

Fly Global, Act Local:  
A study into the role of storytelling in the  
projection and construction  
of brand.

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## Contents

List of Figures	iv
List of Tables	vi
Attestation of Authorship	vii
Acknowledgments	viii
Abstract	ix
<b>Chapter 1 Overview of the research</b>	
1. Introduction	01
1.1. Background	01
1.2. Rationale for the research and the research questions	03
1.3. Structure of the thesis	04
<b>Chapter 2 Cathay Pacific in context</b>	
2. Introduction	05
2.1. Beginnings of Cathay Pacific	05
2.2. Hong Kong's cultural context	06
2.3. Cathay Pacific's brand refresh	07
2.4. Summary	08
<b>Chapter 3 Literature Review</b>	
3. Introduction	09
3.1. Brand and the branding paradigm	09
3.1.1. The definition and concept of brand	09
3.1.2. The symbolic, psychological and narrative elements of brand	12
3.1.3. Brands as deliverers of experience	14
3.1.4. Summary of the role of brand	15
3.2. Brand, advertising and cultural meaning	15
3.2.1. The Frankfurt School's account of advertising	16
3.2.2. Semiotic approach	17
3.2.3. Models of the movement of cultural meaning	19
3.2.4. Summary of advertising as storytelling and a communication of brand	21
3.3. Narrative theory and storytelling	22
3.3.1. The pervasiveness of narrative	22
3.3.2. Narrative structure according to Todorov, Propp and binary opposition	22
3.3.3. Narrative, persuasion and the audience	25
3.3.4. Narrative as mythologies	29
3.3.5. Barthes' narrative codes	30
3.3.6. Alternative and brand narratives	31
3.3.7. Summary of Narrative theory	33
3.4. Globalisation and glocalisation	33
3.4.1. Cultural globalisation and glocalisation	33
3.4.2. Glocalisation as a global marketing strategy	35

<b>Chapter 4</b>	<b>Methodology and Research Design</b>	
4.	Introduction	38
4.1.	Methodology	38
4.2.	Research Design	42
<b>Chapter 5</b>	<b>Data and Findings</b>	
5.	Introduction	46
5.1.	Presence of sub themes in employee stories	46
5.2.	Number of instances of the sub themes in the employee stories	49
5.3.	Gender and the sub themes	51
5.4.	Location of work and the sub themes	54
5.5.	Summary	57
<b>Chapter 6</b>	<b>Narrative Devices</b>	
	Introduction	58
6.1.	Projection of brand through narrative devices	58
6.1.1.	Predominant sub themes of Cathay Pacific's storytelling	58
6.1.2.	Cathay Pacific's central theme	60
6.2.	Structure of Cathay Pacific's narrative	61
6.2.1.	Cathay Pacific's storytelling as an antenarrative	61
6.2.2.	Proppian account of Cathay Pacific's brand narrative	62
6.3.	Summary	71
<b>Chapter 7</b>	<b>Brand Characters and Personification</b>	
	Introduction	71
7.1.	Characters, personification and brand personality	71
7.2.	Cathay Pacific employees as brand characters	74
7.2.1.	Cathay Pacific and gender	74
7.2.2.	Cathay Pacific and race	77
7.3.	Cathay Pacific as a character	81
7.3.1.	Cathay Pacific as a multicultural collage	82
7.4.	Summary	84
<b>Chapter 8</b>	<b>Representative Techniques</b>	
8.	Introduction	86
8.1.	Advertising, mise-en-scène and semiotic method	86
8.2.	Still images in <i>People. They make an airline</i>	87
8.3.	Cathay Pacific's television commercials	93
8.4.	Summary	100

<b>Chapter 9</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	
9.	Introduction	102
9.1.	Cultural meaning and storytelling	102
9.2.	Cathay Pacific's storytelling: the sum of all impressions	103
9.2.1.	Story arc 1; adventures, heroes and mentors	104
9.2.2.	Story arc 2; intercultural interaction, cultural diversity, the global and the local	105
9.3.	Blending the local and global through storytelling	106
9.4.	Storytelling and the consumer experience	107
9.5.	Summary	110
<b>Chapter 10</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	
10.	Introduction	111
10.1.	Conclusions from major findings	111
10.2.	Limitations and future research	113
10.3.	Practical applications of this research	114
<b>References</b>		115

## List of Figures

### Chapter Six

Figure 6.1 - Alice 1; Television commercial	65
Figure 6.2 - Alice 2; Television commercial	66
Figure 6.3 - Alice 3; Television commercial	66
Figure 6.4 - Alice 4; Television commercial	66
Figure 6.5 - Alice 5; Television commercial	67
Figure 6.6 - Alice 6; Television commercial	67
Figure 6.7 - Nigel 1; Television commercial	67
Figure 6.8 - Nigel 2; Television commercial	69
Figure 6.9 - Nigel 3; Television commercial	69
Figure 6.10 - Nigel 4; Television commercial	69
Figure 6.11 - Nigel 5; Television commercial	69
Figure 6.12 - Nigel 6; Television commercial	70

### Chapter Seven

Figure 7.1 - The Mother	76
Figure 7.2 - The Sex object	76
Figure 7.3 - Alice Li, Flight Purser, Employee Story	79
Figure 7.4 - Ai Hoshino, Customer Service Officer, Employee Story	79
Figure 7.5 - Nadia 1; Television commercial	80
Figure 7.6 - Nadia 2; Television commercial	80
Figure 7.7 - Nadia 3; Television commercial	80
Figure 7.8 - Nadia 4; Television commercial	80
Figure 7.9 - Nadia 5; Television commercial	80
Figure 7.10 - Nadia 6; Television commercial	81

### Chapter Eight

Figure 8.1 - Cabin crew featured in their uniforms with three employees featured in their own clothing	88
Figure 8.2 - Pilots featured in their uniform with one featured in his own clothing	88
Figure 8.3 - Alpna Matthews, Account Manager	90
Figure 8.4 - Nancy Tsou, Supervisor Airport Services	91
Figure 8.5 - Aya Kitamichi, Flight Attendant	91
Figure 8.6 - Daniel Teng, Flight Purser	91
Figure 8.7 - Ellen Hsu, Flight Attendant	92
Figure 8.8 - Lynn Chen, Inflight Service Manager	92
Figure 8.9 - Karen Bishop, First Officer	93
Figure 8.10 - Grace 1; Television commercial	95
Figure 8.11 - Grace 2	96
Figure 8.12 - Grace 3	96
Figure 8.13 - Grace 4	96
Figure 8.14 - Grace 5	96
Figure 8.15 - Grace 6	96

Figure 8.16 - Barbara 1	97
Figure 8.17 - Barbara 2	98
Figure 8.18 - Barbara 3	98
Figure 8.19 - Barbara 4	98
Figure 8.20 - Barbara 5	98
Figure 8.21 - Kelly 1	99
Figure 8.22 - Kelly 2	99
Figure 8.23 - Kelly 3	99
Figure 8.24 - Kelly 4	99
Figure 8.25 - Kelly 5	100
Figure 8.26 - Kelly 6	100

## List of Tables

### Chapter Three

Table 3.1 -	Abridged Summary of Antecedents and Consequences to the brand Construct	11
Table 3.2 -	Stages of consumption experience	14
Table 3.3 -	Comparison of Todorov's narrative structure to Propp's structure	23
Table 3.4 -	Propp's functions (character roles)	24
Table 3.5 -	Propp's spheres of action modified to incorporate binary oppositions	25
Table 3.6 -	Burke's pentad	28
Table 3.7 -	Barthes' narrative codes	30

### Chapter Four

Table 4.1 -	Coding Units	44
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### Chapter Five

Table 5.1 -	Presence of the subtheme in the employee stories	46
Table 5.2 -	Percentage of subtheme mentions in the total of employee stories	48
Table 5.3 -	Presence of subthemes in the employee stories	49
Table 5.4 -	Subthemes; comparison of prevalence	49
Table 5.5 -	Gender split of the employees represented in the employee stories	52
Table 5.6 -	Number of instances of subtheme mentions split by gender	52
Table 5.7 -	Percentage of subtheme presence in the employee stories split by gender	53
Table 5.8 -	The employee stories and their plot by the employees' role	55
Table 5.9 -	Percentage of the subtheme mentions split by the role of the particular employee	56

### Chapter Six

Table 6.1 -	Propp's functions (character roles)	64
Table 6.2 -	Fiske's simplification of Propp's schema	64

### Chapter Eight

Table 8.1 -	Meaning of Shots and Camera Work	94
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### Chapter Nine

Table 9.1 -	Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs relevant to storytelling	108
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## **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the acknowledgements

Signed:

Jason Cox



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## **Abstract**

A feature of this increasingly globalised world is the presence and strength of global brands. The investigation analyses how brands are constructed through storytelling and ascertains the effects, influences and outcomes that storytelling might have. Storytelling contributes to the construction and projection of brand but brands need to be based on cultural meaning by using narrative devices, characters and representative techniques that are culturally relevant, appropriate and appealing giving brands the ability to construct a brand personality and associate particular cultural phenomena to the brand to differentiate, create cultural meaning and deliver an experience to the consumer. Grounded in the context of globalisation, this study seeks to analyse how a global brand uses storytelling to market its product or service in culturally distinct markets. This research identifies, analyses and discusses several components of brand storytelling and addresses how these many elements come together to create a dynamic and multilayered story. This research has been undertaken by using a quantitative content analysis and identifies trends and cultural content to establish meaning from Cathay Pacific's storytelling. To build on this textual analysis and semiotics are used to analyse the specific meaning, influence and consequences of the different storytelling components to analyse the meaning of these subthemes to ascertain what they communicate about the brand and how they serve to construct and project the brand to consumers.

## **Chapter 1: Overview of the Research**

The purpose of this research is to determine and analyse how brands are constructed through storytelling and to ascertain the effects, influences and outcomes that this storytelling might have. Grounded in the context of globalisation, this study seeks to analyse how a global brand uses storytelling to market its product or service in culturally distinct markets. More specifically, this research will identify, analyse and discuss several elements of brand storytelling and address how these many elements come together to create a dynamic and multilayered story.

### **1. Introduction**

This chapter will outline the origins and purpose of this research. This chapter will be categorised into four parts. The first section will give a brief overview as to the background and context of the parameters of this study. The second section will discuss the rationale behind the research and will introduce the research questions. The third section will then outline the organisation of this thesis.

#### **1.1 Background**

'Think global, act local' has become a common maxim used in a plethora of contemporary contexts (De Mooji, 1998). The term has become particularly problematic in times of globalization, when worldwide economic, political, social and cultural processes have become increasingly interconnected and where social relations and economic transactions occur on a global level (Adams, 2005, p. 293). In light of the supposed widespread influence of globalisation one may reach the conclusion that in fact in today's increasingly interconnected world that 'think global, act global' would be far more appropriate. This forecasts many criticisms of globalisation and its corresponding processes, namely that it involves the eradication of local culture because 'consumer tastes and cultures are homogenized and satisfied through the provision of standardized global products created by global corporations' and 'everywhere is becoming the same' to the detriment of rich cultural diversity (Johnston, Gregory, Pratt & Watts, 2000, p. 315).

A feature of this increasingly globalised world is the presence and strength of global brands. Tragos (1998) argues that globalisation has provided the contextual basis for the ability to capitalize from global markets with global brands. This is due to the decreasing relevance of geography and the increasing influence of intersecting psychographics and global lifestyles (p. 123-4). Multinational corporations have operations in many distinct locations and although they generally do not maintain an allegiance to place or community, globalisation poses a challenge as to how multinational corporations should best market and promote their products and services across distinct markets (Johnston et al. 2000, p. 315 & 528). The question is therefore

raised as to whether the pervasiveness of global brands is resulting in global cultural homogenisation and the eradication of local culture. Secondly, it also elicits the question as to how a multinational corporation faces the challenge of using their global brand to market their offering to local sensibilities in culturally distinct markets. Halliburton and Ziegfeld (2009) argue that multinational corporations have to decide as to what extent their strategy will be standardised across their global operations when marketing their offerings across distinct markets. They query whether these products and services will be localised to particular cultures and localities or involve a combination of the two polarities known as glocalisation (Halliburton & Ziegfeld, 2009).

The use of a global brand in this situation entails the consideration of not only the name and visual identity or packaging design, but also communications tactics or programmes (Tragos, 1998, p. 124). Communication tactics and programmes are integral to branding. *Brand* is understood to refer to a distinct form of marketing practice that intends to link products and services with 'resonant cultural meanings through the use of narratives and images' (Hearn, 2008, p. 199). For McCracken (1986) consumer goods have a significance that goes beyond their utilitarian character and commercial value; this significance rests largely on their ability to communicate cultural meaning (p. 71). Branding can therefore be understood as the cultural meaning that is constructed through narratives and images and attributed to products and services.

This role of narrative and images is important considering a recent increasing focus on brands as being constructed and developed through storytelling (Fog, Budtz & Yakaboylu, 2005; Ind, 2004; Grow, 2008; Sachs, 2013). It is argued that brands are managed through storytelling (Fog et al., 2005; Ind, 2004; Grow, 2008). Fog et al. (2005) stress that a brand's story builds emotional relationships, which in turn develops a brand's value and maintains its equity. According to Ind (2004, p. 171) the dynamism of branding is rooted in storytelling, and for Grow (2008) the emotional relationships that are rooted in the brand promise are built and maintained by branded storytelling (p. 315).

The importance of carefully crafted and consistent storytelling can help a brand distinguish itself from competition, break through in an environment of considerable media noise and thus build loyalty and belonging (Sachs, 2013). Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) go so far as to argue that storytelling acts as an aid to memory, as a means of making sense of the world, as a way to strengthen emotional connections and as a way of recognising and identifying with brands of any type (p. 21). Sachs (2012) describes how great story-based brands have compelling, memorable and single overarching narratives. Storytelling as a projection of brand serves to build 'solidarity, meaning, experiences - all the things that are supposedly no longer provided by the social context to the same extent, or in an equally straightforward manner as before' (Arvidsson, 2006, p. 83). Global brands therefore have to be compelling, memorable and have a single overarching narrative, which needs to distinguish the brand, build loyalty and belonging

and provide meaning and experiences. Brands also need to be based in resonant cultural meaning by using narratives and images that are culturally relevant, appropriate and appealing.

With these complex requirements, it can be seen that it is almost impossible to have a global brand that can appeal, be appropriate and be relevant across distinct cultural realities. By taking this all into account, the corporation then has to decide their strategy for it's global brand, implementing either global standardisation (and therefore thinking global and acting global), or the alternative, glocalisation, which may be understood as thinking global and acting local.

Cathay Pacific is a global brand that markets its offering in distinct markets and to different cultures. A global airline provides a valuable example of an organisation whose business is to think global, or rather operate global flights. Through its brand Cathay Pacific intends to differentiate itself in a competitive and increasingly commoditised airline travel market. The question here is whether Cathay Pacific tailors its brand communications and positioning to cater to diverse audiences and sensibilities. In this sense the airline would be glocalising, being a global airline that is *acting* as if it were local.

According to Grow (2008) 'brands are the sum of all impressions' and therefore it is beneficial to study a number of these impressions in order to gain a view of a brand's storytelling. Cathay Pacific's *People. They make an airline* campaign provides an excellent example for this purpose as it combines 96 online employee stories with the 6 corresponding television commercials. These will be analysed by this research in order to gain an overview of the 'sum of all impressions' to ascertain how brand is constructed through the various elements of storytelling.

## **1.2 Rationale for the research and the research questions**

This investigation into the construction and projection of brand through storytelling will serve to contribute to the recent increase in interest, in both academia and in branding practice, in the notion of branding as storytelling. By grounding this study in the context of globalisation the intention is to provide commentary and analysis on contemporary global consumer culture and its repercussions.

The interdisciplinary nature of this research will bring together disparate fields of research, particularly incorporating narrative theory and cultural studies into the understanding of branding. Therefore this study intends to be useful for both those in branding practice, whose emphasis is on evaluations of strategies of glocalisation, and for those in academia who are concerned with the branding paradigm and contemporary consumer culture. This study is also significant in that it may contribute to my knowledge as to how storytelling is constructed and projected and ultimately to what extent it is a useful tool in the creation and management of brands.

## **Research questions**

The following questions frame this research. There is one primary research question and three sub-questions that will be answered in turn in the analytical chapters.

Primary research question:

1. In what ways does storytelling serve the projection and construction of brand?

Secondary research questions:

2. How do narrative devices serve to construct and project brand?
3. How are characters depicted and how do they project brand attributes?
4. How do representative techniques serve to build narrative and how do they contribute to the development of brand storytelling?

The questions serve to firstly discuss and analyse each element of storytelling in relative isolation so that each element can be evaluated on its own merits. The research questions highlight certain implications and advantages that contribute to overall answers.

## **1.3 Structure of the thesis**

This first chapter outlines the context and origins of this research, focusing specifically on the background, rationale of the research and the research questions. Chapter Two seeks to contextualise Cathay Pacific's brand in the socio-cultural frame of a Hong Kong based airline and in the global airline industry. Chapter Three gives more of a detailed background to the existing research and begins to frame the response to the primary research question: In what ways does storytelling serve the projection and construction of brand? The review of literature in this chapter will deal with the concept, study, practice and paradigm of brand and branding, storytelling and narrative within the context of globalisation. Chapter Four deals with the methodological foundations of the study and will present the research design and the rationale behind it. Following this, Chapter Five presents the data, identifying trends and discussing observations. Chapters Six, Seven and Eight are the analytical chapters that will seek to answer the three secondary research questions in turn: (1) How do narrative devices serve to construct and project brand? (2) How are characters depicted and how do they project brand attributes? (3) How do representative techniques serve to build the narrative and how do they contribute to the development of brand storytelling? Chapter Nine will draw together the discussion from Chapters six, seven and eight. This chapter will consolidate the discussion, findings and conclusions from these chapters on the elements of storytelling and will analyse the brand's storytelling as a whole rather than in parts. Chapter ten will conclude this thesis and ultimately answer the primary research question. It also addresses whether the original purpose of this research was achieved and will identify useful areas for future research and limitations of this study.

## **Chapter 2: *Cathay Pacific in context***

### **2. Introduction**

This study on the role of storytelling in the construction and projection of a brand is grounded in the contemporary context of globalisation, specifically cultural globalisation. This chapter contextualises Cathay Pacific as an international airline and as a global brand. For this research to progress it is essential to view the airline and its operations within an understanding of the surrounding socio-cultural and economic context. This chapter is therefore organised into three sections. The first section outlines Cathay Pacific's corporate history. The second discusses Hong Kong's history and cultural context. Finally, the third component will contextualise the Cathay Pacific brand in its own history and in relation to Hong Kong's cultural context.

### **2.1 Beginnings of Cathay Pacific**

Cathay Pacific began as a British airline based in Hong Kong (Landor, 1999). The airline was founded by American Roy C. Farrell and Australian Sydney H. de Kantzow, and was initially based in Shanghai. The name Cathay Pacific derives from an ancient name for China and Pacific because the intention was to one day fly across the Pacific Ocean (Cathay Pacific, n.d.). Today Cathay Pacific describes itself as an international airline registered and based in Hong Kong with services to 100 destinations worldwide in 42 countries (Cathay Pacific, n.d.). In its corporate vision, Cathay Pacific affirms its vision is to be 'the world's best airline,' which includes a deep commitment to support Hong Kong, the airline's home and headquarters (Cathay Pacific, n.d.).

Cathay Pacific is owned privately, including the major shareholders Swire Pacific Limited and Air China Limited (Cathay Pacific, n.d.). Cathay Pacific's two major shareholders are both Hong Kong companies and are listed on the Hong Kong Stock Exchange, as is Cathay Pacific itself (Cathay Pacific, n.d.). Its largest shareholder Swire Pacific is the publically quoted arm of the Swire Group, whose parent company is UK-headquartered, John Swire & Sons Ltd. (John Swire & Sons (H.K.) Ltd, 2013). John Swire Ltd. in turn holds a 44.16% stake in Swire Pacific (John Swire & Sons (H.K.) Ltd Group, 2013). Swire describes itself as growing from a one-man import-export business in Liverpool, U.K. to a multi-disciplined conglomerate. To a certain extent this suggests Cathay Pacific's roots are not as grounded in Hong Kong as it may claim.

Johnston et al. (2000) argue that multinational corporations do not necessarily maintain allegiance to community and place however Cathay Pacific maintains that it is committed to Hong Kong, its 'home' (Cathay Pacific, n.d.). Thus the airline's brand reflects Hong Kong culture and heritage (Cathay Pacific, n.d.; Landor, 1999). Nonetheless, one may question whether this is a sincere cultural commitment of the airline or merely a branding exercise. Lim, Mohamed, Ariffin and Guan (2009) argue branding is now a key component in the airline industry just like any other product (p. 35). Branding plays a key role in the airline industry as it allows airlines to

differentiate themselves from others in the market (Lim et al., 2009). While Cathay Pacific asserts that its brand and heritage reflect Hong Kong culture, it is therefore important to address Hong Kong's socio-cultural context and cultural identity.

## **2.2 Hong Kong's cultural context**

Hong Kong is described by Martin (1996) as historically a key centre of international commerce and a focal point of Southeast Asian business development. One of the world's most dynamic economies, Hong Kong is a Special Administrative Region of China and is argued to be highly accessible to Westerners as it continues to be a centre of Western business interests and interactions in East Asia (Martin & Shen, 2006). Historically, Hong Kong began as a trading outpost for the British East India Company in the 1840's and remained British crown territory until its handover to the Chinese government in 1997. Chan and Cheng (2002) argue that while the reunification of these two parts of China occurred almost instantly, 'their differences are far from disappearing due to the long time separation which lies between them' (p. 385).

Due to a long history as a British crown territory and being a key centre for business and trade, it is argued that Hong Kong has a truly international lifestyle (Martin & Shen 2006, p. 24). Prendergast and Ho (2006) echo this view, arguing that Hong Kong is a place where there is a close interaction between Eastern and Western values, and because it is basically an international society. However, while it is argued that Hong Kong is a culturally diverse city reflecting a wide range of attitudes and behaviours, the modern and Western appearance of Hong Kong tends to obscure that ethnic Hong Kong Chinese maintain a strong cultural identity (Martin & Shen, 2006).

In this sense there appear to be two components of Hong Kong cultural identity—modern Chinese and traditional Chinese. It is suggested that 'modern Chinese' retain Chinese values such as commitment to family, achievement and moderation alongside values related to Western lifestyles (Martin, 2006). It is also suggested that Chinese who consider themselves more modern develop a greater concern about self-expression, self-assertion, independence, personal achievement, dominance and tolerance. (Martin & Shen, 2006, p. 32).

On the other hand, a 'traditional Chinese' is described as someone who values characteristics like thrift and filial piety, as well as traits of non-competitiveness, superstition and authoritarianism (Martin & Shen 2006, p. 32). Martin and Shen (2006) argue that often the combined concepts of modernity/traditionalism and Chinese/Western value orientation are desirous in segmenting the Hong Kong Chinese population with its very diverse backgrounds and life experiences. This is because Hong Kong society cannot be generalised to be either 'traditional' or 'modern' Chinese as there is a combination of both.



Martin (1996) suggests that the impact of culture on Hong Kong consumers is significant. Martin (1996) argues that elements of Chinese culture such as what he calls 'Virtuous Behaviour' and 'Confucian Structural Harmony' are influential in marketing and advertising. This can be extended to brand construction and has significant implications for marketing and advertising in Hong Kong. Secondly, it raises the question as to how Cathay Pacific constructs and projects its brand, particularly in terms of asserting that its brand reflects Hong Kong culture and heritage.

### **2.3 Cathay Pacific's brand refresh**

It is important for the purposes of this study to note that Cathay Pacific's brand was overhauled mid-1994, and involved the introduction of a new logo and livery, and a redesign of the interiors of planes, uniforms and advertising (Schmitt, 1995). Although the existing brand's visual elements were well recognised, it was ascertained that the brand did not reflect Cathay Pacific's modern values and brand positioning as 'an international airline with a distinct Asian element reflecting the unique nature of Hong Kong as a place where East meets West' (Schmitt, 1995, p. 34).

In light of the fast growth in the early 1990s in the Asian air transport market it was brand agency Landor's view that Cathay's tired looking Identity which had not been updated since 1970 needed reviewing. So in 1994 the management of Cathay Pacific decided that 'a corporate identity renewal was necessary to signal the changes with the company and preemptively respond to growing competition in the region' (Landor, 1999, para 2; "Cathay Pacific takes to the sky with new logo", 1994). Landor (1999) states that in view of the forthcoming handover of Hong Kong back to the Chinese government and in recognition of Cathay Pacific's Asian heritage the previous expatriate image required updating (para 1). It was reported that Cathay Pacific's new corporate identity sought to place heavier 'emphasis on the Asian region and its Asian passengers', meanwhile reflecting the airline's global market ("Cathay Pacific takes to the sky with new logo", 1994).

In response to these external influences, Cathay Pacific introduced a brand refresh which included visual imagery that is described as 'contemporary Asian' which was 'created through a blending of colours, styles and expression that represent core Asian values' (Schmitt 1995, p. 34). Cathay Pacific's new *brushwing* logo presents a single calligraphic brushstroke suggesting the wing of a bird and according to its developers, Landor (1999), 'balances modernity and technological innovation with the airline's Asian heritage' (para 3). According to Schmitt (1995) Cathay Pacific's new logo was intended to symbolize 'East meeting West' in addition to representing Cathay Pacific's two core strengths: technical excellence and superior customer

service. Schmitt (1995) argues that the symbol of the bird reflects Western aviation technology, while the brush stroke is supposed to reflect Cathay Pacific's 'Asian style of service'.

Cathay Pacific's current brand, which is more clearly Asian-influenced, presents an example of how brands can be transformed and additionally, how brands are constructed in relation to external socio-cultural and economic influences. It also possibly forecasts the coming discussions on how Cathay Pacific can regard its brand as anchored in Hong Kong cultural identity and heritage and construct and project this brand through storytelling.

An example of a glocalised brand strategy is exemplified by the rebranding of Indonesian flag carrier, Garuda Indonesia, which was undertaken by corporate branding consultancy firm Lander Associates. In the case study of the 2010 Garuda Indonesia rebranding, Lander Associates (2010) states that the garuda, a mythical birdlike creature from Southeast Asian mythology and the national symbol of Indonesia, is 'ideal for a domestic brand' (para 1). However, as the airline sought improvements in numbers on their international routes it was in the view of Lander Associates (2010) that the airline needed to 'differentiate itself from the growing international competition' and more importantly, in relation to branding, 'the Garuda brand needed to stretch its wings around the world while still appealing to the local culture' (para 1). Lander decided that in the face of a 'global economy where many brands have generalized their image to appeal to the masses' their challenge in the rebranding was to 'elevate the brand to an international level' without losing the grounding in Garuda's Indonesian culture (Lander Associates, 2010, para 2). This exemplifies how an airline may combine elements of the local with the global in order to project a certain brand to increase its appeal globally.

This example has parallels to the context of Cathay Pacific's brand and socio-cultural context. Cathay Pacific has sought to reposition its brand to reflect a more Asian image but simultaneously has attempted to project the notion of 'East meets West', which could be understood as glocalisation. This demonstrates the many contradictions of Cathay Pacific: from its origins as an expatriate airline, to its supposed commitment and roots in Hong Kong while the majority ownership is held by a U.K.-headquartered conglomerate, to the combination of traditional and modern Chinese values, which are to be apparently held by the airline itself, to refreshing its brand to align more with an Asian image, however that imagery serves to present the meeting of East and West.

## **2.4 Summary**

This chapter has provided the contextual basis and introduced the contradictions in the conception and projection of the Cathay Pacific brand. This study continues to investigate the

*Fly Global, Act Local: Cathay Pacific in context*

role of storytelling in the construction and projection of Cathay Pacific's brand and how storytelling can serve to resolve these contradictions in the brand.

## **Chapter 3: Literature Review**

### **3. Introduction**

This chapter reviews the relevant literature that will provide the theoretical framework and context for answering the research question: In what ways does storytelling serve the projection and construction of brand? This question has been grounded in the commentary on cultural globalisation and pursues an enquiry into the complexities of the global-local nexus.

### **3.1 Brand and the branding paradigm**

This section is organised into three parts. The first outlines and describes the definition and complexities in the understanding of brand. The second focuses on the role of brand above functionality such as the symbolic, psychological and narrative elements of brand. The third discusses recent developments in the understanding of brand as a deliverer of experience.

#### *3.1.1 The definition and concept of brand*

Brand is an elusive concept and there is a lack of consensus of its definition and scope (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998). Additionally, it is also suggested that there are significant gaps in the field of the knowledge of branding. A number of commentators have called for exponential development of research into the understanding of brand (Ballantyne & Aitken, 2007; Keller, 2003). In a similar vein, a number of researchers have sought to outline the development of knowledge of brand and have endeavoured to consolidate brand's many interpretations to establish a level of consensus in the definition (de Chernatony & Dall'Olmo Riley, 1998; Merz, He & Vargo, 2009). To further complicate matters, different academic disciplines approach the definition and study of brand in distinct frames; psychology emphasises brands as heuristic frames; sociology as brands as trust mechanisms; and for cultural disciplines, brands as symbols (Holt, 2006).

A brand is a way for companies to connect emotionally with customers, become irreplaceable, build trust and create lifelong relationships in order to stand out in the marketplace (Wheeler, 2009). Branding, on the other hand, is used to refer to the process 'used to build awareness and extend customer loyalty' (Wheeler, 2009). This explanation, or lack thereof, does not give clarity into what a brand is but rather, elements of its function. Temporal (2000) points to the origins in branding to the practice of marking animals with distinguishing marks and suggests that brands still fulfil a differentiating function but now consist of a sophisticated process that combines a mixture of attributes and values. The commonality between these views is that brand serves to differentiate and produce an offering that fulfils rational and functional needs of consumers (Temporal, 2000; Wheeler, 2009).

The American Marketing Association defines brand as 'a name, term, sign, or design, or a combination of them, intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or group of sellers

and to differentiate them from those competitors' (cited in de Chernatony & Dall'Olmio Riley 2009, p. 419). This definition also identifies the notion of brand as a differentiating device but completely overlooks the concept of brand forging emotional connections and relationships.

In their endeavour to consolidate a definition of brand and branding, De Chenatony and Dall'Olmio Riley (1998) highlight the similarities and the differences in the multitude of definitions. These definitions are provided in Table 1 below.

**Table 3.1: Abridged Summary of Antecedents and Consequences to the Brand Construct (Source: Chernatony & Dall'Olmio Riley, 1998, p. 426)**

Brand definition	Antecedents	Consequences
1. Legal instrument	Mark of ownership. Name, logo, design.	Prosecute infringers.
2. Logo	Name, term, sign, symbol, design.	Identify, differentiate through visual identity and name.
3. Company	Recognisable corporate name and image. Culture, people, programs or organisation define corporate personality.	Convey consistent message to stakeholders.
4. Shorthand	Firm stresses quality not quantity of information.	Rapidly recognise brand association.
5. Risk reducer	Confidence that expectations being fulfilled.	Brand as a contract.
6. Identity system	More than just a name. Holistic.	Clarify direction, meaning, strategic positioning.
7. Image	Image in consumer's mind is brand 'reality'.	Firm's input activities managed using feedback of image to change identity.
8. Value system	Consumer relevant values imbue the brand.	Brand values match relevant consumer values.
9. Personality	Psychological values communicated through advertising and packaging.	Differentiation from symbolism: human values projected.

10. Relationship	Consumer has attitude to brand. Brand as a person has attitude to consumer.	Recognition and respect for personality.
11. Adding value	Non-functional extras.	Differentiate through layers of meaning.
12. Evolving entity	Change by stage of development	

This table demonstrates that for the understanding of a brand functionally, a common aspect is its role as a differentiating device and additionally that a brand refers to far more than a logo, a name and design elements and its ability to differentiate for the purposes of identification. Additionally, this table also highlights the non-functional aspects of brand such as the projection of values, personalities, relationship-building and the formation of perception from image. This highlights that there are symbolic dimensions to brands, particularly those aspects that are used to appeal to consumers' emotional needs (de Chernatony & Dall'Omo Riley, 1998; Wheeler 2009; Temporal, 2000).

### *3.1.2 The symbolic, psychological and narrative elements of brand*

Brands not only communicate functional benefit, they also communicate emotional benefit. According to Levy (1959) brands at their simplest level are signifiers of identity. Brands offer symbolism through the communication of brand, which provides the basis for the relationship between brands and consumers. Consumers not only look for functional benefits and also look for the 'possibility to associate themselves with a desired group, role, or self-image, hence, for symbolic benefits' (Merz et al., 2009, p. 333). In this sense it is argued that emotional connections and relationships with consumers are essential for successful branding.

Smith (2011) argues that brands are transformational, not used for what they inherently are, but for what they represent, with emphasis on their intangible, symbolic nature (p. 27). Brands can also serve a social purpose in that using and consuming a particular brand can be a social indicator by which the social significance overshadows the use value (Pettigrew, 2002). This suggests that in terms of brand the symbolic value of the product can be emphasised over its intrinsic use.

It terms of symbolic value of a brand, there has been an increasing notion of describing brands as narratives (Caru & Cova, 2003; Fog et al., 2005; Grow, 2008; Ind, 2004; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010; Stern, 2006). Hearn (2008) states that the term 'brand' is most commonly understood to refer to a distinct form of marketing practice that intends to link products and services with 'resonant cultural meanings through the use of narratives and images' (p. 199).

According to Smith (2011) the brand on one hand is the full market offering making the product competitive and differentiated, whereas on the other hand, the brand narrative acts as an ongoing dialogue between the company and the customer (p. 32). Brand and brand narrative attribute cultural meaning to products, mediating and facilitating symbolic consumption.

Narrative brands are argued to build emotional relationships (Fog et al., 2005) and that these emotional relationships are rooted in the brand promise, which is built by brand storytelling (Grow, 2008). Klein (1999) argues that persuasive global brands can create 'corporate mythologies powerful enough to infuse meaning into raw objects just by signing their name' (p. 22). Herskovitz and Crystal (2010) argue that storytelling acts as a clear aid to memory, as a means of making sense of the world, as a way to strengthen emotional connections and as a way of recognising and identifying with brands of any type (p. 21). Narrative is argued to be a natural heuristic, stories facilitate recall, recognition and relevance (Smith, 2011, p. 27). Therefore, it can be seen that brands as narrative have the ability to create symbolism and build emotional connections with consumers.

This symbolism is argued to originate in the culturally constituted world, leading a number of commentators to refer to the concept of brands being narratives and brand storytelling as cultural myths or mythology (Holt, 2004; Klein, 1999). Holt (2004) conceptualised iconic brands as being constructed by cultural myths and stories. These cultural myths derive from the culturally constituted world and thereby 'brand narratives need to resonate with target audiences and represent essential truths to consumers. What often seems the intangible layers of a brand—its brand "essence"—are rooted and reflected in precise contextual values and aspirations' (McCracken, 1993; Smith, 2011, p. 33). The conceptualisation of brands as narratives that in turn builds and develops storytelling and the origins of these stories in culture is the main thrust of this thesis.

The next level is the determination of how these stories, derived from culture, are constructed. Smith (2011) outlines a variety of existing brand narratives and their structures, identifying that they are based upon communicating a combination of archetypes that represent the journey, values and attributes of the brand and philosophical reasoning or social significance for the brand's existence.

Olins (2000) argues that brands are born in the many conversations that circulate culturally around the three kinds of brand narrative, namely, company-authored myths, media-authored myths and customer-authored myths (p. 52). Company-authored myths both explicitly and implicitly project a positioning story into strategic and tactical communications (Olins, 2000). Media-authored myths that are constructed through media communication channels and customer-authored myths arise through the interpretation of image and meaning of the brand by consumers (Olins, 2000).

The concern of this thesis is neither the media or consumer's role in the development of brand storytelling but is rather focused on storytelling's role, purpose and the intention the company has in the projection of such culturally-derived stories. Cathay Pacific's *People. They make and airline* campaign is a company-authored myth which explicitly and implicitly projects a story that strategically and tactically serves to position the brand. The brand narrative at hand is a company-authored myth and does not involve media or customer involvement, though many campaigns today involve a combination of, if not all three, kinds of brand narrative.

The role of brand storytelling is argued to go beyond building emotional relationships and conveying symbolic meaning (Arvidsson, 2006; Caru & Cova, 2003; Schmitt, 1999). Storytelling as a projection of brand serves to build 'solidarity, meaning, experiences—all the things that are supposedly no longer provided by the social context to the same extent, or in an equally straightforward manner as before' (Arvidsson, 2006, p. 83). Brand is therefore not merely functional and symbolic but is central to the consumption experience. According to Arvidsson (2005) branding 'stands for a specific way of using the object, a propertied form of life to be realized in consumption' (p. 244). In this sense branding doesn't refer merely to a single commodity but rather to an entire context for consumption.

### 3.1.3 Brands as deliverers of experience

Corresponding to the notion of branding as a context for consumption, brands have also been discussed as vehicles to deliver experiences (Arvidsson, 2005; Caru & Cova, 2003; Schmitt, 1999). Schmitt (1999) is a proponent of this, advocating the ability of brands to bring about experiences, asserting that culturally constituted brands are 'first and foremost providers of experiences' (p. 30). Similarly, Caru and Cova (2003) suggest that experiences of consumption are not isolated, one-off and momentary but rather develop as a narrative, in which the brand can function as a script. The context of consumption, the brand experience is constructed and influenced by a prevailing brand narrative. In this sense the brand narrative serves to shape the consumption experience rather than merely promote consumption.

**Table3.2: Stages of consumption experience (Source: Caru & Cova, 2003, p. 271)**

The <i>pre-consumption experience</i> , which involves searching for, planning, daydreaming about, foreseeing or imagining the experience.
The <i>purchase experience</i> , which drives choice, payment, packaging, the counter with the service and the environment.
The <i>core consumption experience</i> , including the sensation, the satiety, the satisfaction/dissatisfaction, the irritation/flow, the transformation



The *remembered consumption experience* and the *nostalgia experience* activates photographs to relive a past experience, which is based on accounts of stories and on arguments with friends about the past, and which moves towards the classification of memories.

Table 3.2 presents the stages of the consumption experience according to Caru and Cova (2003, p. 271). As the brand narrative serves as a script for the unfolding consumption experience, Caru and Cova outline in this table that the consumption experience begins and continues before and after the core purchase. For Schmitt (1999) these different stages of the consumption experience allow the consumer to sense, think, feel, act and relate to a brand. A brand narrative serves to mediate this holistic brand experience.

Schmitt (1999) argues that experiential elements of brand such as the products, the merchandising and the design of a store serve to enhance a brand. These elements need to appeal to a customer's five senses and 'they need to relate to something the consumer cares about, thus incorporating it into the consumer's daily life' (p. 31). With this in mind, as consumers seek brands that provide experiences and can become part of their lives (Schmitt, 1999, p. 32) and as brands serve to communicate symbolic meaning and appeal to emotional needs, a brand narrative will too relate to things the consumer cares about, finds familiar and appeals to symbolic and emotional levels above pure functionality.

#### 3.1.4 Summary of the role of brand

The power of the intangible notion of brand is conveyed when Salzer-Morling and Strannegard (2002) argue that symbolic expertise is utilised to 'infuse meaning into products, [and] transform commodities into concepts and lifestyles' (p. 224). Brand is therefore both a communicator of the functional benefits of a product to appeal to the rational need of the consumer, and simultaneously is a communicator of symbolic benefits to appeal to emotional needs. Integral to brand is thus the attribution of symbolic meaning to consumer products. Through narrative, brands serve symbolic, psychological and emotional purposes by communicating meaning and appeal to psychological and emotional needs which ultimately affords brands the ability to deliver an experience to the consumer.

### 3.2 Brand, advertising and cultural meaning

This thesis seeks to evaluate the cultural implications of global branding and in order to analyse brand communications culturally, this review takes into account that brand communications, namely the six television commercials and the 96 employee stories of the *People. They make an airline* campaign, are a form of advertising but it is through this advertising campaign that the projection and construction of brand can be observed.

There is well-established literature on the symbolic role of consumer goods (Bourdieu, 1994; McCracken, 1990). As brand serves to attribute symbolic meaning to consumer products and build stories and emotional stories it is essential to outline how this occurs. This subsection of the chapter focuses on the role of advertising as a communication of brand and the different approaches in the analysis of how cultural meaning is attributed to consumer goods.

### *3.2.1 The Frankfurt School's account of advertising*

The Marxist approach is based upon a focus on the relationship between subjects and objects and addresses advertising's role in transforming this relationship in line with the changing requirements of the consumer or commodity-base through the production of persuasive and pervasive advertisements. This approach in the literature is interested in the role that advertising plays in transforming or at the very least, influencing, the relationship between people and objects and emphasises that advertising has become more persuasive and pervasive.

It is necessary to briefly consider the Marxist account of the relationship between people and objects under capitalism as it has had such a formative impact on the place attributed to advertising in subsequent work. The Marxist view is that the form of the person-object relation in capitalism is shaped by the system of production in the sense that it is driven by the need to exchange rather than use goods produced (Sinclair, 2012). In Marx's view commodities have two levels, essence and appearance. Essence corresponds to the basic social relations of production, concealed by the appearance of things in capitalist systems of production. On the other hand, appearance corresponds not to illusion but rather an aspect of reality, the means in which the essence shows itself. For the Marxist account, the dual use-value and exchange-value of commodity production is integral to the social relations of production (McFall, 2004). While both types of value have an essence and an appearance, the difference is that in use-value the two are intrinsically connected—an object's appearance suggests its use. Conversely, exchange-value is conferred with qualities that they do not in themselves possess. This is the basis of commodity fetishism, which for Marx refers to how people see values as inherent in objects rather than as the result of human actions (Sinclair, 2012). Commodity fetishism both legitimises and naturalises a social process by which essence is rendered undetectable concealed by the appearance of intrinsic value (McFall, 2004).

Marxists view advertising as possessing the function of creating the mystique around commodities by endowing them with exchange value (McFall, 2004; Sinclair, 2012). Other theorists from the Marxist tradition have identified that advertising fits well into the theory of commodity fetishism. It is argued that advertising replaces the story of the product's origins in production with a symbolic story which McFall (2004) argues ultimately becomes reality in the culture industry. Adorno (1991, p. 55) states 'the poetic mystery of the product, in which it is

more than itself, consists in the fact that it participates in the infinite nature of production and the reverential awe inspired by objectivity fits in smoothly with the schema of advertising'. Furthermore, in Adorno's (1991, p. 55) view the real becomes an image, and an image turns immediately into reality.

The Marxist approach in the study of advertising focuses on the role that advertising plays on changing the relationship between the object and the subject. Advertising is argued to be the definitive instrument in the fetishisation of commodities in that it alters not only the reality of objects but also that of subjects (Adorno, 1991). According to Adorno and Horkheimer (1973) the objectification of people in advertising is so complete that the notion of individual personality and identity is reduced down to mere characteristics. Prominent in Horkheimer and Adorno's analysis of advertising is the concept of the culture industry. According to Adorno and Horkheimer the culture industry marks the erosion between the cultural and commercial spheres in the sense that 'all culture is commercial culture' (Protherough, 1999, p. 142). Sinclair (2012) argues that marketing, and more specifically advertising, can be understood as a culture industry 'that seeks to connect the producers of consumer goods and services with their potential markets, and indeed, to bring those markets into being' (p. 2).

Arvidsson (2005) is a contemporary commentator who builds upon the Marxist account, focusing on the 'productivity of consumers', or rather the context of consumption created by the cultural capital collectively produced and then exploited by marketers in advertising, within which 'goods can acquire use-value' (p. 242). However, Sinclair (2008) emphasises that here Arvidsson in fact refers to use-value as the social identity and cultural identity attributed to goods in their consumption, because rather 'for Arvidsson, use-value is the good's cultural value not its utility' (p. 13). Insomuch, for Sinclair (2008) as Arvidsson's (2005) 'use-value' in fact refers to 'exchange-value' it appears increasingly problematic to argue that Marx's distinction can either be useful or retain meaning in the contemporary understanding of consumption.

Additionally, the Frankfurt School's account is argued to overemphasise production and seems dated in the contemporary context of consumption (O'Reilly, 2005; Sinclair, 2008). O'Reilly (2005) argues that the Frankfurt School's 'production as consumption' approach sees consumption as being determined by production and in the contemporary context lacks acknowledgment of the consumer and groups of consumers in the consumption process.

### *3.2.2 Semiotic approach*

The semiotic approach concerns itself with the relation between meaning and reality. In brief, this approach concentrates in utilising method and terminology based upon semiotics to gain meaning of advertisements. The semiotic method is composed of the description and analysis of the formal relations between different elements that serve in the production of meaning (McFall, 2004, p. 12). The most basic of these elements is the sign which can be understood as

the 'associative total' of the signifier, or the material good, and the signified, its corresponding meaning (McFall, 2004, p. 12). Each sign is comprised of two parts, the signifier and the signified (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993). The signifier is an explicit and visible aspect of the sign, the signified is the invisible but referred to tactic element of the sign (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993). Signs are found in all forms of representation and communication (Leeds-Hurwitz 1999).

This focus on the meaning in advertisements rather than advertisements in relation to the practice of advertising has attracted ample criticism (Sinclair, 2012; McFall, 2004). Such an approach overemphasises the relations of meaning within individual advertising texts and ignores broader economic and sociocultural contextualisation. However, De Mooij (1998) states that semiotic habits are 'the grammar of a culture' and that culture can be understood as the shared capacity to recognise, decode, and produce signs and symbols (p. 55). In this sense, distinct cultures will interpret different meanings. However, the approach based upon a semiotic method provides a method of analysis of how meaning is produced within images (Sinclair, 2012).

This approach affords an understanding of advertising functions to attach value to a product or service beyond its ordinary use, that is to say a cultural value (Williamson, 1978; Goldman, 1992). According to Williamson (1978), in order to sell, advertisements have to contain meaning, which is realised by connecting people and objects and subsequently, making the two interchangeable. Williamson (1978) discusses how advertisements are structured as to invoke and associate common cultural meanings with particular products and services (Sinclair, 2012). The basic premise of this approach is that advertisements use a pre-existing referent system of meaning because prior to signification in the advertisement the product has no meaning (McFall, 2004, p. 19).

Williamson (1978) employs semiotic terminology to describe how signs enable the transference of meaning onto products, which is required to be necessary in advanced capitalist economies in order to differentiate essentially similar products. The transference of meaning allows illogical juxtapositions of products and meanings and for these juxtapositions to take on a natural status (McFall, 2004, p. 19). After being signified, products have captured meaning and generate feelings they represent or offer themselves as currency for something else, in this sense 'Clariol equals happiness' or 'Anne French equals clear skin equals boyfriends' (McFall, 2004, p 19). The logic of Williamson's (1978) work continues with some influence particularly in relation to facilitating an understanding of the function of advertising to add cultural value to a product from analysing the relationships within an advertising text. This logic has greatly influenced more recent analysis by Goldman (1992).

Goldman (1992) also seeks to explain how cultural value is attributed to products and services and in doing so coins the idea of the 'commodity-sign' to explain how advertisements attribute 'commodities' (in the goods and services sense) with exchange-value. Goldman (1992)

proposes that advertising is a key institution in 'producing and reproducing the material and ideological supremacy of commodity relations' (p. 2). Goldman (1992) terms this system of commodity relations, 'commodity hegemony'. The ideological significance of advertisements can therefore be read by means of skilled deconstruction that will ultimately provide insight into how commodity interests shape social relations (McFall, 2004). Goldman (1992) differs from Williamson (1978) in terms of giving greater focus to the embeddedness of meaning within the system of advertisements and its extension beyond singular texts to products as commodity-signs.

Whereas Williamson's (1978) product is absent of meaning prior to signification in the advertisement, Goldman's (1992) product is a commodity-sign, which carries meaning from previous advertising and from the system of advertising in general. This is problematic particularly for a method that gains meaning from relations internal to an individual text. McFall (2004) suggests that there is a deep paradox running through this semiotics-based approach. McFall (2004) argues that this paradox is premised upon the fact while the theory acknowledges meaning as internal to the structural relations persisting across a system of representation, on the whole the method follows meaning within individual texts (p. 23). It appears paradoxical to McFall (2004) to claim to locate meaning in advertising systems external to relations between elements within a system, but then undertaking analysis internally within individual representations.

Goldman (1992) asserts that 'advertisements have sociocultural consequences and repercussions that go beyond the corporate bottom-line' (p. 2). In this sense according to Goldman (1992) 'advertising is an institutional process in a political economy of commodity sign-value' (p. 224). Sinclair (2012) argues that both Williamson (1978) and Goldman (1992) concentrate on advertisements rather than advertising as an institution or practice. Despite the rhetoric of political economy these writers are more concerned with signification and how meanings are produced within advertisements; neither give regard to the advertisers or agencies that produced them, nor in the media in which they are placed (Sinclair, 2012). Nonetheless, Williamson (1978) and Goldman (1992) offer an understanding of advertising's function to attribute cultural meaning to products and services and how advertising enables products to acquire meaning that may be perhaps illogical and irrelevant to its particular use value.

### *3.2.3 Models of the movement of cultural meaning*

A number of commentators have proposed models that attempt to explain how cultural meaning is attributed to consumer goods (Alexander, 2003; Du Gay, Hall, Jones, Mackay & Negus, 1997; McCracken, 1986). This subsection discusses the models proposed by these authors and the advantages and disadvantages between them.

McCracken (1986) argues that consumer goods have a significance that goes beyond their use and commercial value. This significance rests in their ability to communicate and have cultural meaning attributed to them. According to McCracken (1986) this cultural meaning is drawn from a culturally constituted world and attributed to a consumer good. Frith (1997) argues that consumable products are cultural signifiers (p. 3). Similarly, Frith (1997) suggests that cultural meaning is attached through various forms of communication including advertising, arguing that advertising tells us what products signify in our culture (p. 3).

In offering a view of how meaning is manufactured and moved in the world of consumer products, McCracken (1986) observes meaning is constantly in transit. McCracken proposes a model in which there are three locations of meaning, namely within the culturally constituted world, within the consumer good and within the consumer. Advertising and fashion are vehicles for moving meaning from the culturally constituted world to the good. There are then four instruments for moving meaning from the good into the life of the consumer. McCracken views these instruments as rituals, 'a kind of social action devoted to the manipulation of the cultural meaning for purposes of collective and individual communication and categorisation' (O'Reilly, 2005, p. 576). These four rituals are exchange, possession, grooming and divestment. These rituals afford consumers with the ability of 'moving meaning out of the goods and into their lives' (McCracken, 1986).

O'Reilly (2005) notes that McCracken's work has been highly influential in consumer research into culture and consumption, stating that McCracken's Movement of Meaning Model is a helpful conceptualisation of the double movement of meaning. Nonetheless there are issues with the model that require addressing (p. 577). According to O'Reilly (2005), notably absent is that the model does not explicitly take into account issues of representation which is unhelpful considering its central theme is meaning. Also absent in the model is the role of the producer. Thirdly, advertising and fashion systems are not the only means in which meanings are attributed to goods (O'Reilly, 2005). Fourthly, the model focuses overly on the consumption of the individual rather than on the consumption of groups of consumers, or the interaction between the individual with other consumers such as how Elliott and Wattansuwan (1998) discuss the internal-external dialectic of personal and social identity (O'Reilly, 2005).

The principle of Alexander's (2003) cultural diamond is that 'to understand art and society, researchers must take into account all four corners and all six links in the Diamond'. The model acknowledges the role of art, consumers, society and creators, all as distributors of cultural meaning. While the model includes society as groups of consumers and the role of creators, both of which are absent from McCracken's (1986) model, the model also lacks the presence of the role of representation. O'Reilly (2005) asserts that the lack of presence of representation is disadvantageous when thinking about production and consumption of symbolic/cultural products.

Du Gay et al. (1997) introduced a new model for culture as the production and circulation of meaning. In their comprehensive analysis of the Sony Walkman. The model is based upon the articulation of five distinct processes: production, consumption, representation, regulation and identity, which form the circuit of culture (Du Gay et al., 1997). Unlike McCracken (1986) and Alexander (2003), the influence of the processes of representation, identity and regulation are included in the model. Du Gay et al. (1997) highlight that cultural meaning is not sent from one stage to another as in the transmission model but rather as 'more like the model of a dialogue' (p. 10).

For the purposes of this thesis the interplay between production, consumption, identity and representation that Du Gay et al. (1997) propose is useful in terms of the consequences of the construction and projection of brand through storytelling. Du Gay et al. (1997) regard production and consumption not as separate but rather as mutually constitutive. According to Du Gay et al. (1997) it is during production that products are encoded with meanings and it is in consumption that meanings are made, in actual social usage. Du Gay et al. (1997) reject the Frankfurt school's lack of agency on the demand side of the consumer and view that consumption can be used as a marker of social and cultural difference. In terms of identity, Du Gay et al. (1997) view in linking production and consumption through signifying processes, the attribution of cultural value to products, advertising seeks to do this by constructing ideal identities or subject positions for consumers to occupy and negotiate.

#### *3.2.4 Summary of advertising as storytelling and a communication of brand*

Insights into the interplay between culture and advertising have been obtained by McCracken (1986) who proposes that advertising works by bringing the product and a representation of the culturally constituted world together in an advertisement. In McCracken's (1986) theoretical account of the structure and movement of cultural meaning, it is suggested that meaning flows to goods and onto the consumer through the vehicle of advertising. There are then four instruments for moving meaning for purposes of collective and individual communication, a way of moving meaning out of the consumer goods and into the lives of the consumer (McCracken 1986). In this sense advertising functions to add cultural meaning to products and add value beyond that of the use of the product in question (Goldman, 1992; Sinclair, 2008; Sinclair, 2012).

As advertising can be read as a text, so too can brand (O'Reilly, 2005). 'Brands can be read as cultural texts which are culturally produced and consumed, and as symbolic articulators of production and consumption' (O'Reilly 2005, p. 582). Brands as texts represent and construct identities. It is therefore important to take this into account when analysing brand storytelling. While Du Gay et al. (1997) and O'Reilly (2005) emphasise the role of the consumer on the construction and mediation of brand, this research seeks to rather explore the intended meaning construction and projection from the perspective of the global brand itself.

This review has already discussed the view that conceptualises brand as narrative constructed and projected through storytelling (Caru & Cova, 2003; Fog et al., 2005; Grow, 2008; Holt, 2004; Ind, 2004; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010; Stern, 2006). In addition to Goldman (1992) and Williamson's (1978) theses on how cultural meaning is attributed to a consumer good, the models of the movement of cultural meaning (Du Gay et al., 1997; McCracken, 1986) are helpful in the understanding and analysis of how brand narrative and storytelling serve to attach cultural value to consumer products. While Du Gay et al. (1997), McCracken (1986), Goldman (1992) and Williamson (1978) do not explicitly or comprehensively discuss storytelling and rather advertising, their work remains useful and relevant as due to its narrative, symbolic, and mythic aspects, advertising can be understood as storytelling (Berger, 1997; Lacey, 2000).

### **3.3 Narrative theory and storytelling**

Brand and its corresponding storytelling attribute cultural meaning to products, mediating and facilitating consumption, acting as an ongoing dialogue between the company and the consumer and serving to differentiate from the competition (Hearn, 2008; Smith, 2011). Additionally brands appeal to emotional and symbolic needs of consumers and therefore the narrative and stories that attribute this meaning to products must appeal to these needs (de Chernatony & Dall'Omo Riley, 1998; Wheeler, 2009; Temporal, 2000). Holt (2004) and Klein (1999) describe brand storytelling as mythologies or being constructed through the process of myth creation, while Smith (2011) highlights that narrative is a natural heuristic, which facilitates recall and recognition. This section will therefore address the construction of mythologies in terms of how brand storytelling constructs and projects brand by reviewing narrative theory.

#### **3.3.1 The pervasiveness of narrative**

Narratives pervade our lives; stories play an important role in our lives. From lullabies, to nursery rhymes, to fairy tales and other stories, the presence of narratives spans our entire lives (Berger, 1997, p.9). In fact some scholars suggest that narratives are one of the most important ways we learn about the world, Richardson (1980) states that 'narrative is the primary way through which humans organize their experiences into temporally meaningful episodes...[and] is both a mode of reasoning and representation' (cited in Berger, 1997, p. 10). Considering the importance and pervasiveness of narrative in our lives, it can be assumed to be an effective method for communicating the information of brand to consumers.

Bennet and Royle (1999) define narrative as a 'series of events in a specific order – with a beginning, a middle and an end' (p. 55). Similarly, Lacey (2000) suggests that narrative presents information as a connected series of events with the most basic narratives being linear sequences, however this is not to say that without a lineal sequence that there is an absence of narrative, although Lacey (2000) points out that one event is not a sequence and that a narrative requires at least two events (p. 14). However, building on Boje's (2001) work, Grow (2008) suggests that a lack of sequence can be a narrative of sorts in a kind of living



storytelling. It is necessary to emphasise that narratives are not necessarily limited to fictional texts (Lacey, 2000).

### 3.3.2 Narrative structure according to Todorov, Propp and binary opposition

According to Todorov narrative is a causal transformation: 'narratives have within them some form of logical change' (cited in Lacey, 2000, p. 27). The transformation is not any mere change but is quite specific. For Todorov the basis of the conventional narrative consists of an initial situation, a problem that disrupts this situation and a resolution of the problem, which allows for a return to equilibrium, the original situation (Lacey, 2000). Todorov suggests a slightly more complicated version of the aforementioned narrative structure, which consists of five stages: (1) a state of equilibrium, (2) a disruption of the equilibrium, (3) a recognition that there has been a disruption, (4) an attempt to repair the disruption, and (5) a reinstatement of the equilibrium (Lacey, 2000, p. 29). This narrative structure remains useful today, such as when Lacey (2000) uses said structure to demonstrate the structure of the narrative of an episode of *The X Files* (p. 31-2).

In his classic study of the *Morphology of the Folktale*, Propp offers a useful study into the nature of narratives, even though it focuses on a particular group of Russian fairy tales (Berger, 1997). The study focuses on narrative structures and forms, concentrating on the components of the narrative and how they relate to one another. Propp begins by stating that a given action may be undertaken by any number of different characters in a story. This means it is possible to analyse a story in terms of the functions of its various characters. Lacey (2000) notes that Propp conceptualised these functions in two ways: as the actions of the characters in the story and the consequences of these actions in the story.

According to Propp there are only 31 functions. Functions of characters are independent of the characters' fulfilling their functions and functions are the fundamental elements of a story (Berger, 1997). Additionally, the sequence of the functions in fairy tales is always identical, that is to say that all stories have the same structure. However not every function need be present in every story—functions may be absent but they remain in the same sequence. Lacey (2000) asserts that Propp's structure is readily comparable to Todorov's, as exemplified in Table 3.3.

**Table 3.3: Comparison of Todorov's narrative structure to Propp's (Lacey, 2000, p. 48)**

	Todorov's structure	Propp's functions
1	A state of equilibrium	0 to 8
2	A disruption of the equilibrium	8
3	A recognition that there has been a disruption	9

4	An attempt to repair the disruption	10 to 17
5	A reinstatement of the equilibrium	18 to 31

Lacey (2000) emphasises that each function develops logically from the previous function. Propp proposed that there were seven 'spheres of action', or narrative functions, 'characters' who have a specific role in the development of the narrative (Lacey, 2000). Different individual characters may perform a particular function at different times in the narrative, therefore for Propp, 'the functions of characters are stable constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale' (Fiske, 1987, p. 136). There are eight character roles, which are located in the seven spheres of action as exemplified in Table 3.4.

**Table 3.4: Propp's functions (character roles), reproduced from Fiske (1987, p. 136)**

Character role	Sphere of Action
Villain	Villainy, fighting, action
Donor (provider)	Giving magical agent or helper
Helper	Moves the hero, makes good of a lack, rescues from pursuit, solves difficult tasks, transforms the hero
The princess and her father	A sought-for person: assigns difficult tasks, brands, exposes, recognises, punishes
The dispatcher	Sends hero on quest/mission
The hero (seeker or victim)	Departs on search, reacts to donor, attempts difficult tasks, marriage
The false hero	Unfounded claims to hero's sphere of action

Berger (1997) argues that the functions that Propp dealt with can be applied to modern narratives of all genres, however they might need to be contemporised (p. 24). Lacey (2000) echoes the view that Propp's description needs adapting to contemporary contexts, stating for example that contemporary plots rarely conclude with a wedding (p. 48). Berger (1997) continues to state that Propp's functions can be applied to genres other than fairy tales, which carry narratives—novels, plays, comic strips, films, television programmes and television commercials (pp. 24-5).

According to Berger (1997), from Propp it can be determined that while many modern narratives do not borrow content from fairy tales per se, they certainly borrow from the structure. However, Lacey (2000) suggests that paraphrasing of Propp ‘dissipates the sense of prescriptiveness that sometimes accrues to the use of his theories’ (p. 64). However, Lacey (2000) asserts that Berger (1997) sidesteps this problem by suggesting that Propp is applicable to ‘popular culture genres’ (p. 64). Berger (1997) asserts that ‘despite its limitations, however, Propp’s theory remains one of the most significant attempts ever made to understand how stories work’ (pp. 28-9). Taking this into consideration, Propp’s, and indeed Todorov’s, narrative structures provide both a basis for analysis of the structure and development of a narrative and the role of characters in this narrative.

Todorov’s and Propp’s ideas about narratives are argued to emphasise the resolution of conflict (Lacey, 2000, p. 64). Saussure (1966) argues that ‘concepts are purely differential and defined not by their positive content but negatively with their relations with the other terms of the system’ (cited in Berger, 1997, p. 29). Saussure demonstrated that signs have no intrinsic meaning, whether words or images, and that a sign’s meaning is derived from its context and the group to which it belongs. Consequently, language is only understood by using a system of oppositions, for example, without good there can be no evil. This is to say that meaning is derived from not content per se but rather from relationships of terms to other terms. ‘Binary oppositions are obviously applicable to narrative because stories are structured by the attempt to resolve conflict, characterised by the opposition between the hero and villain’ (Lacey, 2000, p. 65). Berger (1997) showed it was possible to adapt Propp’s spheres of action.

Berger (1997) draws from Saussure’s understanding of how meaning is created in order to modify Propp’s theory of functions. Saussure was concerned with examining binary oppositions rather than the emphasis on the sequence of events. However, Berger (1997) proposes modifying Saussure’s method to focus instead on bundles of related elements in the text than upon the oppositions central in the particular text (p. 30). This takes Saussure’s insight about differential definitions of concepts and applies it to characters and their actions to determine the meaning of characters’ actions in the text as exemplified in Table 3.5.

**Table 3.5: Propp’s spheres of action modified to incorporate binary oppositions (reproduced from Berger 1997, p. 44).**

<b>Good</b>	<b>Bad</b>
Heroes	Villains
Helpers	Henchmen

Princesses (love objects)	Sirens (sexual objects)
Magicians (good magic)	Sorcerers (evil magic)
Donors of magic objects	Preventer/hinderers of donors
Dispatchers of heroes	Captors of heroes
Seekers	Avoiders
Seeming villains who are good	False heroes/heroines who are evil

### 3.3.3 *Narrative, persuasion and the audience*

Brand storytelling has the ability to attribute cultural meaning to products and in turn, mediate and facilitate consumption. While narrative can communicate the way in which human beings understand their surrounding world, persuasive devices and techniques can be incorporated into the narrative to induce a receiver to feel something in particular, relate to certain emotions and even alter their behaviour. This is particularly relevant for this study as Larson (2013) argues that persuasive techniques are pervasive in the narratives of advertising. Many commentators have analysed how fictional narratives can have effects on readers' real-world beliefs and attitudes, particularly in the area of narrative persuasion (de Graaf, Hoeken, Sanders & Beentjes, 2012). Many such commentators have focused on narrative persuasion and its presence in the narratives of advertising, both within the moving-image and print (de Graaf *et al*, 2012; Escalas & Stern, 2003; Phillips and McQuarrie, 2011). This subsection will outline and evaluate persuasion, as it can be located in narrative.

Larson (2013) asserts that the ancient Greeks were among the first to systemise the use of persuasion, referring to it as rhetoric. Aristotle defined rhetoric as 'the faculty of observing in any given case, the available means of persuasion' (cited in Larson, 2013, p. 20). According to Aristotle, persuasion consists of artistic and inartistic proofs. The former is controlled by the persuader and consists of devices such as the choice of evidence, the organisation of the persuasion, style of delivery, and language choices. The latter includes matters not controlled by the persuader such as the occasion and the speaker's physical appearance. For Aristotle, persuasion operates on three basic types of artistic and inartistic proof. The first is that persuasion depends on the source's credibility, or *ethos*. The second is the use of emotional appeals, or *pathos*, typically located in the use of colourful language and imagery used by the persuader or in the emotional level of evidence utilised. The third is the concept of using logical or rational appeals, or *logos*. Persuaders often use a combination of all three; *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos* (Larson, 2013).

Larson (2013) comments that, while Aristotle's rhetoric has many possible contemporary applications, it may be more appropriate to analyse the sum of these parts, rather than dissecting rhetorical into *ethos*, *pathos* and *logos*. Nonetheless some dissection of the three

types may be beneficial to this study in that ethos can include what audience members see of the persuader — their height, body type, complexion, clothing, grooming and so on. By extending the original precepts of Aristotle's theory, it might be beneficial in that the analysed text is accompanied by imagery of the many employee "narrators" and that the imagery of the employees may aid their credibility. In the classical view of rhetoric, emotional appeals that refer to character and personal histories are acknowledged as powerful means of persuasion, but they are presumed to function within an orderly framework of facts and ideas (Rodden, 2008). The orderly framework of facts and ideas can be considered the narrative and its structure. It is concerned primarily with the persuasion of the audience rather than a propositional chain of logic (Rodden, 2008).

Aristotle proposed that persuasion is most effective when based on the common ground, or 'the shared beliefs, values, and interests between persuaders and persuadees that could be established by all the tactics' (Larson, 2010, p. 21). The common ground or beliefs, values and interests in common, affords the persuader the ability to make assumptions about the audience and its beliefs, such as assuming that using certain patterns or types of language, emotions and logic will persuade them. Aristotle's definitions of persuasion focus on the sources of messages and the persuader's skill and art in building a speech. However, Larson (2010) argues that these rhetorical approaches to persuasion are still applied in current research on persuasion and its effects. In a contemporary context, Aristotle's rhetoric, particularly pathos and emotional appeals, is evident in advertising - persuading audiences to buy particular brands, modify their behaviour and urging them to support specific causes. Building on Aristotle's persuasion, Burke used language as a means of explaining persuasion as Larson (2013) states by writing "he focused on language as a symbolic means of inducing cooperation in beings that by nature respond to symbols".

More recently, Burke (1970) defined persuasion as 'the artful use of the resources of ambiguity usually revealed in an artistic, and frequently emotional format' (Larson, 2013, p. 21). Burke focused on language and how it is used to persuade people to action. Burke argued that if receivers feel they are being spoken to in language they use, can relate to and hear references to their own beliefs and values, they will develop a sense of identification with the persuader. This concept of identification parallels Aristotle's understanding of common ground: in Burke's theory, when 'persuaders try to act, believe, and talk like the audience, they create a bond with listeners, who will identify with them and will follow their advice on issues' (Larson, 2013, p. 21). Identification occurs most effectively in formats such as a drama, a story, or another kind of narration. In the campaign analysed, Cathay Pacific's employees can be understood as persuaders who through their storytelling attempt to induce the audience to identify and create a bond with them as characters in the narrative and follow their advice on matters from life, work to air travel.

Burke additionally developed a tool in the study of persuasion for the analysis of the semantic dimension of language. Burke called his theory dramatism and the tool the pentad (Brummet, 2006). Dramatism maintains that the basic model used by humans to explain various situations in the narrative story or drama. Burke's view is that people formulate their perceptions of the world through symbolic systems, especially through language; therefore, he regarded drama as 'a philosophy of language capable of describing and analysing a wide variety of human symbolic acts such as language use' (Brummet, 2006; Larson, 2013, p. 147). In his view, when people explain the world to themselves, and thus formulate motives for acting in the world, they do so by anchoring their explanation in one or a combination of five basic terms of the pentad. The five terms of the pentad are:

**Table 3.6: Burke's pentad (Reproduced from Brummet, 2006, p. 186)**

Act	Actions, things that are done, willed or intended undertakings
Agent	People, groups, beings with the power to chose and to act
Agency	The means, tools, techniques with which something is done
Scene	The physical or social environment, or context, for action
Purpose	The guiding ideas, goals, or motives for choice and action

Burke's pentad operates on the assumption that texts, and authors of texts, will tend towards explaining the world consistently by using one or a simple combination, or ratio, of these five terms. Larson (2013) highlights the interplay between act and scene, in that the act often relates to and in turn becomes a more persuasive message, in a relevant setting. For example 'heroic actions should occur in heroic settings' (Larson, 2013, p. 148). According to Burke, agent refers to the person or group of persons who take action in the scene and in the interaction between them, the act and the scene that gives the combination the persuasive meaning (Brummet, 2006). In this particular study, it could prove useful to determine the agent, act and scene of a particular employee story to analyse its persuasive message. For Burke, agency refers to the tool, method, or means used by persuaders to achieve their means, whereas, purpose refers to the reason an agent acts in a particular scene using a particular agency.

Burke's pentad provides a useful tool for analysing a number of persuasive elements in a narrative. A focus on act could involve the analysis in how actions, or verbs in terms of language, are persuasive messages. In this sense the actions of a character in a narrative can be analysed to determine what the audience is being persuaded to do, feel or how to act (Brummet, 2006). An analysis involving a combination of the five terms of the pentad could

provide insight into the effects the persuasive messages in Cathay Pacific's storytelling have on their audience. In this sense it could provide analysis into the effects of projection of brand through storytelling, whereas the structuralist narrative theories of Propp and Todorov only view characters as functions to narrative as opposed to creating identification through persuasion between characters and the audience.

#### *3.3.4 Narrative as mythologies*

Both Holt (2004) and Klein (1999) discuss brand storytelling as mythologies or as being constructed through the process of myth creation. Claude Levi-Strauss and Roland Barthes have been influential in seeking to explain that a range of apparently diverse narratives have in common is myth. Barthes (1973) was concerned with the role of myth in industrialised capitalist societies and how myths worked to naturalise and universalise the class interests of the bourgeoisie (Fiske, 1987). On the other hand, for Levi-Strauss myth is a mechanism that deals with unresolvable contradictions in culture and provides imaginative ways of living with them (Fiske, 1987).

According to Levi-Strauss, these contradictions in culture were expressed in terms of binary oppositions, which ultimately form the deep structure of a number of apparently unrelated myths based upon large abstract generalisations (Fiske, 1987). Fiske (1987) argues that the reliance on binary oppositions reinforced cultural insecurity rather than solving it. However myths provide for an imaginative structure in which the contradictions can be interpreted. A flaw in Levi-Strauss' understanding of myth is that for him, culture is a homogenous concept, 'his theory does not admit that some classes may have different mythic needs from others, or that myths may work hegemonically' (Fiske, 1987, p. 133).

Contrarily, Barthes' (1973) focus was on the role of myth as marked by class conflict rather than cultural homogeneity. According to Barthes (1973) myth is not a narrative but 'an associative chain of concepts that works below the threshold of consciousness' (Fiske, 1987, p. 134). While the users of Levi-Strauss' myths may not know the deeper meanings of them, they are aware of that they are hearing and telling them. In opposition, the users of Barthes' myths are unaware that they are handling a myth. For Barthes (1973) myths are ideological and serve to promote the interests of the dominant classes by making the meanings that serve their interests appear natural and universal.

Barthes (1973) regards myth as a form of speech, 'that is a system by which meanings are made and circulated. The content of myths can changed rapidly, but the mythologizing process is constant and universal (Fiske, 1987, p. 135). He describes myth as 'a type of speech...a mode of signification' (cited in Fulton *et al*, 2005). In these terms, myths represent a metalanguage, 'a second-order or connotative discourse that enables us to speak about the first-order or denotative level of signification (Fulton *et al*, 2005, p. 6). For Barthes, myths

function as symbolic, ironic and metaphorical commentaries on what we understand to be literal meanings.

Fulton *et al* (2005) argue that a flaw to Barthes' theory is his view of the distinction between connotative and denotative levels of signification. Denotation refers to the lower-order processes and to the more or less literal meanings of signs. Contrarily, connotation refers to a kind of metalanguage and tends to be built up of prior denotations. Fulton *et al* (2005) argue that while it is logical that one 'signified' can also stand as the 'signifier' of another sign, 'this process does not operate merely on two or three levels, but as a chain of signification limited only by social usage' (p. 7). In this sense, there is no denotation but only connotation, since denotative language is as ideologically positioned as language that one would regard as highly connotative and subjective.

The Barthesian idea of myth can therefore be reinterpreted simply as narrativised ideology, 'the formulaic articulation and naturalisation of values, truths and beliefs' (Fulton *et al*, 2005, p. 7). What media narratives achieve is this kind of mythologising, the presentation of ideological positions as if they were natural and normative. Similarly, brand storytelling can be considered a myth that serves not only to naturalise and universalise particular values and perspectives of the brand, but also to facilitate and encourage consumption, and a marketplace in which consumption is of the attributed cultural meanings associated with specific goods and services.

### 3.3.5 Barthes' narrative codes

Barthes asserts that narrative pervades human culture, is universal and exists in a wide range of forms to suit a diverse range of purposes. He identifies a number of defining characteristics of narrative: levels of meaning, including basic units, the level of actions and the level of discourse; the linear development of the narrative structure; a confusion of consequence; narrative turning points; and, narrative time (Fencott, 2003). Barthes also proposes that there are five narrative codes by which one can undertake a detailed analysis of characterisation of narrative at work (Lacey 2000). The five narrative codes are hermeneutic, semic, symbolic, proairetic and cultural.

**Table 3.7; Barthes' narrative codes (compiled from Lacey, 2000)**

Hermeneutic code	All the units whose function it is to articulate in various ways a question, its response, and the variety of chance events which can either formulate the question or delay its answer, or even constitute an enigma and lead to its solution. The intention here is to build suspense and keep the audience guessing.
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Semic code	This is the way in which characters, objects and settings take on particular meanings. For example, Propp's 'spheres of action' are individualised into a character by their codes of speech, clothing, gesture. For example, iconography can act as a semic code.
Symbolic code	Codes which signify Levi-Strauss's binary oppositions. For example, Good: evil, male: female (p. 73)
Proairetic, or action, code	Codes of behaviour that we understand, not in relation to behaviour in the 'real world' but from experience of other narratives.
Cultural (or referential) codes	These codes refer not to the text's narrative but to outside the text. The outside, however, is not reality but a common stock of a culture as it is expressed in already written knowledge of morality politics, art, history, psychology and so on.

Using Barthes narrative codes for the analysis of narrative can reveal the devices for introducing, maintaining, transforming and then ultimately, resolving the confusions of consequence. Barthes's principal aim is to slow down the common reading of a text that focuses heavily on analysis of each piece of action in the proairetic code and the suspense provided in the hermeneutic code. For Barthes, an analysis of a narrative's plurality can be achieved through the analysis of these five narrative codes and their horizontal and vertical interaction. This is argued to 'expose the richness of language by exposing the many facets of a classical narrative' (Novak, 2003). However, according to Pavel, Barthes' construction of a detailed analytical network, which functions at different levels, results in the narrative aspect of the story being marginalized: 'it becomes no more than a sequence of actions without any logic' (cited in Bal, 2004, p. 32-3). Barthes' codes serve an important function as they show us that the illusion of realism in a narrative is founded on the integrated functioning of five levels of codes. Nonetheless, it remains essential to consider a narrative as a whole as much as the sum of its parts.

### 3.3.6 *Alternative and brand narratives*

Smith (2011) describes brand narratives as 'interlocking story arcs, which help to change the emotional, symbolic and social connections between company and customer, buyer and brand (p. 32).' Smith (2011) outlines a variety of existing brand narratives and their structures, identifying that they are based upon communicating a combination of archetypes that represent the journey, values and attributes of the brand and philosophical reasoning or social significance for the brand's existence. For example, the story of the archetypal Frontier cowboy allows a Marlboro cigarette to embody masculinity, ruggedness and rebellion (Aaker, 1996; Smith, 2011; Sachs, 2011), whereas Unilever's Dove brand maintains a philosophical purpose, namely to break down stereotypes and unrealistic body expectations by empowering all women to celebrate their beauty (Smith, 2011, p. 35; Sachs, 2011).

The common elements that all these brand narratives have from Marlboro to Unilever's Dove, to Amnesty International to Nike, is as Smith (2011) describes, 'interlocking story arcs'. These interlocking story arcs act as common threads to all brand communications and thus serve to construct an overarching brand narrative. Quite simply, these story arcs allow brands to communicate 'who they are, what they stand for and what they care about' (Fog et al., 2005). According to Grow (2008) 'brands are the sum of all impressions, including their emotional promises and consumers' experiences of them as sacred entities and living things. Together, these three branding hallmarks create potent advertising messages' (p. 314).

In a study on the Nike's women's sub-brand's storytelling, Grow (2008) discusses how that particular storytelling followed an anti-narrative structure. Nike's women's sub-brand storytelling consists of many different stories in both print and television commercial format and has been studied over a significant time period. From this Grow (2008) discussed that Nike's women's story has been told both over time and through the combination of many stories, from different characters and over distinct media. Boje (2001) describes anti-narrative as 'fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculation, a bet' (p. 1).

Similarly, *People. They make an airline* is fragmented as it is a collection of employee stories across distinct media (both text and visual), does not follow a lineal narrative structure, is representative of a collective voice of Cathay Pacific employees and is unplotted in the sense that as the stories are real experiences there is a lack of a predetermined direction of the storytelling. Boje (2001) discusses the nature of anti-narrative as living storytelling, highlighting its polyphonic (many voiced) and collective production. The anti-narrative expressed visually and/or verbally, is a fluid collective response to lived experiences (Grow, 2008).

Another narrative form that is perhaps beneficial to the text at hand is the serial. Lacey (2000) defines the serial as having 'numerous episodes; however, although they may have numerous subplots, they normally deal with one overarching narrative which runs through all the episodes'

(p. 34). Serials allow repetition of particular themes and also withhold the narrative resolution, often in an attempt to encourage watching all episodes and increasing ratings (Lacey, 2000). This narrative may appear to relate more to modern day soap operas than a marketing communications campaign but could prove useful in understanding how separate employee stories, texts within the greater text of brand generally, communicate an overarching message and narrative as if they were episodes.

### *3.3.7 Summary of narrative theory*

Todorov and Propp provide a useful method in order to conduct an analysis of the narrative structure, particularly in terms of the sequence of events and the role that characters play in the development of the narrative, albeit with adaptations to make the theories more relevant to contemporary stories (Berger, 1997; Fiske, 1987; Lacey, 2000). On the other hand, Berger's (1997) revision of the understanding of Saussure's binary oppositions to incorporate Propp's spheres of action will provide less emphasis on the sequence of events and the resolution of conflict and rather the meaning created in terms of relationships of signs.

Smith's (2008) understanding of brand storytelling as revolving around an overarching story arc echoes the narrative form of the serial, which has numerous episodes yet one overarching narrative consistent through all the episodes (Lacey, 2000). Additionally, Smith's (2008) use of Boje's (2001) explanation of anti-narrative will be useful in understanding the nature of the lack of an overtly structured lineal narrative for the brand campaign in question.

## **3.4 Globalisation and glocalisation**

As corporations move into previously untapped markets, they encounter implications for the marketing of their products or services owing to cultural difference (Sinclair, 2008). Sinclair (2012) argues that in the process of becoming more globalised, the practices of marketing in general and advertising and branding in particular have had to learn how to come to terms with the realities of cultural and other differences (p. 117).

Implicit in this is the influence that culture has upon economic activities. Culture does not exist outside the processes of globalisation, but rather is influenced, informed and disrupted by them (Hopper, 2007, p. 2). This study however will focus on the cultural implications of globalisation that are the results of global branding and its corresponding storytelling. Cathay Pacific, global in nature, constructs and projects its brand through storytelling in order to market its offering, which ultimately is a commercial activity. In terms of globalisation and indeed, this very study, the interaction between the commercial and cultural spheres is dynamic and continuous.

### *3.4.1 Cultural globalisation and glocalisation*

There is a polarisation in relation to the understanding of the nature of cultural globalisation (Robertson, 1995). Ram (2004) describes two competing, almost contrasting approaches in the

literature on relations between the global and the local. On one hand, it is argued that globalisation in relation to increased cultural interconnectedness is resulting in homogenisation of world cultures at the expense of cultural diversity, fostering cultural uniformity (Hopper, 2007; Sengupta & Frith, 1997). In the field of branding and advertising there is a significant amount of literature that argues that global brands and their corresponding advertising encourage the overriding of the local by the global (Sengupta & Frith, 1997; Jory, 1999; Lee, 2005; Scherer & Jackson, 2008).

On the other hand, there is the view that global cultural interconnectedness is resulting in the opposite, rather heterogenisation and the creation of new cultural forms and identities (Robertson, 1995; Pieterse, 1995; Maynard & Tian, 2004). This approach gives more weight to localisation, describes the resilience of local cultures and emphasises the myriad fusions between the global and the local such as glocalisation and hybridisation (Ram, 2004). Similarly, in branding and advertising there is also significant literature that global brands, products and their advertising create a synthesis between the global and the local and become a new form (Maynard & Tian, 2004; Sinclair, 2008; Kobayashi, 2012).

Cathay Pacific projects and affiliates itself with certain cultural identities and a focus of this research will be to ascertain what cultural identities these are and if they correlate to either a global standardised culture, one particular culture or a syncretic combination of many cultural traits and characteristics.

On the heterogenisation side of the dichotomy of the literature that relates to the interaction between the global and local, globalisation is considered as resulting in fragmentation, cultural hybridity and can perhaps be better understood as glocalisation (Pieterse, 1995; Robertson, 1995; Barker, 2000; Maynard & Tian, 2004). This view has gained in influence over the last few decades (Sinclair, 2008, 2012). Commentators from this perspective of the dichotomy such as Robertson (1995) and Pieterse (1995) conceive that there are as many distinct modes of globalisation as there are globalising agents and dynamics or impulses. Pieterse (1995) suggests that the varied dimensions of plural globalisations exemplify the 'inherent fluidity, indeterminacy and open-endedness of globalisations' (p. 46). This indicates that globalisation cannot be understood in simplistic terms of homogenisation and also less likely that global flows can be one-directional processes, either structurally or culturally (Robertson, 1995; Pieterse, 1995, Maynard & Tian, 2004, Kobayashi, 2012).

The notion of cultural hybridity provides a significant contrast to the idea of cultural homogenisation. Hybridisation can be understood as 'the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices' or as the fusion of two previously relatively distinct forms, styles, or identities, cross-cultural contact, which often occurs across national borders as well as cultural boundaries (Rowe & Schelling, 1991 cited in Pieterse, 1995, p. 49; Kraidy, 2005, p. 5). In this sense, cultural hybridity

acknowledges to a greater extent the transforming and non-static nature of culture in that cultural contestation can result in a synthesis of cultural identity.

Similarly on the heterogenisation perspective of cultural globalisation is the concept of glocalisation. Glocalisation can be understood as a strategy for companies to tailor product and service offerings, in addition to marketing activities, to local sensibilities and consumer tastes (Sinclair, 2008). Robertson (1995) argues that glocalisation can be understood as a new paradigm for globalisation in social theory. In relation to the interaction between the global and the local, glocalisation refers to a synthesis of the two which results in unique results in distinct geographic locations (Maynard & Tian, 2004; Ritzer & Ryan, 2004).

Glocalisation rejects the cultural homogenisation thesis and perceives the global not to be in tension with the local but rather involving reflexive and mutual influence (Robertson, 1995, Pieterse, 1995). Robertson (1995) argues that the idea of cultural globalisation as homogenisation ignores that the local is largely constructed on a trans- or super-local basis (p. 26). Ritzer and Ryan (2004) propose that glocalisation is 'more in tune with postmodern social theory' for 'its emphasis on diversity, hybridity and independence' in various places in the world and an unprecedented ability to create and forge new realities and identities (p. 43).

For the most part the literature presents a dichotomy on the debate of the nature of global and local cultural contestation, however, there is a third approach very much in the minority that combines elements from both opposing sides and rejects the strict polarisation (Maynard & Tian, 2004; Ram, 2004, 2008; Kobayashi, 2012). In this sense globalisation should be viewed as the synthesis of the global and the local, convergence and divergence, homogenisation and heterogenisation, universalism and particularism, where such occurrences not only coexist but interact, influence each other in ways that are both dynamic and fluid (Maynard & Tian 2004, p. 288). This view perceives that the dichotomisation of cultural homogenisation and heterogenisation is unhelpful in explaining and evaluating contemporary cultural changes (Maynard & Tian, 2004; Kobayashi, 2012). While Robertson (1995) agrees with this evaluation, what is distinct about this third approach is its focus and distinguishing on the structural and symbolic levels of analysis in relation to the global-local nexus.

Ram (2004) argues that both approaches of the global-local dichotomy are valid however they operate on distinct societal levels. Ram (2004) differentiates between the one-way and two-way approach to global-local interactions; the one-way approach relates to the argument that global cultural flows are one directional and amount to homogenisation and the two-way approach relates to dynamic multidirectional flows from global to local and vice versa. On one hand, Ram (2004) argues that the one-way approach is relevant on a structural level in the sense that homogenisation occurs institutionally and organisationally. On the other hand, Ram (2004) argues that the two-way approach operates on a symbolic-expressive level of social reality which in this sense can lead to the forging of new identities and cultural forms nonetheless the

structure is standardised. This third approach provides a basis for this research to evaluate the interaction between the global and the local with a combination of the approaches.

#### *3.4.2 Glocalisation as a global marketing strategy*

It is essential to define glocalisation as a strategy in addition to outlining the differences in global marketing strategy, which includes both branding and advertising. The literature that considers global marketing strategies in relation to the interaction between the global and local categorises three main approaches that multinational corporations can take in relation to marketing strategy of their global goods and service offerings (Maynard & Tian, 2004; Scherer & Kapferer, 2004; Kapferer, 2005; Sinclair 2008; Halliburton & Ziegfeld, 2009). The three approaches are standardisation, localisation and glocalisation.

As stated earlier, multinational corporations face the challenge of marketing their products or services in distinct cultural realities (Sinclair, 2008). In evaluating the cultural implications of the interaction between the global and the local, the type of strategy employed is highly relevant. Many commentators emphasise the importance and relevance of the kind of strategy employed in relation to the nature and consequences of the cultural implications of the interaction between global and local (Sengupta & Frith, 1997; Maynard & Tian, 2004; Sinclair, 2008; Halliburton & Ziegfeld, 2009; Kobayashi, 2012).

Standardisation refers to standardised global campaigns rather than tailored campaigns for national or localised markets (Sinclair 2008). It is here that cultural elements influence commercial decisions; correspondingly, such decisions relating to promotional strategies can have effects on culture and cultural identity.

In his seminal article Levitt (1983) advocates for the global standardisation of products in light of the increased globalisation of markets. Levitt (1983) asserts that 'companies must learn to operate as if the world were one large market—ignoring superficial regional and national differences' (p. 92). While Levitt (1983) does not explicitly consider the standardisation of advertising but rather the global standardisation of products, the article raises an interesting perspective in relation to the globalisation of markets and the global homogenisation of tastes, preferences and desires. Additionally, many commentators still discuss the influence of Levitt's (1988) article in relation to global advertising as it led to many advertising agencies undertaking standardised global campaigns (Maynard & Tian, 2004; Halliburton & Ziegfeld, 2009; Sinclair, 2008; 2012). Standardisation is often criticised as a form of cultural imperialism (Sinclair 2008).

It is argued that the standardisation of global marketing campaigns is culturally imperialistic because it ignores, or rather does not concern itself with, cultural difference. Levitt (1983) claims that he does not 'advocate the systematic disregard of local or national differences' (p. 97). Somewhat contradictorily Levitt (1983) argues that the inclusion of tailoring to national differences in a global marketing strategy is an unnecessary accommodation of what are only

believed to be fixed local preferences, such an accommodation was commercially detrimental and firms should rather persist more vigorously for global standardisation. Hill (2008, p. 485) asserts that 'cultural differences limit a firm's ability to use the same marketing message and selling approach worldwide'—'what works well in one country may be offensive in another.'

According to Levitt (1983), 'gone are accustomed differences in national or regional preference' (p. 92). Levitt (1983) continues, arguing that 'the world's needs and desires have been irrevocably homogenized' (p. 93). In this light it is clear to see that Levitt's (1983) views correspond with the notion of globalisation as homogenisation. Levitt (1983) views global flows as one-directional, originating from multinational corporations and the like, which is commercially advantageous. Much criticism of Levitt (1983) suggests that he overwhelmingly overstates his case particularly in relation to the disappearance of diversity in cultural preferences, tastes and consumer desires. Hill (2008) argues that 'the continuing persistence of cultural and economic differences between nations acts as a brake on any trend toward the standardization of consumer tastes and preferences' (Hill 2008, p. 476). Hill (2008, p. 476) asserts that Levitt's (1983) 'globally standardized markets seems a long way off in many industries.'

The second approach at the polar opposite to standardisation is localisation. Schuiling and Kapferer (2004) robustly reject Levitt's (1983) unequivocal position on standardisation and make a persuasive case for local brands and highlight the strategic advantages of local brands. Schuiling and Kapferer (2004) define local brands as brands that exist in one country or that are contained to a particular geographical area; such brands may belong to a local, international or global firm (p. 98).

In the face of trends towards regionalisation and the rise of anti-globalisation sentiments in many parts of the world international brands should reject the extremities of hardline standardisation and reap the advantages of local brands by incorporating elements of localisation in their promotional strategy (Schuiling & Kapferer, 2004). Kapferer (2005) in this vein asserts that 'global brands should never forget that business must also be local: this is the post-global brand' (p. 319).

The 'post-global brand' refers to the brand that no longer tries to adhere unreservedly to the model of total globalisation, as this is no longer perceived as ideal (Kapferer 2005, p. 321). Kapferer (2005) rejects Levitt's (1983) prediction that cultural, geographical and national difference in taste and preference will fade away and points to growing trend in building international brands has begun to reverse somewhat in order to incorporate the regional or local concept. The post-global brand, according to Kapferer (2005), refers to those brands that imply global standardisation but have also distanced from such extreme positions of global standardisation and correspond today, more appropriately to 'selective globalisation' (p. 322).

The concept of the post-global brand is somewhat similar to glocalisation, however Kapferer (2005) does not use this term.

The third approach is glocalisation and is argued to be the middle ground between the two former approaches, namely standardisation and localisation (Sinclair, 2008). Glocalisation is predominately understood as 'the process whereby global corporations tailor products and marketing to particular local circumstances to meet variations in consumer demand' (Maynard & Tian, 2004, p. 288). Sinclair (2008) asserts that glocalisation has become the new mantra of global marketing as it enables the adaption of global brands to the particularities of local markets and provides a compromise which balances the advantages of standardisation and the realities of cultural difference (p. 119). A glocal approach combines the local and global and takes into account the significance of adaption to local markets and sensibilities with the overarching motivation of striking a balance between global homogenisation and local customisation (Maynard & Tian 2004, p. 288).

Glocalisation demonstrates that 'cultural adaption has become a fundamental strategic principle for marketers in the age of globalisation' (Sinclair, 2012, p. 117). Whereas glocalisation generally refers to the tailoring of products, services and their respective marketing strategies, Kapferer's (2005) concept of the post-global brand provides a definition for the brand that is itself a glocalised synthesis that even when a brand appears to be global, closer examinations reveal that often the product is far from standardised and conversely, 'a composite, hybrid or highly adapted product' (pp. 321-2). The post-global brand parallels the concept of Robertson's (1995) glocalisation in that it refers to not mere tailoring of the global to the local but rather a synthesis and hybrid of the global and local.



## **Chapter 4: Methodology and Research Design**

### **4. Introduction**

The previous chapter presented the body of literature and the theoretical framework relevant to how brand storytelling serves to construct and project 'brand'. This chapter will present the methodology for the research and outline the design of the investigation in order to answer the research question.

Content analysis will be utilised for the primary component of the research and will be additionally supplemented and enhanced by textual analysis in order to obtain in-depth insights. The research design will discuss the sample selection and the coding units and will explain how a quantitative content analysis will be reinforced with qualitative textual analysis and semiotics. This will be done to provide robust analysis of both manifest and latent meaning and the generalities and specifics of the storytelling.

### **4.1 Methodology**

There is an extensive precedence of content analysis being used in the analysis of advertising content (Beccaria, 2001; Khairullah & Khairullah, 2002; Maynard & Tian, 2004; Nacar & Burnaz, 2011; Sengupta & Frith, 1997; So, 2004; Wang & Chan, 2001). More generally, content analysis has been used extensively in the field of mass media communication (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Krippendorff (2004) describes content analysis as 'an empirically grounded method, exploratory in process, and predictive or inferential in intent' (p. xvii). That is to say that it is concerned with the examination of the form, content and purpose of a communicated message (Krippendorff, 2004). Similarly, Holsti (1969) outlines three primary objectives of content analysis, which are firstly to describe the characteristics and meanings of the communication, secondly, to identify the antecedents of the communication, and thirdly, to identify the effects of the communication.

Krippendorff (2004) states that 'content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful matter) to the contexts of their use' (p. 18). Text is used to describe when an interpretation of meaning is made from everyday items such as books, films, furniture or ornaments; we treat that item as a text, thus a text is something we can make meaning from (McKee, 2002, p. 4). In this investigation, an advertising campaign will be studied as the exemplification of brand as advertising is a method of communicating brand (Scherer & Jackson 2008). Further, this study acknowledges that as advertising can be read as a text, so too can brand (O'Reilly, 2005).

Content analysis is by definition a quantitative method of which the purpose is to identify and count the occurrence of specified characteristics or aspects of texts, then consequently be able to comment on the messages, images, representations of the texts and their wider social

implication (Hansen, Cottle, Negrine & Newbold, 1998, p. 95). Previous studies have used content analysis to identify the manifestation of cultural value appeals in advertising (Khairullah & Khairullah, 2002; Nacar & Burnaz, 2011; Sengupta & Frith, 1997; Wang & Chan, 2001), in cross-cultural comparison of advertising content (So, 2004) the quantity and type of particular television commercials during a particular broadcast period (Beccaria, 2001).

These previous studies provide precedence for analyzing the content of advertising. A number also provide insight into the analysis of advertising undertaken by multinational corporations, specifically in the area related to standardisation and glocalisation strategies in global advertising (Khairullah & Khairullah, 2002; Nacar & Burnaz, 2011; Sengupta & Frith, 1997; Wang & Chan, 2001). These aid in the discussion of what role storytelling, through advertising, plays in the strategies of standardisation or glocalisation.

There are many advantages of content analysis. Krippendorff (2004) expresses that content analysis had four primary advantages. Firstly, unlike other research methods, content analysis affords researchers the ability to collect data in an unobtrusive manner. As a result, response biases can be avoided. Secondly, unstructured data can be utilised in content analysis. Other quantitative research methods often provide respondents with a set of predefined choices to obtain data, which hampers the variation of responses. Thirdly, content analysis is flexible as to the context of use. Finally, it can be used with large amounts of data.

Berelson (1952) defines content analysis as 'a research technique for the objective, systematic, and quantitative description of the manifest content of communication' (p. 18). Larsen (2012) argues that content analysis is basically descriptive, allowing for certain well-defined textual elements or characteristics to be measured in various ways and is therefore useful for questions about generalities, and describing recurrent features to identify textual models (Larsen, 2012, p. 385). This study seeks to answer the primary research question: In what ways does storytelling serve the projection and construction of brand? It is first beneficial to determine the subthemes of storytelling in order to identify what these subthemes are intending to communicate to the consumer and as a result what they construct and project about the brand.

In answering this question it is necessary to identify the subthemes of Cathay Pacific's storytelling as communicated in their brand communications campaign *People. They make an airline*. The results of the coding criteria are then collated and then used to identify which subthemes are communicated the most frequently. This will consequently identify the content of Cathay Pacific's storytelling and serve to determine what the airline intends to communicate about its brand on a manifest level.

A key weakness in this type of methodology is that it is necessary that the texts used are valid and understood when selected and coded and this relies on the subjective selection of the researcher or coder. In this study the selected advertisement campaign's online employee stories are coded according to the researcher's independent selection. Krippendorff (2011)

argues that researchers have to take into account the conditions 'under which they obtain texts' as content analysts can be susceptible to speculation when data is collated without providing a theoretical framework to build a bridge between manifest meaning to a discussion of latent meaning (p. 34). Therefore this study provides the 'best hypothesis for how the texts came to be' (Krippendorff, 2011, p. 38).

Furthermore, there are some additional disadvantages to content analysis. Holsti (1969) notes that early 'definitions of content analysis required that inferences from content data be derived strictly from frequency with which symbols or themes appear in the text (p. 6). Similarly, Hansen et al. (1998) argue that an extensive period of communications research has made it abundantly clear that there is no simple relationship between media content and its reception and social implications. Therefore, while it is argued that quantitative content analysis can help provide indications of trends, and prominence and absences of certain characteristics in media texts, the inferences that can be made from such data depends on the context and framework of interpretation by which the texts analysed are circumscribed (Hansen et al., 1998). Nonetheless content analysis remains useful on a basic manifest level for this research in that 'content analyses count occurrences of specified dimensions and they analyse the relationships between the dimensions' (Hansen et al., 1998, p. 98).

Larsen (2012) argues that a quantitative content analysis is concerned more about the generalities of a text and is useful in making general inferences about the meaning of texts and their implications regarding various social phenomena. Therefore, a quantitative content analysis is useful to identify subthemes in Cathay Pacific's storytelling including which are most predominant, however the focus remains on the manifest meaning rather than the latent (Larsen, 2012). On the other hand, qualitative textual analysis and semiotics focuses on the latent meaning, concentrating on the questions of 'what does the text really mean and how are its meaning organized?' In this sense, such textual analyses may be concerned with particulars as well as with generalities (Larsen, 2012).

Beccaria (2001) provides an example of countering a quantitative content analysis' shortcomings by combining quantitative content analysis with qualitative textual analysis and semiotics to provide a robust study that can analyse manifest and latent meaning. Following that example and to counter the shortcomings of content analysis described by Holsti (1952), Hansen et al (1998) and Larsen (2012), this study will use quantitative content analysis to identify trends, make general inferences and deduce manifest meaning which will secondarily be enhanced in terms of depth by qualitative textual analysis and semiotics to analyse latent meaning in order to determine how storytelling constructs and projects brand, and the resultant meaning and consequences of such projections.

More specifically, this study is focused on storytelling and the construction and projection of brand through such storytelling. The theories of Todorov and Propp were raised in this study's review of the relevant literature as theoretical foundations to analyse the meaning in text through focus on narrative structures to obtain meaning. Therefore the textual analysis component of this study will focus on narrative analysis. Larsen (2012) defines narrative semiotics as 'the study of basic narrative patterns and procedures' and argues that the study of basic narrative patterns has been one of the most fertile interdisciplinary fields of study in recent decades (p. 138).

Narrative is defined by its content and can be understood as a representation of events in time and space. These events are organized into a series of causes and effects and are understood in their social context that they relate to and influence (Larsen, 2012). Larsen (2012) highlights how Propp's understanding of the narrative sequence involves a movement between central thematic positions or values and in the analysis of narratives it is therefore helpful to gain an understanding of elementary sequences in order to gain insights into the underlying value system which is important in this study for the understanding of what is intended to be projected by Cathay Pacific (p. 138).

In addition to narrative analysis, semiotics will also be used to analyse and interpret meaning from the texts. The use of a semiotic method was introduced in this study in the literature review in relation to how meaning is produced in advertisements and attributed to productions most notably in the work of Williamson (1978) and Goldman (1992). It was also raised in the discussion of narrative theory in relation to Berger (1997) modifying Propp's functions with Saussure's understanding of binary oppositions. Therefore in this study concerned with storytelling and the construction of brands through storytelling, semiotic method appears to already have currency in the analysis of both advertisements and narrative. Semiotic method can therefore be useful for both understanding how advertising can attribute cultural meaning to products and on a more basic level to analyse meaning in a particular text.

Semiotics can be defined as 'the study of signs' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 6), comprised of the description and analysis of the formal relations between different elements that serve in the production of meaning (McFall, 2004, p. 12). The most basic element is the sign while the signified refers to the corresponding meaning (McFall, 2004, p. 12). The semiotic method therefore is first to separate an act, called the 'signifier' from its meaning, called the 'signified' (Pines, 1982). The semiotic method will be useful in the study of signs in Cathay Pacific's storytelling whether those be verbal or visual.

Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) focuses on signs, the smallest elements of meaning in interaction, and on codes, sets of related signs and rules for their use (p. xvi). Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) intends to expand semiotic theory into a new direction going beyond the traditional boundary of a single sign and code into the relationships between signs (in codes) and codes (in cultures). According to Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) signs are entities unto themselves, yet signs do not occur singly, they

occur in groups referred to a set of signs, a code. Expanding the definition of codes to 'a set of signs and the rules for their use' facilitates analysis of how signs are used to create and exchange meaning (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 51). The investigation of codes allows for the researcher to find the meaning that resides not in the sign but in the relationship between signs, namely, the code. This component of the method is most pertinent to this study as it stresses the study of signs not singly, but as an entire code. This is advantageous as it can focus on the relationship between signs as they occur in Cathay Pacific's storytelling. This provides an analysis of the signs and the relationship between these signs in the broader context of the storytelling they occur in.

#### **4.2 Research Design**

There are a significant number of studies of advertisements that utilise content analysis and there is a recent increase in the understanding of brand as a narrative and the role that storytelling plays in relation to brand. However there appears to be no similar study that analyses brand, as a text, to explore storytelling's role in relation to brand construction and projection. This study also positions itself in the contemporary context of globalisation, specifically considering global brands and the challenge of such brands in appealing across markets in distinct cultural realities. Therefore, it is important to ascertain the role a brand's storytelling plays in countering this challenge.

A defined sample is a requirement of content analysis. Krippendorff (2004) describes sampling units as 'units that are distinguishable for selective inclusion in an analysis' (p. 98). The sampling process reduces the data to a more manageable size. Cathay Pacific is the global brand to be analysed and the sample will be contained to the airline's brand communications campaign *People. They make an airline*, which includes 96 employee stories and six accompanying television commercials all located on a campaign-specific website (<http://www.cathaypacific-campaign.com/people/en/home>, n.d.).

Coding units are also required for the analysis. They can be understood as 'units that are distinguished for separate description, transcription, recoding, or coding' (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 99). Coding units should be small as possible to the point that they can still provide meaningful analysis. The focus of this study is to determine the role of storytelling in the construction and projection of brand. As a result this involves determining how Cathay Pacific's storytelling is constructed and structured. The literature review indicated that brands can be understood as narratives and that there are many components of a brand's storytelling, including narrative (Fog et al., 2005; Grow, 2008; Hearn, 2008; Smith, 2011), brand personalities (Aaker, 1996), values (Aaker, 1996), visual identities (Wheeler, 2012), images (Hearn, 2008; Wheeler, 2009), symbols (Aaker, 1996; Wheeler, 2012), amongst other aspects.

Beginning with a trial period with 20 codes, the trial presented that 6 of these created overlaps with other codes so these codes were removed and merged with existing codes. The 14 codes that were used reflect the intention to firstly determine the predominant subthemes of Cathay Pacific's storytelling and secondly to obtain an indication of projected personality traits, cultural values, and psychological characteristics as components of brand, as suggested by De Chernatony & Dall'Omo Riley (1998). The codes are presented in Table 4.1 and break down the criteria for each code.

**Table 4.1: Coding units**

Code	
Hospitality	Friendliness, kindness, serving, caring, being responsive to customer needs; generous treatment of customers, exemplifying thoughtfulness, gentleness, compassion, sensitivity and being considerate towards customers, making customers feel comfortable both emotionally (e.g. at ease) and physically (e.g. with pillows, blankets, a hot drink to calm nerves)
Familiarity	Recognising repeat customers and knowing their preferences; acting as if passengers/customers are close acquaintances; rapport or close (professional) relationship with customers (not necessarily friendly/friendliness (See: Hospitality)
Challenges	Facing adversity and challenges and then overcoming these; being placed in a difficult, stressful, problematic situation then presenting solutions and solving the issue; being put outside of one's comfort zone and facing new experiences that are challenging; experiencing culture shock
Excitement	Feelings of excitement and anticipation; feelings of eagerness and enthusiasm; significant amount of energy and anticipation to experience something
Sharing	Sharing an experience with others and being part of a larger social group; sharing one's resources, experiences, knowledge with others, use something jointly with others; not sharing work tasks (See: Teamwork)
Satisfaction	Being satisfied with an aspect of their professional or private life; feeling satisfied for achieving, doing or experiencing something; fulfilling one's personal desires and needs
Encountering	Encountering foreign or distinct cultures to one's own; overseas trips and stories of immigration/emigration
Self improvement	Instances of improving both personally and professionally, learning and education

Customer input	Customers influence to change processes, behaviour, service; customer opinions and preferences
Culture	Mention one's own culture, cultural background, upbringing, ethnicity or nationality, particularly, but not necessarily, in relating it to one's professional life
Ambition	Discusses their future plans with the company like career progression; discusses past plans or desires for what they wanted in the future (e.g. I always wanted to be a pilot); individualistic not collective ambition
Teamwork	Group action or effort; working as/in a team;
Safety	Issues of safety, protection and prevention/minimisation of risk, harm, damage and/or injuries; technology, processes and instruments that ensure the minimisation of risk, harm, damage and injuries
Dedication [Collective]	Collective/corporate desire, intention and/or procedures to improve service, quality and performance; not an individualistic dedication to one's tasks (See: Ambition); a collective dedication to continually improving the customer experience

This study progresses with the understanding that storytelling is made up of many components and therefore the analysis will occur in two parts. The first will focus on the general overarching subthemes of the storytelling, examining the data from the quantitative content analysis closely to identify trends in the predominance or absence or particular subthemes. It will also look into the personality traits, psychological characteristics and cultural values projected through such subthemes. The data will present the dominant subthemes which will then be analysed in terms of what meaning is communicated through these subthemes and how they construct and what they project about Cathay Pacific's brand. The second part will focus on the specific components of the storytelling, namely, the narrative devices, characters and representative techniques. Textual analysis and semiotics will be used to analyse the specific meaning, influence and consequences of the different storytelling components to analyse the meaning of these subthemes to ascertain what they communicate about the brand and how they serve, if they do at all, to globalise the brand to distinct audiences. The three components of the storytelling focused on in this study will be analysed in turn: narrative devices (Chapter 6), characters (Chapter 7) and representative techniques (Chapter 8).

## Chapter 5: Data and findings

### 5. Introduction

This chapter will present the data and discuss the findings from the content analysis. As content analysis was used to identify the particular characteristics, or themes, that Cathay Pacific communicates in its *People. They make an airline* campaign the presence of the particular subthemes will be presented, giving an indication of the repetition of narrative subthemes in the employee stories. The textual analysis and semiotic method will be utilised in the analytical chapters, this chapter is exclusively for the quantitative analysis.

#### 5.1 Presence of subthemes in employee stories

The intent of coding whether a particular subtheme (code) is present in each of the 96 employee stories or not is to ascertain how many of the stories mention at least once, each particular subtheme. This seeks to determine whether there are trends raised in any of the particular subthemes in the employee stories. It will also present which of the subthemes are most prevalent across the employee stories. Simultaneously, it will present which subthemes are the least prevalent.

**Table 5.1: Presence of subthemes in the employee stories**

Subtheme	Present in # number of employee stories (n = 96)	Absent in # number of employee stories	Percentage of presence in total number of stories (n = 100%)
Hospitality	78	18	81.2%
Familiarity	63	33	65.6%
Challenges	91	5	94.8%
Excitement	33	63	34.4%
Sharing	21	75	21.9%
Satisfaction	69	27	71.9%
Encountering	66	30	68.8%
Self improvement	84	12	87.5%
Customer input	32	64	33.3%
Culture	61	35	63.5%
Ambition	52	44	54.2%



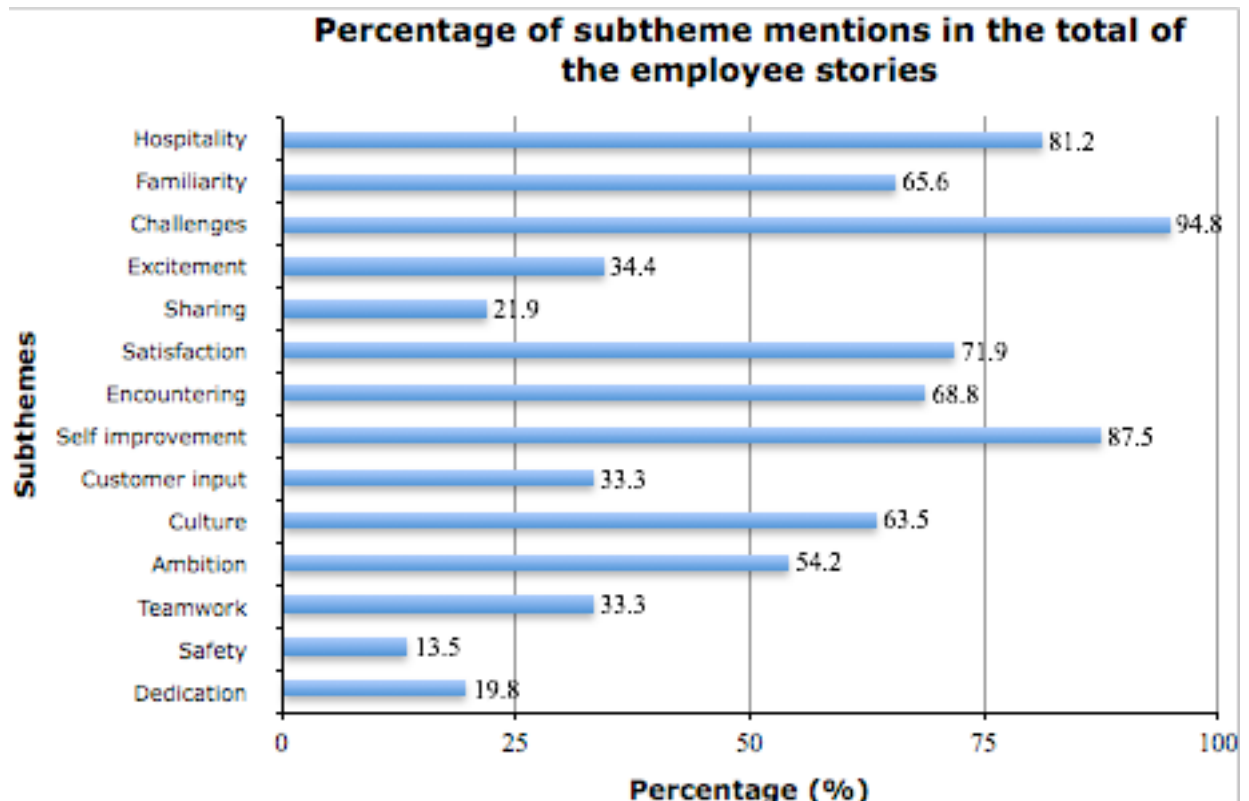
Teamwork	32	64	33.3%
Safety	13	83	13.5%
Dedication	19	77	19.8%

As Table 5.1 presents, in terms of presence the subtheme of Challenges was the most common subtheme mentioned at least once across the employee stories. An overwhelming majority of 91 out of the 96 stories mentioned aspects that correspond with this code. On the whole, 94.8% of the stories had aspects of facing challenges and adversity, difficult and problematic situations, employees being put outside their comfort zones and then overcoming these issues. It is therefore evident that the subtheme of Challenges features prominently as a subtheme communicated in the brand messaging of this particular campaign.

Perhaps coincidentally, following the subtheme of Challenges as the second most common subtheme in presence is Self Improvement with 84 of the 96 stories mentioning at least one situation of learning, educating or improving oneself either professionally or personally. It is important to note that the stories did not necessarily connect to the overcoming of any challenges. However, it is important to note that as Challenges feature so prominently, as does Self Improvement, this can perhaps suggest the high prevalence of a narrative structure that entails subthemes of facing difficulties and challenges, all the while improving, learning and achieving in the face of adversity. Although this is a suggestion, it cannot yet be inferred until the textual analysis is discussed in the following analytical chapters.

The next most common subtheme in terms of presence was Hospitality, with 78 of the 96 stories having aspects of friendliness and kindness to customers/passengers and presented notions of thoughtfulness and being considerate to customers/passengers. It may be hypothesised that such aspects are bound to be common in narrative relating to a service industry, particularly in brand communications about an airline and air travel. However Hospitality did not top the subthemes in terms of presence across the total stories though it does remain relatively high in prevalence, suggesting that through this particular campaign Cathay Pacific aims to emphasise, constantly reinforcing notions of hospitality to signify the nature and experience of the service from the airline. Additionally, perhaps most notably is that even though 41% of the employee stories are from employees who are or are not considerably less customer facing in their role, many of their stories have aspects of the Hospitality subtheme present in their stories. This connotes notions of hospitality span the organisation.

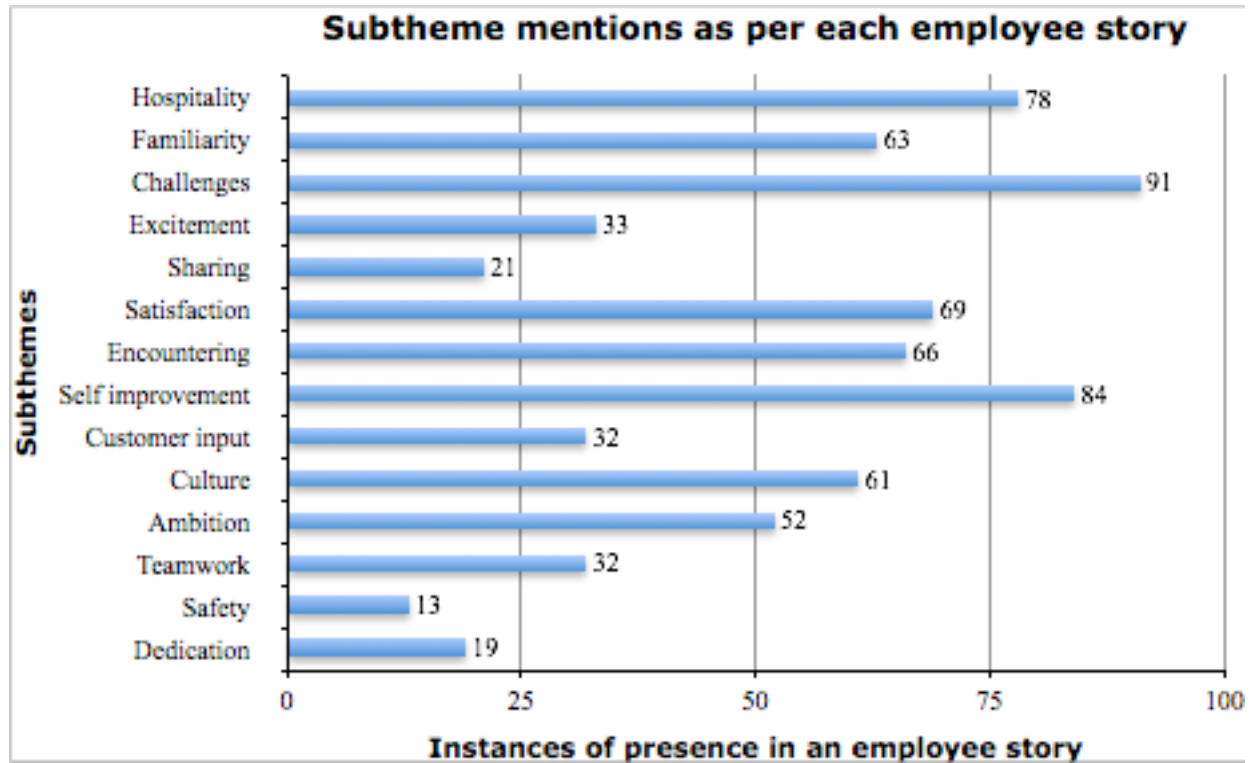
Table 5.2: Percentage of subtheme mentions in the total of the employee stories



The subthemes with the least presence in the total employee stories are Safety, then Dedication, followed by Sharing. Very few of the stories mentioned any aspects or experiences concerning Safety; only 13 mentioned the subtheme. 19 of the 96 stories mentioned the aspects of Dedication and only 21 of the stories had an instance of Sharing. Interesting to note is the low presence of Safety as it could be hypothesized that Safety is relevant to consumers in terms of air travel, however the low presence of mentions does not indicate that Cathay Pacific places little importance on safety but rather it does not desire to project this aspect in relation to its brand communications.

As is visible from Table 5.2, Challenges, Self Improvement and Hospitality are the only three subthemes that exceed presence in 80% of the total employee stories. The next four subthemes are quite close in terms of their presence as seen in Table 5.2. Satisfaction, Encountering, Familiarity and Culture range from the low-mid 60s to the low 70s. However, the data presents slightly different results when considering the number of instances rather than mere presence in the stories. While these subthemes are quite frequent in mentions in the employee stories they are not as predominant as Challenges, Self Improvement and Hospitality. This suggests that while they are important in terms of the desired projection of communication, they remain lower in the hierarchy of importance to the top three. In this sense they form a supporting role to the major themes, as such becoming the minor themes, while the last three subthemes are not a high priority in terms of being communicated to consumers.

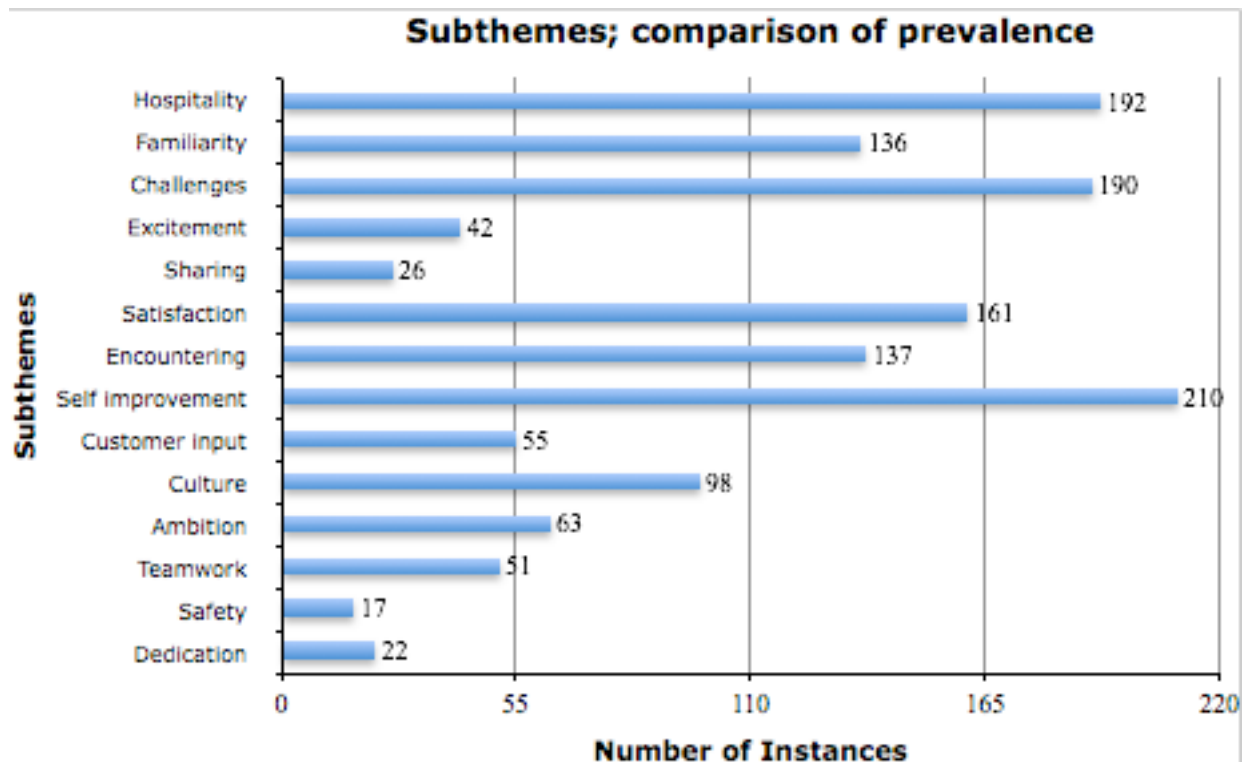
**Table 5.3: Presence of subthemes in the employee stories**



## 5.2 Number of instances of the subthemes in the employee stories

While Challenges and Self Improvement were the most common subthemes in regards to presence across the total employee stories, in terms of prevalence, or rather, the number of instances of mention of a subtheme across all the employee stories the results are slightly different. Presence was tallied by at least one mention of a subtheme in a singular employee story. On the other hand, prevalence refers to the number of instances in all the employee stories, as seen in Table 5.3. This highlights that in one singular employee story there were at times more than one instance of a subtheme mentioned in their individual narrative. The formulation of the data in this way intends to present the regularity of that subtheme being mentioned across the entire employee stories and therefore presents the salience of a particular subtheme.

**Table 5.4: Subthemes; comparison of prevalence**



The most common subtheme in terms of instances appearing is Self Improvement, which was second most common in terms of presence in the employee stories. Further it is followed by Hospitality and then closely behind, the most common subtheme in terms of presence, Challenges. It is important to note that these are the subthemes that were the three most common in terms of presence, however the order has changed slightly. This trend implies that Self Improvement, Hospitality and Challenges and their specific aspects are highly valued in terms of being communicated by the brand due to the amount of their communication. This reinforces the notion of these three subthemes forming the major subthemes in the analysed text. Overall, this indicates trends towards emphasising these three subthemes—Self Improvement, Hospitality and Challenges—as integral and emphasised components of the brand narrative.

In comparison of Tables A and C, 84 of the 96 employee stories had a presence of the Self Improvement subtheme yet there were 210 total instances of the subtheme from all the employee stories. Therefore not only did 87.5% of the employee stories have the presence of Self Improvement but also with 210 total instances many of these employee stories had more than one instance each. This is similarly the case with 78 of the stories having Hospitality present with 192 instances and 91 of the stories having Challenges present with 190 instances. Each employee story functions as a text in its own right, part of a larger text, the employee stories, which is ultimately part of the greater text of the brand and brand story. Therefore presenting the data in this manner allows for the identification the frequency of each subtheme

and also whether this compares with the presence of a particular subtheme in an employee story.

The subthemes with the lowest number of instances were again Safety with 17 instances, Dedication with 22 and Sharing with 26. The fact that these subthemes have their figures of the number of instances and the presence relatively close together, Safety with 13, Dedication with 19 and Sharing with 21 indicates that when they were mentioned by a particular employee they were not mentioned as often as the Self Improvement, Hospitality and Challenges.

Noteworthy is the close number of instances between Encountering and Familiarity. Encountering had 137 instances, while Familiarity had 136, which indicates both were quite equally weighted in terms of mentions by the employees, from which one could infer that they were valued equally in importance. Furthermore, it could perhaps be an indicator that while these subthemes have contrary notions and aspects, there is perhaps an attempt to balance one against the other. Encountering on one hand refers to 'encountering the global', overseas experiences, encountering cultural differences and stories of migration, insomuch encountering the not-so-familiar. On the other hand, familiarity refers to the recognition of repeat customers, building rapport and acting as if passengers/customers are close acquaintances.

### **5.3 Gender and the subthemes**

Gender can occupy an influential role in brand, particularly in brand storytelling (Grow, 2008). The following presents the comparison of both presence and prevalence for each subtheme split by the gender of the employee. Additionally, Table 5.4 presents the split in gender of the employees represented in the employee stories. As can be seen the majority of the employees represented are female with 73% of the employees; males only represent 27% of the employees in the stories. This suggests that the brand perhaps intends to have a more female face, however the meaning or possible motivations for this cannot be answered by this data and will require additional analysis relating to the representation of gender (Lacey, 2009) and in the role that gender plays in brand (Grow, 2008).

**Table 5.5: Gender split of the employees represented in the employee stories**

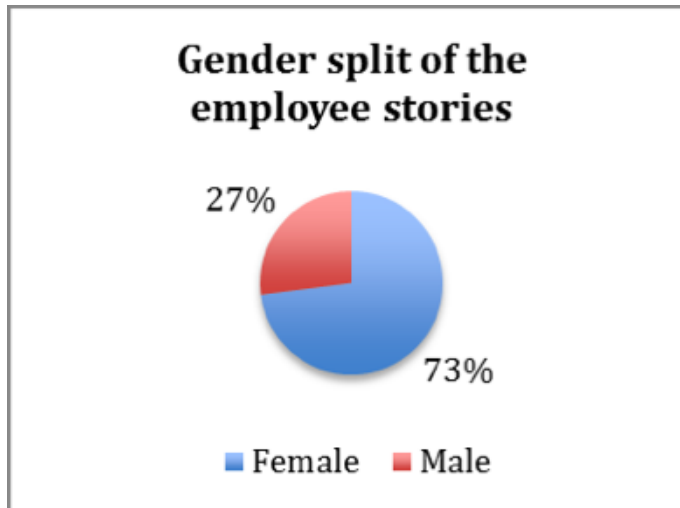
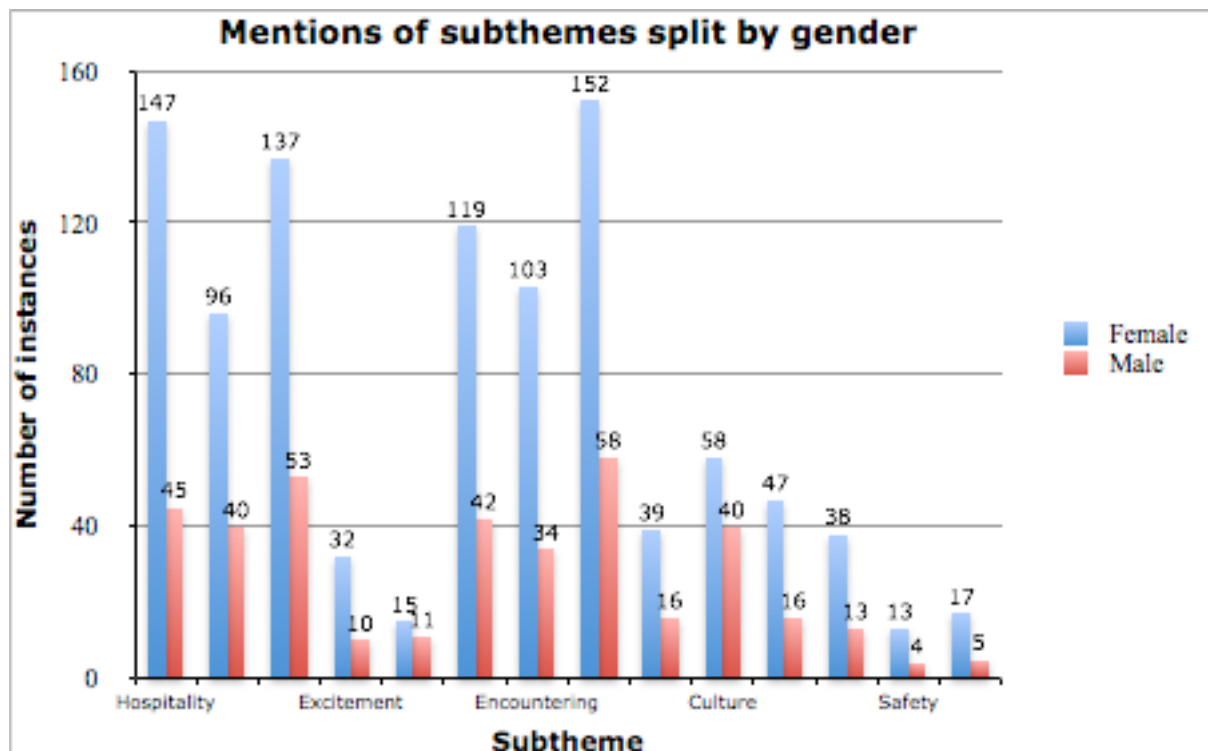


Table 5.6 shows the number of instances of the subthemes split by gender. Similarly to when the number of instances were not spread by gender, Self Improvement, Hospitality and Challenges are the most common subtheme. Although for female employees Hospitality was second and Challenges was third, for male employees Challenges was second and Hospitality was third. The differences here are not significant enough to mark a trend worthy of note, although it is important to be aware of this lack of difference in the top three subthemes.

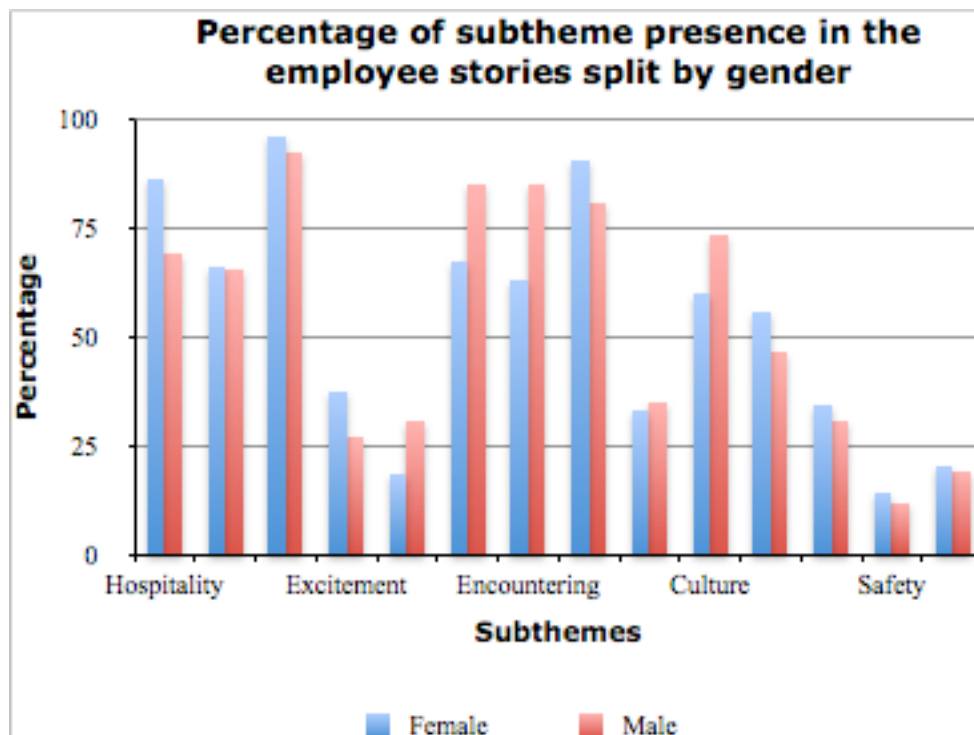
**Table 5.6: Number of instances of subtheme mentions split by gender**



The least common subthemes are similar with Safety, Sharing and Dedication for females and Safety, Dedication and Excitement for males, although Dedication follows closely behind. However, due to the disproportionate split between female and males represented in the employee stories, comparing the difference between the numbers of instances in terms of gender is ineffective.

Therefore Table 5.7 presents the percentage of presence of a particular subtheme split by gender. Table 5.7 shows that many of the subthemes have a similar percentage of presence in both female and male employees. For example, Familiarity, Challenges, Customer Input, Teamwork, Safety and Dedication present very close results across the genders. On the other hand, employee stories from female employees had a higher presence of Hospitality than their male counterparts with 85% compared to 69.2%. Female employee stories also reported a higher presence of Excitement with a 10.2% difference with their male counterparts, Self Improvement with a 9.2% difference and Ambition with a 9.5% difference.

**Table 5.7: Percentage of subtheme presence in the employee stories split by gender**



The male employees had a higher presence of Sharing with a 12.2% difference with their female counterparts, Satisfaction with a significant 17.5% difference, Encountering with a significant 24.7% difference and Culture 13.1% difference. Of note particularly is where there are significant disparities between the results across the genders. Those are presented in the subthemes of Hospitality with the female employee stories having an 18.3% higher presence in their stories than their male counterparts. On the other hand, the male employee stories resulted in Satisfaction having a 17.5% difference and Encountering having a 24.7% difference.

This indicates that in the employee stories females were more likely to mention and be connected to aspects and notions of friendliness, kindness, serving, caring, being responsive to customer needs, sensitivity and being considerate towards customers, and making customers feel comfortable emotionally and physically. Furthermore, the male employee stories had a higher presence of Satisfaction and Encountering. This indicates that in the employee stories male employees were more likely to mention notions of being satisfied with their professional and private lives, feeling satisfied for achieving something and fulfilling their desires and needs. Additionally, male employees were more likely to mention aspects and notions of 'encountering the global', that is to say, encountering foreign or distinct cultures different to one's own, undertaking overseas trips and stories of migration.

While female employees had a significantly higher presence of Hospitality and male employees had a significantly higher presence of Satisfaction and Encountering this only suggests that perhaps either females or males valued (and therefore discussed more often) the aspects of these subthemes more or perhaps in the copy proofing process it was thought more applicable to the brand to tailor the stories this way.

#### **5.4 Location of work and the subthemes**

Table 5.8 presents the split in the representation of the employees with employee stories split by the location or section of the airline that they work in. The four categories were defined and presented on Cathay Pacific's specific *People. They make an airline* website. The purpose of presenting the data that allows for the comparison of the presence and number of instances of subtheme mentions is to determine whether particular subthemes are more aligned with particular tasks undertaken by certain roles or in particular sections of the airline. Table 1 presents this data.

As Table 5.8 presents, cabin crew are most represented in the employee stories making up 41%, next is behind the scenes with 33%, followed by 18% employees who work at the airport and finally are those in the cockpit, the pilots, with 8%. It is interesting to note that even though they are in a non-customer facing role, employees who work behind the scenes are so well represented in the employee stories.



**Table 5.8: The employee stories and their split by the employee's role**

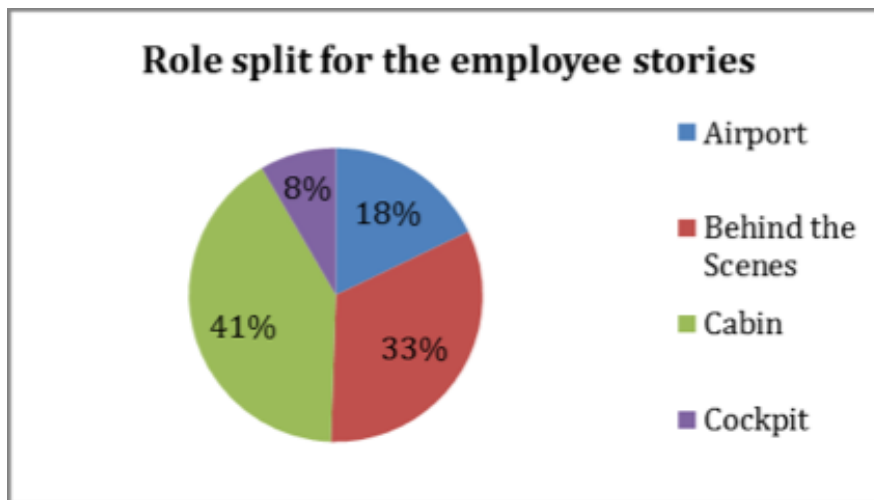
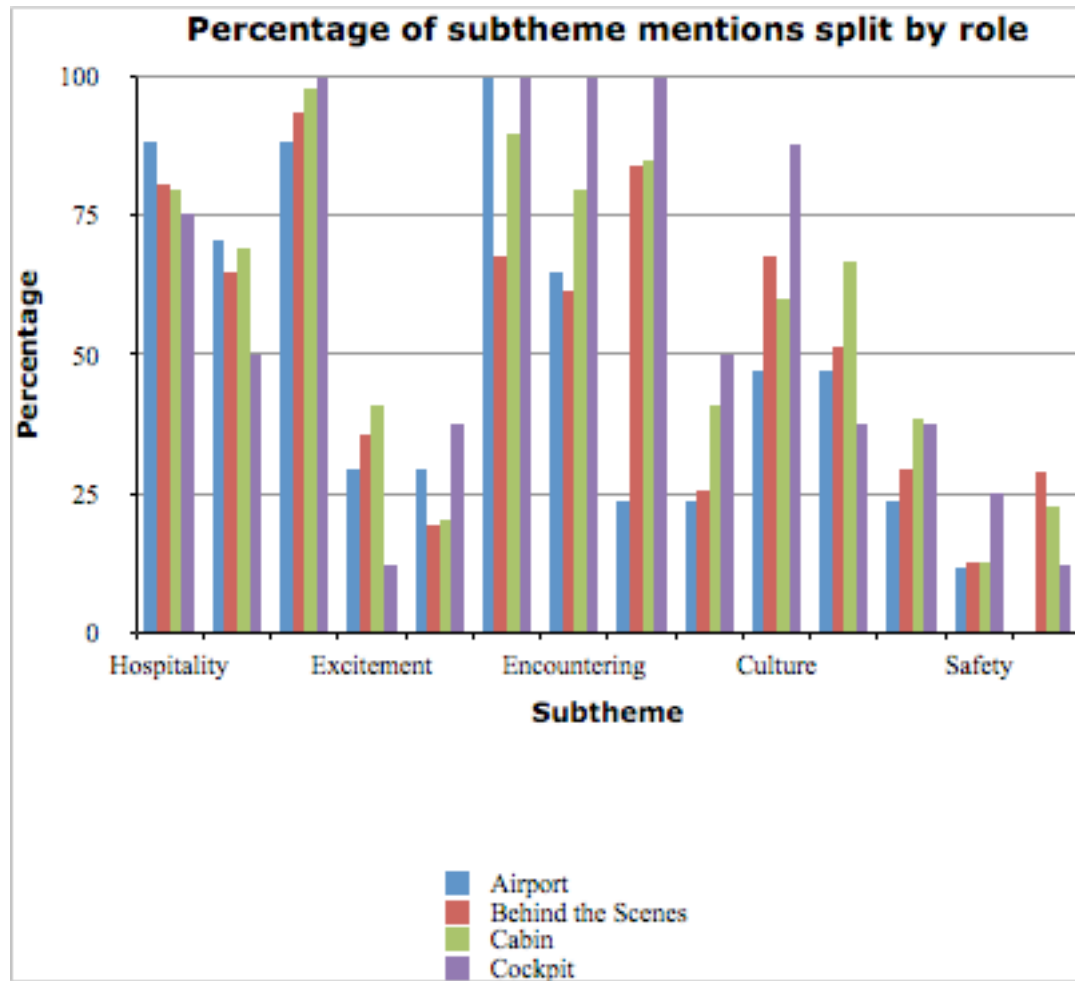


Table 5.9 presents a comparison of presence of subthemes in employee stories split by the location or section of the airline worked in. Of note is that for the pilot employee stories, indicated as those who work in the cockpit, 100% had a presence of Challenges, Satisfaction, Encountering and Self Improvement. This is perhaps an indication of what the brand intends and desires to communicate about its pilots and their personalities.

Table 5.9 presents that Airport employee stories had the highest presence of Hospitality, with those behind the scenes, in the cabin or cockpit reporting similar results for presence of Hospitality. It is interesting that behind the scenes and cockpit employees had such a high presence of Hospitality, 80.6% and 75% respectively, as aspects of Hospitality such as serving and caring for customers/passengers are not typically or are considerably less part of the tasks in their role. Behind the scenes, airport and cabin employees all had similar results of presence of Familiarity, perhaps not unexpectedly due to their roles; Familiarity was least common for pilots. All sectors have high percentages of presence of Challenges, the lowest being Airport employees with 88.2% and the highest, pilots with 100%.

Pilots had the lowest percentage of presence of Excitement, considerably less than the next lowest percentage, Airport employees with 29.4% compared with the pilots' 12.5%. However, pilots had the highest percentage of presence of Safety with 25%, with the three other sectors having very close percentages ranging from 11.8% to 12.9%. It is also important to note the large disparity in the percentages of presence of Self Improvement. For airport employees Self Improvement was present in 23.5% of their stories, compared with 83.9% for behind the scenes, 84.6% for cabin crew and 100% for pilots.

Table 5.9: Percentage of subtheme mentions split by the role of the particular employee



## **5.5 Summary**

The objective of this data was to identify the major and minor themes of the text, namely the employee stories. As a form of brand communication the employee stories are representative of the brand's storytelling and therefore this sample serves to indicate the major and minor themes for Cathay Pacific's storytelling. The data demonstrates that Challenges, Self Improvement and Hospitality are the major themes of Cathay Pacific's storytelling. These are supported by the minor themes of Satisfaction, Encountering, Familiarity and Culture. The following analytical chapters will focus on how through a particular structure these construct a specific understanding of the brand and project the desired attributes of the brand. The function of these subthemes in the construction and projection of Cathay Pacific's brand which will be discussed further in Chapter ix.

The collection of the data also allows for the data to be presented to compare and contrast the split of the presence and prevalence of the subthemes in the employee stories by gender and by role in the airline. This has identified that according to the presence of subthemes in the employee stories that female employees mention Hospitality significantly more than their male counterparts. This suggests that the female portion of the airline's workforce is perhaps more focused on these particular notions of Hospitality or additionally, that these notions are more commonly attributed to female employees. On the other hand, through subtheme mentions male employees are associated more with Encountering and Satisfaction, perhaps an indication that the notions of these subthemes are associated more with male employees.

Worthy of note in the comparison of subtheme presence in the employee stories, when split by role within the airline is the actual lack of many significant disparities. This perhaps suggests that the subthemes are intended to be communicated across the airline and that the focus is in the brand's attributes and the implication of the subthemes are relatively consistent across the entire organisation than differences for specific roles. Comparing the presence and prevalence of subthemes in the employee stories split by gender and by role in the airline is particularly relevant for the construction of the characters in the brand's storytelling, which will be discussed in Chapter Seven.

## **Chapter 6: Narrative Devices**

### **6. Introduction**

In this study analysing the role of storytelling in the construction and projection of brand, it is essential to determine how the storytelling itself is constructed and to ascertain what messages it projects about the brand. Smith (2011) argues that brand narratives are built upon communicating a combination of archetypes that represent the journey, values and attributes of the brand and philosophical reasoning or social significance for the brand's existence (p. 34). The storytelling undertaken by Cathay Pacific is no different. The communication of values and attributes of the brand can be understood as the projection of brand, whereas the communication of the journey can be understood as the development of the narrative and structure.

This chapter will therefore concentrate on the role of narrative devices in building Cathay Pacific's storytelling. It will firstly determine what Cathay Pacific intends to communicate about itself in terms of values and attributes through narrative subthemes and secondly, it will outline how these narrative subthemes are structured to demonstrate how these subthemes serve in the construction of brand.

### **6.1 Projection of brand through narrative devices**

Grow (2008) asserts that 'brands are the sum of all impressions'; in terms of brand communication it can be argued that a consumer formulates their impression of a particular brand relative to their total exposure to the brand (p. 314). Branding can be understood as a form of marketing practice which links products and services to particular cultural meanings through the use of narratives and images (Hearn, 2008). Story-based brands have the ability to not only distinguish a brand but to also allow them to break through the considerable media noise to reach their target consumer (Sachs, 2012). This is achieved through a brand's storytelling being compelling, memorable and having a single overarching narrative (Sachs, 2012). Therefore each brand communication that reaches a consumer serves to build their impression of that particular brand and for that reason each piece of communication should relate to the brand's single overarching narrative.

#### ***6.1.1 Predominant subthemes of Cathay Pacific's storytelling***

Cathay Pacific's storytelling, as represented in this study through the 96 employee stories and 6 accompanying television commercials of the airline's *People. They make an airline* campaign, presents a number of subthemes that demonstrate the values, attributes and other characteristics the airline intends to project about its brand. The values, attributes and characteristics can be understood as the brand's identity. Aaker (1996) relates to the perception the brand intends to create through associations that demonstrate what the brand stands for and implies a promise to customers from the organization members' (Aaker 1996). The data

collated from the quantitative content analysis of the 96 employee stories presented the predominance of three particular subthemes: Challenges, Self Improvement, and Hospitality.

As the data demonstrated, 91 out the of 96 employee stories mentioned aspects that corresponded with the code of Challenges, which referred to facing challenges and difficult situations, being put outside one's comfort zone and then overcoming these issues. An example from the text is presented when Jack George, Manager on Duty in Paris states, 'I have to find ways out of tricky situations almost everyday'. He mentions facing a difficult situation again when he moved to France: 'France was a big challenge for me as I didn't speak the language...What a challenge! But somehow I made it.' These situations exemplify being able to cope in difficult situations and an ability to resolve against adversity.

Aaker (1996) argues that such human characteristics can be associated with a given brand. The ability to cope in difficult situations and achieve against adversity is the particular human characteristic that Cathay Pacific intends to project. Furthermore, the abundant repetition of this code, present in 94.8% of the employee stories, forms the predominant subtheme. The subtheme of Challenges gives an indication of the brand's worldview (Sachs, 2012). The predominance of Challenges as a subtheme aligns with how Sachs (2012) believes stories to be constructed. The storyteller has characters, whether real or fictional, pursue 'some type of goal in accordance with his or her values, facing difficulty along the way and either succeeds or fails according to the storyteller's view of how the world works (Sachs, 2012, p. 18). The pursued goal of Cathay Pacific is simple—the undertaking of their role and the experiences it may bring. This suggests that Cathay Pacific wishes to communicate that operating an airline is fraught with challenges, however it will, as presented through its employees, continue to face challenges and succeed in the face of adversity.

Following Challenges, the second most predominant subtheme in Cathay Pacific's storytelling is Self Improvement with the subtheme present in 84 of the 96 stories. The subtheme refers to mentions of learning, educating or improving oneself and gives an indication of the airline's philosophical position. As has been highlighted earlier, Smith (2008) argues that brand narratives communicate a brand's philosophical orientation, noting that Singapore Airlines communicates its philosophical orientation through its brand narrative, which projects its underlying philosophy of service (p. 35). An example of this particular subtheme is when Flora Chow, a flight attendant states, 'Every trip I learn something new.' This suggests that the brand is in a constant state of improvement. The philosophical orientation that this communicates to consumers can be seen more clearly in the example of Prian Chan, when he explains how he undertook further study while working at Cathay Pacific: 'I read about a Master's Degree Program in Corporate Environmental Governance...Cathay Pacific were very supportive and eventually I was able to start using my new knowledge.'

The high proportion of similar stories in the employee stories component indicates that the employees constantly seek to improve themselves and that the airline encourages this. The

philosophical position is two-fold: firstly, that the airline is in a constant state of improvement and re-evaluation, thereby rejecting complacency and constantly endeavouring to improve. Secondly, it shows that the airline presents a position of prioritising sincerity. Sachs (2012) suggests that sincerity in storytelling is beneficial because 'great stories are universal' (p. 43). Sincerity prevents consumers rejecting a brand's claims when they perceive the message they are receiving as insincere therefore it would be disadvantageous for a brand to overstate their abilities (Sachs, 2012). Cathay Pacific does not overstate its abilities but rather focuses on communicating that it is constantly seeking to improve itself. The desire to improve oneself connotes sincerity in that it recognises that there is often room for improvement as perfection is hard to achieve.

It may be expected that as a service industry, Hospitality may feature heavily as a subtheme in Cathay Pacific's brand narrative. In fact, 81.2% of the employee stories had the Hospitality subtheme present in them and there were 192 specific instances in total. While it may be expected, what is most notable is that across the organisation Hospitality featured predominately even in employees whose role is particularly customer facing. While 88.2% of Airport employees and 79.5% of the Cabin crew had Hospitality present in their stories, Behind the Scenes staff also had Hospitality present in 80.6% of their stories, and those in the Cockpit had presence to 75%. This projects the impression that at Cathay Pacific, across the organisation and all touch points, people are friendly, ready to be of service and are deeply concerned with passenger comfort and their overall experience.

The heavy presence of the notions of Hospitality in the narrative can be argued to elaborate the brand's personality by reinforcing and constantly reminding customers about certain desired associations (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). The subtheme of Hospitality referred to mentions of friendliness, serving, caring, being responsive to customers' needs, gentleness, sensitivity, generous treatment of customers and making customers feel comfortable. An example of this is, 'Every detail is important: a soft pillow here, a blanket there, a magazine, a cup of tea, some hot noodles to break the tedium of a long flight. Taking care of people is like painting a picture: it can only be done from somewhere in your heart,' states Adelaide Ng, a Flight Attendant. Here she connects her hobby of painting with how she performs her role. It is not just her role to dispense pillows, cups of tea and the like, but it is service and hospitality that is personal and hints to the personality that the airline wishes to project (Lyth, 2009).

#### *6.1.2 Cathay Pacific's central theme*

While the notions of Challenges, Self Improvement and Hospitality form the major subthemes of Cathay Pacific's narrative it is essential to clarify how their high presence in the employee stories form the brand's narrative. Smith (2011) describes brand narratives as 'interlocking story arcs, which help to change the emotional, symbolic and social connections between company and customer, buyer and brand' (p. 32). These interlocking story arcs act as common threads to all brand communications and thus serve to partly construct the overarching brand narrative. These story arcs allow brands to communicate who they are, what they stand for and what they

care about (Fog et al., 2005). The subthemes constitute the content and messages of these interlocking story arcs as is exemplified by their repetitive presence.

Cathay Pacific's storytelling can be described as a serial, a narrative form that involves 'numerous episodes; however they may have numerous subplots, they normally deal with one overarching narrative which runs through all the episodes' (Lacey, 2000, p. 34). Each employee story in the *People. They make an airline* campaign can function as an episode and the subthemes function as the numerous subplots. As a brand is perceived as the sum of all impressions, the repetition of particular subthemes serve to constitute the central theme communicated to the consumer (Grow, 2008). The central theme relates to the brand's philosophical reasoning or the social significance for the brand's existence (Smith, 2011). For Aaker (1996) a central theme in all brand extensions and communications should serve to differentiate the brand and present its position not only in the market but standpoint on its social context. Therefore the central theme serves as the overarching narrative in the serial of brand communications and extensions that serve to present social significance in its particular context.

An example of a brand that maintains a philosophical purpose in its storytelling is Dove. Dove's philosophical purpose is to break down stereotypes and unrealistic body expectations by empowering all women to celebrate their beauty (Smith, 2011, p. 35; Sachs, 2011). A brand with a standpoint in its particular social context is Nike, which through its storytelling communicates that 'through hard work and determination, anyone can achieve amazing things' (Sachs, 2012, p. 24). On the other hand, Amnesty International maintains a philosophical purpose while relating this to the reasoning and social significance for the brand's existence—'Human rights abuses cannot be carried out when people are watching' (Sachs, 2012, p. 24). With the noticeable predominance of three subthemes, Challenges, Self Improvement and Hospitality, it could be supposed that Cathay Pacific's central theme with the tagline, *People. They make an airline*, could be something similar to, 'We encounter challenges often in our everyday lives, however by constantly striving to improve ourselves we are able to deliver friendly, thoughtful and caring service to our customers.'

## **6.2 Structure of Cathay Pacific's narrative**

It has already been discussed that the central theme constructed through 'interlocking story arcs' are fundamental in the construction of Cathay Pacific's storytelling (Sachs, 2012; Smith, 2008). It was also mentioned that the central theme serves to partly construct the brand's overarching narrative. The central theme exists as a common thread to the brand's storytelling and it is through structure and sequence that an overarching narrative is constructed. This is because narrative is not merely a central theme or subthemes, but requires the presentation of a connected series of events in a specific order (Bennett & Royal, 1999; Lacey, 2000). It is therefore necessary to analyse the structure and sequence of these themes in the formation of a narrative.

### **6.2.1 Cathay Pacific's storytelling as an anti-narrative**

Grow (2008) suggests that brand storytelling can take an anit-narrative form in her study of Nike's women's sub-brand's storytelling. Like Cathay Pacific's *People. They make an airline* campaign, Grow (2008) notes that Nike Women's storytelling occurred over a number of separate texts connected through central themes. Anit-narrative can be described as a 'fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculation, a bet' (Boje, 2001, p. 1). Similarly, *People. They make an airline* is fragmented and collective as it is a collection of employee stories across distinct media, namely the online employee stories and the television commercials. It is also largely non-linear as each employee story does not pick up where another left off or considers the same time and space. The unplotted nature of *People. They make an airline* gives the impression that they are real experiences suggesting that there is a lack of a predetermined direction of the storytelling.

The impression that an anit-narrative gives is of living storytelling, highlighting its polyphonic (many-voiced) and collective production (Boje, 2001). *People. They make an airline* is also polyphonic, presenting 96 employee voices that through their respective stories contribute to the general storytelling. According to Grow (2008) the anit-narrative, expressed visually and/or verbally, is a fluid collective response to lived experiences. This is reflected in the lack of confines of temporality in Cathay Pacific's brand narrative. The different employee stories can mention a wide-ranging period of time before their employment by the airline such as a childhood memory, and to the other extreme, that the employee shortly approaches retirement and relates how aviation and the airline itself has transformed over a long period. For example Tammy Wong, an Inflight Service Manager, stated, 'When I first applied to join Cathay Pacific...I was barely 19...Now 32 years later, I'm coming up to retirement and I can say, hand on heart, that I've enjoyed every minute.' Tammy continues, 'In the cabin there have been so many changes...We fly to many more destinations nowadays...And all the aircraft have changed.'

The anit-narrative form of the Cathay Pacific storytelling combined with repeated subthemes gives it the impression of collective, living stories with the ability of reinforcing certain brand characteristics. This suggests a kind of interplay between what the employees communicate and the company's core story. It is this kind of interplay between employee 'hands-on' stories that 'lie at the heart of creating a strong brand' (Fog et al., 2005, p. 54). 'A great brand is a compelling, never-ending story that recognizes there are fundamental human truths and needs that it can uniquely serve' (Grow, 2008, p. 315.). *People. They make an airline* has the potential to be a never-ending story as the same predominant themes are continually repeated in each employee story. The communication of the central theme and the predominant subthemes continues on throughout each communication.

#### *6.2.2 Proppian account of Cathay Pacific's brand narrative*

The structure and sequence of the themes of the storytelling are critical to the construction of the brand's narrative. Propp's classic study of fairy tales, *Morphology of the Folktale* (1928) is helpful in understanding how interlocking story arcs construct a narrative (cited in Berger, 1997). Propp is generally acknowledged to be one of the most influential scholars of the nature of



narratives (Berger, 1997, p. 23). Propp argues that fairy tales can be separated into their components, by which an analysis reveals the structure of narratives (Berger, 1997, p. 23-4). Propp (1928) proposes that a given action may be done by any number of different characters in a story and therefore this makes it possible to study a story in terms of the functions of the characters (Berger, 1997). These functions are understood as both the actions of the characters and the consequences of these actions for the story. Propp (1928) asserts that there are only 31 functions, no more and no less. Berger (1997, p. 25) argues that Propp's analysis is beneficial not because modern narratives borrow from fairy tales for content per se, but their structures often do.

Propp's focus on the role of the characters and their function in the narrative is particularly useful for this study. As discussed, the central theme in *People. They make an airline* is constructed by the repetition of certain subthemes by the employees and that the narrative is constructed through the structure and sequence of the subthemes. Propp's account of character is only concerned with what the character does rather than what he or she does as an individual (Fiske, 1987, p. 137). In this sense it is how the employees put into action the notions of the subtheme. Therefore the employees, like the characters of the fairy tales of Propp's study, serve a function in the construction and development of the narrative, their individual stories serve to contribute to overarching themes to construct the brand narrative rather than the specificities of their stories being the focus.

Fiske (1987) states that for Propp, a character is defined in terms of a 'sphere of action' (p. 137). Different individual characters may perform a particular function at different times in the narrative; therefore, for Propp, 'the functions of characters are stable constant elements in a tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale.' There are eight character roles that are located in the seven spheres of action.

**Table 6.1: Propp's functions (character roles), reproduced from Fiske (1987, p. 136)**

Character role	Sphere of Action
Villain	Villainy, fighting, action
Donor (provider)	Giving magical agent or helper
Helper	Moves the hero, makes good a lack, rescues from pursuit, solves difficult tasks, transforms the hero
The princess and her father	A sought-for person: assigns difficult tasks, brands, exposes, recognises, punishes
The dispatcher	Sends hero on quest/mission
The hero (seeker or victim)	Departs on search, reacts to donor, attempts difficult tasks, marriage
The false hero	Unfounded claims to hero's sphere of action

It can be suggested that these character functions align with these character roles. For example Challenges, as the most common, refers to the subtheme that relates to instances when the employees mention facing adversity and challenges and then overcoming these, being placed in difficult and stressful situations and then resolving the issue, being put outside of one's comfort zone or experiencing new experiences that are challenging. Like Propp's hero, a majority of the employee stories have the presence of difficult tasks. For example, as previously mentioned, Jack George says, 'I have to find ways out of tricky situations almost every day.' This is an example of the notions of the code Challenges, demonstrating resilience but also a hardiness and flexibility in difficult situations.

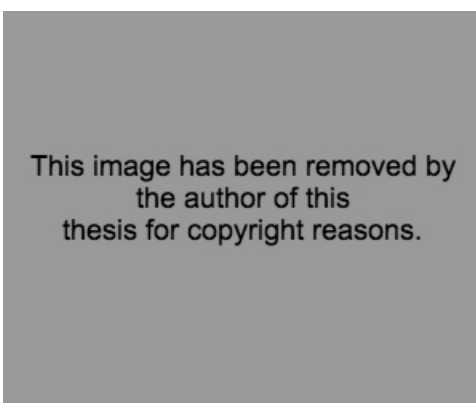
**Table 6.2: Fiske's simplification of Propp's schema (source: Fiske 1987)**

1	Preparation
2	Complication
3	Transference
4	Struggle
5	Return

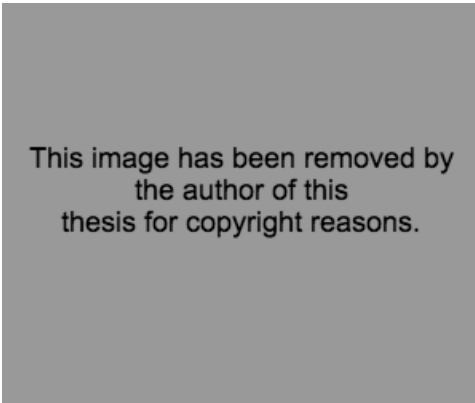
6	Recognition
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While Propp's character roles serve to explain the role the character plays in putting a subtheme into action, it is advantageous to also analyse how this occurs in a sequence of narrative development. Propp's 31 functions are suggested to always have the same sequence, that is to say that all fairy tales have the same structure. Not every function need be present but they must remain in the same sequence (Table 2). This sequence is evident in Cathay Pacific's storytelling. For example, Adrian Ng, a Second Officer states, 'I applied for a Cadetship at Cathay Pacific and was immediately rejected. That was my first lesson in flying...Flying is all about preparation and I wasn't prepared.' Adrian later became a pilot with Cathay Pacific but only after facing a challenge and a significant set back. As if a hero facing difficult challenges, being rejected for a Pilot's Cadetship corresponds to the sequence of Propp's schema under 'Transference' and 'Struggle' (Table 2, Fiske, 1987). Here the hero fights against the forces that have disturbed equilibrium; it is for the hero to return this equilibrium. Adrian's description that after he was rejected he applies again, this time prepared and he finally realises his dream of becoming a pilot. This speaks to 'Return' and 'Recognition' in Propp's schema (Table 2, Fiske, 1987).

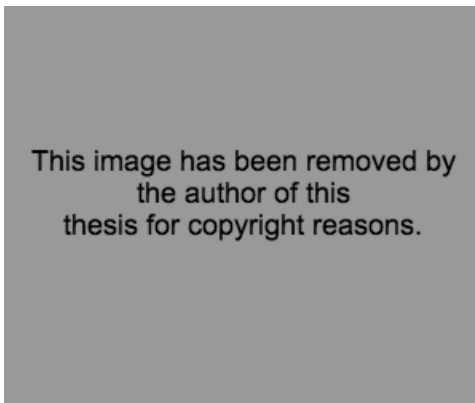
An example of how the two—Propp's character functions and schema—combine is presented in the television commercial featuring Alice. Alice faces a challenge in which she has to adapt to her new environment. At the beginning of her television commercial Alice begins, 'When I was seventeen my dad sent me overseas to study. I was the weird new kid no one would talk to' (Figure 1). We see Alice as a teenager in a busy school corridor trying to catch someone's attention, anyone's attention (Figure 2). She appears nervous and shy. According to Propp's character roles Alice's father functions as the dispatcher for he sends Alice on her quest, overseas to study to expand her horizons and allow her to gain confidence. Alice's leaving the family home fulfils the first of the schema, 'Preparation', and then the 'Complication' arises when Alice finds herself the weird kid that no one would talk to. The viewer sees Alice struggle to get someone's attention in the corridor; we are viewing 'Transference' and 'Struggle', or rather, when the hero is tested.



**Figure 6.1 Alice 1; Television commercial**

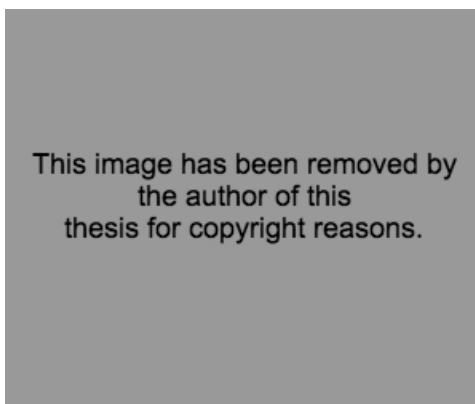


**Figure 6.2: Alice 2; Television commercial**

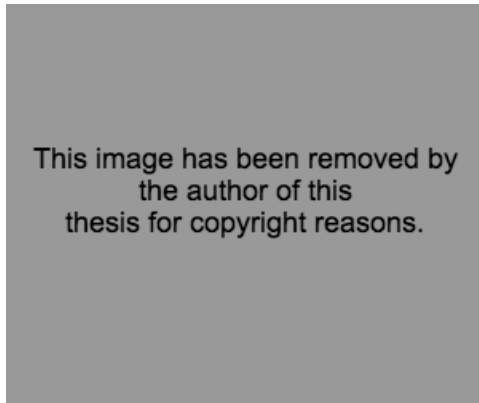


**Figure 6.3: Alice 3; Television commercial**

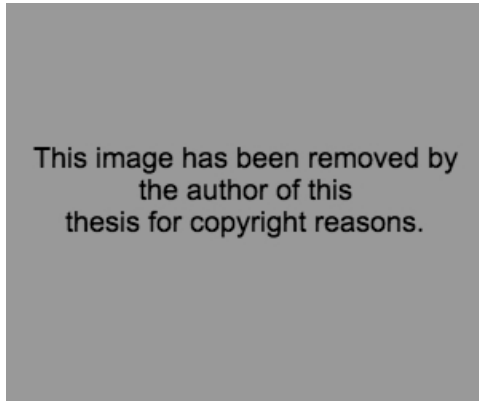
The viewer sees Alice overcome this challenge as we see her, now dressed in Cathay Pacific flight attendant's uniform (Figure 4). She approaches a man dressed in a business suit of Western appearance. 'I soon learnt it was up to me to learn how to talk to people,' the audience hears Alice say in the voiceover as she begins to help the man with directions. Here the viewer reaches 'Return' and 'Recognition'—Alice has completed her quest. She has gained confidence and equilibrium has been restored. She can be seen without a worried facial expression, smiles and confidently composes herself (Figure 4).



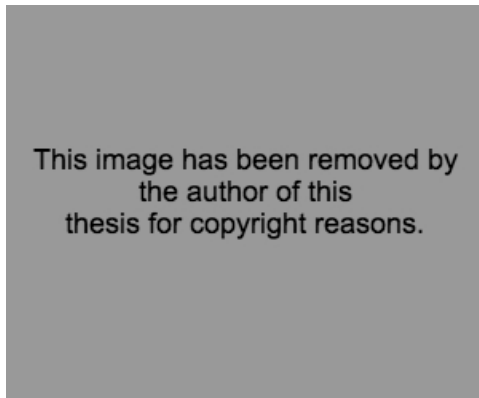
**Figure 6.4: Alice 4; Television commercial**



**Figure 6.5: Alice 5; Television commercial**



**Figure 6.6: Alice 6; Television commercial**



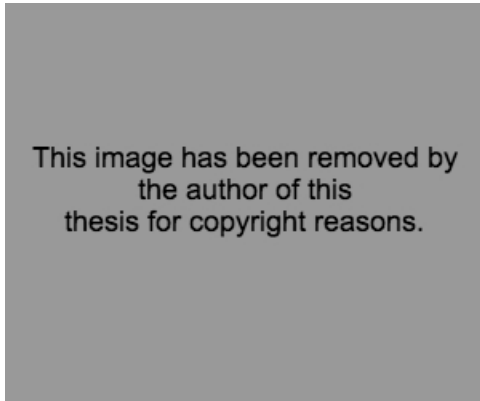
**Figure 6.7: Nigel 1; Television commercial**

In his television commercial, the viewer sees Nigel, now a Senior Training Captain beginning his journey to become a pilot. At the beginning of the commercial we see a young boy in the passenger seat of a car and a woman driving who the viewer is likely to assume is his mother. The viewer hears from the voiceover, 'I always wanted to fly and started taking lessons when I was seventeen but I was too young for a drivers license so I had to get a ride to the airfield' (Figure 4). This is another example of Cathay Pacific employees facing challenges, for Nigel not being able to drive was not a hindrance to being able to learn to fly. Nigel fulfils Propp's character role of hero by encountering a difficult task; his being unable to drive to the airfield presents the 'Preparation' and 'Complication' stages of Propp's schema.

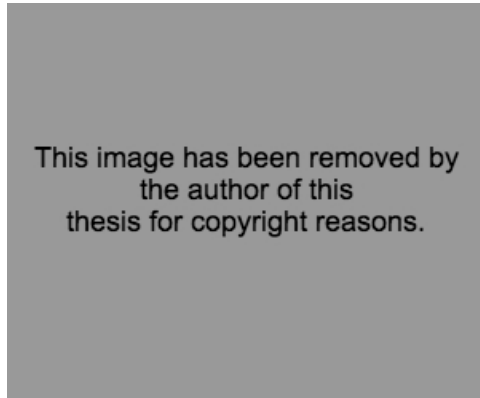
The viewer sees Nigel, as a young boy, flying a small aircraft under the watchful guide of an older flying instructor (Figure 5). The challenge of learning to fly is the 'Struggle', facing a difficult task. The view then focuses on Nigel's hand on the throttle; it then transitions to the throttle of what appears to be a much larger cockpit: 'Today, my passion for flying is as strong as ever and my greatest satisfaction is helping others on their way up.' The viewer then sees Nigel as an adult, in a pilot's uniform and he has now become the instructor of another trainee pilot, which corresponds to the 'Return' and 'Recognition' (Figure 6). The 'Return' refers to a task being accomplished as we see Nigel has become a pilot. The 'Recognition' refers to 'when the hero is crowned', and by contemporising this to the present context it can be seen when Nigel reveals that he is a Senior Training Captain, an esteemed position.

Like Alice, Nigel has faced and overcome his challenge. According to Propp, different characters may perform a particular function at different times in the narrative—'the functions of characters are stable constant elements in the tale, independent of how and by whom they are fulfilled. They constitute the fundamental components of a tale' (Fiske, 1987, p. 137). That is to say that characters serve functions in the narrative and follow the predefined schema. It is unimportant which character fulfils the function (Berger, 1997, p. 137). Both Alice and Nigel in their television commercials fulfil two distinct character roles. In Nigel's commercial he is shown as a young boy receiving a ride to the airfield from his mother. This positions Nigel, in Propp's character role of the hero, embarking on his quest, with his mother as a Donor, the helper who provides the hero with the otherwise unachievable action of the ride (Table 1, Fiske, 1987, p. 136). Later in the commercial we see Nigel flying with a flying instructor, who fulfils the role of the helper, transforming the hero by teaching him to fly (Table 1, Fiske, 1987, p. 136).

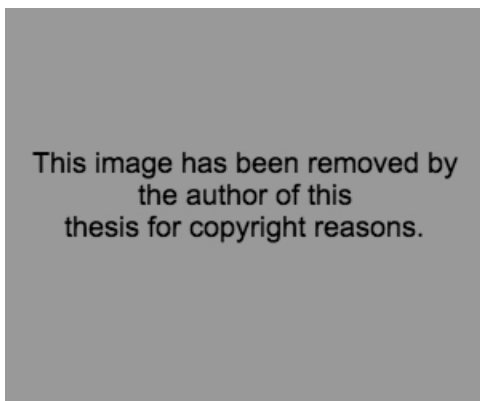
There is then a transition between the audience viewing young Nigel seated on the left of the cockpit flying the light aircraft, which then cuts to an extreme close up of a left hand pulling down a throttle in a different cockpit to the light aircraft. The extreme close up allows for inspection, which indicates to the viewer that as the hand is coming from the right and young Nigel is sitting on the left that it is not Nigel's hand on the throttle. The audience would be unaware of this because the shot then cuts to the light aircraft taking off in the rural setting. The next shot is a close up of Nigel, as an adult in a pilot's uniform, again seated on the left of the cockpit. The viewer then sees that Nigel is teaching someone to fly. Nigel has thus transformed in his character role, beginning first as a hero and then as a helper, serving to transform another hero, specifically the young trainee pilot (Table 1, Fiske, 1987, p. 136).



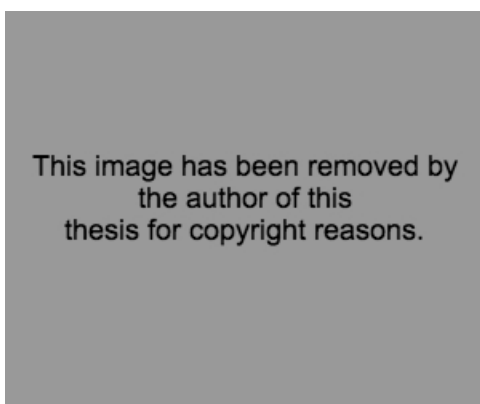
**Figure 6.8: Nigel 2; Television commercial**



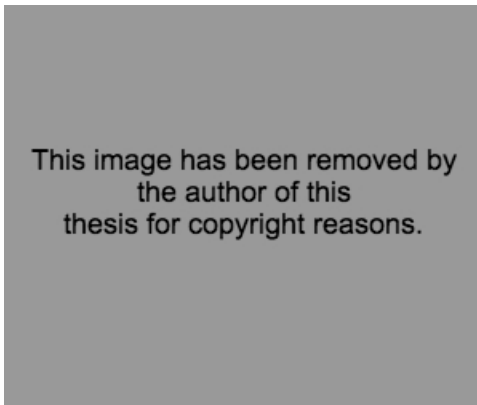
**Figure 6.9: Nigel 3; Television commercial**



**Figure 6.10: Nigel 4; Television commercial**



**Figure 6.11: Nigel 5; Television commercial**



**Figure 6.12: Nigel 6; Television commercial**

The concept of the hero becoming the helper as in Propp's narrative schema, is also presented in the television commercial of Alice, a flight purser. In the beginning of the commercial Alice is unable to talk to people in her foreign surroundings. She overcomes this and approaches a man, lost like she was, helping him. Alice moves from hero to helper, giving the man directions. Then there is a shot of the two walking off in the airport, Alice guiding the man (Table 1, Fiske, 1987, p. 136). Both Alice and Nigel move from the role of hero to helper, specifically helping a hero realise their potential and aiding them in their quest (Table 1, Fiske, 1987, p. 136). The concept of the brand, demonstrated here through its representatives Alice and Nigel, of serving as a mentor is suggested by Sachs (2012) as integral to best-practice brand storytelling construction.

According to Sachs (2012) there are three essential characters in brand storytelling: the hero, the mentor and the villain. Both the hero and the mentor are relevant to the storytelling at hand. Sachs (2012) proposes that in every brand's storytelling there should be a character of the brand hero, which can be understood as a parallel to Propp's hero. This character is not the brand itself but rather should be the consumer the story intends to speak to. However, as it has been presented both Alice and Nigel are depicted as, and fulfil the character roles, of heroes in the narrative. This is not a significant departure from Sachs' (2012) assertion as it becomes evident that both Alice and Nigel move from fulfilling the role of hero to fulfilling the role of helper, or to use Sachs' term, the Mentor. For Sachs (2012) the brand should act as Mentor and the storytelling should progress to present how the consumer can become a hero (p. 149).

According to Sachs (2012) the brand's role as a Mentor is to encourage the hero and call them to adventure as real heroes are often pulled to adventure rather than pushed into it by necessity (p.150). The transformation from hero to helper involves all of three predominant subthemes. Nigel and Alice are first presented as heroes on their quest; whether it be through studying in a foreign country or learning to fly this presents the subtheme of Challenges. When Nigel and Alice overcome their challenge and achieve their objective, adding to their skill base, the subtheme of Self Improvement is presented. Finally, Hospitality is presented when Nigel and Alice become the Mentor because they display the aspects of helping and caring for others.



As Sachs (2012) describes, the brand is the Mentor, which is exemplified through representatives of the brand. The storytelling intends to reach the audience and with the brand exemplified as Mentor, it acts to call the audience to adventure and to become a hero like Nigel and Alice have. This can be seen in the final shot of Alice's commercial. While guiding the man in the airport, Alice looks back as if to say, 'Come with me and begin your adventure.' However the man is no longer in the shot, and in fact it appears as if Alice is looking back towards the audience. The audience here is the unfulfilled hero, Cathay Pacific, with Alice as representative, the Mentor.

### **6.3 Summary**

The role of narrative devices in brand storytelling is two-fold. Firstly, the narrative devices serve to construct the storytelling and secondly, narrative devices serve to project certain brand characteristics. The subthemes served to construct the central theme, which then in conjunction with the structure and development of the sequence ultimately result in the creation of an overarching narrative. An overarching narrative, through the communication of the subthemes, project certain values, attributes and characteristics that are intended to be associated with the brand (Aaker, 1996). It also functions to communicate a philosophical orientation (Smith, 2011), while the repetition of the predominant subthemes and the common thread of the overarching narrative functions to reinforce and remind consumers about the particular associations the brand intends to make to itself (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

The combination of the narrative structure with the predominant subthemes seeks to connect with consumers in presenting the brand as a Mentor who seeks to call the audience to adventure to realise its potential of becoming a hero. The concept of Cathay Pacific's employees being representatives of the brand and being presented as heroes and Mentors will be continued in the next two analytical chapters.

## **Chapter 7: Brand Characters and Personification**

### **7. Introduction**

Characters occupy a central role in brand storytelling (Sachs, 2012). The previous chapter focused on how narrative devices serve to construct and project brand, which involved how characters function to fulfil certain actions in the narrative. This chapter discusses the role that characters play in storytelling, particularly in relation to the construction and projection of brand. It is suggested that characters in brand storytelling can serve to personify the brand and project the brand's personality, values and other characteristics (Brown, 2011; Delbaere, McQuarrie & Phillips, 2011). Characters allow for the personification of the brand, attributing human characteristics and qualities to an organisation or product (Brown, 2011; Delbaere et al., 2011).

This chapter analyses how characters serve to construct and project brand. It will identify the characters in Cathay Pacific's storytelling, discuss how the personification of the brand occurs, analyse the representation of the characters in the storytelling and discuss how the characterisation of employees serves to project brand personality and other characteristics.

### **7.1 Characters, personification and brand personality**

Characters play a central role in the construction and projection of Cathay Pacific's brand. Cathay Pacific's employees feature heavily in its *People. They make an airline* campaign. 96 employees working in distinct roles in many offices and locations worldwide are represented in the campaign, along with six television commercials of six employees. It is firstly essential to identify the characters present in Cathay Pacific's storytelling. Delbaere et al. (2011) and Brown (2011) discuss the creation of brand characters that embody the personality of the brand; Ronald McDonald, Uncle Ben, Betty Crocker, Captain Birdseye and the Marlboro Man are such examples. These are constructed characters, however there are many cases in which employees are similarly used to project the values and personality of the brand (Miles & Mangold, 2005).

Miles and Mangold (2005) discuss how employees are used in branding, suggesting that the use of employees to project internalized desired brand image to customers and other organizational constituents (p. 535). Miles and Mangold discuss the involvement of its employees in brand projection in the particular case of Southwest Airlines and how they project a desired brand image and organisational mission and values. Hence, the employees that feature in the 96 employee stories can be recognised as important characters in Cathay Pacific's storytelling. Balmer and Gray (2003) assert that the staff of corporations often play an integral role in the projection of the brand's values and are essential to the corporate branding process as they provide the interface between the internal and external environments (p. 979).

In relation to the projection of brand, characters are argued to project the brand's values, personality and characteristics (Balmer & Gray, 2003; Brown, 2011; Delbaere et al., 2011; Miles & Mangold, 2005). On the other hand, in terms of construction, Harris & DeChernatony (2011) argue that when staff are used to act as a bridge between the internal and external faces of the brand that this serves to both build and maintain that brand. However, the process of projection and construction can be understood as one in the same. An example is Singapore Airlines' *Singapore Girl* who represents a flight attendant but is in fact a constructed character serving to embody 'the essence, the soul of the airline's unique style of service' and to communicate the romantic notions of travel (Batey, 2002 p. 120). While the *Singapore Girl* projects certain characteristics about the Singapore Airlines brand, she also serves in the construction of the 'service core' of the brand (Batey, 2002, p. 118-20). In *People. They make an airline* campaign the characters featured are in fact actual employees, nonetheless this chapter presents how they serve to personify the brand and thus serve in its construction.

Apart from the 96 employees featured in the *People. They make an airline* campaign, there is one important additional character—the brand itself. Sachs (2012) suggests that the brand is a character which is integral to brand storytelling. Miles and Mangold (2005) describe how Southwest's employees' collective personalities served to personify the Southwest brand. Additionally, while Delbaere et al. (2011) and Brown (2011) speak of such brand characters as a form of personification of the brand, it must be recognized that Cathay Pacific's employees collectively personify the airline's brand. That is to say that the collective personality, values and characteristics projected by Cathay Pacific's employees personify the brand. This is further reinforced by the repetition of certain characteristics in the subthemes as noted in chapter 6.

In Cathay's *People. They make an airline* campaign, the brand itself is personified in the employee stories in their descriptions of the airline. For example Johnson Wong, a Manager on Duty says; '...Cathay Pacific handles thousands of passengers every day and we need to be alert to everything: different cultures, languages, attitudes and problems.' Cathay Pacific is a character, but also a collective 'we' for the employees of the airline. This quote is two-pronged; on the one hand Cathay Pacific handles thousands of passengers and on the other, the employees need to be alert and customer focused. The former in fact refers to the employees as a collective character that embodies the brand. The collective becomes a character, which is in turn is personified through being able to undertake human tasks and possessing human qualities. The employees as characters collectively construct the brand as a character.

As it has been outlined that characters in brand storytelling serve to project the personality of the brand it is important to clarify the definition of brand personality. Aaker (1996) describes brand personality as 'the set of human characteristics associated with a given brand' (p. 141). A brand's personality serves to establish a recognisable personality and thus enrich understanding of the product or service, construct an identity differentiated from market competitors, guide communication efforts and build brand equity (Aaker, 1996). Aaker (1996) identifies characteristics that constitute brand personality such as gender, age and

socioeconomic status, in addition to human personality traits such as concern and warmth (p. 141). The notion of characters projecting brand personality aligns with the narrative technique of characterisation.

Berger (1997) outlines that characterisation is achieved through description, dialogue and actions. The two pillars of characterisation are firstly what the character looks like and secondly, how a character behaves (Berger, 1997, p. 52). Similar to Aaker's characteristics that constitute brand personality, Berger (1997) outlines that character can include characteristics such as age, gender, race, posture, body language, clothes, facial expression, occupation and setting, amongst others (p. 53). Characters therefore project characteristics that are intended to be associated with the brand, known as brand personality. They accomplish this through the projection of the characteristics that constitute their character. It is necessary to analyse their representation in the employee stories and television commercials of the *People. They make an airline* campaign in order to determine what characteristics Cathay Pacific's employees project and how the brand is personified.

## **7.2 Cathay Pacific employees as brand characters**

Aaker (1996) outlines that some brands have recognisable personalities such as Virginia Slims' femininity compared to the Marlboro Man's masculinity (p. 142). Batey (2002) highlights the role of race in the construction of the *Singapore Girl*; important to her character is her Asian heritage, which is suggested to exemplify 'natural femininity, natural grace and warmth, and a natural, gentle way with people' (p. 120). Both gender and race are projected by brand characters in constructing a brand personality, using this as an example the analysis will focus on these two particular aspects in terms of what is projected by Cathay Pacific's employees in this particular campaign.

### **7.2.1 Cathay Pacific and gender**

Gender is a characteristic that serves in the constitution of character and which Aaker (1996) argues is at times relevant to the projection of brand personality. Grow (2008) and Fog et al. (2005) agree, discussing how genders can be attributed to brands. Aaker (1996) suggests that some brands may be feminine in character in comparison to masculine. An example of gender being associated with a brand is Nike. Grow (2008) asserts that Nike's embodiment of brand is premised 'with masculine signifiers from sweating, muscle-bound male athletes, to body copy predicted on vigorous competition, with the "Just do it" tagline as the ultimate signifier of this masculine promise' (p. 314). On the other hand, Grohman (2009) identifies nurturance, interpersonal warmth, expressing feelings, fragility, gracefulness, sensitivity and tenderness as feminine qualities that are attributed to brand personalities. It raises the question of whether Cathay's brand personality is attributed to a gender, and if so, for what reasoning and with what implications.

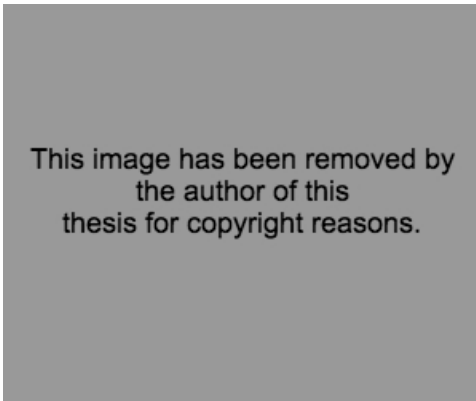
In Cathay Pacific's storytelling female employees are overrepresented in comparison to their male counterparts with 73% of the employees featured in the employee stories being women. Additionally, 5 out of 6 of the television commercials feature a female employee, all flight attendants. The overrepresentation of women in the campaign suggests that Cathay Pacific intends to project female characteristics over male. Femininity tends to be associated with passivity, emotionality, the body and caring roles; masculinity on the other hand, tends to be associated with activity, rationality, the mind and productive roles (Patterson, O'Malley & Story, 2009, p. 11). As femininity tends to be associated with caring roles, it is important to note that many of the notions of femininity relate to those of the code of Hospitality, one of the most predominant subthemes. In fact, there was an 18.3% higher presence of notions of Hospitality in female employee stories compared to male employees. This reinforces this notion of femininity being associated with caring roles and suggests that this is an impression that the brand intends to project.

While femininity may be associated with caring, passivity and emotionality, this is not an essential or biological quality of women (Patterson et al., 2009). It is widely accepted today that gender identities are socially constructed and the product of cultural meaning being attached to certain attributes and forms of conduct (Nixon, 1997, p. 301). Butler (1990) argues that 'gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow: rather, gender is an identity tenuously constructed through time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylised repetition of acts' (p. 46). Butler (1990) further discusses the 'performativity' of gender or rather, that gender is performed through such stylised, socially and culturally expected, repeated acts. Similar, to Nixon's understanding of gender identities being constructed by cultural meaning being attributed to the person, brands consist of brand personalities whereby human characteristics are attributed to a brand.

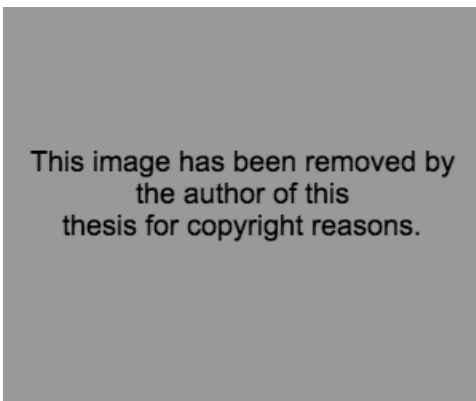
The notion of performativity of gender can be extended into the performance of a role of service. In her story, Margaret Lai, a flight attendant, says, 'It may sound strange, but I enjoy the whole "theatre" of my job—standing up there in my uniform in front of hundreds of people all expecting great things from me.' This suggests that like an actress on a stage, Margaret 'performs' her role as a flight attendant. The stylised repeated acts serve to construct the role of a caring and hospitable flight attendant. Despite Batey (2002) arguing that the *Singapore Girl* represents 'natural femininity, natural grace and warmth', it is important to note that these are socially constructed norms, which can be exploited by brands to project certain characteristics. In Cathay Pacific's storytelling, Olivia Kwan, Corporate Communications Executive, states, 'Taking care of others comes naturally to me.' This reinforces the idea that caring roles are an essential quality of women.

Patterson et al. (2009) identify a number of gender roles for women presented in advertising. Three of those, namely the mother, the good wife and the sex-object are applicable for this research sample. These roles can be identified in this campaign. For example there is the mother as exemplified in Figure 1. As already mentioned, Olivia is a mother for whom caring

and nurturing come naturally, fulfilling the stereotype of femininity as caring (Patterson et al., 2009). Ellen Hsu, Flight Purser, provides the example of the good wife; 'Soda water also works for red wine and carpet stains, by the way.' Ellen offers cleaning advice like the good wife, undertaking domestic duties for her family (Patterson et al., 2009). The third archetype is Doris Wong, Flight Purser, as pictured in Figure 2, who is the sex-object. Doris recounts how before becoming a flight attendant she was a fashion model, a role in which only her appearance is currency and she is therefore merely an object to be gazed upon (Patterson et al., 2009).



**Figure 7.1: The Mother**



**Figure 7.2: The Sex-Object**

While Patterson et al. (2009) identify a number of gender roles that women are presented as in advertising, in Cathay Pacific's storytelling the gender roles are not exclusive and a female employee is often represented as occupying many of these gender roles. This is exemplified when Lucy Yang, a Senior Purser says, 'I guess every girl thinks about being a flight attendant at some time. It seems such a glamorous job...but also had a lot more responsibility than I thought: babysitter, nurse, policewoman, safety officer, aunty, big sister and more, all rolled into one.' Lucy's view that every girl thinks about becoming a flight attendant is perhaps based in gender role expectations that women by their essential quality are best suited to roles relating to serving, nurturing and the body (being glamorous) (Patterson et al., 2009).

The repetition of notions that associate female employees with these gender roles and caring, emotionality, interpersonal warmth and sensitivity serves to construct a greater impression of Cathay Pacific's female employees and as a result, the personality of the brand (Aaker, 1996). For example, Christina Chan, a flight attendant describes how she helped a passenger that was upset exemplifying emotionality, care and sensitivity: 'I took her to the galley for some hot tea and provided a shoulder to cry on.' Cyrilla Anatasia, also a flight attendant, describes how she helps mothers with babies, which suggests motherly characteristics: 'I spent a lot of time helping one of them to calm her new baby.' Another example is when Ester Thien, an Inflight Service Manager describes having to aid and nurse a fragile elderly woman: 'Of course we took special care of her and made sure she was comfortable', again mentioning notions that are presumed to be associated with the female essence. The repetition functions like Butler's (1990) stylised acts that are repeated in the performance of gender. The repetition of these acts serves to have the representatives of the brand perform the gender intended to be associated with the brand on the whole.

Cathay Pacific's representation of its female employees to project feminine qualities of the brand such as caring, nurturing, sensitivity, emotionality and passivity are not unprecedented in the airline industry. Lyth (2009) argues that after the Second World War the female flight attendant became more than a representative of the airline as she appeared in airline publicity. She became 'an exact reflection of all those attributes that the airline liked to think of itself as possessing and which it wished to project to the world at large' (p. 6). Here, Lyth highlights how an employee becomes more than a representative of their employing company but rather as a symbolic character embodying the values and attributes of that company. In this sense the employees become the manifestation of a strong, well-drawn, and quickly recognized persona—the essential connection between what a company says and what it does (Herskovitz & Crystal, 2010, p. 21). Similarly, Cathay Pacific's representation of its female employees serves to project a particular personality that can be associated with essentialist notions of femininity. As a result these employees become symbolic characters both constructing the Cathay Pacific brand and projecting its characteristics and personality.

#### 7.2.2 Cathay Pacific and race

While Fog et al. (2005), Grow (2008) and Grohmann (2009) discuss how a particular gender can be associated with brands, there appears to be no research as to if race has the same influence. However, Aaker (1996) suggests that brand personality is made up of human characteristics and Berger (1997) mentions race as one of the characteristics that can be used to constitute character. Therefore this research proposes that race is an element that can also be attributed to brand in the same way as gender is. There are some characteristics, traits and features that are attributed to particular races through stereotyping and essentialist logic, which are consequently attributed and associated to the particular brand. As Singapore Airlines' *Singapore Girl* characterisation is deeply influenced by gender and race, so too, are the representations made by Cathay Pacific.

There has been much discussion of the Western portrayal of Asian women. Kim and Chung (2005) focus on the representation of Asian women in US advertising and Wang (2013) focuses on the representation of Asian women in US film. These studies are beneficial in analysing the representation of Asian women, both noting that Orientalism is essential in the understanding of how Asian women are represented (or arguably Asian people and Asia in general). 'The essence of Orientalism is the ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority' (Said, 1979, p. 42). Orientalism influences Western knowledge of the East in a marginalising manner. The West is perceived as developed, powerful and superior, whereas on the contrary the East is underdeveloped, weak, mysterious and inferior (Kim & Chung, 2005, p. 73).

Wang (2013) argues that the representation of the Asian woman is grounded in preconceived notions of the 'Oriental woman', which ultimately results in the 'Othering' of Asia. Wang (2013) argues that Asian women are portrayed in an image constructed for the gaze of men, particularly Western men, with their 'Otherness' being the appeal. (p. 76). Kim and Chung (2005) suggest that feminine exoticism is a common feature of Orientalist representations of Asian women (p. 80). They argue that Kim and Chung (2005) note that the representation of Asian women reduces the woman to be merely 'an entertainer, a Madam Butterfly, a courtesan, a geisha, and "a Lotus Blossom baby"' (p. 80). The representation of the Asian woman as a Lotus Blossom baby are argued to represent Asian women as exotic, subservient, enticing, self-sacrificing and sensual (Kim & Chung, 2005, p. 80).

Kim and Chung (2005) discuss the representation of an Asian woman in an advertising campaign for Virginia Slims cigarettes, arguing that the depiction of the Asian woman emphasises her femininity and often denotes sexual invitation. Kim and Chung (2005) argue that this is demonstrated through the Asian woman's visual depiction in the print advertisement. The woman is looking down and sideways, her head is tilted as well, with a cryptic smile and her hands are curled in front of her in an 'Oriental-like' dance pose (Kim & Chung, 2005; p. 80). Comparably, in Figure 3 Flight Purser, Alice Li is pictured in a provocative pose; she gazes strongly into the camera, perhaps an indication of sexual invitation. She covers the lower part of her face with her collar, which could be argued to have parallels of how geisha and other performing women obscure parts of their face with a traditional fan. She is enticing and sensual, intended for a male gaze, which Kim and Chung (2005) suggest is common in the representation of Asian women.



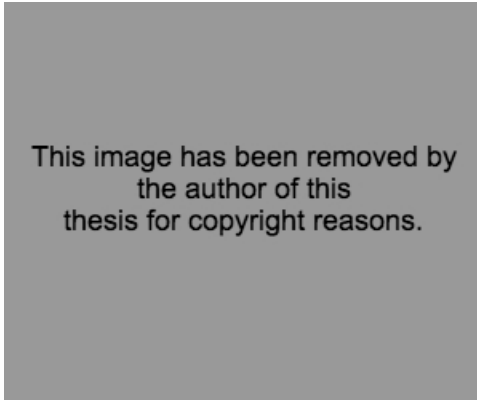


Figure 7.3: Alice Li, Flight Purser, Employee Story

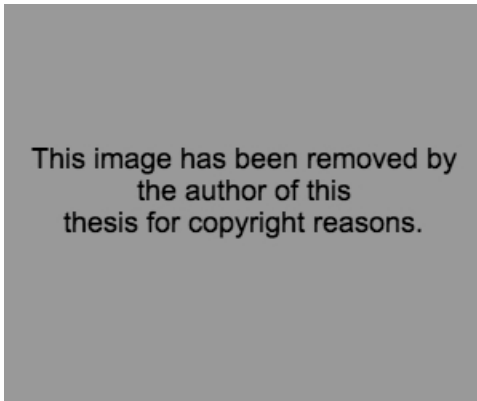


Figure 7.4: Ai Hoshino, Customer Services Officer, Employee Story

Wang (2013) argues that another common image of Asian women in film is the China Doll, an image, which presents the woman as submissive, docile, exotic, mysterious, sexy and seductive (p. 78). Customer Services Officer Ai Hoshino provides a good example of this China Doll image in Figure 4. Dressed in a traditional silk Mandarin gown, despite being Japanese, portrays her as exotic and mysterious. Her pose is neither threatening nor confrontational; her lowered head suggests docility and submission. Additionally, her dress serves to emphasise her 'Otherness' and feminine exoticism (Kim & Chung, 2003; Wang, 2013). The Orientalist constructions of the female employees that emphasise feminine exoticism serve to project certain essentialist notions of the characteristics of Asian women such as submissiveness, mystery, subservience, selflessness, seduction and enticement. In terms of these characteristics relating to the projection of brand personality, these characteristics relate to notions of the code of Hospitality. Therefore they serve to give an impression of the kind of service delivered by Cathay Pacific (Miles & Mangold, 2005).

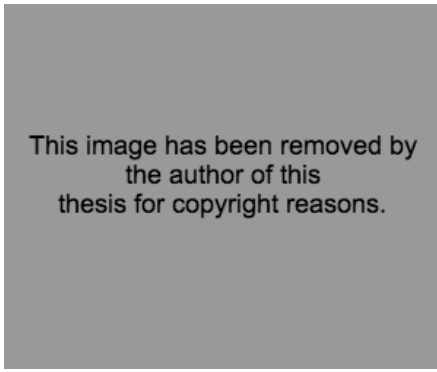


Figure 7.5: Nadia 1, Television commercial

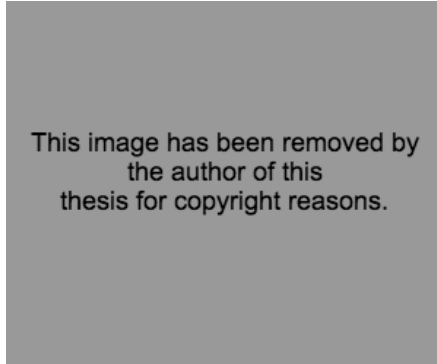


Figure 7.6: Nadia 2; Television commercial

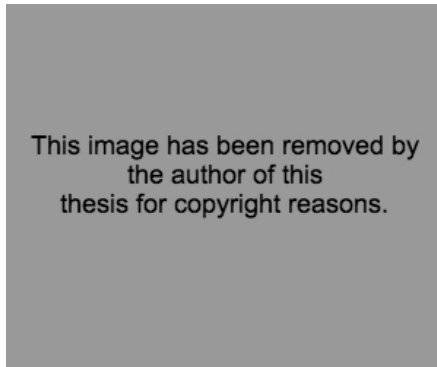


Figure 7.7: Nadia 3; Television commercial

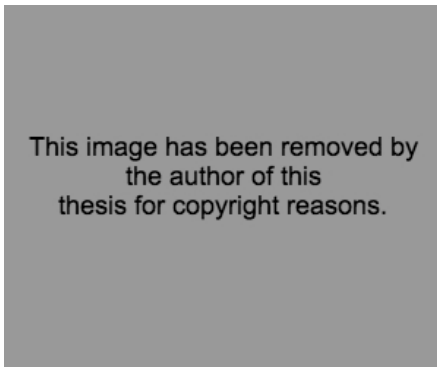


Figure 7.8: Nadia 4; Television commercial

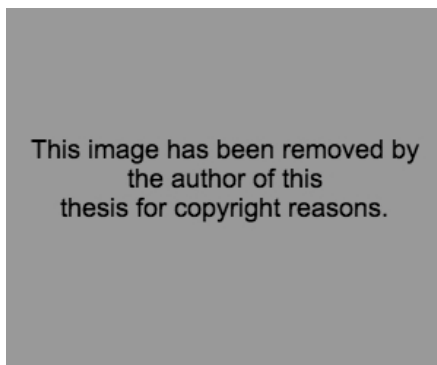


Figure 7.9: Nadia 5; Television commercial

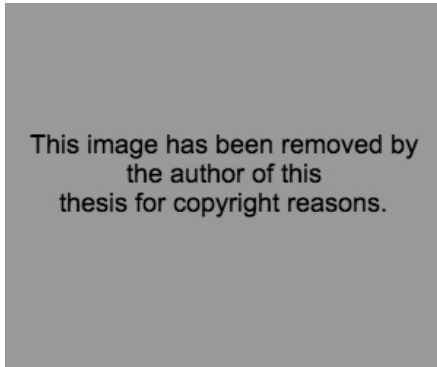


Figure 7.10: Nadia 6; Television commercial

The television commercial featuring Nadia, a flight attendant, provides an example of the combination of the projection of feminine qualities of the brand such as caring and nurturing, and the essentialist constructs of race such as submission, exoticness, enticement and selflessness. In the beginning of the television commercial Nadia is presented as the naughty schoolgirl sitting in a crowded classroom, while a teacher writes in Chinese script on a blackboard (Figures 5 & 6). This emphasises Nadia's 'Otherness' and exoticism; the viewer is not aware of the exact location of the schoolroom, which gives the impression of distance.

Lyth (2009) outlines that female flight attendants have been presented in advertising to project the idea that 'flying is fun', in which the flight attendants are presented as 'sexy and fun-loving' (p. 12). In her television commercial Nadia is shown as a naughty young girl disrupting her school class for attention, the voiceover says, 'I like to sing anytime anytime, anywhere' (Figure 5 & 6). The viewer is then transported to the cabin of an aircraft, a curtain opens and Nadia is presented, now an adult and wearing a Cathay Pacific's flight attendant's uniform (Figure 7). She then adds, 'especially when it puts a smile on someone's face.' Her appearance from behind a curtain to sing 'Happy Birthday' to a male passenger has arguable parallels with how courtesan and harem women are typically depicted as being kept behind curtains and would only leave the confines of behind the curtain to entertain (Kim & Chung, 2005). Like a geisha or another type of entertainer, Nadia sings for the male passenger. She is there to serve, to entertain, to be consumed vicariously by the male passenger and to fulfill his desires (Kim & Chung, 2005).

Nadia is also seen lowering herself to hand a birthday card to the male passenger, and with her head tilted she looks into the eyes of the male passenger, smiling (Figure 8). This conveys friendliness and notions of hospitality, yet perhaps the way her head is tilted down and to the side demonstrates not only docility but also submission (Kim & Chung, 2003). Additionally, presenting Nadia as a naughty schoolchild functions to provide the basis of projecting that Nadia is fun and entertaining. She is presented as the centre of attention (Figure 6), which potentially serves to justify the male gaze she receives (Wang, 2013). The projection of these particular stereotypical characteristics associates the brand with such characteristics and constructs the brand's personality (Aaker, 1996). That is to say that the airline intends to project

a kind of service that is differentiated from the competition due the essential and supposed natural characteristics of subservience, exoticism, caring, nurturing, seduction and enticement. Similar to Singapore Airlines' *Singapore Girl*, Cathay Pacific's representation of its female employee serves to construct a character that embodies the service of the airline.

### **7.3 Cathay Pacific as a character**

The previous section focused on how Cathay Pacific's employees are characterised through representations that allow for particular personality traits and characteristics to be attributed to the brand (Aaker, 1996). Their characterisation and representation ultimately result in the employees becoming symbolic characters that embody the brand's values, characteristics and personality (Lyth, 2009). Cathay Pacific as a character in its storytelling is constructed through the collective characterisation of its employees. This section redirects the focus away from representations of employees to how the airline is personified through its employees.

The 96 employees featured in the *People. They make an airline* campaign presents the diversity of its workforce. On the one hand, it has been argued that Cathay Pacific intends to project essentialist notions of race and gender in the construction of a number of its female employees featured in its storytelling. On the other hand, Cathay Pacific attempts to project the opposite ideal, that the brand itself is made up of many different people and is therefore diverse, multicultural and possessing a combination of Western and Eastern values.

#### **7.3.1 Cathay Pacific as a multicultural collage**

Cayla and Eckhardt (2007) discuss how there is a wide variety of brand-building approaches utilised in the Asian region, however they propose that many Asian brands are building upon both global and local appeals and 'Asianizing their positioning, situating products as belonging less to a specific country and more to a region' (p. 218). It was noted earlier that the subthemes of Encountering and Culture form part of the minor subthemes of Cathay Pacific's storytelling. Encountering as a subtheme refers to instances of when employees mention the encountering of foreign or distinct cultures different to their own, stories of overseas travel and of migration. On the other hand, Culture refers to stories that involve the employee mentioning their own cultural background, upbringing or nationality, or country of origin. It is through the repetition of these subthemes in the employee stories that the employees form a collective identity, which serves to construct Cathay Pacific as a character in its storytelling.

Cayla and Eckhardt (2007) argue that Asian brands seek the projection of a 'multicultural collage and the creation of a mosaic Asian culture' which displays the invocation of a plethora of cultural references rather than homogeneity. In the subtheme of Encountering 'the global' there are the notions of adaptation, the blurring of cultural identity and intercultural interaction. In this sense, there is a fluid interaction, to the point of blurring, between the 'local' and the 'global'. For example Adelaide Ng, a flight attendant, states, 'I'm from Hong Kong...I spent four years studying in Taiwan.' She then adds that this experience in a different country, '...taught [her]

better ways to serve people and what people in other countries expect.' This simple experience of overseas travel, and the many similar stories featured in the brand narrative, serves to project that Cathay Pacific employees are aware of cultural difference and have learnt to adapt to cultural diversity. It also serves to present the invocation of cultural references rather than homogeneity as suggested by Cayla & Eckhardt (2008).

Another example of Cayla and Eckhardt's (2007) multicultural collage and plethora of cultural references is presented in the example of Daylinda Frank, a Customer Service Officer. In Frankfurt's experience, she states, 'I moved to Germany [from the Philippines]. This was a bit of a culture shock to me. At first I went around greeting everyone cheerfully Filipino style by their first names...until I learnt that this wasn't the German way.' While Daylinda mentions that her major challenge when first moving to Germany was learning the language and finding employment, she credits her Filipino background and knowledge of an Asian language as her suitability to work for Cathay Pacific, she likewise mentions that she had to become accustomed to her new cultural surroundings by adapting to a distinct culture whilst maintaining her cultural identity.

The diverse cultural references presented here in the examples of Adelaide and Daylinda are similar to how Zhou and Hui (2003) suggest that the best strategy to promote global brands in China is to 'position nonlocally; act locally' (Zhou & Hui, 2003, 53). Chu and Sung (2011) point to the example of HSBC's 'World's Local Bank' campaign as a good example of this glocal branding strategy—the image of being global is maintained as the ability to adapt to local sensibilities is emphasised (p. 178). This notion can be extended generally; Cathay Pacific here projects a multicultural collage of global citizens who retain their cultural identity and adapt to others. This is similar to how Zhou and Hui suggest that 'a good balance between a sustained foreign image and local adaptation in product functionality is essential' (p. 53).

Cayla and Eckhardt's (2007) multicultural collage and plethora of cultural references are also realised by the subtheme of Culture. The brand's character is constructed through the collective identities of the employee brand characters and 68.8% of employees mention aspects of their culture, often relating it back to their role at Cathay Pacific. Consequently Cathay Pacific's character is one that reflects diversity. For example Daniel Teng, a Flight Purser from Malaysia, now based in Singapore, relates his cultural background to the service of cabin crew on Cathay Pacific's flights. He says, 'I grew up in Sarawak in Malaysia in a little Kampong, our name for village...Every flight is like a small flying village—a Kampong in the sky. And just like in a village, every new passenger is greeted like a friend.' Teng also states, 'I also think my mixed cultural background helps me relate to passengers better.' This example demonstrates the global mobility of Cathay Pacific's employees and of the interaction between the 'local' and the 'global'.

Daniel's example raises two points. The first is that it serves to project an example of Cayla and Eckhardt's (2007) cultural mosaic. It additionally suggests that Daniel's cultural background has aided him in the ability to perform this role at Cathay Pacific. Another example of this is when

Ellen Hsu, a Flight Purser, explains that her family are originally from Indonesia but that she was brought up in Hong Kong and was raised speaking Chinese, Indonesian and English. She states, 'I think having a mixed background helps me understand people from different cultures better.' Similarly, Alice Li explains that she was born in Hong Kong but moved to Britain when she was a young teenager. She states, 'I've learnt a lot about British people too. And in some ways they are just like the Chinese. In times of crisis, a nice cup of tea solves everything!' The repetition of such examples serves to project the notion that through Cathay Pacific's employees' intercultural experiences and multicultural backgrounds by association the airline is similarly adept at intercultural interaction.

The repetition of notions of adaptation, the blurring of cultural identity and intercultural interaction suggests a blurring between the 'local' and the 'global'. The employees featured in the *People. They make an airline* campaign present a diverse range of cultural identities, numerous intercultural interactions and instances of migration and global mobility. The employees present heterogeneity or a multicultural mosaic as suggested by Cayla and Eckhardt (2007). While individually the employees present notions of the 'local', their cultural identity, their background, their home country, these instances collectively construct an character for Cathay Pacific that is 'global'. Global, here in the sense of being constituted by many diverse 'locals' rather than in terms of standardisation. Utilising both global and local associations is an example of undertaking a glocalisation approach to create 'post-global brands' in the Kapferer (2005) sense in which brands are elevated above the global and the local.

#### **7.4 Summary**

This chapter has presented that characters play an integral role in storytelling. In Cathay Pacific's storytelling the employees that feature in the *People. They make an airline* campaign, are characterised to function as symbolic characters that embody the airline's determined characteristics, personality and traits (Lyth, 2009). The characters therefore play an essential role in the construction of the brand as a character in its storytelling.

Nonetheless this chapter has demonstrated that Cathay Pacific's characters are at times contradictory in nature. For example, the airline's female employees are represented from a perspective that borrows from essentialist notions of both gender and race. The stereotypical notions of Asian women project attributes of subservience, exoticism, mystery, seduction, caring, nurturing and grace. It can be concluded that due to its repetition and pervasiveness this representation was deliberate, with the intention of associating these attributes with the level of hospitality and kind of service that the airline delivers similar to the constructed *Singapore Girl* (Batey, 2002). However on the other hand, the diversity and numerous intercultural experiences and multicultural identities projected through the individual employee stories when collated to construct Cathay Pacific as a character, constructs an identity that is global in the sense that it is constituted by diverse aspects of the 'local'. It appears that Cathay Pacific intends to position itself between the 'global' and the 'local'. There appears to be a projection of a particular kind of

service constructed upon essentialist and stereotypical notions of the Asian woman, and on the other hand one that also demonstrates a global, diverse and multicultural entity that is adept in intercultural interaction, the cultural mosaic that was suggested by Cayla and Eckhardt (2007). It has yet to be seen if this fluidity between the global and the local in terms of positioning extends to other aspects of Cathay Pacific's storytelling.

## **Chapter 8: Representative Techniques**

### **8. Introduction**

Wheeler (2009) asserts that brand is communicated not only through verbal elements but also visual. As all texts convey meaning, the still images and the moving image of the television commercials of the *People. They make an airline* campaign have many elements that convey meaning and in turn, serve to build the brand narrative through storytelling and project certain characteristics about the brand. These elements can be understood as mise-en-scène, which involves representative techniques to convey and attribute meaning. This chapter focuses on two forms of mise-en-scène, the first are the elements that relate to theatrical staging such as costume, setting, acting, props and lighting (Dix 2008, p. 11). The second relate to the visual properties that are distinct to film such as framing, camera movement and other photographic decisions (Dix 2008, p. 11). The elements of the former can be understood as signs following semiotic method, they convey meaning and make representations through iconography and symbolism.

This chapter focuses on the role of elements of mise-en-scène and focuses on the analysis of the meaning they convey to construct and project Cathay Pacific's brand. This chapter will first analyse the still images, focusing on costume, setting, acting and props. This is followed by the analysis of the moving image of the television commercials, concentrating on costume, setting, acting, props, lighting and elements of production such as framing, camera movement and editing.

### **8.1 Advertising, mise-en-scène and semiotic method**

Danesi and Beasley (2002) highlight that the semiotic investigation of advertising has become widespread (p. 20). Danesi and Beasley (2002) argue that brand and commercials are interpretable at two levels- a surface level and an underlying one, highlighting that the former involves the use of specific types of signs to create a personality for the product (p. 20). These reflect the underlying level, where concealed and embedded meaning of the text lies. Each sign is comprised of two parts, the signifier and the signified (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993). The signifier is an explicit and visible aspect of the sign, the signifier is the invisible but referred to tactic element of the sign (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993). Signs are found in all forms of representation and communication (Leeds-Hurwitz 1999). The elements of mise-en-scène, costume, setting, props, acting and lighting, in the still and moving image of Cathay Pacific's storytelling can therefore be understood as signs. There are three kinds of signs, two of which are relevant for this particular campaign; symbols and icons.

An icon refers to a sign that resembles its referent in some way, the signifier is made to look or sound like the signified (Danesi & Beasley 2002; Leeds-Hurwitz 1993). A symbol is a sign that has an arbitrary or conventional relation to some referent (Danesi & Beasley 2002; Leeds-



Hurwitz 1993). The categories of sign and icon are not mutually exclusive, signs can be partially iconic and symbolic. Signs do not occur singly, they occur in groups. A group or set of signs is known as a code. A code is a set of signs and rules for their use allows for the analysis of the relationships between signs to create and exchange meanings (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993).

Danesi and Beasley (2002) highlight that the use of symbolism in advertising is ubiquitous, advertising utilises symbols to refer to culture-specific meanings that they invoke. The use of symbolism and iconography in Cathay Pacific's symbolism therefore serves to communicate certain meanings to the consumer. The elements of mise-en-scène such as costume, setting, props, acting and lighting will be analysed to identify the use of symbolism and iconography, seeking to determine the meaning their use intends to project. For the moving image, this will be reinforced with the other representative techniques that refer to the production techniques, editing and camera work.

## **8.2 Still images in *People. They make an airline.***

This section will analyse the elements of mise-en-scène present in the still images of Cathay Pacific employees that accompany the employee stories on the *People. They make an airline* website. Specifically, this section will focus on clothing and props, then how the employees are portrayed as heroes and what role these elements play in the brand's storytelling.

Costumes and clothing play an important role in the projection of character and also in the development of the narrative. The employees that feature in the 'People. They make an airline' campaign are presented in a number of different outfits. The clothing that the employees are presented in both the television commercials and the online employee stories serve social, cultural and economic functions. According to Piatti-Farnell (2013) clothes are representational in nature, conveying meaning in a given situation (p. 231).

All 96 of the employees featured in the 'People. They make an airline' campaign have two photographs accompanying their employee story. The first photograph shows the employee in uniform, except the behind the scenes employees who are featured in professional corporate attire (Figures 8.1 & 8.2). The second photograph presents the employee in their own clothes, or a particular outfit that illustrates their cultural background, a hobby or part of their personality (Figures 8.1 & 8.2). The various Cathay Pacific uniforms feature prominently in the 'People. They make an airline' campaign. Each of the 96 employee story is accompanied by a picture of the employee in their uniform (except those who work behind the scenes and thus do not have a prescribed uniform). In the projection of brand storytelling, the function of uniforms is multifaceted.

Primarily, uniforms can also serve the function of a 'homogenizing mechanism' (Piatti-Farnell 2013, p. 234). In this sense, a uniform masks cultural differences that may be conveyed through clothing. By erasing the ability to individually express themselves through clothing, the uniform

allows a disparate group to be signified as a collective, held together with the sign of their uniforms. The concept of the uniform as enforcing a particular standard has parallels to the culturally homogenising and standardising powers of globalisation (Sengupta & Frith 1997; Hopper 2007; Baker 2000; Johnston et al 2000). However, there is far more at play in terms of the role the uniform plays. Clothing serves to communicate individuality and group membership (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 113). It can therefore be argued that a uniform is evidently a sign to communicate group membership, namely being a Cathay Pacific employee whereas the second image presents the employee in their own clothing that denotes individuality, specifically, cultural identity, self-expression and projects their individual personality and hobbies.

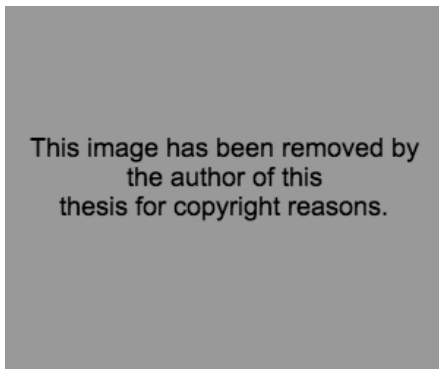


Figure 8.1: Cabin crew featured in their uniforms with three employees featured in their own clothing.

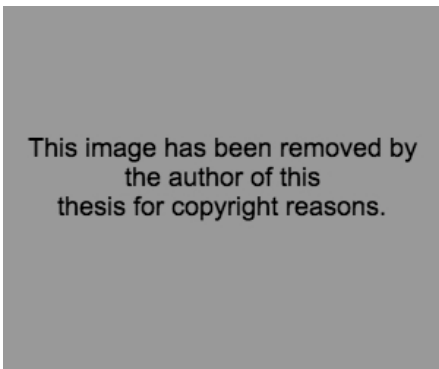


Figure 8.2: Pilots featured in their uniform with one featured in his own clothing.

As can be seen in Figures 8.1 and 8.2, juxtaposed with the employees in their uniform are also employees in their own clothing. This presents that while there is homogenisation, there is also heterogenisation. This is far more aligned with Ram's (2004) perception of the global-local dichotomy. Ram (2004) argues that the one-way approach is relevant on a structural level in the sense that homogenisation occurs institutionally and organisationally. This is demonstrated in this instance by the homogenising ability of the uniforms. On the other hand, Ram (2004) argues that the two-way approach operates on a symbolic-expressive level of social reality in

this sense can lead to the forging of new identities and cultural forms nonetheless the structure is standardised. This is also demonstrated here as while there is structural and organisational homogenisation in the uniforms, there is also heterogenisation on a symblic-expressive level as each employee is depicted in their own clothing denoting individual preferences and differences. In this sense, the uniform presents the global and the employees in their own clothes is the local. In featuring both images for each employee, Cathay Pacific projects in its storytelling that indeed it is global, but as it is their people that make the airline it is also local. Correspondingly, Cathay Pacific intends to project the notion that it is in the local and in the individual that makes up the global and the collective.

Cathay Pacific's uniforms function to mark a collective and homogenise, while symbolically it conveys meaning. Its design and colour palette are rich in meaning. As Figure 1 illustrates, the colour red features prominently. In Chinese culture red symbolises the sun, inspiration, expresses happiness and is used in celebrations such as in New Year's and in the bridal gown (Kommonene 2011, p. 370-1). The colour red also serves to depict the employees as heroes as per Propp's functions (Berger, 1997). Red is regarded to have the ability to ward off evil, the walls of the Forbidden City are red for this reason and red underwear should be worn for luck in one's "bad luck year" according to the Chinese Zodiac Kommonene (2011, p. 372). Following Propp's schema, the characters in the "Transference" stage use a magical agent, red clothing affords Cathay Pacific's heroes luck in their coming "Struggle" due to arising complications (Fiske 1987, p. 136). The colour red shares luck and brings happiness, which is an ultimate endeavour for Cathay Pacific's heroic characters. The uniform as well allows for the completion of the final stage "Recognition" as the uniform acts as a marker for the brand's heroes.

Clothing can be understood as a sign, thereby conveying a particular meaning to the audience. Clothing rarely conveys complete meanings in isolation of garments, therefore by appearing in combinations and in contexts, the individual items convey meaning through their juxtaposition more than through unique characteristics (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 111). This demonstrates how individual signs are analysed in a system of signs, thus analysing the code. Cathay Pacific acknowledges that its uniforms, along with the brush-wing aircraft tail are the most recognised symbol of the airline's brand (Cathay Pacific 2013). The uniform is said to reflect a modern Asian airline and be stylish, elegant and contemporary (Cathay Pacific 2013). The uniform reflects an Asian heritage with Western influences. For example, jackets are featured with a modern take on the mandarin collar, a traditional motif in Chinese fashion (Cathay Pacific 2013). While suit jackets and ties incorporate an almost globally universal outfit into the prescribed uniform.

Therefore these garments must be read as a code with particular consideration of the juxtaposition (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 111). This juxtaposition and combination of these distinct garments reflecting both Asian and Western influences suggests that while the uniform has a homogenising ability in terms of masking cultural differences that could be presented in clothing choices, it additionally demonstrates that the homogenising uniform actually consists of a

combination of different influences rather than from one particular culture over another. This suggests that through the uniform Cathay Pacific presents its existence within a space between global and local. It is to say that the Cathay Pacific collective is a combination of both global and local, while the images of the employees out of uniform further engrains the local in the form of heterogeneity.

The 96 images of the employees in a casual state- out of their uniform or corporate wear- affords the audience the ability to take a view into the private lives, otherwise unseen by the regular customer. Clothing can be analysed as a vehicle to convey identity as it can establish what and where the person is in social terms, Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) argues that people become socially significant for one another through the external signs they display (p. 113). The image in casual clothing serves to communicate those socially significant signs and therefore can build familiarity and consolidates relatability. The audience not only hears that the employee has similar concerns as a fellow human being, but sees them. While this is in a photograph, it in a sense puts a face to a story serving to characterise and personify the brand.

Leeds-Hurwitz (1993) discusses that clothing can convey particularly subtle details of sociopolitical identity (p. 191). Clothing can be used to express a particular political position or cultural identity. As suggested earlier, the juxtaposition between the employees in and out of their uniform allows for the representation of cultural difference and identity. Figures 8.3, 8.4, 8.5 and 8.6 present employees in a variety of outfits that as a collection depict a multitude of cultures. From Alpna's sari in Figure 8.3, to Nancy's cheongsam to practice martial arts in Figure 8.4, to Aya's Japanese kimono in Figure 8.5 to Daniel's costume for Chinese theatre in Figure 8.6, these all together serve to project that the people that make up Cathay Pacific's airline are diverse. As symbols they all relate to Asian cultures. These particular outfits allow Cathay Pacific to demonstrate that not only the employee make up of the airline is culturally diverse but also that when the employees are not in their "homogenising global" uniforms their cultural identity and difference is not eradicated as the proponents of cultural globalisation as homogenisation would argue (Baker 2000; Hopper 2007). This further suggests the continual and fluid movement between the global and the local.

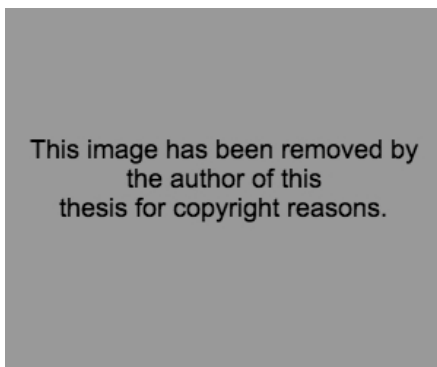


Figure 8.3: Alpna Matthews, Account Manager

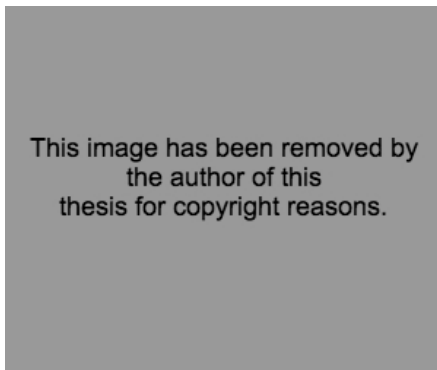


Figure 8.4: Nancy Tsou, Supervisor Airport Services

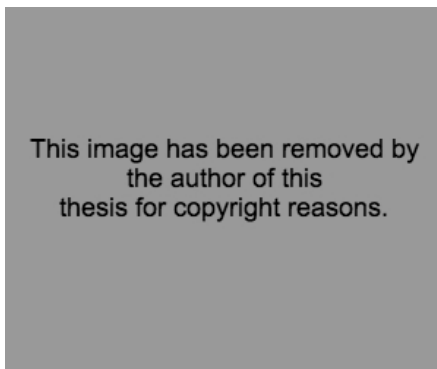


Figure 8.5: Aya Kitamichi, Flight Attendant

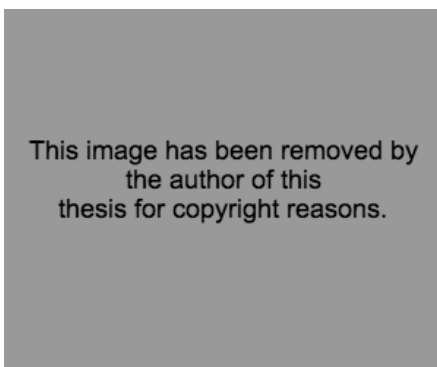


Figure 8.6: Daniel Teng, Flight Purser

The out of uniform still images of the employees are not only in outfits that have connotations of cultural identification, some of the employees wear costumes, or specialised outfits that are worn for a particular activity. Piatti-Farnell (2013) suggests that the role of costumes in soliciting audience response is undeniable and that costumes are both contextual and conceptual agents that communicate information to viewers (p. 236). These images feature both costumes and props that function as symbols to communicate the particular hobby or interest that the

employee partakes in. Figure 8.7 features Ellen who is wearing a wet suit and is featured with scuba diving gear on and holding a scuba mask, Figure 8.8 features Lynn wearing hiking boots, using walking poles and carrying a backpack and Karen, featured in Figure 8.9 is pictured in a wetsuit holding a surfboard. In each of these images the costumes and props act as signs, together when analysed as a code they serve to convey particular meanings.

Appadurai (1986) argues that 'things have no meanings apart from those than human transactions, attributions, and motivations endow them with' (cited in Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 129). Figures 8.7, 8.8 and 8.9 all present objects that have a particular use, for example, Lynn's hiking boots are for hiking and Karen's surfboard is for surfing. However, these are vehicles capable of conveying meaning, their social meaning do not necessarily have any direction connection to their use or physical attributes (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1993, p. 129). Ellen's wet suit and scuba gear forms a code that presents the equipment necessary to scuba dive however it also symbolises the cultural notions of exploration, discovery, curiosity and adventure (Figure 8.7). Lynn's hiking boots, walking poles and backpack presents the equipment required for a hike, as a code they serve to symbolise the notions that can be associated to hiking, similar to scuba diving, exploration, discovery, curiosity and adventure (Figure 8.8). Karen's wet suit and surfboard form a code that indicates surfing, however they symbolise surfing's cultural associations, relaxation, laid back attitude and thrill seeking (Figure 8.9).

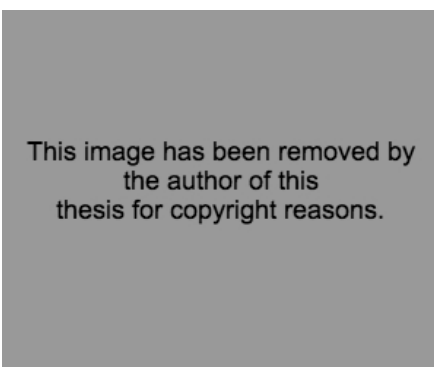


Figure 8.7: Ellen Hsu, Flight Attendant

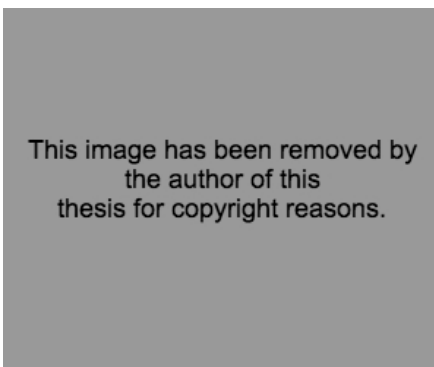


Figure 8.8: Lynn Chen, Inflight Service Manager

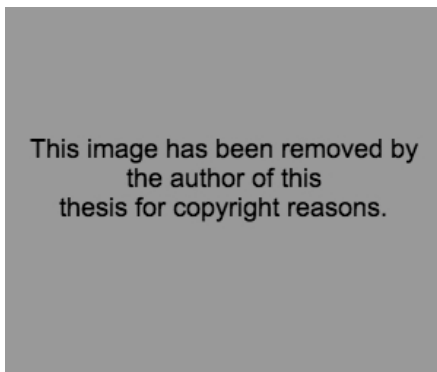


Figure 8.9: Karen Bishop, First Officer

The codes that involve costumes and props in Figures 8.7, 8.8 and 8.9 communicate heroic qualities onto the subject. From Ellen's scuba diving gear (Figure 8.7), Lynn's mountain hiking (Figure 8.8) and Karen's surfing (Figure 8.9) each of these employees is pictured with costumes that denotes undertaking difficult, skill demanding and often strenuous activities. In addition to the repetition of the association of adventure, discovery and curiosity, this parallels Propp's sphere of action, in that the hero 'attempts difficult tasks' in the "Struggle" stage of Propp's narrative schema (Fiske 1987). These symbolic codes serve to project certain characteristics of these employees that in turn are ultimately attributed to the brand (Miles & Mangold, 2005). The cultural meaning relating to these symbolic codes also relates to the narrative of the call to adventure (Sachs, 2012) and Propp's schema (Fiske, 1987).

### **8.3 Cathay Pacific's television commercials**

This section of the chapter will focus on the analysis of the moving image of the television commercials of the 'People. They make an airline' campaign. While each television commercial has a narrative of its own, this section of the chapter will discuss how the television commercials contribute to the overall storytelling of the Cathay Pacific brand through the representative techniques of *mise-en-scène*. The representative techniques that will be focused on our setting, costume, props and production techniques such as camera work and editing. Three out of the six television commercials have already been analysed in previous chapters so to avoid overlap, this section will analyse the last three remaining television commercials that feature flight attendants, Grace, Kelly and Barbara.

In the analysis of narrative, Propp's study on the narrative structure of fairytales remains beneficial here even when analysing moving image. From chapters 6 and 7 it has been raised that Propp argues that the character-function is the most elemental unit of a fairytale (Berger, 1997). For the analysis at hand it is important to relate this to moving image. Berger (1997) transposes Propp's notion character-function to the analysis of the narrative of moving image, asserting that the most elementary unit of the medium is the shot, 'the manner in which a camera follows some course of action' (p. 113). A shot can be defined as a segment of action in a moving image narrative that exists between cuts, dissolves, or other editorial decisions that

end one shot and begin a new one (Berger 1997, p. 113). These will be helpful for when analysing the meaning of the production techniques and how they contribute to the narrative.

Table 8.1: Meaning of Shots and Camera Work; reproduced from Berger 1997, p. 114

	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
<b>Shot</b>		
Close-up	Small part of body	Intimacy
Extreme close-up	Very small part of body	Inspection
Medium shot	Most of body	Personal Relations
Full shot	All of body	Social Relations
Long shot	Setting and characters	Context, scope
Z-axis	Vertical action toward viewer	Involvement
Wipe	Image wiped off screen	Imposed end
Dissolve	Image dissolves into next one	Weaker ending
<b>Camera Work</b>		
Pan down	Camera looks down on X	Power of the viewer
Pan up	Camera looks up at X	Weakness of the viewer
Dolly in	Camera moves in	Observation
Fade in	Image appears on screen	Beginning
Fade out	Image disappears from screen	Ending
Cut	Switch from one image to the next	Excitement

The commercial featuring Grace opens with opens with a long shot that pans up to Grace on a snow-covered mountain. The long shot serves to present the setting as vast and imposing while the pan up and focus on Grace serves to put her in a position of power (Table 8.1). The vast, imposing and intimidating landscape makes Grace look insignificant however when she begins to snowboard, building and taking turns at speed, it demonstrates that she is mastering and dominating the difficult landscape (p. 8.11). Dix (2008) states that in film, settings 'are not merely inert containers of or backdrops to action but themselves charged with significance' (p.



13). The viewer is then transferred from the snowy mountain to a cold, grey and dull airport where all other passengers are dressed in varying tones of grey (Figures 8.13 & 8.14). The grey as a sign, symbolises 'dullness, obscurity, mistiness and mystery' (Danesi & Beasley 2003). Grace's red uniform makes her stand out considerably from her surroundings (Figure 28). Similarly, Grace also stands out while snowboarding, as apart from her white ski pants and a white helmet, her jacket and snowboard however are the same red of her uniform (Figures 8.10 & 8.11). This juxtaposition functions on two levels symbolically, first it suggests that Grace, as a hero, stands out from conformity and mediocrity.

Grace is presented as a hero and a helper, fulfilling these Proppian character-functions in the narrative of the television commercial (Berger, 1997). In the commercial Grace is featured snowboarding down a ski slope at speed (Figure 8.11). The setting changes to an airport, where while on a travelator Grace sees a soft-toy monkey fall out of a male passenger's luggage without him knowing. Grace, with speed and agility runs to pick up the monkey and return it to the man's luggage, all without him knowing. A close up of Grace smiling and looking away from the camera denotes intimacy and an emotional moment (Figure 8.15; Table 8.1; Fulton, Huisman, Murphet & Dunn 2005). Grace says on the voiceover, 'it's not what you do in life but how you do it.' Her costume not only serves to make her stand out by also denotes her psychological perspective (Piatti-Farnell 2013). This reinforces the visual elements that allow Grace to stand out in terms of her bravery and domination of the imposing surroundings, standing out against conformity in the airport and going above and beyond to return the monkey without needing recognition for the act.

The soft toy monkey as a prop and sign serves two purposes. One serves to reveal something about the character (Dix 2008). The man appears in a suit, the symbol of the soft toy monkey connotes associations of a child's toy, of family and that perhaps the man is on his way back to his family. His costume, a suit, symbolises that he is probably a businessman and the monkey symbolises his family or children. By returning the monkey it suggests to the viewer that Grace, and vicariously Cathay Pacific, are concerned with the passenger and his family.

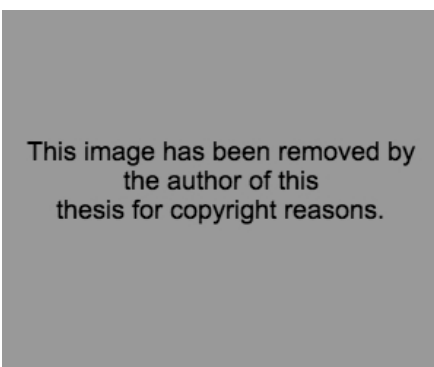


Figure 8.10: Grace 1; *Television Commercial*

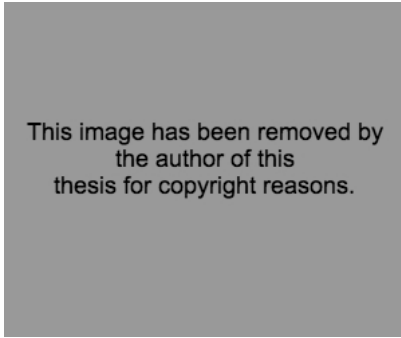


Figure 8.11: Grace 2

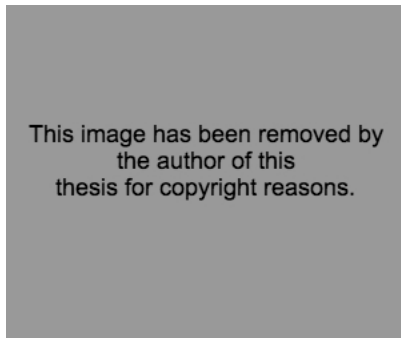


Figure 8.12: Grace 3

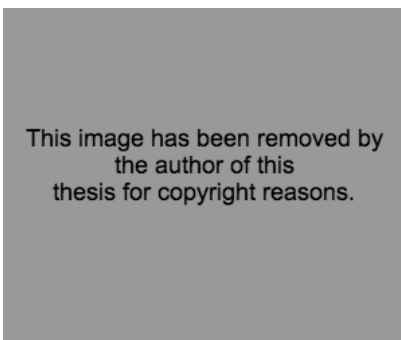


Figure 8.13: Grace 4

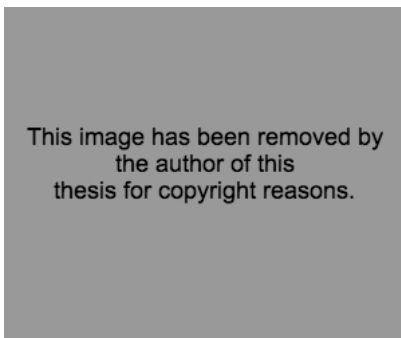


Figure 8.14 Grace 5

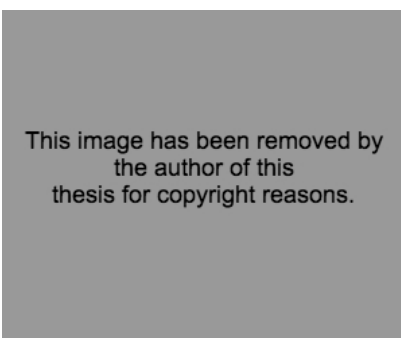


Figure 8.15 Grace 6

Dix (2008) states that settings also serve 'to specify geographic locations, socio-economic status and occupation of protagonists, settings may also work more subtly to symbolise their psychological conditions' (p. 14). Barbara's television commercial begins with Barbara explaining that she used to be a report as the viewer sees a motorbike speeding through what appears to be the narrow streets of an Asian city to get to a motor vehicle accident where a truck has lost its load. The dark, low-lit setting evokes foreboding while the ominous setting symbolises stress however when Barbara arrives at the scene and questions witnesses she is calm and collected (Dix 2008, p. 18). This presents that Barbara, and vicariously Cathay Pacific, are calm and adept in stressful situations. The setting also serves to suggest psychological conditions in terms of the transition between the dark streets and when the viewer is transported to the interior of the plane. The interior of the plane is the opposite, it is calm, with higher lighting symbolising comfort, safety and optimism and tranquility (Dix 2008; Fulton et al 2005).

Dix (2008) suggests that props also reveal character and function to substantiate the narrative (p. 14). Additionally, Dix (2008) highlights that the function of props can be informational with respect to the character but can also take on expressionistic power (p. 15).

Grace and Barbara's television commercials both use a similar technique that represents excitement and mobility. Where Grace snowboards with speed and agility, Barbara speeds through narrow streets on a motorbike. This breaks conventions of gender of what women may be stereotyped to do (Grohman 2009). Both partake in activities which involve props that connote a daring lifestyle in Grace's snowboard and Barbara's motorbike. The fast cutting and changes in angles, gives the impression of excitement, exhilaration, urgency with slight disorientation for the audience (Berger, 1997, p. 114).

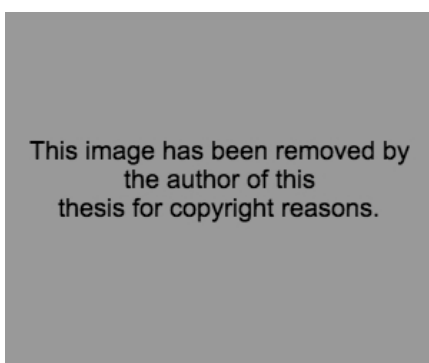


Figure 8.16: Barbara 1

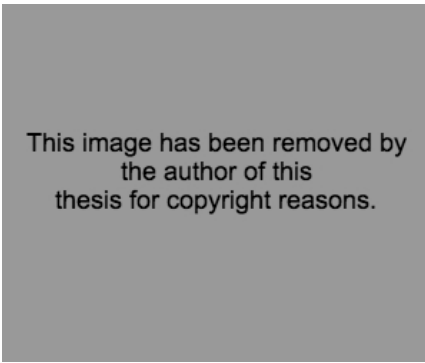


Figure 8.17: Barbara 2

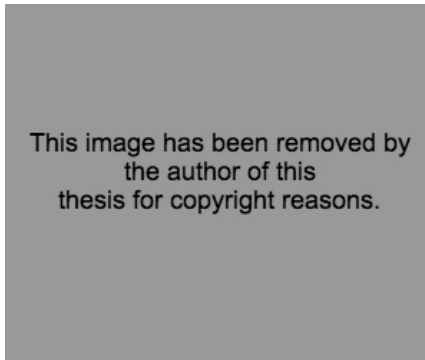


Figure 8.18: Barbara 3

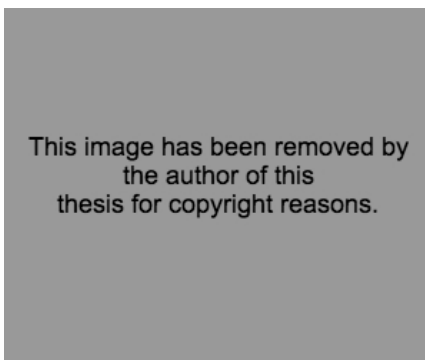


Figure 8.19: Barbara 4

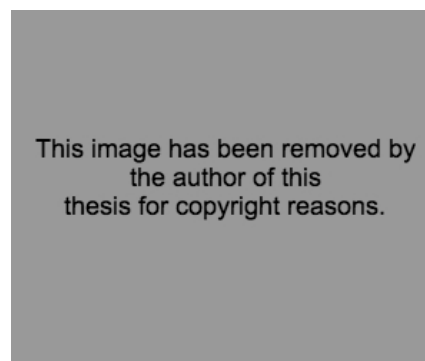


Figure 8.20: Barbara 5

In the commercial that features Kelly, the setting serves to convey a particular significance (Dix, 2008). Kelly's commercial begins with Kelly enjoying herself at an amusement park, the viewer is told through Kelly's voiceover that she used to work at an amusement park as she searched for some excitement in her life (Figures 8.21 & 8.22). The setting as a sign is relevant in conveying both a psychological position and the cultural association of what the amusement

park represents (Dix 2008; Leeds-Hurwitz 1993). The amusement park and the rapid cutting from frame to frame serve to convey excitement, joy and fun (Table 8.1). The viewer is then transported to a tarmac where special guests on a red carpet surround a Cathay Pacific plane. The props such as the plane itself with bright lights, reference the amusement park, the red carpet and ribbon cutting ceremony connote importance, excitement and exclusivity. This suggests that Kelly, as she is now a flight attendant, has found the excitement she searched for.

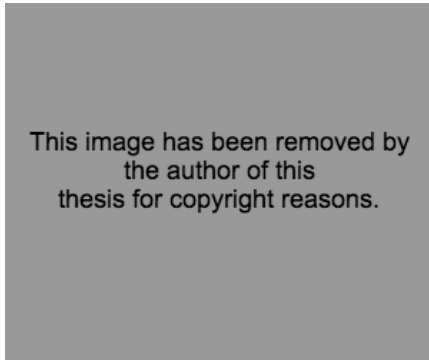


Figure 8.21: Kelly 1

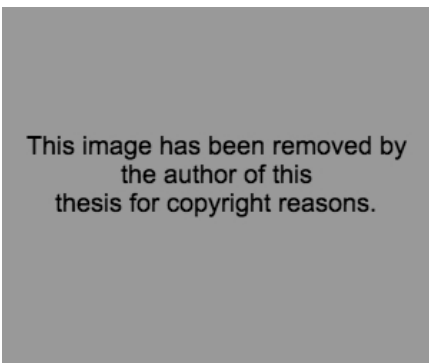


Figure 8.22: Kelly 2

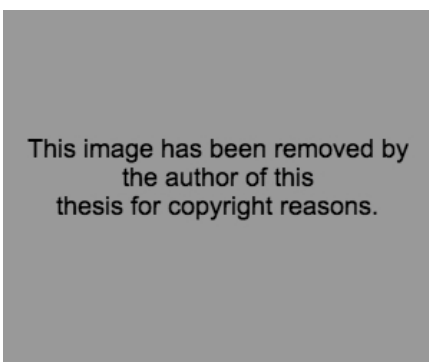


Figure 8.23: Kelly 3

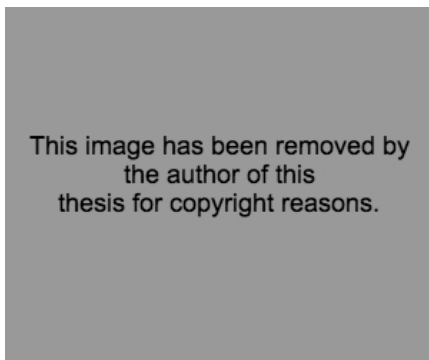


Figure 8.24: Kelly 4

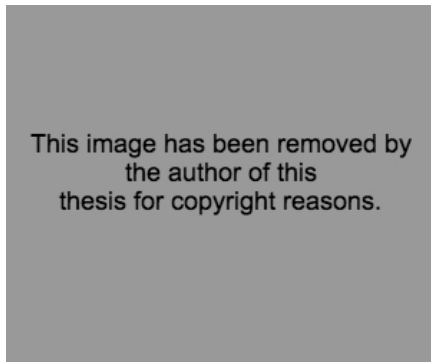


Figure 8.25: Kelly 5

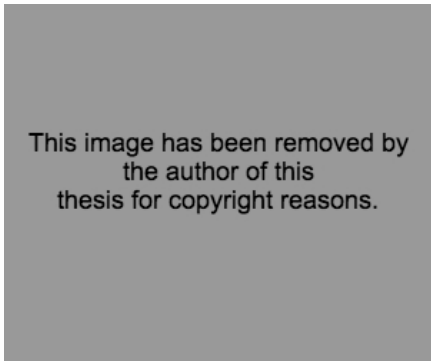


Figure 8.26: Kelly 6

Dix (2008) suggests that a setting often serves at the most basic level to reinforce the plausibility of particular kinds of story (p. 13). Therefore as an airline, it could perhaps be expected that the television commercials would contain abundant imagery of aircraft. However the other 5 television commercials featuring Alice, Nigel, Nadia, Grace and Barbara never actually show the exterior of a Cathay Pacific aircraft. In Nigel's commercial a small light aircraft is shown and so is a flight simulator. In Alice and Grace's commercials, the setting moves from a school and a snow-covered mountain to an airport presenting. In Nadia and Barbara's commercials, the cabin is the last setting. Therefore, Kelly's commercial is the only one to include external imagery of a Cathay Pacific aircraft. The imagery of the aircraft as a sign is an icon for an in-service aircraft. At the same time, it is a symbol for travel, adventure, exploration and discovery. The bright lights around the aircraft reference back to the carousel at the amusement park. This serves to associate the excitement of the amusement park with the plane and by extension, with travel with Cathay Pacific. Like the mentor in Sachs (2012) ideal storytelling, Kelly seeks to share this excitement to others as she intends to call her passengers to adventure by sharing in the excitement of flying.

#### **8.4 Summary**

This chapter has presented the role that representative techniques that constitute mise-en-scène play in storytelling. In terms of brand, both verbal and visual elements communicate meaning and are attributed with cultural meaning (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993; Wheeler 2009). The elements of mise-en-scène such as clothing, setting, props, lighting, framing, editing and

camera work serve to contribute to the building of the narrative, project certain characteristics about the brand vicariously through its representatives, its employees (Lyth 2009; Miles & Mangold 2005) and associate certain cultural meaning to the brand.

Clothing and costumes played an important role in presenting Cathay Pacific within a space between global and local. The combination of both Asian and Western influences in addition to the images of the employees out of uniform further engrains the local in the form of heterogeneity. The images of a number of employees served to present them as heroes following Propp's narrative schema. It also functions to associate the notions of exploration, adventure, discovery, curiosity, thrill seeking and relaxation to the brand. These notions align with the predominant subtheme of Challenges, reinforcing this brand message and Sachs' (2012) idea that brand storytelling functions as a call to adventure for consumers.

The television commercials are rich in symbolism, serving to build the narrative, associate notions of adventure and excitement to Cathay Pacific and air travel and projecting the characteristics of standing out against conformity and mediocrity, being daring and seeking exhilaration, and adept at being calm in difficult and challenging situations. The three commercials analysed here each have their own narrative but contribute to Cathay Pacific's broader storytelling by evoking similar structure that presents an adventure to some form of fulfillment. Kelly finds the excitement she searched for in her life, Grace acknowledges that fulfillment is less about substance and more about actions, 'it's not what you do in life but how you do it' and Barbara continues to strive for perfection, demonstrated by when she states, 'the challenge is still the same, getting it right'.

## **Chapter 9: Discussion**

### **9. Introduction**

'Brands are the sum of all impressions', argued Grow (2008). Branding is a holistic practice; it is verbal, visual and experiential, with the ability to be extended over many touch points (Aaker, 1996; Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000; Wheeler, 2009). Storytelling functions holistically to communicate messages relating to the brand over these many touch points. Therefore this investigation into the ways that storytelling serves in the projection and construction of brand has involved the analysis of three distinct components of storytelling, namely, narrative devices, characters and personification, and representative techniques.

Brand can be understood as a cultural text and therefore does not exist in isolation from its surrounding socio-cultural environment (O'Reilly, 2005). This chapter therefore seeks to bring together the analysis of the distinct components of Cathay Pacific's storytelling in order to position them in the broader socio-cultural context and theoretical framework. This chapter explains how storytelling functions to attribute cultural meaning to products and how the combination of these three storytelling components serves in the projection and construction of brand.

This chapter discusses Cathay Pacific's storytelling as the sum of its many parts. It first discusses how storytelling and brand can attribute cultural meaning to products. It then outlines and analyses how the components of Cathay Pacific's storytelling serve to construct and project brand when they are read together. This chapter then analyses and comments on the broader socio-cultural context of globalization and the strategy of glocalisation. This chapter then discusses how storytelling can create consumer experiences.

#### **9.1 Cultural meaning and storytelling**

Hearn (2008) argues that brand can be understood as the process in which resonant cultural meaning is linked to products through the use of narratives and images. Cathay Pacific's storytelling is an example of how narratives and images create, and subsequently are attributed to a certain product. Cathay Pacific's storytelling serves to instil an expectation of what the experience of the airline's service would be like (Caru & Cova, 2003). It is now essential to outline and describe how brand and storytelling can attribute cultural meaning to the experience of air travel.

While Williamson (1978) and Goldman (1992) discussed advertising rather than storytelling, their explanations on how advertising functions to attach cultural meaning to a product are useful to explain how storytelling does the same. Nonetheless, the storytelling analysed in this investigation has been part of an advertising campaign. Williamson (1978) and Goldman (1992) use semiotic method to analyse the formal relations between different elements that serve in the



production of meaning (McFall, 2004). Williamson (1978) and Goldman (1992) suggest that advertising functions to attach a cultural value to a product or service to demonstrate meaning beyond its ordinary use. According to Williamson (1978) advertising invokes and associates common cultural meanings with particular products and services. Therefore the product can be understood as the signifier and the cultural value, the signified. Once signification occurs in advertising, the product acquires cultural meaning and becomes a sign.

Frith (1997) suggests that cultural meaning is attached to various forms of communication including advertising, arguing that advertising tells us what products signify in our culture (p. 3). McCracken (1986) argues that this cultural meaning is drawn from a culturally constituted world and attributed to a consumer good. This is particularly useful as it presents the influence of a broader cultural context in the attribution of meaning upon products. Storytelling also draws its meaning from the culturally constituted world to attach meaning to products. This is exemplified in Cathay Pacific's Orientalist and essentialist representation of Asian women, which borrowed from the broader cultural context of such representations that are pervasive in many distinct cultural forms such as television commercials and film (Kim & Chung, 2003; Wang, 2013).

Brands can be read as cultural texts that are culturally produced (O'Reilly, 2005). Brands are a form of communication, derived from the culturally constituted world and link cultural meaning to products (Hearn, 2008; Holt, 2004). Furthermore, brands are understood to infuse meaning into products (Salzer-Morling & Strannegard, 2002, p. 224). O'Reilly (2005) and Smith (2011) echo this view that brands have the ability to transform products through what they represent, not for what they intrinsically are. Therefore brand appears to resemble in function the signified as discussed by Williamson (1978) and Goldman (1992) in their discussion on cultural meaning in advertising.

Holt (2004) argues that brands are constructed by cultural myths and stories. These cultural myths also derive from the culturally constituted world (Klein, 1999; Smith, 2011). Holt's (2004) cultural myths resemble what Sachs' (2012) refers to as storytelling and what Smith (2011) refers to as brand narrative. In this investigation, storytelling began as the communication of brand across different components. After the analysis that demonstrates that storytelling is derived from the culturally constituted world and serves to associate cultural meanings to brand, it is evident that storytelling functions to both construct brand and project certain cultural associations (Hearn, 2008; Holt, 2004). Storytelling therefore represents the interaction between brand and the broader cultural context. The following subsection discusses this interaction in relation to the components of storytelling and how they construct and project brand.

## **9.2 Cathay Pacific's storytelling: the sum of all impressions**

Cathay Pacific's storytelling is constituted by three components. Individually each component forms part of the storytelling, each functioning differently with distinct implications. Narrative devices serve to provide the thematic organisation of the storytelling. Insomuch, narrative

devices provide the structural foundations for the storytelling. The central theme of the storytelling consists of subthemes that through repetition and reinforcement ultimately become the predominant subthemes in the storytelling (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000). The combination between the narrative structure and the communication of the central theme creates an overarching narrative that functions to project certain values, attributes and characteristics that are intended to be associated with the brand (Aaker, 1996). The narrative devices provide the thematic organisation, the structure and the sequence for which characters operated.

Characters are essential in Cathay Pacific's storytelling as they put actions of the narrative into play and also serve to embody the airline's determined characteristics, personality and traits (Lyth, 2009). In Cathay Pacific's storytelling, the characters are employees who through association bestow the airline with human characteristics. This role in the personification of the brand also functions to construct the Cathay Pacific brand as a character. Cathay Pacific as a character is therefore constructed through the collective characteristics and personality traits of its employees. The characterised employees reflect the airline and the airline reflects them (Miles & Mangold, 2005).

Representative techniques such as the elements of *mise-en-scène* such as clothing, setting, props, lighting, framing, editing and camera work have a complimentary role to both narrative devices and the characters. The meaning conveyed through signs served to build the narrative and elements such as clothing aid in the characterisation of the characters (Dix 2008). In this complimentary role these representative techniques further enriched the brand's storytelling with additional cultural meaning. As a holistic experience, brand was also communicated implicitly through representative techniques and their symbolism and iconography.

Cathay Pacific's storytelling presented two story arcs. The first relating to the predominant subthemes and of the central theme of facing challenges, improving oneself and acting in a caring and thoughtful way. The second related to intercultural interaction, cultural diversity and the interaction between the "global" and the "local". The next two subsections will discuss how each of these story arcs is constructed across the components of storytelling.

#### *9.2.1 Story arc 1; adventures, heroes and mentors*

The combination of the three components presents a multilayered and multifaceted story. In Chapter Seven it was suggested that Cathay Pacific's central theme communicated the message along the lines of: 'We encounter challenges often in our everyday lives, however by constantly striving to improve ourselves we are able to deliver friendly, thoughtful and caring service to our customers.' This central theme projected to the consumer who the brand is, what it stands for and what it cares about (Fog et al, 2005). This central theme became the common thread for all brand communication. When combined with the narrative structure, the storytelling began to align with Propp's schema of the traditional fairytale (Berger, 1997; Fiske, 1987). This

structure presented the employees as heroes, facing challenges and overcoming them. It was then determined that the employees were depicted as heroes and then as Mentors. The storytelling therefore resembled Sachs (2012) storytelling ideals that suggest that every brand's storytelling needs a brand hero, who should be the consumer the story intends to speak to. The brand as a character in the storytelling is instead a Mentor, guiding the hero and calling him or her to adventure (Sachs 2012). The narrative devices were not the only component serving to construct and project this story demonstrating that many components together construct the storytelling.

The representative techniques utilised in the television commercials, particularly the three that feature Grace, Barbara and Kelly through symbolism reinforce the notion of the storytelling progressing along lines of a hero undertaking an adventure. This builds the narrative but the representative techniques additionally, project certain characteristics that relate to the development of this narrative. Elements of mise-en-scene project the characteristics of standing out against conformity and mediocrity, being daring and seeking exhilaration, and adept at being calm in difficult and challenging situations. Similar to Sachs' (2012) call to adventure, in her commercial Kelly searches for excitement in her life, she finds it when she becomes a flight attendant. However, for Kelly now the best kind of excitement is excitement shared with her passengers, here she is like the Mentor calling a new hero, namely the consumer, to their adventure and search for excitement.

#### *9.2.2 Story arc 2; Intercultural interaction, cultural diversity, the global and the local*

The first story arc related to the call to adventure and the potential for one to become a hero. This story arc, which is similarly constructed across the components of storytelling relates to the subthemes of Encountering and Culture. When the first story arc relates to the adventure, this story arc perhaps relates to the potential encounters that one may have on an adventure. The subthemes that feature in this story arc also serve to associate certain characteristics to the brand. Cathay Pacific's employees were characterised to project these characteristics associated to the brand (Miles & Mangold, 2005). The first aspect was the essentialist and Orientalist representations of Asian women including the projection of stereotypical notions of Asian women such as subservience, exoticism, mystery, seduction, caring, nurturing and grace (Kim & Chung,). As a symbolic representative that embodied the airline, this representation served to associate these characteristics to the kind of hospitality that the airline delivered. It is to say, service that had exotic and seductive appeals while being personal, graceful and nurturing.

On the other hand, the construction of Cathay Pacific as a brand vicariously through the employees and the representative technique of clothing served to project a cultural mosaic (Cayla & Eckhardt, 2007). The diversity and numerous intercultural experiences and multicultural identities projected through the individual employee stories when collated constructed Cathay Pacific as a character of a global, diverse and multicultural entity that is adept in intercultural interaction. The combination of both Asian and Western influences in the

Cathay Pacific uniforms, for example presents a syncretism between the 'global' and the 'local'. This story arc relates directly to the airline's glocalisation strategy, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

### **9.3 Blending the local and global through storytelling**

The importance of cultural, social and historical contexts have been acknowledged as essential to the analysis of brand (Schoroeder and Salzer-Morling 2006). Cathay Pacific as a global brand faces the challenge of marketing its brand to distinct markets and diverse cultures. In marketing their offering across distinct realities, multinational corporations have to decide to what extent their marketing strategy and brand positioning will be standardised across global operations, localised to appeal to local sensibilities or a combination of the two known as glocalisation. It is important to determine which strategy *People. They make an airline* took and to determine the cultural implications of this.

Aaker, Benet-Martinez and Gerolera (2001) observed that culture plays a vital role in the construction of brand personality. Cathay Pacific's storytelling addressed this predicament in two components of the storytelling, namely by means of the construction of the brand as a character and through the representative technique of clothing. Cayla and Eckhardt (2007) assert that Asian brands are building upon both global and local appeals and 'Asianizing their positioning' by attempting to appear less belonging to a country and more to a region (p. 218). This appears true in Cathay Pacific's storytelling. The airline states that it is based in Hong Kong but the character it projects is one that represents many nationalities, ethnicities and cultural backgrounds (Cathay Pacific, n.d.). Through the subthemes of Encountering and Culture there are additionally numerous stories of international travel, migration, intercultural interaction and mentioning one's own cultural identity. These serve to produce a myriad of fusions between the global and the local suggesting a strategy of glocalisation and a character of hybridisation (Ram, 2004).

Cathay Pacific's brand character was constructed vicariously through its employees as a collective. As a result, Cathay Pacific's character reflected the diversity of their employees. This ultimately provided for a fluid interaction between the 'global' and the 'local'. Hybridisation can be understood as 'the ways in which forms become separated from existing practices and recombine with new forms in new practices' or as the fusion of two previously relatively distinct forms, styles, or identities, cross-cultural contact, which often occurs across national borders as well as cultural boundaries (Rowe & Schelling, 1991 cited in Pieterse, 1995, p. 49; Kraidy, 2005, p. 5). It is represented in examples such as when Alice Li, explains that she was born in Hong Kong but moved to Britain when she was a young teenager. She explains that she feels that she can identify with both cultures, therefore a hybrid.

While Ram (2004) has argued that the global-local dichotomy are valid however they operate on distinct societal levels. On one hand, Ram (2004) argues that the one-way approach is relevant on a structural level in the sense that homogenisation occurs institutionally and organisationally.

On the other hand, Ram (2004) argues that the two-way approach operates on a symbolic-expressive level of social reality in this sense can lead to the forging of new identities and cultural forms nonetheless the structure is standardised. The juxtaposition between the employees featured in uniforms and in casual attire, presented the institutional homogeneity in the uniforms and symbolic-expressive heterogeneity out of the uniforms. However, the presence of the second story arc, the repetition of the subthemes of Encountering and Culture and the characterisation of the brand itself as a syncretic combination of numerous distinct cultural identities can best explained by Kapferer's (2005) concept of the 'post-global brand.'

The 'post-global brand' refers to the brand that no longer tries to adhere unreservedly to the model of total globalisation, as this is no longer perceived as ideal (Kapferer 2005, p. 321). The post-global brand, according to Kapferer (2005), refers to those brands that imply global standardisation but have also distanced from such extreme positions of global standardisation and correspond today, more appropriately to 'selective globalisation' (p. 322). The concept of the post-global brand can be understood as a strategy of glocalisation however instead of tailoring products and personality in different markets, Cathay Pacific has determined to construct and project a syncretic identity that reflects cultural diversity. It is to say, its identity is global, in that global is constituted by a plethora of distinct "local" identities. Cathay Pacific's glocalisation strategy provides a definition for the brand that is itself a glocalised synthesis that even when a brand appears to be global, closer examinations reveal that often the product is far from standardised and conversely, 'a composite, hybrid or highly adapted product' (Kapferer, 2005, p. 321-2).

#### **9.4 Storytelling and the consumer experience**

According to Schmidt (1999) culturally constituted brands are 'first and foremost providers of experiences' (p. 30). Schmitt (1999) outlines the multiple ways in which consumers may experience brands and delineates five dimensions of experience: thinking, feeling, sensing, acting, and relating. Caru and Cova (2003) suggest that experiences of consumption are not isolated but rather develop like a narrative in which the brand functions as a script. To put this in the terms used in this investigation, brand can act as a guide in experiences of consumption. Therefore storytelling can serve the purpose of creating a particular experience for the customer. Cathay Pacific's storytelling creates three experiential elements, the first is that the storytelling serves to build relationships and emotional connections, the second is that it serves to appeal to consumer's desire to seek out higher level values and creating a social context.

Fog et al (2005) and Sachs (2012) argue that storytelling brands build relationships. Fog et al (2005) stressed that a brand's storytelling builds emotional relationships, which in turn develops a brand's value and maintains its equity. For Sachs (2012) a storytelling brand allows consumers to relate and connect with a brand and its purpose. An example of a device used to build emotional relationships between the consumer and the brand is the antenarrative form of

the narrative structure. This form was described by Grow (2008) as an example of living stories with the ability of providing the audience with emotional promises. The fluid and collective production of these living stories serves to create the impression of honesty, intimacy and that the stories are authentic. The hands-on nature of these stories and the recounting of legitimate experiences facilitate consumers being able to relate to the employees and their experiences and consequently relate vicariously to the brand. The authenticity, honest, realistic stories are relatable and serve to build relationships between the brand and consumers by appealing to consumers desire for brand sincerity (Sachs 2012).

Sachs (2012) argues that brand storytelling has reached a point where storytellers seek to appeal 'to higher values and believing in the desire of the audiences to seek truth, take on challenges, and understand complexity' (p. 127). In explaining how storytellers seek to appeal to higher values and the like, Sachs (2012) refers to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.

Table 9.1: Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs relevant to brand storytelling. Reproduced from Sachs (2012, p. 129-131).

Higher Level Need	Description
Wholeness	The need to feel sufficient as an individual and connected to others as part of something larger, to move beyond self-interest.
Perfection	The need to seek mastery of skill or vocation, often through hard work or struggle.
Justice	The need to live by high moral values and to see the world ordered by morality, to overthrow tyranny.
Richness	The need to examine life in all of its complexity and diversity, to seek new experiences and overcome prejudice.
Simplicity	The need to understand the underlying essence of things.
Beauty	The need to experience and create aesthetic pleasure.
Truth	The need to experience and express reality without distortion, to tear down falsehood.
Uniqueness	The need to express personal gifts, creativity, and non-conformity.

Playfulness	The need for joyful experience.
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In Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, human beings crave more once their basic physiological needs are met, moving onto requiring safety, then love and belonging, then self-esteem and the final ideal is self-actualisation. For Maslow these needs do not refer to a need to be possessed but rather, an individual moves toward the embodiment of these ideals (Sachs 2012, p. 129). Sachs (2012) states that in Maslow explaining how people strive to achieve higher level needs reduced his theory into key terms. Sachs (2012) elaborated on those terms, or rather, higher level needs that feature in brand storytelling, reproduced here in Table 1.

Maslow's higher level needs are useful for this study to determine and analyse which higher purpose needs are appealed too through Cathay Pacific's brand narrative and the repetition of particular subtheme motifs. It additionally allows us to analyse which particular values Cathay Pacific seeks to project and attribute to its brand. Sachs (2012) suggests that brand storytelling is not about magical fulfilment but rather, values and inspiration (p. 133). For example, Sachs (2012) suggests that Amnesty International embodies its values; its brand serves more than to shed light upon its issues of interest and to obtain fundraising but also to offer its supporters the ability to pursue the higher value purpose of Justice, 'bringing moral order to the world' (p. 137).

Cathay Pacific's higher purpose relates to Maslow's Higher Level Needs of Perfection and Richness. The first story arc with its call to adventure, facing challenges and realising one's potential to become a hero relates to the notions of the value of Perfection in that one needs to seek mastery of skill, and therefore improve oneself. Additionally, the hard work or struggle component of this value relates to Propp's narrative 'struggle' schema (Table 9.1). Cathay Pacific's second story arc refers to encountering the global, intercultural interaction and the "global" and the "local". This relates to the Higher Level Need of Richness in that there are correlations to the need to examine life in all of its complexity and diversity, which is manifested in the cultural mosaic and subtheme of Encountering the global. With this in mind, as consumers seek brands that provide experiences and can become part of their lives and as brands serve to communicate symbolic meaning and appeal to emotional needs, a brand narrative will too relate to things the consumer cares about, finds familiar and appeals to symbolic and emotional levels above pure functionality (Schmitt, 1999, p. 32). Therefore Cathay Pacific through the thematic organisation of its storytelling appeals to consumers because it projects the notion that it provides experiences that appeal to symbolic and higher level needs.

The role of brand storytelling is argued to go beyond building emotional relationships and conveying symbolic meaning (Arvidsson, 2006; Caru & Cova, 2003; Schmitt, 1999). Storytelling serves to build 'solidarity, meaning, experiences-all the things that are supposedly no longer

provided by the social context to the same extent, or in an equally straightforward manner as before' (Arvidsson 2006, p. 83). This suggests that there is a greater social experience created by brands because when meaning is attributed to goods, these goods can become concepts and lifestyles (Salzer-Morling and Strannegard, 2002). Cathay Pacific's narrative structure seeks to involve the consumer in the narrative.

Sachs (2012) argues that having consumers involved in the brand's storytelling journey and as a result create belonging and loyalty. In Cathay Pacific's brand narrative, the employees are first portrayed as heroes. They appear as ordinary people who are constantly facing challenges and overcoming these. In turn, they move from being depicted as the hero to the mentor. It is suggested that the viewer, or rather consumer, become the hero. Smith (2011) argues that due to the increasing difficulty to differentiate competitive offers in terms of mere functional attributes and benefits, brands today serve 'symbolic and psychological purposes and create emotional, often metaphorical individual/brand congruity and often virtual experience' through storytelling (p. 29). Cathay Pacific intend to create a similar sort of experience, the consumer is presented with the opportunity to become a hero. Through representative techniques of props, clothing and production techniques the consumer is presented with the notions such as exploration, discovery, curiosity and adventure. It is up to the consumer whether they take up the call to adventure or not.

## **9.5 Summary**

This chapter has discussed Cathay Pacific's storytelling as a whole, its implications and its role in creating experiences for consumers. It presents that storytelling can involve the communication of a plethora of messages and that through the many components two story arcs are formed, the first relating to the adventure, heroes and mentors and the second, relating to intercultural interaction, cultural diversity and the fluidity between the global and the local.

This has also been presented that Cathay Pacific, through the character of the brand which was constructed through the collective character of the employees (Miles and Mangold, 2003), intends to construct its character and project the notion of being a "post-global brand" (Kapferer, 2005). Cathay Pacific's glocalisation strategy therefore includes the construction and projection of brand through characterization that on a superficial level appears to be global but on closer examinations it is revealed that the product is far from standardised and conversely, 'a composite, hybrid or highly adapted product' (Kapeferer, 2005).

This chapter then demonstrated that through narrative devices including narrative structure, chracterisation of the employees as heroes and then as mentors, the appeal to high level needs and the use of representative techniques such as clothing and props that suggest notions of exploration, discovery, curiosity and adventure serves to involve the consumer in Cathay Pacific's storytelling by becoming a hero through their consumption.



## **Chapter 10: Conclusion**

### **10 Introduction**

This chapter provides conclusions from the major findings of the analysis and answers the primary research question proposed for this investigation. It also discusses the limitations of this research, proposes recommendations for future research and the practical applications for this investigation.

#### **10.1 Conclusions from major findings**

The objective of this research was to investigate how brand storytelling is constructed in order to identify, determine and analyse the many ways storytelling serves the projection and construction of brand. This research has identified and analysed the influence of narrative devices, characters and representative techniques, and how these components of storytelling serve the projection and construction of brand.

Holt (2004) argues that brands are constructed by cultural myths and stories. These cultural myths also derive from the culturally constituted world (Klein, 1999; Smith, 2011). Holt's (2004) cultural myths resemble what Sachs (2012) refers to as storytelling and what Smith (2011) refers to as brand narrative. In this investigation, storytelling began as the communication of brand across different components. After the analysis that demonstrates storytelling is derived from the culturally constituted world and serves to associate cultural meanings to brand, it is evident that storytelling functions to both construct brand and project certain cultural associations (Hearn, 2008; Holt, 2004). Storytelling therefore represents the interaction between brand and the broader cultural context. The following subsection discusses this interaction in relation to the components of storytelling and how they construct and project brand.

The combination of the three components presents a multilayered and multifaceted story. In Chapter Seven it was suggested that Cathay Pacific's central theme communicated the message along the lines of: 'We encounter challenges often in our everyday lives, however by constantly striving to improve ourselves we are able to deliver friendly, thoughtful and caring service to our customers.' This central theme projected to the consumer who the brand is, what it stands for and what it cares about (Fog et al, 2005). This central theme became the common thread for all brand communication. It presents that storytelling can involve the communication of a plethora of messages and that through the many components two story arcs are formed, the first relating to the adventure, heroes and mentors and the second, relating to intercultural interaction, cultural diversity and the fluidity between the global and the local.

The role of narrative devices in brand storytelling is two-fold. Firstly, the narrative devices serve to construct the storytelling and secondly, narrative devices serve to project certain brand characteristics. The subthemes served to construct the central theme, which then in conjunction with the structure and development of the sequence ultimately results in the creation of an

overarching narrative. An overarching narrative, through the communication of the subthemes, project certain values, attributes and characteristics that are intended to be associated with the brand (Aaker, 1996). It also functions to communicate a philosophical orientation (Smith, 2011), while the repetition of the predominant subthemes and the common thread of the overarching narrative functions to reinforce and remind consumers about the particular associations the brand intends to make to itself (Aaker & Joachimsthaler, 2000).

The combination of the narrative structure with the predominant subthemes sought to connect with consumers in presenting the brand as a Mentor who seeks to call the audience to adventure to realise its potential of becoming a hero. Cathay Pacific's employees as representatives of the brand are depicted first as heroes and they relate and share their experiences through their employee stories with the consumer. The employees are then depicted as Mentors who function to invite consumers into the brand experience through the vehicle of the brand's storytelling.

Chapter Seven presented that characters play an integral role in storytelling. In Cathay Pacific's storytelling the employees that feature in the *People. They make an airline* campaign, are characterised to function as symbolic characters that embody the airline's determined characteristics, personality and traits (Lyth, 2009). The characters therefore play an essential role in the construction of the brand as a character in its storytelling.

Nonetheless the chapter demonstrated that Cathay Pacific's characters are at times contradictory in nature. For example, the airline's female employees are represented from a perspective that borrows from essentialist notions of both gender and race. The stereotypical notions of Asian women project attributes of subservience, exoticism, mystery, seduction, caring, nurturing and grace. It can be concluded that due to its repetition and pervasiveness this representation was deliberate, with the intention of associating these attributes with the level of hospitality and kind of service that the airline delivers, similar to the constructed *Singapore Girl* (Batey, 2002). However on the other hand, the diversity and numerous intercultural experiences and multicultural identities projected through the individual employee stories when collated to construct Cathay Pacific as a character, constructs an identity that is global in the sense that it is constituted by diverse aspects of the 'local'. It appears that Cathay Pacific intends to position itself between the 'global' and the 'local'. There appears to be a projection of a particular kind of service constructed upon essentialist and stereotypical notions of the Asian woman, and on the other hand one that also demonstrates a global, diverse and multicultural entity that is adept in intercultural interaction, the cultural mosaic that was suggested by Cayla and Eckhardt (2007). It has yet to be seen if this fluidity between the global and the local in terms of positioning extends to other aspects of Cathay Pacific's storytelling.

Chapter Eight presented the role that representative techniques that constitute mise-en-scène play in storytelling. In terms of brand, both verbal and visual elements communicate meaning and are attributed with cultural meaning (Leeds-Hurwitz 1993; Wheeler 2009). The elements of

mise-en-scène such as clothing, setting, props, lighting, framing, editing and camera work serve to contribute to the building of the narrative, project certain characteristics about the brand vicariously through its representatives, its employees (Lyth 2009; Miles & Mangold 2005) and associate certain cultural meaning to the brand.

Clothing and costumes played an important role in presenting Cathay Pacific within a space between global and local. The combination of both Asian and Western influences in addition to the images of the employees out of uniform further engrains the local in the form of heterogeneity. The images of a number of employees served to present them as heroes following Propp's narrative schema. It also functions to associate the notions of exploration, adventure, discovery, curiosity, thrill seeking and relaxation to the brand. These notions align with the predominant subtheme of Challenges, reinforcing this brand message and Sachs' (2012) idea that brand storytelling functions as a call to adventure for consumers.

The collective character of the employees constructs the Cathay Pacific brand character (Miles and Mangold, 2003). In doing so, it intends to construct its character and project the notion of being a "post-global brand" (Kapferer, 2005). Cathay Pacific's glocalisation strategy therefore includes the construction and projection of brand through characterization that on a superficial level appears to be global but on closer examinations it is revealed that the product is far from standardised and conversely, 'a composite, hybrid or highly adapted product' (Kapeferer, 2005).

Chapter Nine then demonstrated that through narrative devices including narrative structure, characterisation of the employees as heroes and then as mentors, the appeal to high level needs and the use of representative techniques such as clothing and props that suggest notions of exploration, discovery, curiosity and adventure serves to involve the consumer in Cathay Pacific's storytelling by becoming a hero through their consumption.

## **10.2 Limitations and Future Research**

There are limitations to this research. The first being that this investigation has only analysed one brand, using the sample of one advertising campaign to analyse the manifestation of brand storytelling. Further research in the field could therefore include comparative studies between brands and their storytelling. It could also include cross-cultural comparison and the comparison across industries.

Keller (2003) asserts that there are significant gaps in the field of the knowledge of branding. Taking this into account, there are many possibilities for future research in the field. There is a general lack of research into brand storytelling. Other studies could possibly investigate the role of brand storytelling and how it influences consumer decision making, self-identification with brands, brand loyalty or brand experience construction.

### **10.3 Practical applications of this research**

Sachs' (2012) *Winning the Story Wars* provided a guide for how to create compelling and memorable brand storytelling. It was written for marketing practice rather than for academia. This current study has practical applications for both branding practice and academia. From an academic perspective, this investigation provides analysis of the cultural elements and implications of brand and branding practice. It also provides commentary on the broader socio-cultural context that brands operate in. While there has been an increasing interest in the notion of brand as a narrative and as storytelling (Caru & Cova, 2003; Fog et al, 2005; Grow, 2008; Ind, 2004; Phillips & McQuarrie, 2010; Stern, 2006), this researcher is not aware of any study or text on brand storytelling that explicitly and methodically incorporates narrative theory, other than Sachs' (2012) *Winning the Story Wars*. This study therefore serves to build upon the existing practice of analysing brand storytelling through narrative theory. Conversely, this study introduces additional narrative theory to serve in the strategic development of storytelling systems.

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