Research
Marilyn Monroe: Truth in Posthumous Endorsements

Commentaries
Technological Food: Towards the End of the Animal Age?

The Binary Man

Poetry
Life Force: On the Move

Visual Arts
Urban Angles
CrossBridge

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Editor-in-Chief
Robert S. E. Caine, Ph.D.
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When WaterHill Publishing asked me if I could provide one last picture to represent ‘illusions,’ the theme of this issue, I immediately thought of this image. Looking at this picture, one ponders: what is it? Is it merely greyscale geometric shapes without meaning? Is it the photograph of something real? Reality is a complex notion, partly ‘really out there’ and partly a construction of our mind based on the inputs of imperfect senses. Exceptionally, I now reveal what this picture represents: it is the shadow of a staircase and of a pedestrian overpass and other overhead structures on a concrete wall. Where? Does it matter? The only thing that matters is that the image triggers questions, reactions, and imagination. I love shadows because they do all these things by being simple projections of reality in which details are abstracted in darkness, creating a new reality, triggering impressions and reflections.

- Luis Martin

Luis Martin is a visual artist featured in this issue. The cover photograph is from him as well.
OW do we know if anything is real or merely an illusion? Upon encountering any event, person, thing or place, what evidence are we able to secure as definitive proof that what we perceive to be real is in fact a reality of our world? The notion of one's consciousness and perception of reality is an integral part of human experience. In this issue of Crossbridge, impressions and notions of perceived reality and/or illusion are presented not necessarily as separate and distinct, but rather as potentially blended, conjoined, even coexisting within our psyches.

Our first contributor to this discussion, Jackie Raphael, in her piece *Marilyn Monroe: Truth in Posthumous Endorsements*, ponders illusions created by Hollywood, by media, and in the minds of celebrity fans who accept the portrayals of famous celebrities as idealistic models to be adored and even replicated. In the case of a movie star such as Marilyn Monroe, her appearance, wardrobe, and carefully selected acting roles that portray her as a sex symbol became widely accepted by a public desirous of a goddess archetype for whom they (the public) could fantasize and worship as an ideal model of sexual perfection.

Moving from the glamorous to human-caused suffering, Paula Greenwood, in *Technological Food: Towards the End of the Animal Age?* brings to consciousness one of the most disturbing and omnipresent illusions of our humanocentric society – the belief that the exploitation of non-human animals as sources of food is a God-given right, denying the reality that said animals are living, sentient, loving beings. There remains a monumental disconnect between the real lives of animals and the ways in which humans exploit and utilize animals as resources to be consumed. The mass illusion sustains the
denial of once living beings' existence by thwarting the 'who' inherent in the absent referent of the animal as a 'what' to be served at the dinner table. This is, without a doubt, the most ubiquitous illusion of human existence in that billions of innocent lives are extinguished annually for the appetite of humanocentric dietary habituation.

Luis Martin, in *Urban Angles*, extends our perceptions of illusions and reality to human-made architecture, studied and appreciated through photography. Shapes, angles, shadows, and colors continuously surround us and subconsciously affect our moods and our perceptions of time and space. Martin’s photography invites us to relate to our surroundings through visual contacts that characterize our sense of reality through our imagination.

*Life Force: On the Move* by Saul Courrier engages us to question the multiple illusions of life through poetic observations of both our natural and social environments, with an emphasis on the constructed reality and cultural conditioning that influence our actions. His accompanying photographs of natural settings stir in us our capacity for relating to planet Earth through unlimited consciousness.

Finally, in Miguel Martinez's *The Binary Man*, we are encouraged to contemplate modern-day technology that seems to have taken over our lives in multifaceted ways to an acute extent that we feel hard-pressed to imagine our lives without computerised assistance. Within a short period of history – only a few decades – we have grown more reliant on technological innovation to guide us through our daily existence. Mainstream society has accepted technology as a necessity for functioning and progressing in our work, our routines, and our very lives. Martinez demonstrates how technologies and those designing them ignore critical human needs. The computerised world of digits has masterfully created an illusion of progress and reality of global proportions in which the very notion of humanity is evacuated.

As always, we at *Crossbridge* endeavour to engage our readers in critical and deep thought regarding the world we share. We hope to never remain complacent with present-day social/societal structures and habituations, but to progress and discover new approaches for creating and sustaining a more humane and meaningful existence for all our fellow Earth residents.

Robert S. E. Caine, Ph.D.
Editor-in-Chief
Research Paper

Marilyn Monroe: Truth in Posthumous Endorsements

Jackie Raphael, Curtin University, Australia

Abstract. Marilyn Monroe is a sex symbol and icon of popular culture, which has an easily recognizable visual identity that is still used for endorsements five decades since her tragic death. While endorsements often rely on authenticity, this is contradicted by the fact that celebrities have a constructed image. How can Monroe be seen as authentic when her hair and name are not even in their original form? This paper examines this issue through a case study of the Monroe Chanel No 5 advertisement. Applying semiotic analysis and Grant McCracken’s (1989) meaning transfer theory to the 2013 advertisement, it is evident they focus largely on the theme of ‘truth’ and selling her sex appeal. From this exploration, eight key factors that contribute to the successful use of iconic celebrities in posthumous endorsements are identified. This paper is significant to our understanding of icons and the role that celebrities play in the advertising industry.

Introduction

As Richard Dyer established in Heavenly Bodies (1984), Marilyn Monroe personified sexuality and naturalness. Her identity is easily recognised by all generations through her hairstyle, fashion sense and way of speaking. She is an icon of popular culture and a sex symbol. Her image still lingers and is used for endorsements more than five decades since her death, reinforcing her significance in today’s society. However, endorsements often rely on perceived authenticity. Monroe built her brand identity and began selling it to consumers in the 1950s. Today, companies such as Chanel are still using her persona to sell products. Applying semiotic analysis and Grant McCracken’s (1989) meaning transfer theory to the Monroe Chanel No 5 advertisement, released in 2013, it is evident they focus largely on the theme of ‘truth’ and selling her sex appeal. As a result, eight key factors are identified that contribute to the successful use of iconic celebrities in posthumous endorsements.
Celebrity Culture: Authenticity, Personas and Iconic Status

A ‘celebrity’ is a media constructed identity, known for their skills, success or style. This can include actors, musicians, models, socialites, comedians, sportspersons and other public figures. As Hudak (2012) explained:

Media captures their performances, enhances their attractiveness, preserves their beauty, frames their characters (both as media phantasms and as living persons), writes the narrative that draws audiences to them, and edits everything to maximize connectivity with audiences. Celebrities are phantasms contrived from and kept alive by mediated images.

There are varying levels of celebrity status, however this paper focuses specifically on Hollywood icons, who unlike other celebrities, have a lasting status. As Holt (2004, 2) explained:

Cultural icons are as old as civilization, but their mode of production has changed dramatically since the mid-nineteenth century. In premodern times, icons (mostly religious) gradually diffused through oral storytelling traditions and scarce written documents. With modern mass communications beginning with books, magazines, and newspapers in the nineteenth century, then films in the 1930s, and television in the 1950s, we increasingly inhabit a world in which the circulation of cultural icons has become a central economic activity. The market gravitates to produce what people value most. Today, the culture industries – such as film, music, television, journalism, magazines, sports, books, advertising, and public relations – are bent on cultivating and monetizing these icons.

Capitalising on celebrity status has grown with the rise of the social media paradigm shift. Media convergence has transformed the way people communicate and consume. It has become increasingly important for companies to create brand strategies that will stand out against all the other media clutter. Celebrity endorsements are one way of achieving this, however the appropriate match-up is crucial. In today’s celebrity culture, there are a lot more celebrities than ever before. However, their level of fame varies, as does the impact of their status. Thus, utilising iconic celebrities who have an established and consistent brand identity can be more effective.

Marilyn Monroe is among other iconic celebrities used for endorsements posthumously such as James Dean and Steve McQueen. Marilyn Monroe “served as the public fantasy of American sexuality in the 1950s and early 1960s” (Maltby 1988, 14). She has become famous for her white dress flying up, her seductive performances and her specific fashion style. Icons must
“embody qualities that their fans want to emulate and their appeal is timeless, crossing continents and spanning generations” (Millidge and Hodge 2010, 6). Monroe achieved this with her glamour and grace. As Holt (2004, 1) explained: “Cultural icons are exemplary symbols that people accept as a shorthand to represent important ideas.” Looking at Monroe, she is a shorthand representation of a sex symbol. Millidge and Hodge (2010, 6) discussed the various forms of icons:

Icons were once religious objects of devotion, beautifully crafted, gilded representations of saints and holy people. Today, the word has come to mean someone, real or imaginary, who has come to symbolize a concept or an institution, whether it be political, religious or cultural.

For many, Monroe is as culturally recognisable as the iconic Last Supper painting. She is not only easily distinguishable, but the connotations attached to her identity are transferable. As a celebrity, Monroe is also considered a brand. Celebrities create a persona that is shared with the world. It is often somewhat manufactured. In the case of Monroe, her brand was built to be a pinup girl.

A celebrity’s identity is made up of various elements, such as their physical appearance, fashion style, career choices, tone of voice, publicity stunts, marketing and the products or services they endorse. If a celebrity is inconsistent in their image, they may need to rebrand. In Monroe’s case, she crafted her brand as a sexy, curvy film star and maintained this throughout her career.

A celebrity’s value as an endorser comes from their level of fame. The more successful and relevant they are to the target audience, the more likely they are to be used for promotion. As Grant McCracken (1989) explained in his theory of “meaning transfer”, the celebrity’s image is transferred to the product through the advertisement and then onto the end user. Through this process, the celebrity’s brand is not only altered by what they endorse, but the brand they support borrows from their image, and the meaning transferred is then also indirectly enforced onto the consumer. Many researchers have applied McCracken’s model, including Tripp, Jensen and Carlson (1994, 535), Erdogan (2000), Dorn (2001), Harris (2002, 30) and Choi and Rifon (2007). A key aspect of the meaning transfer process is the notion of authenticity.

Authenticity is often based on public perception. If someone or something seems credible then it is more likely to be believed or consumed. This is particularly the case in celebrity culture. The public cannot judge whether a celebrity is accurately portraying their true selves, but they can choose to accept the image being conveyed and perceive the celebrity as authentic. Consistency in one’s identity helps to gain this authentic status.
It is important to note celebrities are a constructed brand, which immediately removes some level of authenticity. Just as everyday people act differently at work than they do at home, and depict a specific version of themselves online, celebrities do the same, only their lives are more visible because of their status. This public representation of one’s brand identity can be referred to as their ‘persona.’ As Marshall, Moore and Barbour (2001) stated; “Persona describes the wider practice of constructing and constituting forms of public identity.” However, if it is found that the formed persona is inauthentic, this can destroy the perception of the person. A celebrity’s persona is particularly significant, as they themselves are a brand with loyal followers. Marshall (2013) explained; “What is celebrated in celebrity culture is the exposed everyday lives of famous people and not necessarily their work as actors or sports stars.” What celebrities wear and who they spend time with attracts media and public attention. Celebrities are a vessel for delivering information and whatever their hobbies or tastes are becomes the interest of fans.

The media can choose to focus on a celebrity’s achievements or create hype around their scandals. As Redmond (2014) stated; “The celebrity operates under a cultural microscope and is subject to forensic-like investigation by the media and the public.” Redmond (2014) goes on to discuss how the media reveal details of a celebrity that are not naturally visible to audiences. Whether it be exposing skin flaws or focusing on the inauthenticity in their identity, the media plays a large role in capturing a celebrity’s persona. As Redmond explained; “Authenticity, even if it is unflattering, is of high currency value in celebrity culture.” Without authenticity, a celebrity is simply a character being performed and lacks the impact needed for endorsements. Their value comes from their credibility, status and brand associations. In terms of the meaning transfer process, if the public believes a celebrity uses the product they are endorsing then they are more likely to engage with the advertisement and receive the intended message.
While a celebrity’s appearance can gain attention, this does not mean a message is delivered or guarantees a positive outcome. Thrall et al. (2008) stated; “Our research contradicts the notion that all one needs to do is invite a famous celebrity down to the rally to make the evening news and set politicians running.” This is true within and outside of politics, as a celebrity must be authentically attached to the communication they are conveying for any meaning transfer to occur. Consumers are surrounded by communication. Whether it be advertising, entertainment, social media or traditional media, it is almost impossible to escape all forms of communication. Therefore, a celebrity can be a useful tool to stand out from the media clutter.

Relying on modern celebrities can result in a higher risk factor, as their authenticity may be challenged by being photographed using another product or their brand may be challenged by being a part of a scandal. Thus, utilising a celebrity posthumously can help to decrease this risk. As Hudak (2014) stated; “Dead celebrities appearing in current advertisements have become a well known practice in contemporary advertising techniques.” A posthumous celebrity brand is established and is unlikely to change in the duration of the campaign or even long-term. Lisa Bode (2010) identified two forms of “posthumous performance,” which Hudak (2014 summarised:

The first are those scenes technologically fabricated in order to finish an existing product. A deleb’s face will be rotoscoped onto a body double to finish a scene previously filmed when the actor was alive. The second type of posthumous performance constitutes a restructuring of the actor’s image for a new context. The performer is plucked out of the original scene and placed in a new one, essentially ‘repurposing’ the original performance to fit a new context (Bode 2010: 50).

An example of this technique being used is Ford’s 2005 commercial where they digitally recreated the deleb Steve McQueen to sell their car. D’Rozario and Bryant (2013) explored the positive and negative aspects of using dead or alive celebrities in endorsements and examined the financial aspects of such deals. While Hudak (2014) and D’Rozario and Bryant (2013) focus more on the digital recreation of dead celebrities in modern advertising and marketing, this paper explores the use of unreleased footage, which adds a sense of authenticity to the message that is being delivered by a posthumous icon. While technology allows for the manipulation of imagery, this can impact on the credibility of the endorsement.

1 A ‘deleb’ is a term used to refer to dead celebrities (D’Rozario and Bryant 2013).
Hudak (2014) stated; “Icons draw audiences to them. They possess intangible qualities, the ‘something’ that others do not have that directly relates to why they became a celebrity in the first place.” While all celebrities hold certain values, an icon’s identity can last decades after their death. Hudak (2014) gave the example of Monroe:

Take for instance Marilyn Monroe: sex symbol, timeless beauty, quintessential coquette worshiped by men and women alike. Even in print, Marilyn’s image communicates these messages, and as such, her prominence as cultural icon did not cease with her death in 1962.

While Monroe spoke seductively and moved elegantly, her static image also reflected her identity through her style and poses. Hudak (2014) summarised D’Rozario and Bryant’s (2013) thoughts on why advertisers use dead celebrities:

(1) they are easily relatable and recognizable, (2) media permits greater control over the image aesthetics, and (3) producers don’t have to deal with the uncertainty of a living celebrity’s actions.

While Monroe may not necessarily be relatable, she is certainly globally recognisable. It is true there are no new actions to impact her brand and there is to some extent more control of her image, however there are also limitations with her image. The advertisers cannot ask her to pose a certain way or speak about a certain product publicly. Thus, there is a reliance on either digital manipulation or authentic footage. In the Chanel example, they have been able to access a real audio recording. Hudak (2014) wrote broadly:

Depending on the context in which her image is portrayed, marketers hope that the audience will identify the product or service in the advertisement with the iconic stature of Marilyn’s beauty, sexuality, glamour, etc.

In this case study, the aim is to show how Monroe’s identity is transferred to Chanel. This process is explored further by applying Barthe’s theory of semiotics, deconstructing the connotations embedded in the advertisement.

**Monroe’s Brand Identity**

Marilyn Monroe was born Norma Jean Mortenson on June 1, 1926 in Los Angeles, United States of America (Marilyn Monroe Biography 2016). While she is remembered for her glamour and seduction on screen, her childhood was filled with foster homes, abandonment and abuse (Marilyn Monroe Biography 2016). At the age of 16, she married Jim Dougherty and in the years that followed, she began modeling and eventually acting. Monroe died on August
5, 1962 at the age of 36 under some suspicious circumstances that still generate
erumours today. In her short life, she married three times and made multiple
successful films such as *Gentlemen Prefer Blondes* (1953), *The Seven Year
Itch* (1955) and *Some Like It Hot* (1959). It is these films that sustain her name
as a powerful brand identity to this day. However, more importantly, it is what
she represents as an icon of popular culture that makes her so memorable and
powerful decades after her death.

Monroe is a sex symbol renowned for her blonde hair, luscious lips, beauty
spot and curvy figure. Andy Warhol captured her iconic status through his
work. Simplifying her visual identity to a stencil representation, she is still
easily recognisable. However, it does not encapsulate her entire essence. While
it is probably one of the most recognisable images of Monroe, another
frequently referenced part of her visual identity is her standing with her white
dress flying up. This image portrays her cheeky side. It is this outfit that is most
used to represent Monroe in a costume setting. However, her brand is also
associated with her connections to the Kennedy family. Rumours that she had
an affair with John and Robert Kennedy led to further rumours that they were
somehow involved in her death (Vogel 2014). Ultimately, the mystique and
controversy surrounding Monroe certainly added to her lasting image, but her
sex-symbol status is what is most referenced in today’s popular culture.

As Dyer (1986) stated; “Monroe was understood above all through her
sexuality - it was her embodiment of current ideas of sexuality that made her
seem real, alive, vital.” Dyer (1986) went on to explain the importance of
Monroe’s naturalness:

Monroe, so much set up in terms of sexuality, also seemed to personify
naturalness. Her perceived naturalness not only guaranteed the truth of
her sexuality, in much the same way as imputed qualities of sincerity
and authenticity, spontaneity and openness, guarantee the personality of
other stars; it was also to define and justify that sexuality, exactly in line
with the *Playboy* discourse.

Dyer suggests she is naturally sexy and thus, her brand as a sex symbol
becomes authentic. Researchers cannot measure sexiness directly; it is up to
each individual’s opinion and thus can be neither true nor false. However,
Monroe has been globally recognised by the masses as being a sex symbol. If
Monroe had merely performed a sexy character for one particular film, it would
not have been so strongly a part of her individual identity. It was consistent in
the way she walked, spoke, dressed and acted. The consistency and naturalness
in her sex appeal add authenticity to her image.

Ellis Cashmore (2016) wrote; “while other figures, such as Jesus, Che
Guevara, Marilyn Monroe and Muhamad Ali were icons, none was
manufactured as such. Jordan was”. Cashmore is referring to the construction of Michael Jordan as a tool to sell Nike. However, I disagree with Cashmore’s suggestion that Monroe was not manufactured. Her name, hair and style were all manufactured to sell a sexy 50s movie star. While her sexiness may be authentic, her overall persona was constructed to sell films, products and the Hollywood fantasy. This same image is still used to sell today.

Semiotic Analysis of Advertisement

The 2013 advertisement for Chanel N°5, includes an audio recording of Monroe stating she wears Chanel N°5 and nothing else to bed, while images and video clips of her are shown onscreen. To understand the denotative and connotative aspects of the advertisement, Barthe’s theories of semiotics have been applied. The video starts off by giving context to the footage. The text onscreen reads “Marilyn Monroe April 1960” and an announcer calls out her name. By writing and stating her name it ensures the audience recognises her and the specific date adds a sense of authenticity to the footage. The video is predominantly black and white, which reflects the notion of it being a part of a historical archive. The video starts with Monroe getting out of a car and then there is a montage of clips of Monroe at various public events with her voiceover playing on top. This is accompanied by subtitles, as the Monroe recording quality is low. The quality however, also adds credibility to the fact that the recording is from 1960. The subtitles read:

You know, they ask you questions …

Just as an example: ‘What do you wear to bed?’
A pyjama top?
The bottoms of the pyjama?
A nightgown?
So I said, ‘Chanel No. 5!’
Because it’s the truth!
And yet, I don’t want to say ‘nude.’
But… it’s the truth.
The video ends with Monroe getting into a car and waving as the car drives away. It then fades to a product shot. By beginning and ending the advertisement with her exiting and entering a car it gives the visual art direction a narrative that can be followed. In one of the various images of Monroe there is a close up of her hands holding a bottle of Chanel No5, clearly selected to reinforce her use of the product.

The pace of the montage aligns with the smooth music to reinforce the sexiness of the advertisement. Overall, on a denotative level there is a woman shown in a montage of media events, a voice over talking about wearing only Chanel No5 to bed and then a product shot of what is being sold. From a connotative level we read this as a rare authentic footage being shared, which reveals that Monroe used to wear Chanel No5 perfume to bed and sleep naked. This reinforces her sex symbol image. Her voice is cute, yet seductive, as she speaks about the topic. She is cheeky in the way she discusses sleeping nude. The montage shows her always dressed up in perfect makeup with her hair styled nicely. This reinforces her celebrity image. The advertisement suggests that by purchasing Chanel No5, the consumer will ‘smell’ like Monroe. Perfume is often sold as being a part of a woman’s seduction, thus using Monroe in the advertisement created the ultimate formula for seduction.

The advertisement evokes sexual stimuli through the use of Monroe’s image. Through the meaning transfer process, it also adds a sense of 1950s class and Hollywood status to the brand of Chanel. Similarly, Monroe’s association with Chanel also emphasizes her classy and expensive taste, adding to her Hollywood image. As Hudak (2014) explained:

Delebs appear to not only endorse a current product or service, but their appearance in the advertisement also communicates that the value and worth of this product or service mimics their own cultural values and status.

Of course, the intended use of Monroe as a deleb in this commercial is to strengthen the long-lasting brand of Chanel. This communication is only successful if it is interpreted as being authentic. Thus, Chanel created supporting material that was shared online through their Inside Chanel website, detailing the history behind Monroe’s connection with Chanel No5 (Chapter 2: Marilyn and No. 5 2016).

The video raises questions about when Monroe first stated that she wears Chanel. While flashing photos of Monroe in bed, the text onscreen reads: “While disembarking from a plane? At a press conference? We may never know when she said the phrase for the first time.” The video then continues to reveal that the first time she was quoted as saying she wears Chanel No5 was in print on April 7, 1952. The video then shows photographs from October
1953, which were taken for a magazine but never published. In these photographs, Monroe is laying nude in bed with a bottle of Chanel on the bedside table. Following this, the text reads that in April 1960: “Journalist Georges Belmont interviews Marilyn for the French magazine Marie Claire.” Her comments about Chanel No5 in this interview were never published, but became the audio for the campaign more than five decades later. The reference to dates adds factual credibility, as do the photographs and the mention of the article quoting her. This supporting material was shared to ensure that the meaning transfer process was direct and avoid having the authenticity of the endorsement challenged.

The authenticity behind Monroe’s endorsement of Chanel No5 is further reinforced in the advertisement itself, in the recording content, the photo of her holding the perfume bottle and the fact that Monroe repeats the words “it’s the truth” twice. This repetition helps to seep the message into the minds of the audience. The song is also used to reiterate the notion of truth, as it is titled “Truth”, although this is even subtler, as there are no lyrics. As Linke (2012, 229) stated; “sound is another crucial constituent synchronized with other elements of an ad”. Music plays a pivotal role in an advertisement, as it sets the tone for the visuals (Linke 2012, 230). The music has a soft romantic tone, which supports Monroe’s romanticised nostalgia.

Hudak (2014) stated:

Delebs are artifacts preserved in media. Watching or listening to an original performance of a now-deceased celebrity can summon a pure memory. On the other hand, seeing delebs in either their original settings or in modern contexts can conjure wistful memories of a time gone by.

Thus, the advertisement evokes a sense of memory for some, and for others, is a reflection of a classic Hollywood period that they may have wished to be a part of. Creating a sense of nostalgia can romanticise the message even further. The advertisement is not specifically stating why the product should be purchased, rather it is simply stating that Monroe used to use it. Thus, the advertisement relies on Monroe fans or those who simply take the message that Chanel No5 is a sexy, classic perfume. As Hudak explained; “the personal and collective connections that viewers have to delebs in advertising depends on what recollections they have of the deleb.” Some people may have been around when Monroe was still alive, while others may have grown up watching her films or may have never seen her films but recognise her as a sex symbol.

Regardless of the consumer’s connections with the icon, the authenticity in the brand alignment is crucial. As Hudak (2014) explained:
The characterization and context with which the newly fabricated posthumous performance occurs influences the degrees to which audiences believe in the post-mortem presentation. Audiences would not believe a Marilyn phantasm selling farming equipment, unless, of course, it was very sexy farming equipment.

Ultimately, the brand match-up is crucial to any endorsement being successful. Without the appropriate alignment of brands, the communication will not be perceived as authentic. This particular advertisement seemed to gain a positive reaction.

Method and Results

The Chanel YouTube channel posted the Marilyn Monroe commercial online November 22, 2013. By March 11, 2016 it reached almost 13 million views and 6,192 likes. These statistics do not include the reach it would have had broadcasted on television or through the variations of the video that spread online. This paper used published YouTube comments to analyse the perceived authenticity behind this endorsement. Out of the 172 comments collected, 50 were not in English, one was a Google+ post by Chanel, and three posts were accidentally repeated by fans, thus these were excluded from the data analysis. It is important to note that the various languages used throughout the comments are indicative of both Monroe and Chanel’s global brand identities. The remaining 118 comments were thematically analysed by placing them into categories, as shown in table 1.

The data shows that of those who commented on the video, the majority (44 comments) believed the brand match up was authentic and had a positive response to the commercial. There were only five, which challenged the authenticity of the advertisement, by raising facts about Monroe either not sleeping naked or having worn other perfumes. These people seemed to also be fans, since they were claiming to be well informed. The majority of posters were considered fans of Monroe, with comments referring to her beauty, seductiveness and her voice. Many posts also referred to their love of Monroe. Only four comments exclusively mentioned liking Chanel, without any reference to Monroe. Comments that referred to both of them were included in the category ‘Like the commercial and/or stated views of authenticity.’ It was assumed that those who expressed views of liking both brands liked the advertisement and thus believed it was authentic. There was also some discussion about the song used in the advertisement (14 comments). The 10 miscellaneous comments were unclear about what they were referring to and thus could not be categorised elsewhere. Overall, 87% of the comments analysed had a positive reaction to the advertisement.
Table 1. Results of data collection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Categories</th>
<th>Number of Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Believed it was NOT authentic</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Like the commercial and/or stated views of authenticity</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing Monroe fandom specifically</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressing Chanel fandom exclusively</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Referring to song in advert</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miscellaneous</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Comment Analysis

The data collected suggests the commercial was successful and the brand match-up was appropriate. The perceived authenticity behind the brand association allowed for this advert to be well received by fans. It is also evident that although Monroe died more than five decades ago, there are still many fans today.

Numerous people simply wrote that they “loved it” or it was “sublime” or “amazing”. Comment 118 was more specific: “I don't know why, but I love this commercial. Her fame and everything, put into one, the music in the background, the speaking, and Chanel. thank you.” Other comments that fell into the same category, ‘Like the commercial and/or stated views of authenticity’ include:

Comment 1:

Out of all the junk they use Marilyn to advertise Chanel is the only product worthy as she endorsed it with her words. Maxfactor was said to be her favourite lipstick but they insulted her with their recent campaign, comparing her old pics to her new ones, as if to say our product makes you better. Give me a break!

Comment 36:

There's nothing in the whole world with more glamour than this ad!! I love
Comment 71:

Makes me want to buy a bottle like right now...

Marilyn knew the power of sex appeal and seduction...

Comment 99:

the only youtube adv that i ever watch

Comment 104

Great job Chanel! I simply love this ad! Respect.

Comment 106:

i love this video it just makes me happy idk why lol

Comment 71, in particular, would be the exact result that Chanel would be hoping for. All of these comments show an enthusiasm for the advertisement and the combination of Monroe and Chanel.

On the other hand, those comments classified as ‘believed it was NOT authentic’ include:

Comment 122:

Marilyn was OBSESSED about the idea her breasts would sag. She wore very supportive bras as she slept. Eluding to sleeping naked was a tactic to appear more 'sexy' - not that she needed to!

Comment 134:

Didn't she say the same about Yardley's Lavender?

These people appear to possibly be fans of Monroe, as they provide information that suggests the advertisement is inauthentic due to other knowledge about Monroe’s habits. Other fans clearly showed their fandom and support of Monroe, but without criticising the advertisement:

Comment 31:

Marilyn monroe the most beautiful woman ever! will remain a legend and sex symbol....

Comment 34

I just watch this add cuz Marilyn <3
Comment 87:

It is so amazing that I stop every time to watch this "ad" again and again, her voice is so dreamy and timeless. Unfortunately, CHANEL is not an affordable brand. ;/

Similarly, some viewers were specifically Chanel fans:

Comment 109:

I love Chanel N°5

Comment 136:

My fav fragrance!

Ultimately, the advertisement would have drawn in existing fans of either or both brands. The song choice also generated some conversation with many asking what it was. For those who learned the song title, it would further reinforce the message of the advertisement – Monroe truly liked to wear Chanel N°5.

**Posthumous Endorsement Selection**

Through this successful endorsement key factors can be identified and applied to future posthumous endorsements. These are:

1. Capitalise on an authentic history between two brands and share the story;
2. Provide evidence of the product being used by the deleb;
3. Create an appropriate brand match-up that aligns similar feelings or views between the icon and the product/service being sold;
4. Produce a well art-directed piece of communication that evokes emotion and a sense of nostalgia to connect to the deleb;
5. Choose a deleb that has a lasting iconic status that transfers meaning purely through their established identity;
6. Select an icon whose status has been well protected by not being overly used for a variety of endorsements and merchandising;
7. Avoid relying on digital recreations of an icon, however if it is to be used it must be tasteful and relevant; and
8. Ensure that the relevant target audience of the product being sold aligns with the fan-base of the icon. There may be an older generation and a newly found generation. Each endorsement should of course be planned out on a case-by-case basis. However, these are common threads that have helped other posthumous campaigns to be successful. For example, Tag Heuer use Steve McQueen to endorse their watch, which relates back to a history of him owning their watches and wearing them in his film *Le Mans* (1971). Similarly, Converse uses a photograph of James Dean wearing their shoes as evidence of his association with the brand, although the endorsement only occurred posthumously. Both of these brands also align well. Dean represents everlasting youth and being cool, which is also reflected in the Converse brand. McQueen’s film was about racing, but he also raced in real-life, this car racing image is what Tag Heuer utilises, as well as the concept of being timelessly trendy.

Using posthumous icons means advertisers can show the celebrity at the height of their career and strongest selling power. In the majority of cases, an image of Elvis Presley in the 1960s would be used over a ‘fat Elvis’ image for an endorsement. Similarly, the Monroe images used in the Chanel campaign would have been carefully selected to represent her sex symbol identity. The visuals are chosen based on how they will be interpreted in the modern context. As Hudak (2014) explained:

> Understanding the ways in which delebs create a phenomenological connection to the living consumer in the present moment offers considerable insight into how advertisers can begin to frame culturally and historically contingent images of authentic, intentional, believable, and ethical representations of delebs in their posthumous advertisement narratives.

We must acknowledge the current reading of these icons and how their images are interpreted by a younger generation. An advertising campaign is always aimed at a specific target audience. Researching that audience and understanding their association with a particular icon can help to create the appropriate posthumous endorsement. Relevance to the audience and to the product/service is crucial. It is also important that the brands are well aligned to protect the icon’s image.

Oversaturation and misrepresentation are risks for both living and deceased endorsers. While a living celebrity has a variety of other risks attached, they also have the opportunity to create new media hype to move on from a bad endorsement campaign. In the case study example, Monroe’s brief comment about wearing Chanel is now being attached to her brand long-term. She cannot
rebut or change her mind about how she feels about the product. In the case of delebs, their brands are in the hands of publicists or managers that own their copyright. If their image is used to endorse too many products or the wrong brands posthumously, their own brand identity will lose value.

Conclusion

Marilyn Monroe’s brand has lingered for five decades since her death and with the global access of the Internet it is likely to help her image maintain its reach. The Chanel advertisement is evidence of this, as the YouTube version gained millions of views. As long as her films are accessible, and her brand is maintained through appropriate application on merchandise and use in endorsement campaigns, then her brand can last for many more decades to come. Posthumous endorsements can help to maintain a brand identity if it is well aligned. Ultimately, pairing Chanel and Monroe works well, as they both represent class, seduction, nostalgia and beauty. Having evidence of an authentic history allows for the endorsement to be believed. As Monroe said herself, “it’s the truth.”

References


Urban Angles

Luis Martin, Lisbon, Portugal

Urban street photography is for Martin a way to enter a contemplative state that grounds him in the here and now. Early each morning he goes out searching for architectural features and unusual details that appear alive in the warm light.

Martin refuses to use post-processing and filtering for his work. For him, the act of photographing must be immediate – point and click – and whatever is captured is the final result with all its imperfections. Photography is about the composition and the choice of light and shooting angle, not artificially generated or amplified effects and colors. Martin believes the camera has enough implicit filters as it is without adding more explicitly. He hypothesizes that the extensive use of post-processing software and filters in photography corresponds to society’s refusal to accept reality. “Instead we blindly embrace the alternative virtual reality offered by technology. It feels more comforting, but
normality in our world is not necessarily healthy.”

Mainstream art has become pervasive with protocols and techniques. Art galleries and agents expect certain things and behaviors. “In art, one must break the rules, including the often unconscious rules set by artists themselves.”

Splendour can be found in the smallest details if one chooses to see it. This is how Martin uses photography to unlock inner peace: with a focus on hidden beauty. Each time he is out taking pictures he enters a meditative state that both disconnects him from the social narratives and reconnects him with the fundamental beauty of life, its essence. “Most people do not see the amazing beauty in everything surrounding them, even mundane things, because they live in their head, constantly self-justifying their actions with the messages of conformity they are brainwashed with. Most people follow the social narratives like sleepwalkers.”
Martin’s rejection of conformity and normality, of perfection and exactitude, and of photographic technical correctness, is central to his work and minimalist lifestyle. It is not about the instrument and its photo-electronic processing, but rather about a sense of intimacy with the here and now to emulate how light chemically reacts with the eyes sensors, and how the resulting signal is translated into a living experience by the brain. Martin hopes to give birth to “beauty inside the viewer” and consequently generate a sense of wonder for everything.

*Urban angles* is one of Martin’s main photographic collection with an emphasis on angles, planes and lines that abound in urban settings and architecture. He also has a passion for shadows; he sees them as projecting serenity by summarizing objects essence, revealing unexpected points of view.

The objective points to the immediacy of lights and shadows, to the geometrical primitives of visual elements and their intersection, often erased from our perception by habituation. It’s not about the technical – Martin clicks when he feels something.

Martin captures little human physical presence except for a few unusual silhouettes. His photographs are more about what

> “In art, one must break the rules, including the often unconscious rules set by artists themselves.”
is around us and our intimate but often unconscious connection with our surroundings. As such, his camera rather points inside each of us. It is what it tells about us, expressed by the underlying components, the hidden yet visible geometric primitives and their rudimentary cognitive and emotional effects as constructed by our nervous and endocrine systems.

Twitter: @martinluis614

Note from the editor: Luis Martin contributed this issue’s cover image and the pictures shown on pages 20-24. Images reproduced with the artist’s permission. © Luis Martin
Technological Food: Towards the End of the Animal Age?

Paula Greenwood, London, U.K.

Abstract. The consumption of animal products is a deeply rooted socio-cultural construct. However, ethical and environmental pressures are leading to the development of alternative plant-based foods. Some of these alternatives, particularly ‘fake’ meats, rely on new technologies to create products that have similar taste, appearances, and texture as their animal-based counterparts. Are the urgent issues associated with animal agriculture and the technological solutions signaling the end of the long period of human history during which we have relied on animals for food and other necessities? Are we approaching the end of the animal age?

"In nature's economy the currency is not money, it is life."

- Vandana Shiva, author of Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace

As a child, my mother used to tell me I was lucky to be growing up in the country and to know where food actually came from. She would then put an axe in my hand and ask that I decapitate the chicken that would become our dinner.

The consumption of animal products is a deeply rooted socio-cultural construct. For millennia, we have relied on animals for the nutritious food and other necessities they provide. However, according to a UN environmental
report, animal agriculture is not sustainable\textsuperscript{1}. Fortunately, issues associated with animal-based food can be addressed by technological alternatives. Will our use of animals for food be rendered obsolete by technologies, just as the electric motor and combustion engine have replaced animal muscular force in industry and transportation?

Technologies have long influenced the food we consume. Juliet Clutton-Block, the author of \textit{A Natural History of Domesticated Mammals}, wrote that there is “almost no species of animal or plant that have not been influenced by human activity.” Farming machinery, artificial selection, chemical pest control and fertilizers, growth hormones and genetic engineering are just a few of the many human interventions and technologies that have contributed to making our food less and less a natural affair.

We eat \textit{technological food}. Despite the bad publicity and many real problems, it may not be as bad as it sounds.

In the late 1960s and 1970s, experts like Paul R. Ehrlich with his book \textit{The Population Bomb} painted a catastrophic picture of the future due to food shortages. Wide-ranging starvation was predicted because it appeared impossible to feed the growing world population. The crisis never materialized thanks in part to the development of technologies that significantly increased farming efficiency and land productivity. Where hunger exists today, it is not due to a lack of food but rather to distribution problems or degraded socio-political environments. However, a wide-ranging food crisis is still a possibility due to climate change. It is therefore highly desirable to continue developing technologies that increase productivity, but it is essential that this be done while minimizing the environmental impacts of farming and food production.

\begin{center}
\textbf{We eat technological food and it may not be as bad as it sounds.}
\end{center}

There are many challenges in making industrial food production both sustainable and efficient (where I use the word ‘efficient’ to refer, among other metrics, to \textit{yield} – how much can be produced per hectare). Some issues that come immediately to mind are the use of chemicals that are detrimental to our health and the environment, monocultures that destroy the soil, overuse of water resources, and so on. The major challenge I aim to address in this article is meat and other animal products which have an enormous impact on both

\textsuperscript{1} \url{http://www.unep.org/resourcepanel/Portals/24102/PDFs/PriorityProductsAndMaterials_Report.pdf}
sustainability and efficiency. For example, according to a recent study\(^2\), switching to a healthy vegetarian diet reduces water consumption by 35-55%.

In his book *Green Business: An A-to-Z Guide*, Nevin Cohen calculated that a hamburger patty would cost $200 if we accounted for all environmental costs. The reason is that raising animals consumes an unreasonable amount of water and land while generating more greenhouse emissions than all modes of transportation combined. These are critical issues. Moreover, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, the demand for meat is expected to double by 2050\(^3\). That is a real danger for humankind.

In some ways, it would be more helpful to the environment if we drove SUVs but adopted a vegan diet.

Yet, many people who sincerely care for the environment are unable to give up meat and other animal products. Their decision forfeits one of the most promising solutions to the very environmental issues they have so much at heart. I know this contradictory behavior well, having practiced it for most of my life. Such disconnect between personal philosophy and consumption choices is not surprising since animal products, like eggs, dairy and particularly meat, are more than food: they are important socio-cultural constructs to which we are emotionally attached. As such, it is not surprising that most people are unwilling to become vegan.

Even though veganism is growing (there were an estimated 540,000 vegans in the U.K. in 2016, up from 150,000 in 2006\(^4\)), it is still marginal with around one percent of the population following a vegan diet. In the U.S., surveys by the Vegetarian Resource Group show that 1.5% of the U.S. population never consumes meat and other animal products\(^5\). Most people reject the vegetarian diet because they believe that it will not provide all necessary nutrients. From a young age, we are taught that meat and other animal products like dairy are necessary to grow strong and healthy. Governments and food corporations intensely support this belief, but their message does not represent the complete story. For instance, the American Dietetic Association in their 2009 paper *Position of the American Dietetic Association: vegetarian diets* states that

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\(^5\) http://www.vrg.org/nutshell/faq.htm#poll
“appropriately planned vegetarian diets, including total vegetarian or vegan diets, are healthful, nutritionally adequate, and may provide health benefits in the prevention and treatment of certain diseases.” Hence, not only is a plant-based diet better for the environment, but it is also better for our health. In spite of these facts, traditions and habits hold us back.

A possible key to breaking the habit of meat consumption is the introduction of substitutes that resemble their animal counterparts. Meat alternatives have existed for a long time, many cultures having adopted tofu, corn or legumes as their historical protein sources. Health food stores and supermarkets have carried various meat substitutes for years. But people used to animal meat are looking for specific textures and tastes that fail to be reproduced by these products.

Technologies may once again be part of the solution. Indeed, a new technology that produces plant-based meat has received much media attention in recent years with Bill Gates announcing his support for it. Beyond the ‘Bill Gates’ buzz, the new technology does have a major advantage over its predecessors: by aligning vegetal protein molecules in a way that emulates muscular fibers, the resulting ‘meat’ feels like its animal counterpart (see figure 1). There is no comparison with a T-bone steak, but cut into strips in a wrap or a salad, it astonishes most of those who blind tasted it. They cannot tell the difference.

Given the emotional and cultural attachment we have for animal meat, and the habit we have developed for its texture, this plant-based alternative may offer an enticing stepping-stone towards the environmentally friendlier vegetarian diet.

As a recent vegan (I abandoned consumption of all animal products five years ago at age 60), my own experience illustrates the above idea. The only way I was able to eliminate meat from my diet was to reproduce dishes I enjoy

Figure 1 – Plant-based ‘chicken’

http://www.thegatesnotes.com/Features/Future-of-Food
with meat alternatives. Being a ‘foodie,’ I have created my own vegetal meats with grains and flours (see figure 2), which is a far cry from the meat substitute I mentioned. Nevertheless, after a few months of retraining my taste buds and texture perception, I concluded that with the appropriate seasoning and sauces, ‘mock meat’ did the job. Obviously, I was not able to reproduce a roast beef or a filet mignon, but my ‘pork cutlets,’ ‘chicken strips,’ and ‘ground beef’ allowed me to slowly adapt to a plant-based diet. I also tried the new technological plant-based meat products I talked about previously (the ones Bill Gates endorsed) and they were wonderful. They look, feel, and taste like real chicken.

The technology that allows for mock meat to resemble the real thing is only a first step and only one of the many possibilities. Other technologies and techniques may need to be developed and perfected, like the ones to create meat from animal stem cells, as they may be helpful to those who have even more difficulty abandoning meat. The advantages are the same: a lesser impact on the environment, and potentially healthier food.

Are the urgent issues associated with animal agriculture and the potential technological solution signaling the end of the long period of human history during which we have relied on animals for food and other necessities?

Are we approaching the end of the animal age?

Given the environmental concerns associated with animal agriculture, reaching this major turning point of human history should probably be a
priority. The United Nations Environment Programme report *Assessing the Environmental Impacts of Consumption and Production* states “A substantial reduction of impacts would only be possible with a substantial worldwide diet change, away from animal products.” This conclusion was reiterated in a 2018 study. "Feeding the world over the next generation is one of the biggest global challenges that we face," commented Dr. Evan Fraser, the Canada Research Chair in global food security and one of the study’s authors. But it "is also doable given certain changes that need to be made. Those changes include shifting to diets that are higher in fruits and vegetables, shifting to plant-based proteins, reducing waste and investing in science to increase crop yields.”

A plant-based diet, facilitated by technological food alternatives, appears to be part of the solution for a sustainable future in which all can enjoy enough nutritious food. To achieve that goal, animal agriculture subsidies need to be redirected to create incentives for the agro-food sector to move in the direction of plant-based food. Governments’ food policies need to be redesigned, stressing the health and environmental advantages of a balanced, well-planned vegetarian diet. It is also necessary to implement education campaigns similar to those of anti-smoking to change habits and perceptions. Meat, in particular, must cease to be seen as a cultural symbol of strength and wealth, just as today we do not accept cigarette as a symbol of ‘cool.’

Another consideration in adopting a plant-based diet is ethics. Many groups worldwide such as PETA and the Save Movement have advocated for the abolition of animal exploitation. With over 60 billion sentient beings killed each year, the end of the animal age becomes much more than a self-preservation change but a major revolution in humankind’s thinking and morality. American philosopher Tom Regan explained how animals are sentient (or subjects-of-a-life in his words) because they have interests, a capacity to learn, expectations, and emotions like fear and pleasure. In other words, what happens to them matters to them. Therefore they should have rights and we, humans, a duty to intervene to assist if their rights are violated. It is a call to extend our circle of compassion and to develop a more inclusive morality, two changes that would benefit human relationships as well.

The goal is to fix “the disconnect of cellophane- and plastic-wrapped ‘meat’, ‘dairy’ and ‘eggs’ with the untold suffering and horror of individual animals

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7 Showwei Chu (CBC News) Aug 16, 2018. *If the world ate the USDA-recommended diet, there wouldn't be enough land to grow it.* http://www.cbc.ca/news/health/usda-guidelines-diet-agricultural-land-use-study-1.4781291

wanting to escape confinement, torture and death.”9 The outcome is a complete departure from our ancient urges to kill and exploit other animals for our subsistence. Of course, before we developed appropriate technologies to feed ourselves one may argue that we had no choice but to eat animal products. The false arguments that “we always ate meat” or “it is the natural order” do not stand to scrutiny. Our situation has changed and it is time we change our belief system as well.

These are challenges that demand our immediate attention. However, it will take time to readjust our food systems and habits, but the end of the animal age should be our objective, as it will create a more sustainable and ethical world.

Life Force: On the Move

Saul Courrier

The poems reproduced here were first published in 2016 in the author’s book, Life Force: On the Move. A digital nomad, Saul Courrier writes from the road and shares with us his longing to incessently move forward, both physically and psychologically. The poems carry messages of hope, inviting the reader to embrace life and move beyond obstacles and setbacks.

The theme of nature is ever-present in Saul Courrier’s work because of the wealth of metaphors it offers but also because this is where he finds his inspiration. Courrier’s poems also passionately criticizes socio-cultural practices and human behaviors. One feels touched and engaged by the powerful images and sensations conveyed by his words.

Saul Courrier is also the author of Moving Forward: Seven Steps to Align Yourself With Your Path. His books are available on Amazon or during his worldwide intimate public speaking events. The photographs shown here were taken around the world by the author during his many travels.

Courrier also regularly tweets messages of self-improvement and hope, while shattering misconstrued social and psychological beliefs.

Twitter: @SaulCourrier

Photographs pages 32-40: © Saul Courrier. Images reproduced with the artist’s permission.
Spectacular Life

It is the aim of life to adapt
and to always move forward.

Like a river flowing in mountainous terrain,
the water courageously finds its way through.

At times in somber valleys
or in wide bright plains,
it accumulates in emerald lakes.

When needed, with patient time,
it carves its own path in hard rock,
turning invincible barriers into canyons.

The end result is always spectacular!
Fluid Impressions

As I caress your fluidity,
you create wrinkles of diamonds,
swallowed in immediate satisfaction.

Ripples of undulating joy,
joined as one with my hands,
a soft invisible touch,
reaching into your infinity.

Futile attempts to grasp you,
I can only observe your brilliance,
short-lived here, resurrected there,
impossible to fully embrace.

Elusive grace of luminosity,
dancing particles of eternity.
The Storm is Not Coming

in the distance gathering
clouds clash collectively
heavy and compact
they close the blue gap
but nothing happens
they act in violent silence
moving in a soft collision
a grandiose show of nothing
barely covering the sun
reflecting its brightness
on a more welcoming corner
of a world without interest
a beautiful day it will be
Mistaken Identity

The beauty of the world evaporates
In the scorching fire of adversity
Believe! Believe! We are told
You must battle to be someone
You must fight for a spot under the sun
It is human nature they say
The worse excuse ever uttered
We can be so much better
Because there is limitless magic
If we let our hearts open
If we let ourselves be touched
By the bright colours of kindness
By the sweet taste of compassion
Nomad

ships are not built to stay in ports
their nature is to sail over the horizon
facing the stormy sea with determination
seeking new harbours for short moments
surely one day they end up at the bottom
to those who can't stand this notion
stop saying in horror, “it's not the norm”
retreat to your comfortable suburban salon
and watch adventures on television
The Binary Man

Miguel Martinez, Phoenix, Arizona, USA

WHEN I bought a new computer a while ago, it came with Windows 10, admittedly a big jump (and a rather late one) from Windows XP. As a software engineer with over 30 years of experience, I thought it would not be a problem. After all, I had seen many software paradigm shifts during my career. To my surprise, I have been struggling. I can see what developers are trying to do, but I disagree. I think software design, particularly Human-Computer Interface (HCI) design, is going in the wrong direction. Moreover, I would say that the software developer’s profession is itself taking a wrong turn with an uncaring, dehumanizing, machine-like attitude. It seems we are turning into a binary man.

Here are two examples that illustrate the kind of issues involved. First, the address bar of the browser is invisible unless one clicks the space where it is supposed to be (an issue now resolved, thankfully). There was no gain in screen space by hiding the address bar: the area was unused until it is clicked. Second, scrollbars suffer from a similar predicament in many programs, becoming visible only when one moves the mouse over where they should be, as shown in figure 1. Aren’t these fundamental functionalities of the interface that should be presented up-front and should not result in more cognitive load and actions from the user? Have we abandoned these fundamental concepts of HCI design?

The above examples are akin to driving on a highway and coming to a river. There is no apparent way to cross until the car leaps over at which point the bridge manifests itself. To keep with the car analogy, one can imagine an invisible brake pedal, one that appears when the foot moves in position, perhaps even appearing and disappearing, then finally materializing after a few attempts, as I experienced with the new scrollbar concept. It would make no sense to design cars in such a way, yet it seems the state-of-the-art in HCI
design has adopted that paradigm, creating clean, minimalistic interfaces that react and adapt according to context and user’s intentions. In some cases, it may be the right approach, but in others, it is completely wrong: basic, fundamental functionalities must be visible and easily accessible at all time. Isn’t that why we moved away from the infamous DOS C-prompt?

It looks as if software engineers assume users will know to click around. Perhaps I am a dinosaur or simply saving energy – I am not that young anymore after all – but I don’t click on a screen hoping something will happen. I know the origin of this attitude: these engineers were born playing games in which clicking anywhere and everywhere is often rewarded with interesting discoveries. In real life, it is tiring.

This is not a mere technical issue: ease of use is a matter of respect for human dignity and different abilities. To make my point clear, HCI are being designed with the same uncaring attitude architects would have if they constructed buildings without access ramps and other accommodations for persons with disabilities. Of course, in their case, the local government would fine the people responsible and force them to retrofit. Software engineers are ableists but no one is pointing it out to them or forcing them to act with

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1 Ableists are people who commit discrimination and social prejudice against those with disabilities.
decency. They claim to act in the name of progress, progress that is ideological and disrespectful.

The goal with graphical HCIs was to be user-friendly. But user-friendliness is not about elegance and aesthetics, it is about easy and intuitive access to functionality which involves minimizing users’ actions and cognitive load. Too many new HCI fail lamentably in that respect. Certainly, esthetics is important, but it must not supersede key aspects of usability as stated in industry standards of ergonomics, as for instance ISO 9241.2

Flawed designs have serious consequences on users and organizations. Badly designed HCIs are disruptive, introducing inefficiency and decreased productivity. As a system analyst investigating workflow and users’ behaviors in the workplace, I have witnessed on numerous occasions how much time is wasted by workers trying to figure out ways to access key features or doing extra work with convoluted operations that could have been designed in a much simpler manner. Bad design also causes frustration and stress, possibly leading to health problems.3

Of course, I will be accused of not adapting to newer standards and more recent professional practices. In fact, colleagues to whom I confided my concerns as well as reviewers of journals and conferences where I submitted previous versions of this paper have told me so. The facts and evidence I have personally observed and been subjected to myself remain: the new software design and HCI practices cause problems we should not ignore.

This other story illustrates how real people are affected by poorly designed interfaces and systems, not only as a lack of enjoyment or efficiency but as hopelessness. A few years ago, I was in San Jose, Costa Rica for a contract. I saw an older gentleman sitting at one of the hotel’s computers for hours. After seeing him there again on the second day, I asked if he needed help. He turned toward me with teary eyes. He told me he had been stuck for days, running out of money, unable to access his bank account and email because he was ‘locked out’ and had no other device to receive the required unlock code. Although this may not appear to be an HCI issue, in reality, it is: this person was trying to


interact with computer systems. HCI goes far beyond the simple graphical presentation on a screen, another often forgotten principle.

The above story is a case of built-in ‘intelligence’ that is supposed to help and protect us. Like car doors that lock automatically, are we giving up human control to machines? What are the consequences of doing so? Is anyone seriously asking these questions and doing the proper investigation before implementing such functionalities?

Bill Gates, Stephen Hawking and others have in recent years voiced concerns about Artificial Intelligence (AI). As so-called intelligent systems make more decisions on our behalf, my worry is less about AI itself than bad programming practices and deficient assumptions underlying the design of ‘intelligent’ software and computer systems. Programmers cannot design in isolation of human and social needs. As rightly pointed out by Massey, the “public imaginary, created and amplified by repeated media coverage, support a narrative of all-powerful thinking machines that will take over the world. This view is missing the point entirely – the real issues are first, bad software written by programmers who do not take into account the human user, and second, people’s blind trust in computers.”

The worse part is that it seems human thinking is being transformed by our trust in and dependence on computers. It seems our minds, and particularly the ones of those who have the closest relation with machines – the technology professionals – are becoming ‘binary,’ increasingly following the cold logic of programs. Denis Duclos expressed the situation perfectly, “The binarist ideology transforms man into software so that he becomes a factor of safety, diagnosis and production. By making himself physically and mechanically available at the side of the machine, no longer only in his movements, as in Taylorism, but with his mind and with the Newspeak [the official language of George Orwell’s 1984 totalitarian dystopia] shared with his peers, the individual becomes civilized by no longer posing a problem of trust to sociotechnical integration.”

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In such a context, compassion, human dignity, and basic respect for differences in capacities are further evacuated from the developers’ concerns. Dictatorial institutionalized ableism is the outcome when one does not take great care in resisting the attraction of technologist and binarist thinking. This leads to a binary man, a seemingly super-human who is, in reality, the servant of machines in a world devoid of humanity, a world focused on productivity and consumption in which humans are unknowingly slaves of the fake pleasure devices, material belongings, and work give them. It is a world we know all too well because it is the one we already started to live in with the rise of technology-enabled neo-liberalism.

Beyond this ‘binarist ideology,’ another cause of abusive computer systems (in the ill-designed way they interact with humans) may be that software engineers and computer scientists are being overly influenced by the narrative that mobile, social, and contextual mean ‘better.’ Instead of blindly committing to a paradigm, one has to properly analyze possible approaches and choose the option that will result in the most usable interface. Under ideological pressure, programmers assume everyone wants to be connected and share everything all
the time. Social networks such as Facebook have fallen for such mistakes on many occasions, having to remove features under the pressure of users and privacy laws. A specific example of this situation is appearing invisible in a previous version of Microsoft messenger. Once the option ‘invisible’ is selected it should stay selected for any new session, but the behavior is totally unpredictable, most time going back to ‘visible.’ As many users pointed out on forums, this is a blatant privacy invasion. Not everyone wishes to be continuously connected. In fact, over-connection is correlated with mental health problems, particularly for teenagers.

What I would call a ‘tablet/mobile paradigm’ is also often overtaking HCI functionality. Under this paradigm, the developer assumes a vertical presentation of information and the user’s primary desire for nice graphics. For example, two hotel chains recently updated their websites and now users who use a laptop (horizontal display) need to scroll down to access the booking fields because the top of the page is occupied by a large image. Isn’t the main purpose of accessing the site to book a room? Why is the user forced to do more work? This not only causes frustration for the user, it may also result in lost business. As I write this paper, an airline website is making the same mistake on the beta release of its ‘new and improved’ site. A big airplane flying over clouds is shown, filling the whole screen. To book a flight, one has to scroll down, whereas on the original website the input fields were right there at the top with a narrow banner showing the airline’s logo. It was elegant and effective. The large image serves no purpose other than forcing the user to do more work. Over the last few months, I have seen a multitude of supposedly improved websites adopting a similar design. This shows how prevalent the attitude and ideology are, and how misconstrued the word ‘improved’ has become.

Competition through innovation is another cause of bad design. This is again ideologically driven, based on the misplaced belief that frequent changes equate market adaptation and therefore a competitive advantage. The following example is typical of the attitude: an online hotel booking company claims to release a new version of its ‘app’ every two weeks. How can developers possibly keep up and ensure quality under such a tempo? They cannot, as I experienced on many occasions. It seems key best practices of Software Engineering have been set aside. Indeed, many changes cause more
problems, and the quicker the changes, the less time for adequate testing. Where has this knowledge gone? Is it simply ignored for the sake of pushing frequent updates, to look innovative? Do changes respond to actual market and customers’ demands? Probably not, since the changes are often ‘flip-flops,’ demonstrating an obvious lack of adequate analysis. The many changes are moreover confusing for the users. For instance, with each new version of the above mentioned online booking app over several months, the HCI kept switching between prices that included taxes and price that did not. Hence, the bookings for one week included taxes and bookings of another week may not.

I was traveling for various contracts in Central and South America at the time, making multiple reservations at hotels each week and often having to modify them according to changing circumstances. I own a software consulting business and of course I aim at keeping my costs as low as possible for my own benefit and my clients’ as well. With the multiple variations on the booking website, it was difficult to compare prices. There was no mention of whether taxes were included or not until I clicked on a link stating “show price details.” The booking confirmations only showed partial information while there was plenty of blank space in the interface to display all pricing information. Minimalism that causes more user interaction, cognitive load, and frustration is a terrible design choice. The result is that I am no longer a customer of that booking website, after months of frustrating experiences and unresponsive dealings with tech support.

Another possible cause of bad design is what I call the “tech-centric attitude” which is a manifestation of the binarist ideology and of the binary man I have mentioned previously. This attitude is characterized by a disconnection from human realities and social impacts. It is expressed as an uncaring attitude on the part of developers who prefer to focus on technical aspects (the newest technology, fancy or ‘funny’ code, etc.), with an emphasis on selfish considerations (what the developer likes, the assumption that the developer knows what is best, etc.). The attitude is not necessarily intentional, but it is nevertheless most pervasive and deeply entrenched. I think it is the cause of much of the problem with bad design, and profoundly damaging for the public image of our profession. On countless occasions during my 30-year career, I have encountered this problem, its roots, its manifestations, and its destructive effects. As a junior programmer-analyst, I was told not to talk to users because we, the software engineers, knew better. As a senior project manager, I saw hundreds of millions of dollars misspend because of this attitude. I observed users revolting due to systems that did not meet their needs and expectations. The users became utterly disgusted with the technical team.
Motivated to change this poor attitude at the source, I started to teach at a university. I observed this unacceptable viewpoint every day among colleagues and students in Computer Science and Computer Engineering programs that over-emphasize technical over soft skills, with the effect that the tech-centric attitude is perpetuated.

In conclusion, I would like to invite and challenge all software engineers, computer scientists, developers, and all others who are involved in the design of computer systems to think more about users and avoid falling for ideologies. Well established, proven best-practices exist: we do not need to re-invent the wheel. For instance, there is a large body of knowledge in Software Engineering and solid principles documented in the ISO standard 9241 to guide us in developing better software and HCI. We must remember that ‘better’ must go beyond mere aesthetics and progress.

I also want to challenge higher education institutions to teach less coding and more psychology, sociology, ethics, anthropology, history, communications, and human relations soft skills that will make developers well-rounded individuals who understand human and social factors and can thus deliver better software and HCI. At the risk of stating the obvious, the software we develop and their HCI are not ours and do not exist to satisfy our own idiosyncratic technical needs or preferences. Our primary attention must go to the respect of human dignity, the many differences in individual capacities, and the enabling of a more equitable society.

I also think researchers in the Humanities, as well as public personalities and journalists, need to become more involved in the criticism of computer systems, investigation of their failures and limitations, and above all exposure of those responsible. Fundamental human rights are at stake with the ever-growing power and pervasiveness of computer systems.

We must stop the fake technological progress that dehumanize, and move away from the fallacy that machine thinking - both in the sense of humans thinking like machines and computer feeble and misused artificial thinking - is a path to a better future. The binary man must not become the norm. Urgent attention and action to change course are required.
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