The Role of the Big Brands

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1. FROM TRADEMARK TO BRAND

McDonald's, *Starbucks*, *Milka*, *Coca-Cola*, *Nescafe*, *Kellog's* are just a few of the hundreds of company names, which have drastically changed our eating habits and the taste perception of billions of people in the last 150 years. In this chapter we will attempt to explain why the influence of the large brands in food industry is so strong and we will get to know the story of the most important ones.

But first, let's see what exactly we mean by "trademark" and "brand".

The mark appeared much before there were machines and factories — back when everything was obtained and produced manually. Even then, the more capable and hard-working producers would put some sort of seal or inscription on the goods they had manufactured — be it pottery, porcelain vases, clay lamps, etc. — in order to make them *distinguishable* from the rest. The more numerous the producers, the bigger their need to mark the goods. Ever since then, the mark has become a sign of quality and guarantee. During the Middle Ages, the mark even became required for some types of goods, as unscrupulous producers would be tempted to cut corners in the production process. This

way, goldsmiths, bakers, etc. would be required to mark their production, so that if the gold turned out to be impure, or if bread weighed less than advertised, certain punishment would be imminent.

Fig. 1.   Among the first uses of the trade mark there was the incision of the proper name or the name of the company on the timber, when the river was used as a natural transport from the place of harvesting to the market. (Item is held by John Oxley Library, State Library of Queensland, Public domain image).

After the discovery of America, world trade gained momentum. Goods, which today are considered indispensable, such as tea, coffee, sugar, pepper, etc., were then considered luxury and generated great profit. The marks of the traders, which guaranteed the origin and quality of the goods, became even more important. Tobacco and some simple medications became popular thanks to some of the most recognizable marks of the time. It was back then that substantial legislation regarding marks came into existence, effectively giving birth to the concept of trade marks.

A new phase in the development of trade marks ensued during the Industrial Revolution of XVIII — XIX. During the course of that period, the number and diversity of the goods on the market grew quickly and substantially. The number of people grew as well, as did the number and size of cities; transportation improved and department stores appeared for the first time, allowing people to find an unimaginable multiplicity of goods in one single location. The most important phenomenon born in this period, however, is *advertising* — the poetic voice of the trade marks, which began transforming them into more than just an indicator of distinction and quality.

It was precisely the trade mark that gave rise to consumer loyalty as a phenomenon, and, as a logical outcome — to the

emergence of counterfeits. The sale of inferior items under the false pretense of respected and popular brands was so widely spread in the US by the end of XIX century that strict legislature against counterfeit goods had to be drafted.

Several decades later, the present-day supermarket appeared. Consumer society was born. Big corporations started managing multiple trade marks, which were sold all over the world. *Procter and Gamble* were the first to introduce the brand manager position. The trade mark transformed into a brand and was now used as a strategic business tool.

This is the most important point for our purposes. The brand makes it possible not only for the goods or services of a certain company to stand out in comparison to the rest, as had previously been the case, but to also create added value for the consumer. Creating a strong brand is an undertaking, akin to creating a work of art. First, one needs to imagine a nice and memorable brand name, unclaimed by anyone else. After that, a beautiful and impressive logo should be fashioned, making sure it corresponds to the brand name. Next, a clever and original slogan must be attached to the ensemble. Many brands also introduce characters (such as Mr. Proper), as well as jingles, which best reflect the emotion built into the brand. Today, package design is an increasingly important brand element, as well as the layout and design of the location, where a service is offered.

All these elements represent the public face of the brand. It must be attractive and memorable, but even that is not enough for today's market competition. Added value, which contemporary brands afford to their goods and services, takes great effort and a long time to create. Imagine a sports goods brand. Their football shoes and t-shirts are of no lesser quality than those of their competitors. But then this exact company signs a contract with the greatest football stars. Millions of children and young people, all over the world, will purchase these shoes and shirts, precisely because the name of their idol is embroidered on them — and not because of quality advantages. This is what we call added value *of the brand* — just regular goods, like shoes or shirts, acquire a radically different signification for a child, simply because they feature a single name. But this brings love and admiration to that child, it brings hope that one day he or she will also become a great football player, it brings the desire and motivation required to train hard and to improve every single day.

Because of added value, the goods of strong brands are more expensive. It has been proven that the consumer is not only willing to pay more for brand goods but will also enjoy the purchase to a higher extent. Furthermore, a big brand can successfully sell not only the main goods it manufactures: people are willing to pay a premium price for a *Mercedes* pram, *Ferrari* sunglasses, or *Adidas* cologne. All in all, big brands sell *a lifestyle*. They manage to settle in our everyday life and assume the role of close friends who constantly guide us — how

to spend our time in a more fun, healthy, or meaningful way — all in exchange for a suitable fee, of course. Contemporary lifestyles are consumerist — they are highly dependent on consumption — and brands are the main driver behind our consumer choices.

2. HOW CULT BRANDS CHANGE CULTURE

What makes certain people get a tattoo of a brand's logo, or others — use one for their *Facebook* profile picture? We can say, without doubt, that today brands are created in such a way, that we can literally fall in love with them, have faith in them, bet our image and reputation on them. Just think about car brands! There are *BMW* or *Audi* fans who drive their cars with such unadulterated love and pride! They would be furious if someone were to insult the brand to their face, just as they would get mad if someone were to insult their friends or relatives. Many people would also judge a person by the car they drive. Neither side is correct, but they are both extreme manifestations of a tendency that affects all of us — and not only with regard to car brands. Such big brands have great power and are able to affect and change the lifestyles of millions of consumers. In the long term, this changes everyday culture as well.

Fig. 2.   Unauthored funny photomontage that became a meme in social media, parodying and at the same time confirming the importance of the big brands in imposing the Fast food culture.

Expressions such as cult brands have become part of everyday parlance. Cult and culture have a common root. These expressions don't so much reflect the essence of the brand itself, as they reflect the attitude of the consumers towards the brand. Research has shown that each of us has his or her own cult brands, although not everyone has the need to actively display them for all to see. A person is the most passionate about cult brands when they have something to do with their hobbies, their free time in general, or important family moments — especially when it comes to gifts, or memorable moments with friends and loved ones. This is why most cult brands can be found in sectors such as *automotive, fashion, sports, alcoholic beverages, dining, video games, energy drinks* and *smartphones*. However, if we further unfold the idea of cult brands in their contemporary form, we can rightfully add *big football clubs,* cinematic sagas such as *Star Wars* and *Game of Thrones*, TV formats such as *X Factor* and *Master Chef*, popular singers and bands, athletes and even influencers.

What is interesting is the mechanism that allows brands to fit so well in our personal world. And we are not talking about products and services that become a part of our life because of convenience, affordability, or any such practical benefit. Nobody has ever gotten a tattoo of laundry detergent or toothpaste. We are talking about cult brands with which we feel intimacy, closeness, in whose mission we see parts of our aspirations. Today, for example, most companies claim a concern for nature and participate in various environmental initiatives. However, a true ecologist would hardly identify with any of them. On the other hand, there are companies that have been created precisely with the idea to change the environmental status quo, to manufacture more ecologically than the rest, to limit their consumers to just the ones who are willing to accept the inconvenience of a higher price, just so that they can support an ecological product. It is easy to see that the goal of such companies is not revenue growth at all costs, no matter how important profit is to their survival. Oftentimes, the founders of such companies are public figures, fighting for their ideas in the public space, whose own life is exemplary, while their employees are none other than people, inspired by their ideas. In these companies, the lifestyle of the employees often overlaps with the company values. Such companies are *Patagonia* and *Harmonica*, and their reputation among ecologically-minded people is undisputed.

So, in order for a brand to turn into a cult brand, its founders must rely on some idea, a vision of improving the world, and must make this idea the leading element in their work — leaving profit in the role of just a means to an end. American market scientist Laurence Vincent calls this conceptual basis of the cult brands their *sacred beliefs*. Ecology is just one of the many directions in which companies can develop their ideals. Family and the self-sacrifice that goes with raising children is another idea, on which many companies base their

sacred beliefs and attract millions of followers. Other companies, such as *Harley Davidson*, sell their motorcycles as an instrument that helps their adherents to experience freedom, to be anti-conformist and to enjoy their life, day for day. *Chanel* acquired a cult status way back in the first decades of the last century, based on the convictions of its founder, Coco Chanel, that fashion must alter the social role of the woman and transform her from simple decoration in a male-dominated world into an active participant with her own style and fulfillment. The founder of *Apple*, Steve Jobs, was led by the extraordinary insight that it is possible to create a personal computer in a time when only enormous machines existed, each at least 200–300kg. It was *Apple's* mission to bring that technology to the ordinary people, because Jobs was convinced that this powerful and easy-to-use tool, which his company manufactured, would allow every single creative individual to change the world — or, at least, to leave a mark.

Another element needed to create a cult brand is the brand's agent. This role is most often taken on by the founder of the company, but, as we will see, this is not always the case. The agent is an extremely important element, because simply having the company's ideals (sacred beliefs) formulated and written down is not sufficient. They need to be in constant circulation among the loyal and potential consumers of the brand. Cult brands don't rely too strongly on conventional advertising, since people don't tend to trust it — instead, they do their best to become a topic of conversation. Many of these companies are founded by extraordinary, charismatic people, who attract the media spotlight with every single public appearance — such as Steve Jobs, Richard Branson, Elon Musk. True followers trust these agents the way believers follow religious leaders and are always excited to talk about them.

There are also other cases, when the product itself can be brand agent, as is the case with the *Harley Davidson* bikes. Their design, their sound, the position of the rider — these features are so typical that they embody the brand ideals in a very natural way. Every *Harley Davidson* owner becomes part of a tribe of people who believe in freedom, liberty, anti-conformism.

The *Star Wars* brand is yet another interesting case. From the very first episode, Darth Vader has become the most captivating character — even though (or maybe precisely because) he stands at the dark side of the force, he has the greatest number of admirers among the fans of the franchise. His dramatic fate, his quality of power and his impressive appearance have turned him into an icon and an eternal brand agent, in spite of his death in episode six.

All of these manifestations of cult brands live in the minds of their followers — not so much an aggregation of facts, but as a *mythology*, a heroic narrative of stark contrasts, in which the sacred beliefs make all the difference. Some call that "brand storytelling". This is the third element of cult

brands. *Mercedes* worshippers, for example, know very well that it was *their* brand that created the automobile; they also know that many of the most important innovations in automotive have come from *Mercedes*; they know about all the greatest Formula 1 victories, and all the many, many other charts, where their brand is at the top. All of this is narrated at the expense of all those brands who wanted to be Mercedes but never could. Similarly, the *Adidas* mythology tells the glorious history of many of the greatest athletes of the XX century, as well as the memorable victory of the German national team at the World Cup in 1954, when, thanks to the replaceable studs of the *Adidas* football shoes, Germany defeated Hungary.

The most important (fourth) element of this system of the cult brands is the emergence of brand culture. The culture of a brand is indicative of the real impact that the brand has on its followers. According to Vincent, usually brand culture is expressed as *the formation of communities, practicing of rituals* and *the use of symbols*. This element of cult brands can most easily be observed in football clubs. We must note that most football clubs did not arise as brands, but during the last decades, all of them have adopted this business model. Each club has a community of followers, although it is not a requirement that the followers be especially numerous. Every Sunday this community gathers, often hours before the game starts, and practices certain rituals. These include songs and chants, unique to each separate club, which glamorize the team and are often offensive to the rival. Most fans wear team t-shirts, which is one of the most visible membership symbols. There are also those fans who get the team name tattooed onto their bodies, which is a more extreme use of a brand symbol. Carrying flags, wearing caps, scarves, pins, etc. are all other forms of use of the brand symbols.
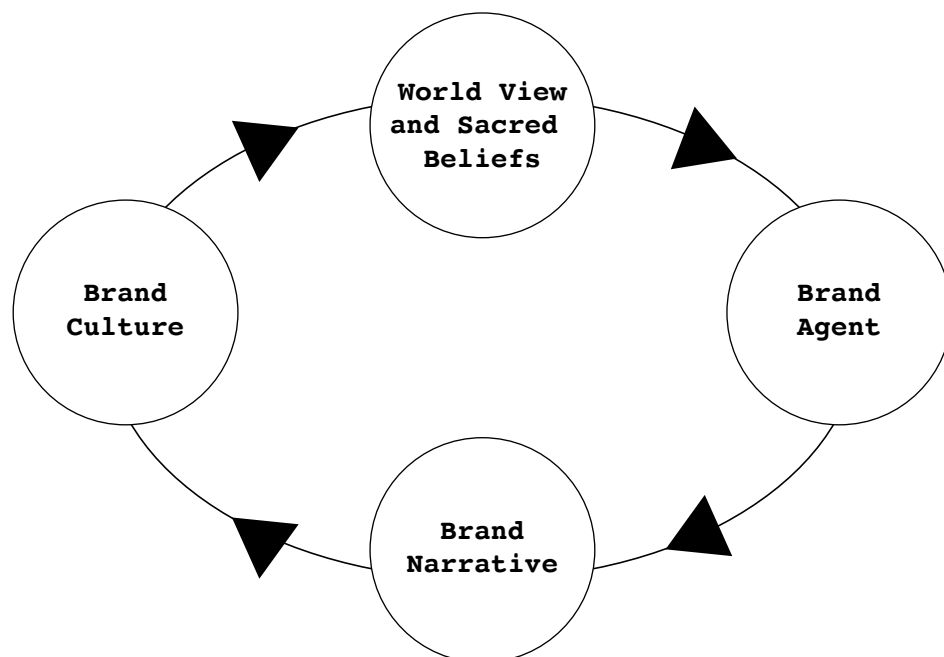

Fig. 3. Brand mythology system (Vincent 2002: 22)

These same elements of brand culture can be observed in the case of some automotive brands, although they are not as distinct or as routine. Still, simply visiting one of the *BMW* motorbike shows would allow anyone to observe a multitude of zealous fans, ritual competitions and chases, tune-up exhibitions and contests, hundreds of branded jackets, caps, and many other expressions of love for the brand.

For the *Apple* fanboys, the company used to organize the annual Macworld Expo, where — when he was still alive — Steve Jobs himself would present the newest and best of the company's products and services. And, although it was just laptops, smartphones, etc. the sheer emotional charge of the audience, and their euphoria, brought the event much closer to a Michael Jackson concert than a corporate event. *Apple*, more so than any other tech company, created a new kind of culture and lifestyle for the creative professionals in the IT sector.

Similarly, we could say that *Amazon* has not only created the most popular online trade platform, but that the company is responsible for a brand-new shopping culture, characteristic explicitly for the digital age. We should not even have to mention *Google* and *Facebook* and their influence on contemporary culture.

Examples for companies that have developed their own brand culture and have changed the habits and lifestyles of millions of people can be found in almost any realm of consumption. Let us, however, have a look at the sector that interests us most.

3. BIG BRANDS OF CONTEMPORARY CULINARY CULTURE

So far, we have managed to present a short overview of the historic development of trade marks, as well as a description of the main elements, which transform a trade mark into a cult brand. Do such brands exist in the field of gastronomy — brands that have been so influential that they have managed to change the tastes and the ways that people eat? The answer is a resounding yes. Maybe here we will not find exactly the same kind of worshippers, who would be willing to tattoo the brand logo on their forehead, but there are definitely companies that have penetrated deep inside the daily life of millions of people, often introducing models, which may even violate orthodox traditions.

3.1. MCDONALD'S *AND FAST FOOD CULTURE*

For many people, *McDonald's* and "cult brand" are not only unrelated, but even mutually exclusive. On the surface of it, this may be so, but after we have exposed the mechanisms of influence, employed by brands, and the ways that they can change contemporary culture, it would make sense to take a closer look at the American fast food chain.

If we exclude the last 10-15 years, when companies such as *Google* and *Facebook* changed our lives profoundly, it is precisely *McDonald's* that has most remarkably influenced everyday culture on our planet during the previous 60-70 years. And we

don't mean just influence by fast food restaurants. The American sociologist George Ritzer talks about the "McDonaldization" of the world — the fact that the outstanding success of the *McDonald's* business model has spread the company's influence far beyond the preparation and consumption of hamburgers, also influencing the way of thinking of all entrepreneurs and millions of workers in the service economy, as well as the overall organization of social life and politics.

Fig. 4.   The Golden arches and the overall design of the McDonalds restaurants is part of the brand identity of the company and a powerful instrument for marketing their service.

Soon after WWII, *McDonald's* had already become one of the symbols of the American lifestyle. After the fall of the Berlin wall, the brand had already turned into a symbol of globalization and capitalism in general. Today, *McDonald's* is one of the largest employers in the world, with almost two million employees.

What are the reasons for the brand's prominence and influence?

Not until after WWII did the United States finally escape the crisis that followed the Great Depression of 1929. What followed was two decades of unparalleled economic growth and the birth of a new, prosperous society, at least in comparison to the rest of the world. The McDonald's model of consumption fit quite nicely in the main spheres of social life:

1. in the new lifestyle and routine of working people;
2. in the new forms of leisure and entertainment;
3. in an updated family model, where many of the old, more traditional habits, faded away.

During the years after WWII, economic growth could be observed not just in the scale of production, but also in the variability of market supply. A constantly growing number of

career options supported the service sector and the pop-culture industries. These new jobs necessitated a much more dynamic daily routine, where the aging industrial schedules of breakfast, lunch and dinner gave way to new patterns. *McDonald's* not only responded to this new need for food at any time, but also became a standard for how people plan their time.

Economic growth provides room for a constantly increasing expenditure of spare time. People do not seem to have more spare time in comparison to previous decades but have much more money and an ever-increasing desire for *entertainment*. *McDonald's* and the fast food culture authored by the brand have become an integral part of the new consumerist lifestyle, which we have seen in movies and novels from that period.

Perhaps the most important change that arose with the ascent of fast food concerns the *family model*. Family dinner and lunch in non-working days had been a ritual for centuries, affirming power relations within the family. The codes of conduct follow the roles of head of the family, wife, children, etc. Fast food culture strikes this model at the foot. The family no longer eats together at the same time, as children and youths feel at home in fast food restaurants — but not the parents. Additionally, saying a prayer no longer takes place at the commencement of the meal. There isn't even cutlery, or a hard model of table manners — a fact, which allows each customer to simply satisfy his or her gastronomic desires without any hassle.

3.2. STARBUCKS *AND THE COMMODITIZATION OF THE SOPHISTICATED TASTE OF COFFEE*

Contrary to *McDonald's*, *Starbucks* has become a global legendary brand without any substantial contradictions. The scale at which *Starbucks* culture has influenced contemporary lifestyles is not as extensive as that of the "Lord" of fast food, but it is nonetheless fundamental and has defined tendencies, which are developing even today. In fact, the *Starbucks* brand harvests the fruit of its success precisely because of some of the negative consequences of the "McDonaldization" of the world.

It can generally be said that the *McDonald's* model transferred the organizational precision of the industrial assembly line from the field of industrial production onto the service sector. The convenience and effectiveness of this approach led to the extreme standardization of the overall *experience* of going out to eat. Everything became fast-paced, everyone received the same "prefabricated" smile from the uniform-wearing staff, the same expressions and phrases, the same deep-fried smell from the kitchen area. The idea of *McDonald's* coffee, or any fast-food coffee in general, used to follow the same logic — to provide a certain quantity of aromatic liquid, which the customer needs to stay alert for work and entertainment. Nothing more.

The *Starbucks* phenomenon "exploded" in the 1980s, after at least a decade of trial and error. The idea is simple, but surprisingly tough to actualize: to import into the US the highly

developed Italian coffee culture. The important insight that *Starbucks'* visionary Howard Shultz had is that it will not suffice to simply offer quality coffee — a completely new attitude towards coffee consumption was needed, which, however, found fertile conditions in the 1980s and 1990s.

Fig. 5.   The core value of the brand Starbucks originated from the sophisticated Italian coffee culture, translated by the company initially for the American market and then globally in more than 70 countries and 25,000 stores worldwide.

1. Starbucks culture developed within a new medium of intelligent and highly educated people, able to develop a sophisticated taste and to understand how important it is for the quality of life. According to Holt, the increasing number of American graduates in the 70s contributed to that trend (Holt 2010:92). Additionally, the brand originated in the emblematic city of Seattle, where the standard of life is higher than the US mean, and from where many other cultural trends spread throughout the years.

2. All elements of the Starbucks brand suggest its cultural sophistication: the name of the brand comes from a character of the classical American novel *Moby Dick*; the interior includes artworks, jazz and ethnic music; during the first years of the brand, aphorisms and quotations adorned the coffee cups.

3. *Starbucks* coffee shops are organized in such a way that the patrons go there not just to enjoy Italian-style espresso, but also to learn how to be true connoisseurs. The staff is commonly composed of coffee aficionados and devotees, who deliberately cultivate a close relationship with the customers, calling them by their first names and even writing their names on the cups — the opposite to the *McDonald's* model.

4. Before *Starbucks*, sophisticated taste was always associated with luxury, no matter whether it was in gourmet restaurants, wine

cellars or fashion shows. Starbucks transformed sophisticated taste and coffee culture into a sort of accessible luxury. What is interesting is that the model is similarly attractive both for pretentious coffee snobs and the patrons of smaller local indie coffee shops. The intelligent atmosphere, good coffee and the high culture of *Starbucks* patrons quickly made the chain into a preferred location for true fans.

5. During recent years, the hipster spirit of the brand has been affirmed by the many progressive causes that the brand has joined — including Fair Trade activities, environmental protection, etc.

3.3. DOMINO'S *PIZZA AND FOOD DELIVERY*

Another global brand that became a byword for the food culture in the last 6 decades is *Domino's pizza*. The company's efforts to transform food delivery into a convenient, pleasant and reliable way to eat at home, quickly gave results. Today thousands of companies around the world deliver food and beverages, the global yearly turnover being around $100 billion.

The implementation of this model seems easy but taking a deeper look at delivery shows the opposite is true. Like *Starbucks*, *Domino's* turned an Italian culinary delight into an accessible product. The great efforts of the company aimed to adapt the idea of pizza for the entirely different American lifestyle, but also to the "industrial" approach in the service sector. Domino's remain in the annals of marketing with their promise that *if the pizza is not delivered within 30 minutes, the customer will not have to pay*. This unconditional engagement with timely delivery, and the multitude of technological innovations aimed at keeping the product fresh and warm, further increase trust in this new approach at dining.

It is important to note that the cultural innovation of food delivery, successfully championed by *Domino's*, is, to many, a disgrace and a downfall of the culinary standards of the general population. This is indicative of the effectiveness with which large companies can take advantage of the possibilities offered by new lifestyles. Ignoring culinary standards, however, did lead to a negative turn of events and in 2010 the company organized another impressive marketing feat. In a self-critical campaign, *Domino's* published authentic comments by dissatisfied customers, filmed at the chain's shops. Then, the company presented a film depicting the introduction of tangible improvements in all elements of their product.

The company further strengthens the success of home delivery with active use of the advantages that internet and mobile devices provide. They have been extremely innovative in integrating new technologies in their services. Their website provides a special option for delivery tracking by the minute. The company is also experimenting with automated drone and robot delivery.

3.4. HARMONICA *AND THE HEALTH FOOD WAVE IN BULGARIA*

The Bulgarian bio and health food brand *Harmonica* is an interesting case. We can say that it has influenced culinary culture in a way similar to the previous examples, albeit on a local scale,

but it can be asserted that behind the vision of the brand one can discover the insight of the most significant tendency in food business during the last 10 years — *organic food production*.

Fig. 6.   In the core of the brand Domino's all over the world there is the promise of the fast delivery, independently what technology and model of organization is employed. (Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 2.0 Generic license).

Before *Harmonica*, there was essentially no market for bio foods in Bulgaria. The company was created in 2006 by Magdalena Maleeva, her husband and a friend of theirs. Magdalena Maleeva is the most successful Bulgarian female tennis player, reaching 4th place in the international rankings. After the end of her sports career, she became a charismatic public figure and an eco-activist.

Harmonica started as an eco-hobby, after the family could not find bio yogurt in any of the shops they visited. They contacted like-minded people, owners of a local dairy farm close to Sofia. The first stages of the company's activities don't even look like business endeavors, but more closely resemble eco activism. People in the country, at that time, were not especially keen on paying premium prices for bio products, except for a very small percentage of earnest environmentalists. In this sense, the brand culture of Harmonica predates the development of the company's business activities. What's impressive here is that, unfazed by the market success, the company never changed its attitude and respect toward its followers — they were never treated simply as clients or consumers, but rather always as adherents.

Not long after, the bio-organic market wave reached Bulgaria but thanks to *Harmonica* there was already an authentic local

trend on the market, so it didn't have to be an imported western fad. Credit must be given to the idealism of the brand and the connection of the brand culture with ecological causes and the humane treatment of animals. This is also the biggest challenge that *Harmonica* faces today.

The increasing demand of bio products has forced Harmonica to grow and to expand its product portfolio to *over 100 products*. Additionally, the distribution of these products has grown so that it can cover the largest supermarket chains, where most of the other products offered are precisely the kind that environmental production renounces. It has become harder for the company to maintain the high level of trust and rapport with such an expanded audience, especially when a large percentage of buyers finds the green idea rather distant. As a result, skepticism towards the ecological paradigms and the high standards in food production has increased.

Harmonica maintains its brand culture via a few successful approaches. In the first place, we have the people who work for the company. They are devoted followers of the brand values. Harmonica has a very well developed website, and these people's

Fig. 7. he Straw Festival, organized each year in the clean, ecological area near the production facilities of Harmonica company and where employees, their families and the families of many of their customers meet, is the major expression of the brand culture.

stories and views, as well as the stories of independent producers and partners, are an important part of that site.

The *Harmonica Facebook* page is also well developed and is the stage for authentic dialogue between both allies and skeptics, and even the unescapable "haters". The main values that Harmonica's brand culture demonstrates here are honesty, openness and

directness. Many of the products are introduced on this page through enjoyable stories, featuring the faces of the company's employees.

Maybe the most important — and already ritualized — events of *Harmonica's* brand culture are the annual *Straw Festival* and the monthly open doors events at the production facilities of the company. The latter are usually targeted toward sceptics, so that they can personally observe the environmentally friendly methods of production, the humane treatment of animals, and the many other characteristics of the company, which distinguish it from the non-bio food producers. The *Straw Festival*, on the other hand, is organized in the fields behind the main production facilities of the company, where families can experience all of Harmonica in one place: children play in the open air, parents spend time in the good company of *Harmonica* employees and even the founders, and everyone can enjoy a free meal, featuring the company's healthy products.

FOCUS 1

An interesting case: Slow food as a brand

Slow Food was born as a civil movement against the opening of a gigantic *McDonald's* restaurant in downtown Rome in 1986. It quickly became obvious that the movement had captured an important attitude of progressive Italians, which lead to an inaugural manifesto and a clearly stated vision, reaching far beyond the initial protest. The idea also reached beyond the borders of Italy, as only two years after the initial manifesto, at the end of 1989, alongside the fall of the Berlin wall, Slow Food International was founded in Paris. Today, there are *Slow Food* activists all over the world, as the movement has offices on all continents and an active membership of around 70,000 people, affecting the lives of millions of people.

While attempting to make out the impressive success of the movement, we come across a paradox, which is quite symptomatic of the topic of the current chapter. Slow food is a movement of resistance against the large fast food corporations and their brands, but at the same time the effectiveness of its impact is owed to the fact that it too has adopted the attributes of a global brand. Slow food came at a moment when traditional pre-industrial food culture, with all its diversity and authenticity, appeared to be headed towards extinction. The goal of the movement, however, is not to just bring the world back 200 years. Rather, the goal is to necessitate a *new food culture*, whose values are inspired by tradition and represent total repudiation of fast food culture.

As we have seen above, creating a new culture in a certain sphere of contemporary life is one of the indicators of legendary brand success and this is precisely what the *Slow*

Fig. 8. The Slow Food movement achieved its exceptional success partially due to the fact that they have adopted the communication instruments of the brand management although their mission is to resist the influence of the giant fast food corporations and their global brands. (Jan-Tore Egge CC BY-SA 2.0; CC BY-SA 4.0)

Food organization has become today. Its sacred beliefs have been very clearly formulated in the manifesto, the numerous local convivia have become actual brand agents, and the brand narrative is so strong and convincing that the cause against the multinational corporations has been perceived in a manner similar to the fight between David and Goliath.

According to the Italian semiologist Gianfranco Marrone, a large part of Slow food's power comes from its direct contrast at a brand level with the global colossus *McDonald's*. This clash is actually a collision between two ideologies, two opposing attitudes towards life, embodied by the logos of the two brands, by their slogans, their visions and all of their brand elements. They can be generally summarized as follows:

Fast food	Slow food
Practical need for food	Pleasure from food
Entertainment and gluttony	Communication and conviviality
Industrial production	Natural (domestic) production
Novelty and modernity	Past and tradition
Fast	Slow

Slow food achieves the formation of a new culinary culture through a large variety of activities, which, however, inevitably carry the basic values of the brand. These activities include the organization of large international expositions of local producers and specialties, the formation of local societies working for the development and popularization of local culinary wealth, the founding of a gastronomic university in Italy, the building of a culinary "Noah's ark" for the conservation of disappearing animals and plants, political lobbying in favor of small local producers, etc.