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HMS Titanic, Elvis Presley and Cadbury's Wispa bar:

An analysis of the consumption of trauma

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Abstract

The embodiment of culture in possessions has been widely documented in consumer research. We argue that this process of embodiment is motivated by an emotional experience that remains relatively unexplored in the literature. In this paper we explore how this emotional meaning manifests in the consumption of trauma through three case-studies: HMS Titanic, Elvis Presley and Cadbury's Wispa bar.

Analysis of the case-studies reveals that trauma consumption occurs through successive generations being unable or unwilling to detach from previous cultural-historical traumas. Consequently, individuals attempt to reconnect to these earlier traumas through seeking out opportunities to recreate not only an emotional state identifiable with that trauma but also by creating new memories related to that trauma. Supporting these experiences are related organisations that actively encourage consumers to engage in these experiences. In effect, both consumers and organisations aim to create a collected memory around cultural historical traumas.

Introduction

The continuing interest in cultural and historical traumatic events, such as the sinking of HMS Titanic, shows no sign of abating. Indeed, an individual can watch the sinking through dramatised films, relive the experience of that sinking through exhibitions, buy actual parts of the ship (coal lifted from the wreck), watch documentaries about the decaying wreck and engage in numerous discussion forums. The need for individuals to replicate, immerse themselves and consume objects linked to cultural-historical traumatic experiences suggests a personal and emotional attachment. Indeed trauma related consumption can be identified not only with historical traumas but also commercial ones. For example, fan based communities around old AppleMac products (Belk and Tumbat, 2005) or the debacle that accompanied the withdrawal of original Coca-cola in the 1980s and so on.

The embodiment of meaning in possessions is well documented in consumer research, ranging from cultural (McCracken, 1984), mortality (Mandel and Smeestersm 2008), inalienable wealth (Cursai, Price and Arnould, 2004) and disposition (Price, Arnold and Curasi, 2000). In these studies, objects become embodiments of an individual's values, and hence an extension of their own self-identity. For example, in inalienable wealth (Cursai, Price and Arnould, 2004) and disposition (Price, Arnold and Curasi, 2000) illustrated how attachment towards objects produces an emotional state. Yet interestingly, only certain products were deemed to be worthy of emotional attachment. Why certain products take on a greater emotional attachment is unclear from previous research, even though emotions as a research area have begun to be explored further (Aaker, Drolet and Griffin, 2008). The question arises then, what happens when a group not only wants to remember the past but develops an emotional engagement with it. We argue that this is achieved through the consumer actively seeking out ways to recreate, renegotiate and reinterpret a cultural-historical trauma. In this paper we explore this question through three cultural-historical

related traumas: HMS Titanic, Elvis Presley and Graceland, and Cadbury's Wispa chocolate bar.

Theory

The premise of this paper is that a group seeks out ways to recreate and consume cultural-historical traumas. This paper explores these themes through two schools of thought drawn from sociological studies: Mannheim's (1928) 'The problem of generations', and Halbwach's (1925) 'The Social Frameworks of Memory'. Mannheim (1928) describes how a generation occupies a particular social location, allowing for their social experiences to be refracted and made meaningful. This occupation of a social location allows an individual, group etc to live through and share a collection of social experiences for a set period of time, demarcated not only by spatial coordinates, such as social class or standing but also by temporal ones; consequently "individuals who belong to the same generation, who share the same year of birth, are endowed, to that extent, with a common location in the historical dimension of the social process" (Mannheim, 1928/1972:105). The process of demarcation occurs at the age of 17 where the individual's attachment to appropriate memories of others, such as their parents or grandparents, loses importance in favor of their own acquired memories. New experiences allow the individual to differentiate themselves from older generations, as their own personal experiences become more prevalent creating shifts and inter-generational clashes between the generations in spatial and temporal locations within a society. This process of detachment and interaction creates a new generation *entelechy*, with each generation sharing their own sense of meaning based around a shared, common, sense of dependence derived from events and transformations that occurred during receptive periods in their lives (Dilthey, 1924 cited in Schorske, 1978). However, Mannheim (1928/1972) warns against viewing detachment and interaction between differing generational *entelechies* as distinguishable separate entities. Instead each generational *entelechy* may share similar

experiences and memories, creating a need to recreate and perpetuate the very historical connections, experiences, emotions and events that a generation from another generation's historical time perspective.

Memory then can be distinguished between the autobiographical, historical and collective. Autobiographical memory represents the memories of the individual, whilst the historical memory can only be accessed through historical records. History then becomes the embodiment of a remembered past that is no longer relevant to the individual. Collective memory, in contrast, represents an aggregation of individual memories, group commemorations, representations as well as fragmented shared aspects of identities located within language, myths, oral histories, personal testimonials, style and the wider global context. Halbwach (1925 [1992:38]) argues that memory is a construct of the societies we live in, allowing individuals to “acquire their memories... [as well as]...recall, recognize and localize their memories”. The individual, Halbwach (1925 [1992]) argues is incapable of memorizing information outside of their immediate group context, such as friendship groups; the unit providing cues, materials, prompts for the individual allowing them to recall particular events to the extent of creating memories that they may never have experienced. Memory then cannot be a repository for all past experiences and over time memories of these experiences become ‘imagos’ requiring a social context to exist within. Memories then are not the sole possession of the individual but also the wider social context, publicly manifesting through the narratives and symbols available to a society and a group.

Collective memory then can be seen as a form of social action and production, using materials and resources available to that generation, handed down to successive generations. Halbwach (1925 [1992]) separates collective memory into two constituent parts: a memory shared by society (the collective memory) and a memory shared by a group (the collected memory). Halbwach (1925 [1992], p. 38) argues that “it is in society that people normally

acquire their memories, it is also in society that they recall, recognize, and localize their memories”. Society then provides cognitive and neurological processes of storing these group memories; in effect these events become almost a universal, collective, perspective and understanding of a certain events and images from the past. In contrast the collected memory places memory not from a societal but an individualistic perspective. Memory represents then an aggregation of individual group members, with commemorative and other related memory symbols only becoming symbolic to the extent to which they elicit a reaction in those individuals within a specific group.

How then does successive generations’ inability to separate their respective entelechies from each other, combined with a group’s memory become attributed to traumas associated with: HMS Titanic, Elvis Presley and Graceland, and Cadbury’s Wispa?

Methodology

Several general questions form the basis for this study. How do traumas arising from events, people or objects become culturally symbolic of a moment in time? What meaning do these traumas take? How do people relate to the events, people or objects that form the trauma? From a commercial perspective, how does marketing use these traumas to develop brand identities that draw upon these cultural-historical contexts? As the main objective of this study is to understand how trauma is consumed, the researcher felt that a quantitative study would not capture nuances surrounding the themes identified in this paper.

Consequently, this research uses a case-study approach owing to its ability to offer a holistic, depth and a multi-perspectful approach (Feagin, Orum and Sjoberg, 1991). This was achieved by using an instrumental approach (Stake, 1995), which assumes that the researcher has a need to understand more about the case-study than is immediately apparent. This approach, therefore, considers not just the voice of the participants but also how they engage, exist within and interact with their community and wider society. Three case studies were

chosen that represent events, people or objects associated with a trauma: HMS Titanic, Elvis Presley and Cadbury's Wispa bar. The relevance of these case-studies is summarized below:

HMS Titanic – launched in 1912 as the world's largest passenger ship and widely described in the media as 'unsinkable'. HMS Titanic's sinking on the night of April 14th 1912 has been retold in numerous films, dramas, books, television programs, exhibitions around the world and merchandise. The discovery of the wreck in 1985 perhaps only served to increase the cultural and historical popularity of the ship, culminating in James Cameron's (1997) film 'Titanic' and various exhibitions displaying Titanic artifacts around the world.

Elvis Presley – (1935-1977) appears to remain one of the most popular US singers of the 20th century. However, by 1977 his popularity was in decline compounded by excessive addiction to prescriptive drugs and a poor diet that led to his untimely death. At the time of his death his estate was estimated to be worth \$4.9m, prompting his ex-wife, Priscilla Presley, to open his home Graceland, to the public in 1982 and attracting 700,000 visitors a year (Brown and Broeske, 1997). In 2007 Elvis's estate was valued at \$600m (Verjee, 2007).

Cadbury's Wispa bar - a chocolate bar known for its air bubbles that was originally launched in Britain, in 1983, to huge commercial success. In 2003 it was withdrawn owing to disappointing sales. Subsequently, various consumer campaigns demanded that Cadbury's re-launch the brand, resulting in the 2008 re-introduction of the Wispa bar to the British market. A re-launch that culminated in sales of 1.2m bars in its first week, making it Cadbury's most successful product launch in recent years (BBC, 2008).

Yin (1984) notes that to achieve validity in case-study research some aspects of triangulation needs to occur. This was achieved through data collection using a variety of means. First, an analysis of web discussion forums was undertaken that are related to the case studies, identifying key emergent themes. Secondly, field visits were made to Graceland (Elvis Presley's home in Memphis, Tennessee) and a Titanic exhibit in London. Thirdly, the

researchers undertook a wider search of related literature surrounding the case studies, noting how narratives were constructed to convey cultural-historical meanings.

A two month analysis of web forums related to the three case-studies was undertaken culminating in January 2011. This analysis included visiting various forums, including Facebook (8 sites – Titanic, 10 sites – Elvis Presley and 10 sites – Wispa Bar), YouTube video clips and related discussions (18 sites – Titanic, 13 sites – Elvis Presley and 13 sites – Wispa Bar), websites (such as wispa.co.uk, titanic.com and elvis.com) and news articles.

The researcher visited sites where cultural-historical recreation involving the case studies occurred, with observations regarding layout, narratives used and time periods focused on and recreated, with depth field notes taken. This included visits to Graceland, including visiting his two airplanes, related exhibits (including ‘The 1968 Comeback Special’ exhibition), and two visits to the Titanic Exhibition at the O2 arena, London. Each visit to these locations followed a prescribed pattern. The researcher was accompanied by the same accomplice and both individuals made their own observations of how artifacts are displayed, how their meaning is constructed and communicated, and the aesthetics of the exhibit. This was then followed by extensive field notes being made by both the researcher and an accomplice. This was then followed by a comparison of notes before a final analysis was made. The inclusion of an accomplice, who was not an academic, was to ensure that any observation and analysis would not be subjective and biased by any preconceptions the researcher may have. Comparison of the field notes indicated a strong similarity in how both exhibits were reconstructing and presenting trauma.

The final stage of the data analysis involved the researcher reviewing the initial data categories and aggregating them into thematic themes (such as trauma and death, humanizing the trauma). Further, the researcher reanalyzed the data to identify any further thematic categories evolving. Again these themes were compared with the field notes. The final

categories and thematic themes represent how events, people or objects are culturally and historically manipulated to reflect individual and group entelechies.

Findings

Trauma and death – not surprisingly all three case studies created and perpetuated cultural associations with trauma and death. For HMS Titanic the loss of life is symbolic of the trauma, featured in numerous films, books, exhibits and web forums. For example, consider this narrative from the film director James Cameron, regarding his film ‘Titanic’ that encapsulates the film and interest on death and trauma regarding HMS Titanic:

The actual story of the Titanic, you couldn't have written it better. It's like a great novel, a great novel that really happened. The people are so alive, so fascinating, the emotions they must have experienced in those last few hours as the ship went down... (YouTube)

The need for people to re-experience / imagine the emotions associated with the sinking is a key feature of the Titanic Exhibition. Artifacts from the ship are carefully displayed in an atmospheric environment that aims to deliver an emotional experience. Pieces of HMS Titanic's steering equipment emphasize the scale of the ship, with the desperation to avoid the iceberg given almost mythical status in the exhibit. Information is presented to enhance the visitors' tensions and produce an emotional experience, even though as spectators we already know what happened. Indeed so strong is the need to remind visitors of the collision between the ship and the iceberg that visitors are encouraged to place their hand through a wall to touch and experience what an iceberg feels like. The connection between the manufactured (touching a fake iceberg) and the real, historical, experiences of that night become fused together in the mind of the visitor. A consumption experience that represents the culmination of an exhibition that encourages the visitor to imagine their emotional state if they had been on HMS Titanic.

The need to produce a heightened emotional state can also be seen in individual's projections onto how they perceive HMS Titanic. As with the other two case studies, certain individuals seek out a closer emotional attachment to the traumas being studied. For example, on one HMS Titanic discussion forum on YouTube, that features the musical video for Celine Dion's song from the film 'Titanic', Premita writes:

I'll be honest at 6 secs when the music started n the 1st pic come up i got all teary. 2 me this was 1 of the most saddest things 2 happin in history. The Titanic was beautiful & 4 all the people how lost there lives my heart goes out 2 them n there families today RIP Titanic.

The need to create an emotional connection to a trauma is central to the legend of Elvis and the focal point of Graceland. Although Graceland does not focus on Elvis's ill-health, drug addiction or poor eating habits, the associations with the death of Elvis are not avoided but actively encouraged as central to the visitors' experience. The culmination of the Elvis experience at Graceland is told by the audio guide which advises the visitor that they are about to enter the 'Meditation Garden'. A purposefully amended part of Graceland's gardens where Elvis was eventually reburied. The audio-guide advises the visitor that this is the most sacred place in Graceland; a place so reverential that the visitor is reminded of the need to respect the dead Elvis, not to talk and think about what Elvis meant to them. The grave itself is presented with a lit flame, along with the graves of his parents, grandmother and still-born twin brother, perpetuating a wider cultural sense of the importance of the family unit in an almost religious experience.

A review of Elvis Presley fan forums on the web reveal a focus on the death of Elvis and the loss this represents to forum members, encapsulated in one comment: "*I will never forget when Elvis died. What a sad time that was. He will always be in our hearts*" (George, Elvis.com). Interestingly the focus on Elvis's death in these forums tends to focus on the loss

of better times; better times embodied in the cultural values that Elvis Presley represented such as generosity, religious values, friendship; the same values that Graceland perpetuate in their tour experience.

Associations with death and trauma share similarities to Cadbury's Wispa. The original withdrawal of the chocolate bar did not initially prompt a consumer backlash. Interestingly it took about five years to create a consumer momentum to reintroduce the bar. For example, a review of the news records shows how one group of Wispa campaigners stormed a performance by Iggy Pop at the Glastonbury Music Festival, unfurling a banner entitled 'For the love of Wispa'. This act televised by the BBC, amongst many, created a wider consumer momentum through discussion forums to campaign for the reintroduction of the Wispa bar. The launch of these forums and the messages include a focus on the apparent loss and emotional experiences that forum messengers experience from not being able to purchase Wispa bars.

Humanizing the trauma – central to the case-studies is the need to humanize the cultural context of the trauma. Rather than present facts and figures, all the case-studies aim to carefully manipulate and perpetuate a culturally construed message. By focusing on the human story, the individual is encouraged to project onto an object, individual or event their own emotional perspective. For example, since the sinking of HMS Titanic one focus has been on the retelling and branding of key individuals, such as the 'unsinkable Molly Brown' a rich American first class passenger who rallied her boat full of survivors to maintain hope of rescue. Myths surrounding HMS Titanic, told through various consumption sites, aim to perpetuate and reconstruct passenger identities that later generations can identify with:

i want to recognize "the unsinkable" molly brown. To me she was one of the nicest women on the ship. She had a heart when every one else was worrying what class

they were in. She stood up to the crew and tried her best to go back and save the people who were going to die in the freezing water. Go molly! (titanic-titanic.com)

For other individuals, there is a need to identify and idealize themselves as being someone involved during HMS Titanic's sinking. For example:

I would definately want to be Mr. Andrews (even though I am a woman but that aside...) and not the movie Andrews but the real guy that night on the ship. He knew the greatness of the disaster before the passengers...he knew of the Titanic construction and held true to the ship until the very end...he went down with the others...unlike Ismay who fled. Andrews knew of things about the Titanic that we are still diving down and trying to discover. I wish I could have gotten into his mind that night. (YouTube.com)

A need to recreate an emotional identification and attachment to the traumatic sinking is evident in James Cameroon's film 'Titanic' and clearly evident in the Titanic Exhibit. Stories of actual passengers are presented to the visitor to create a sense of identification with the unfolding story – 'that person could have been me' is not only an emotion that is encouraged in the exhibit but one that is actively perpetuated through exhibits. Personal artifacts from the wreck are presented with insights into the passengers lives; insights that aim to create a parasocial relationship with the selected passengers described in the exhibits. Thus the Titanic exhibit, through passenger identities, creates opportunities for visitors to fantasize and project their own emotions onto the exhibits and passenger personal stories.

The need to humanize the trauma of the Titanic is perpetuated throughout the visitors' experience of the Titanic exhibition. On collecting your ticket you are presented with a boarding pass carrying the name of a real-life passenger, their personal background, who they are travelling with and most importantly, which travel class they are in. The need to present the visitor with information of a real-life passenger serves to create an enhanced emotional

bond not only with the exhibit, but the very emotional experiences the exhibit aims to recreate, i.e. loss and trauma. Indeed, observing other visitors read their boarding card creates opportunities for initial excitement and sharing of personal details of the associated Titanic passenger. Groups of visitors were observed quickly comparing details, with apparent excitement expressed when a visitor realized their allocated passenger was a young woman travelling first class. No doubt an excitement based upon a realization that this passenger is more likely to have survived the sinking.

The Titanic exhibit uses artifacts from the ship to inform the visitor of the perceived social and travel class of its owner. Complimenting the artifacts are recreations of various rooms from the ship, and a retelling of the night of the sinking. Personal stories of passengers being separated from their loved ones are retold to visitors in dramatic terms, culminating in the visitor performing one last action – did your namesake on your visitor's ticket survive? As visitors exit the exhibition they are presented with a list of passengers and crew, indicating those who died and survived. Observations of visitors checking their tickets suggest a deep emotional connection being made. No one leaves the exhibit appearing excited and relieved that their namesake survived.

The need to humanize a trauma is central to the Graceland experience and humanizing Elvis. Graceland achieves this through a number of means. The house itself is presented not from a factual perspective but an emotional one. Inside the house an audio voice tells the visitor, via headphones, various culturally laden facts about Elvis. For example, on entering the kitchen the visitor is told stories about Elvis and his family's time in this room. The kitchen is presented as a place where traditional American cultural values of hospitality, warmth and family were evident throughout Elvis's life; not the place where Elvis's nutritionally poor diet manifested from. The myth of Elvis at Graceland is perpetuated in various exhibits about Elvis's life, demonstrated through various mementoes. These

mementoes not only provide a positive story about Elvis but also locate him as a role model within American culture; for example, photographs with President Nixon, charity work and so on. Indeed, the exhibits reminded visitors the reason for their visit, presenting a range of fan made paintings, revering Elvis (often depicting him in a halo of light, similar to popular pictures of Jesus Christ).

Another example is the post-Elvis death reconstruction of a 1950s style lounge where the visitor is told Elvis would entertain his friends and family whilst playing the piano. The need to connect the visitor with the world of Elvis is enhanced through culturally laden objects presented throughout the house (the famous television room – Elvis wanted to mimic President Nixon’s apparent ability to watch three television screens at one time) through to the exhibits that encapsulate his life. In these exhibits and within the house itself, the audio guide presents the narrated memories of Priscilla Presley and their daughter, Lisa-Marie. Personal stories, always positive, are recalled to encapsulate the human being that was Elvis; reinforced through a perceived emotional connection to Elvis’s ex-wife and daughter. Complimenting this narration are exhibits that invite the visitor to enter Elvis’s personal world, such as the wedding suit and dress worn on Elvis’s wedding day, or the cupboard displaying baby clothes with a narration proudly declaring that Lisa-Maria actually wore those very clothes. All attempts to create a closer emotional connection to Elvis.

The need to humanize Elvis and consequently enhance the trauma of his death is a dominant feature of discussion forums. Pictures and related objects of perceived happier times offer opportunities for individuals to reflect on Elvis. For example, a photograph of Elvis and Priscilla with the new born Lisa-Maria on Facebook reflects individuals’ emotional attachment. For example, ‘They looked so happy then! I wish it could have lasted’ and another ‘that was probably the happiest day of his life.’

By humanizing people and objects, both HMS Titanic and Graceland aim to encourage the individual to identify and project their own emotions through the objects they experience (hence the previous example of the Graceland Meditation Garden, or the Titanic exhibition). Consequently, these objects and personal stories provide a means for individuals to project and express and identify their emotions onto.

The need to humanize a trauma, evident in HMS Titanic and Elvis, is not initially apparent in the Cadbury's Wispa bar. Although the initial movement to get production of the Wispa bar re-launched is attributed to a small base of fanatics, this does not mean the humanizing of the trauma is not evident. Indeed, a review of discussion forums and related websites reveals a deep level of humanizing occurring. Similar to Graceland and the Titanic Exhibit, Cadbury's deliberately created fan forums that encouraged an emotional attachment to the brand. For example, the website 'fortheloveofwispa.com', now a Cadbury's sponsored website, not only encourages fans to register their personal details and provide opportunities to personalize their own Wispa experience (through musical tunes, package redesigns and so on) but credits the fans for correcting Cadbury's decision to cancel production:

Back in 2003 we didn't realise how much you loved Wispa and we decided to stop making it. (Again we are really sorry). Then in 2007 you decided to let us know that you wanted it back... (Author's emphasis).

Ownership of the trauma – in all the three case studies, the manipulation of a traumatic event is apparent; manipulated and recreated to meet the needs of the individual. A central aspect of this manipulation is not only encouraging the individual to engage and consume the trauma but more importantly, to own their experience of the trauma. We have already noted how Graceland encourages visitors to reflect upon the importance of Elvis in their lives. Whilst the Titanic exhibit and discussion forums create opportunities for individuals to experience their emotions or discuss their thoughts about HMS Titanic related topics. With

the Wispa bar this approach is created and perpetuated through Cadbury's, sponsored, related websites. Yet a central aspect of trauma is the need not only to identify oneself with the trauma but to make some meta-physical connection to the trauma.

Creating a sense of ownership of trauma is easily created and perpetuated by the Graceland and Titanic exhibits. We have already noted how visitors are encouraged to transfer their emotional state to one connected with feelings of experiencing the trauma. Consider this narrative, where a participant summarizes her experiences of a Titanic exhibit, similar to the one in London:

*I was just at the Branson exhibit day before yesterday and it was a wonderful experience. It puts the guest on an imaginary Titanic and it is easy to feel what it was like. As you view the photographs and the recreations you feel close to the individuals who were lost nearly a century ago. It keeps Titanic alive along with the lost souls. I have a different point of view as to the artifacts that are and were at the bottom of the ocean. I believe that returning the items of the passengers to land for us to view keeps their memories alive. I do not believe things and possessions are a part of a grave site. If I were an individual or a family member, I would want my things in a museum for all to view and remember. **Barbara, Titanic.com***

For some individuals on the various HMS Titanic discussion forums there is a need to own the trauma from a national perspective. In particular, British participants wanted to distinguish passengers and crews behavior to specific countries:

*omg this thing is so sad and did you know more americans survived than the British.. apparently because they wanted to keep their tradition .. as a british man yelled on deck "Be British Boys!" **Smith, YouTube***

Yet individuals seeking opportunities to experience these traumas are confronted by the temporal nature of the emotions arising from these exhibits. This is addressed through

souvenirs. For example, Graceland offers not only memorabilia linked to key moments in Elvis's life (such the 1968 Comeback special) but also personalized, tailor made, jumpsuits identical to those worn during his Las Vegas shows. Other forms of humanizing the trauma in Graceland can be seen in fan created memorabilia, some which is presented at Graceland, others produced and maintained in the owner's home. For example, consider this quote from an Elvis fan who describes his need to relate to and understand the death of Elvis:

May the king know that we still love him and miss him " my husband loved him like a brother,we were lucky to meet his daughter. My husband painted elvis as a ghost. Crying for knowing we remember him. And love him.

Gloria, Elvis Presley Funeral, YouTube

Whilst the Titanic exhibit also offers souvenirs, the need to create a sense of ownership to the trauma is achieved through offering actual artifacts from HMS Titanic. In particular, visitors are able to purchase a plastic cube containing a minuet piece of coal that was on the ship when it sank. Hence, the consumption process recreates a tangible means of ownership directly linking the consumer to HMS Titanic and more importantly, the trauma itself. In effect, the consumer can directly identify and own their experience of that trauma.

Cadbury's perpetuates trauma ownership of the Wispa bar amongst its consumers through various sponsored web-links, as well as unofficial discussion forums (for example, numerous ones on Facebook). For members of these discussion forums, the trauma of the Wispa bars withdrawal from the market is associated with personal memories of happier times. For example, *'It reminds me of the 80's when it came out, I still love the Wispa Bar Yummyyyyyy'* or *'My grandad used to give me 20p each week for a wispa. Every time I have one now I think of him & how expensive they are now lol!'* More importantly, Cadbury's perpetuates trauma ownership through Wispa advertising, actively encouraging fan based

campaigns or actively encouraging fans to demand the reintroduction of Wispa derivatives, such as Wispa Gold (a Wispa bar with a line of caramel toffee in it).

Discussion

The aim of this study is to understand how a group engages with, reconstructs and negotiates cultural-historical traumas. Using three case studies (HMS Titanic, Elvis Presley and Graceland, and Cadbury's Wispa bar) we showed how three unrelated traumas are continually renegotiated and owned by successive generations. Complimenting this renegotiation are the commercial owners of these traumas who actively encourage and perpetuate consumer related memories through exhibits, websites etc. Perhaps more importantly, the data analysis reveals how differing groups engage with these traumas: those who engage with the historical significance (not discussed in this paper owing to space limitations) and those who aim to immerse themselves in the trauma. All three case-studies create a perpetual re-engagement of the trauma through various fragmented shared aspects, including: language (evident in the exhibits, sponsored web-pages and discussion forums), oral histories (individuals' narratives in discussion forums) and personal testimonials (again, individuals' narratives in discussion forums and narratives from survivors used in the exhibit) and objects (souvenirs). Consumption of these traumas offer opportunities then to create memories, resulting in reflections of historical events representing happier, better times.

Our findings support Mannheim's (1928) arguments that successive generations engage and consume various aspects of shared memories. In this paper memories derived from the consumption of cultural-historical traumas. As Halbwach (1925 [1992]) notes, the individual is incapable of memorizing every cultural-historical event that has occurred. Instead the individual must seek out other groups to provide the prompts that allow the individual to recall particular events and thus create particular memories they could not have experienced. These opportunities are not only created by individuals seeking out similar

groups (such as discussion forums, YouTube) but also by commercial organisations (such as Graceland or the Titanic exhibit in London).

Perhaps more importantly are the differences between those individuals who consume the trauma from a historical perspective to those with a deeper emotional interest. This difference is apparent in the trauma related discussion forums and can be identified with Halbwach's (1925 [1992]) historical and collective memory. HMS Titanic and Elvis, and to a lesser extent Cadbury's Wispa bar, can all be identified with a historical memory, i.e. these traumas occurred and they are an aspect of an individual's wider cultural identity. However, these traumas are not indicative of a collective memory shared by wider society, such as Armistice Day. Instead those individuals, who actively identify with these traumas, through discussion forum narratives, picture painting etc, appear to demonstrate a collected memory. In these examples, memories are reproduced in an active and reconstructive way through engaging with consumption related trauma, developing further Schwartz's (1982) earlier observations. Hence, discussion forums where individuals express emotionally-laden messages relating to a particular traumatic event and how this manifests through related consumption is indicative of a group that is unable to separate and create their own entelechy.

Our findings develop further than existing research into culturally meaning related consumption. By identifying how cultural-historical traumas manifest as emotionally laden aspects of an individual's life and consumption acts, we offer new insights to explain previous research into inalienable wealth (Cursai, Price and Arnould, 2004) and disposition (Price, Arnold and Curasi, 2000). Our findings suggest that individual's cherishing certain possessions may be indicative of a wider inability to detach from the past. In doing so we extend further McCracken's (1984) work into how culture flows move into objects by locating these flows within an entelechy.

Alternatively our findings may simply reflect an enthusiasm for historical events or attachment to modern cultural reconstructions. For example, on various YouTube discussion forums related to HMS Titanic, various comparisons were made regarding an individual's emotions to the characters played by Leonardo Dicaprio and Kate Winslet in James Cameroon's film 'Titanic'. For example, one person wrote on a HMS Titanic related website, with reference to the two main characters in 'Titanic' that '*Jack loved her, she loved him they loved each other 🥹🥹🥹i cried when jack died tho*'. A narrative suggesting that the individual does not suffer from separating her own entelechy from previous generations, but simply over identifying with an emotionally laden film based around HMS Titanic.

The study has a number of limitations, chiefly that this is an exploratory study that offers preliminary findings to explain a consumption phenomenon. Lack of time prevented the collection of depth interviews into consumers who strongly identified with these traumas and who are indicative of Halbwach's (1925 [1992]) collected memory. A further criticism of this research is no explanation is offered to explain why certain individuals seek out, contribute to and perpetuate, through various consumption acts, a sense of collected memory.

Future research could explore two aspects of this research. First, further research is needed to explore how collected memories and difficulties in generations create their own entelechy's manifest through consumption. Secondly, the reasons why individuals over-identify through collected memories remain unanswered. Indeed, researching this perspective from an object-relations perspective, drawn from psychodynamic studies, would suggest that some deeper unmet emotional need from an individual's early childhood is being projected onto cultural-historical traumas; a research approach that may produce interesting findings.

Conclusion

This paper identified how cultural-historical traumas become recreated memories in differing generations. Central to these recreated memories are opportunities to engage in consumption arenas, often through tangible objects (real or reproduced). Consumers of these memories and their related trauma can be identified between those who share an historical interest and those who appear to be overly emotionally attached to these traumas. Yet consumers are not solely responsible for developing emotional attachments to cultural-historical traumas. Commercial organisations themselves also actively seek out opportunities to recreate and reconstruct memories related to these traumas when it suits their own commercial interests.

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