Aside from the copy, the main feature of the 'label' is a silhouette style illustration that in most cases represents produce that relates to each brand (see Figures 1, 2, 3, 5 and 6). The exceptions to the rule are Suntrail that features a rising sun (see Figure 7) and Redmere that shows a tractor (see Figure 4). The chicken on the Willow Farms label is perched on top of the arrow from a weather vane (see Figure 2) – all of these are perhaps further attempts to prompt thoughts of tradition, pre-mechanisation, as 'creating a feeling of nostalgia can appeal to referential authenticity' (Gilmore and Pine 2007: 71).

Although almost certainly generated digitally, the style of the imagery and the decorative graphic lines have an analogue quality associated with the craft of screen printing. The coverage of the ink on these elements is inconsistent, the lines are not geometrically precise and the Redmere and Suntrail Farms labels introduce a series of

'smudges' within the labels (see Figures 4 and 7). The use of these textural elements gives the smooth digital print a human generated, tactile quality, along with a suggestion of imperfection – perhaps the graphic design equivalent of a mud-encrusted potato or strangely shaped parsnip. There is a link here to the idea of affordance (Jewitt 2009: 24), which in social semiotic terms is connected to both the material and cultural aspects of a mode. Although the materiality in this context – the textural elements – is digitally generated, affordance is shaped by what a mode has been repeatedly used to mean, so in this case, there is perhaps a sense of 'haptic visuality' at play (Marks 2004). In turn, this 'imperfection' reinforces ideas of the handmade and begins to draw the consumer towards ideas of 'moral authenticity' and artisanal production (Beverland et al. 2008). According to Kress (2010: 68), every sign has 'a social and therefore "political" and ideological component'. In the context of the fake farm brands, this component is present in the projection of ideas of 'authenticity' and less mechanized farming practices that attempt to define an 'attitude to life'. Discourse is evident here in the sense of this position and the attempt to shape a 'way of being in the world' (Kress 2010: 69).

Many of the visual and typographic design decisions are made in order to connect to a sense of 'farms' or 'farming' in the consumer's mind. With these visual aspects, it is the colours, textures and imagery such as tractors that make connections with generic ideas of pastoral scenes, the countryside and the handmade. The copywriting crystalizes and locates this generic sense of 'farming' through the use of specific farm names – a vague sense of 'farmness' becomes an image of a specific farmhouse and fields, and therefore successfully renders 'referential authenticity'. For the consumer, this multimodal approach works together through text and image to specifically link farming

with 'authenticity' in the context of a purchase. In both referential and approximate 'authenticity', the designer deliberately includes images that are likely to trigger memories or associations for the consumer. To be understood it makes sense to use resources the audience is familiar with (Kress 2010: 64) as the consumer brings their prior experiences to the interaction (Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 227). This is a strategy Aldi have used directly with packaging that imitates well-known premium brands. The fake farms follow suit to an extent, though not in such literal terms. The fake farm labels essentially carry with them 'traces of long histories of practice' (Kress 2010: 69). We encounter brands, branding and packaging each time we shop, and as we make meaning from these signs, we continue to add them to our visual and conceptual lexicon. Therefore, both designer and interpreter bring these resources with them when they engage in the two-stage communication process (Kress 2010: 69). However, the memories targeted are not solely of premium products that use similar communicative strategies, they are also of farm shops, farmers' markets or trips to the countryside. This dual perspective is therefore likely to change how consumers regard the product, particularly in relation to the previous 'Everyday Value' range. The products are likely to be perceived as better quality and more traditionally farmed or produced, yet cost less than the standard Tesco range, so for the consumer, the value for money is perhaps more evident than when stated within the previous brand name. People expect to pay a premium for 'authenticity' (Groves 2001), so if they are purchasing something they believe is authentic at a lower price than expected this will inevitably produce a positive reaction.

The fake farm packaging is obviously not encountered in isolation, but within the retail experience of Tesco. Retail experience design now includes multi-sensory, affective approaches to the branding and marketing of products, with smell, touch and sound all becoming important. In the context of fruit and vegetables, for example, supermarkets often display them unpackaged, able to be handled and weighed out as if at a market. This is often further reinforced, particularly for organic produce, with materials such as wicker baskets, hessian coverings and wooden pallets. However, for the fake farm brands, there is no such attempt to render 'authenticity' via this type of narrative. The packaging materials used are standard in supermarket terms and the packs themselves are presented within basic green plastic stackable containers. At the point of 'sign-making', the interpreter draws on their 'position in the world' and designers draw on this to select 'apt signifiers' (Kress 2010:70, see also Lakoff and Johnson 2003: 227), yet it seems there is little in the way of overt experience design being utilized here to add to the meaning making. However, while in relation to ideas of 'authenticity', the design of Tesco's retail environment does not seem apt, in the context of 'every little helps' – perhaps the consumers primary motivation for shopping in Tesco in the first place – the minimum investment in the retail environment is likely to be an active choice by the designers. The less spent on display, the more savings can be passed onto the consumer. So, rather than contributing to a sense of 'inauthenticity', the seeming absence of overt retail design 'authenticates' Tesco's overarching brand values. Interestingly, many of the Redmere Farm bags have a printed image of a strip of hessian above and below the label (see Figure 4) – this would suggest the designers are well aware of materials often used

in conjunction with vegetables in retail experience design and are perhaps using the 'lack' of retail experience design as a counterpoint to the 'extra' meaning on the bags.

Customer response to the quality of the product has allegedly been very good, with 'satisfaction scores' of 90 per cent (Gwynn 2016). It seems likely that these satisfaction scores will translate to sales, particularly as the product is positioned within the lower end of the fresh food price brackets and in the context of ongoing financial pressure on a large proportion of UK consumers affected by 'austerity' policies, and the potential post-Brexit interest and price rises. Although Tesco's profits have suffered over the past five years and their market share has diminished, recent figures released in October showed the first rise since 2011 in both profit and market share, which was helped in part by the farm brands (BBC 2016). Although it is impossible to deduce from this article the specific impact of the farm brands and their associated branding and design, for the consumer, it is likely that some will have responded positively to this creatively rendered referential or approximate 'authenticity', particularly in conjunction with the unexpectedly low price point.

Conclusion

Tesco's farm brands use farm names that have been revealed by the media as 'fake'; however, this does not seem to have led to the perception of the brands themselves as 'inauthentic'. The design of the range deliberately utilizes visual and textual references that draw on a consumer's prior experience of farms and farming, as well as other examples of food packaging, in order to render ideas of approximate or referential 'authenticity'. However, the concept of 'authenticity', or indeed 'inauthenticity', is only generated upon the consumer's interaction with the branding and the packaging. The

consumer is an active participant in the creation of meaning, which is built via an

understanding that draws on prior experiences, information and imagination. It is

therefore not a question of whether something is 'authentic' or not, rather, it is a question

of whether the two-stage meaning process between the designer and consumer effects an

interaction with the packaging design that results in the consumer highlighting the

experiences the designer assumed they would. If the increase in sales has been positively

impacted by the redesign of the Everyday Value range as the farm brands as has been

stated (BBC 2016), then Tesco seem to be facilitating this interaction in a way that has

overridden the outcry over the 'fake farms'.

Brands are said to be 'emotionally owned' by the consumer (Balmer 2006: 38),

and a focus on 'values', 'feelings' and 'relationships' is becoming key to brand

communication (Moor 2007: 6). The role of emotion in decision-making perhaps

suggests that 'subjective modality' is becoming more important; in other words, the

stronger a person's 'inner conviction about the truth of an assertion, the higher the

modality of that assertion' (van Leeuwen 2005: 163). In this context, one might

tentatively speculate that the balance of objective and subjective thought in the

customer's experiential understanding favours the imaginative over the rational.

However, this focus on an emotional response in contemporary branding lends itself to

debates of a non-representational nature and questions as to whether any type of

semiology is able to analyse this approach (Rose 2012: 146). A further limitation of the

semiotic approach used here is a lack of engagement with the consumers choosing (or

not) to purchase the farm brands. Further research of an ethnographic or

phenomenological nature could be done to address consumer experience of the

multimodal approach in both the packaging and retail design, which experiences they choose to bring to bear on the interaction with the brands, and their resulting motivations for purchase.

The limitations of this methodological approach notwithstanding, it is clear that whilst branding experts assert that ideas of 'truth' and 'authenticity' are key to a brand's success, 'authenticity' is a social construction and the consumer and their experience are as much a key to this as the product itself. Food perhaps comes with the added complication that although definitions of terms like 'local' and 'authentic' have been attempted by governing bodies, both are impossible to police, and open to a range of interpretations. This lack of clarity has offered brand strategists and graphic designers fertile ground in which to explore the 'magical' potential of their craft and has enabled solutions that render referential or approximate 'authenticity'. In social semiotic terms, genres, or types of texts, can be classified by what they do (van Leeuwen 2005: 122) and Tesco's fake farm branding and packaging is designed to promote and sell the products by rendering a story of 'authenticity'. In this deliberate harnessing of the rhetorical power of design in order to develop branding and packaging that conveys ideas of approximate and referential 'authenticity', it is not that pure (literal) or original 'authenticity' is irrelevant, rather it is necessary for the consumer to construct their preferred meanings from the fake farm packaging. For some that may result in a definition of 'inauthenticity', and they are unlikely to follow through with a purchase. For others, the rendering of 'authenticity' will be understood and, coupled with the low price point, will add to the sense that they are getting more for less.

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