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# HOW CULTS SEDUCE

## AND WHAT MARKETING CAN LEARN FROM THEM

**Ever wondered what would happen if you didn't send the Jehovah's Witnesses away, when they came knocking?**

Eventually they would invite you to join a meeting at Kingdom Hall. But they wouldn't do that until you were good and ready. They would come and visit you a number of times first, to talk about Christ Jesus, New Light and the Ark of Salvation.

If you were observant, you'd notice a pattern in these visits. Each time the same lead Witness would bring along a different assistant. You'd probably not even pick up on this, or you'd rationalize that it was just random variation. But – according to accounts from people who have left the sect - it's quite deliberate and it's designed to get you hooked.



he rotation ensures that, when you finally visit Kingdom Hall for the first time, you will see quite a few familiar faces in the crowd. And so you'll immediately feel that you belong here.

Most people find cults scary. But that's to the cults' advantage. Wherever there is resistance, there is an unconscious factor. None of us are as rational as we'd like to believe. Cults live on the irrational fringe. It's not about mass coercion. It's about things barely glimpsed from the corner of your eye. Cults have fine-tuned their marketing to hook into nuances of human nature.



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**Cults are like the “I Love You” computer worm.**

Ask yourself; what other message would have millions of wary people opening a ‘.exe’ attachment from someone they know only vaguely? In London, the BBC (whose reputation as “luvvies” precedes them) was totally overrun by this epidemic. With cults and similar phenomena, some audiences are more susceptible than others.

Cults are a common research subject for social scientists, like Aaron Lynch (author of “Thought Contagion”) because they are good ‘test tubes’ for human nature. Like many extreme phenomena, they are enlightening about what makes us tick.

But for marketers, cults can feel like a taboo topic.

Cults have a bad name, for being overly manipulative in attracting, retaining and profiting from members. Marketing has drawn similar criticisms, albeit in a milder form (eg “No Logo”). Surely studying cult techniques could lead us into yet more hot water?

Yes and no.

Christianity was originally a cult. So, in a lay form, are Alcoholics Anonymous, Amnesty International and

Weight Watchers. **Ethics should be judged by the result, not just the act.**

As a marketer in today’s environment, given a potential backlash, you’d have to be a bit desperate to play the cult card. And “desperate times” is indeed when cult marketing is called for.

Cults thrive under conditions where most conventional organizations would curl up and die. They are repressed, at times actively persecuted, even today (eg Fulan Gong in China). They are damned in the media and met with suspicion on every corner.

It’s when you get into dire straits with a brand, that cult tactics become relevant.

We came to study cults when working with Napster, through their darkest days of 2001. Napster had transitioned from being the fastest growing technology in history into a black hole legal case, with many music files barred and a temporary shut-down of their service imminent. All they had left was a hard core of fanatics, who’d do anything to keep Napster going.



# The Anthropology of a Cult

Our investigation of the marketing tactics of cult organizations – the Scientologists, Jehovah’s Witnesses, Moonies, Maharishi’s and others - relied on eye witness testimonies from past cult members, as well as

reports by cult watchers. The evidence reveals a high degree of consistency between cults in their overall pattern of activities, which divide into four key areas;

## 1. Boundaries

**Cults, unlike most modern social phenomena, have a closed boundary. You’re either in or out. This creates passionate solidarity.**

"She wasn't my daughter any more," the mother of a Moonie recruit alleged. "They took her over - body and soul. She was swallowed up."

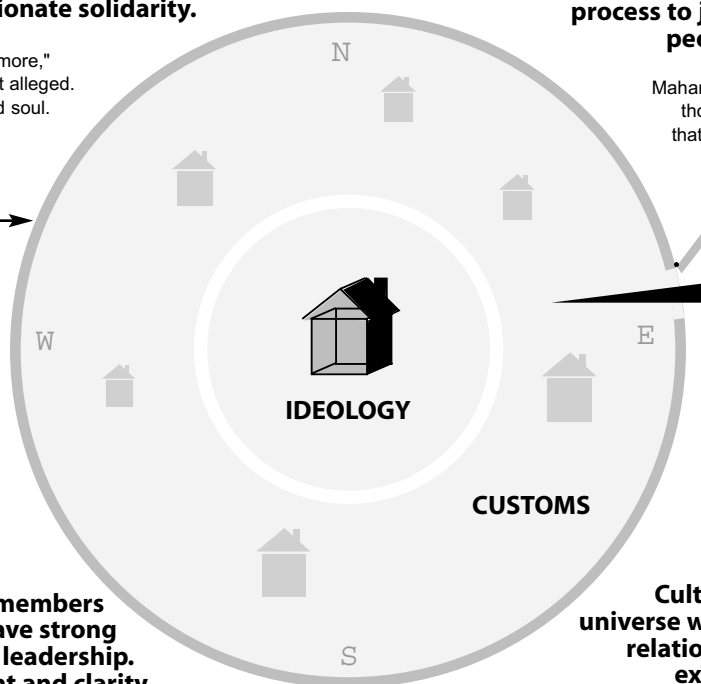
**BOUNDARIES** →

## 2. Initiation

**It's actually not that easy getting into a cult. You can't "walk in". There is a definite process to joining. This converts people's whole outlook.**

Maharishi recruitment "is like one of those large, funnel shaped nets, that's dragged along by a trawler. The further down the funnel you go, the more intense it gets."

→ **INITIATION**



## 4. Ideology

**Cults program what members think and do. They have strong central ideology and leadership. This fosters alignment and clarity.**

In Scientology anything written or said by L.Ron Hubbard is referred to as "the tech" (as in: "psychiatry doesn't work because they don't have the tech".)

## 3. Customs

**Cults are a parallel social universe with their own rituals, relationship structures and experiences. This binds individuals to the cause.**

It is forbidden to wear gold rimmed glasses in the Jehovah's Witnesses.

**NOTE** – Our study was largely based on the reports and testimonies of ex-cult members. It's not intended as criticism, or claiming to be unbiased. These were the only sources we could find that were candid about what cults actually do, and we've had to take their word for it.



**It's hard to read reports of cult activity without feeling morally squeamish.** In our analysis we kept focused on a simple question; what is it in this mystical fog that is relevant to marketing?

Each of the four areas of activity is there to sustain and develop the cult in the face of resistance. It's in this role that the tactics of cults are illuminating for brands in our turbulent times;

## THE TACTICS:

### 1. Boundaries; THE MOONIES

#### THE FIREWALL

- Cults build a protective barrier
- Only those committed and close to the core are fully in the know
- Outsiders are kept largely in the dark

*The Moonies are defended by religious status, secrecy, armies of lawyers and lobbyists, and powerful links in the Washington establishment. Responding to criticisms of brainwashing and hard-sell tactics, they have rebranded themselves "The Family Federation for World Peace and Unification" and are even applying for state funding for some of their social projects.*

#### "BIG BROTHER"

- Cults define 'what we're not'
- A common tactic is to define a big enemy in the outside world
- Attacks from the outside only reinforce the paranoia
- The firewall is also an information firewall
- Only those inside know the truth. Outsiders should not be listened to

*The Unification Church's main enemy is Christianity. They proclaim that "Moon's Church will replace Christianity in America" and that "Jesus is not in the kingdom of heaven" (because he "did not succeed in his mission"), and that "the blessed children (of Moonies) are better than Jesus."*

#### INTERNAL VS EXTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS

- Members have privileged information
- Communication is intimate, extensive and frequent
- Outsiders are often fed a completely different story

*The Moonies control internal communication rigorously; for instance their rule "no first weekers talking to first weekers" (ie sharing doubts). Externally they often use affiliates; for instance supplying sex education programs to public schools ("Total Abstinence"). They also own The Washington Times.*

#### THE SPOTLIGHT

Cults provide selective glimpses of their parallel universe, by staging their own dramatic news, events and experiences.

*The Moonies stage ecstatic public rallies and mass weddings. They court celebrity endorsement through "charity awards dinners" attended by politicians at the highest level. High profile converts are prized – for instance in 2001, Catholic Archbishop Emmanuel Millingo.*



**THE TACTICS:****2. Initiation: MAHARISHI MAHESH YOGA****SELECTING RECRUITS**

- Cults focus not on ‘who we can get’ but ‘who is ready’
- People going through dramatic life change make excellent recruits; new students, recent divorcees....

*85% of people who join a cult do so through a friend or acquaintance. The Premie (Prempal Rawat a.k.a. Maharaji) followers make this their hunting ground. Cult members are charged with getting a friend, colleague or family member to come to a special introductory video screening or to “witness a ceremony” (when there, they find everyone must join in).*

**BAITING THE HOOK**

- No-one wakes up one day and says “I know, I’ll join a cult”
- Cults use bait which invite you in for an innocent, worthwhile purpose with high propensity for repeat visits – like a course
- During this course, you are initiated to a world view that says ‘learning the ways of this cult is the real purpose of my life’

*The Premie’s bait is “Transcendental Meditation”™ consisting of traditional meditation techniques, a “Science of Creative Intelligence” and the “Puja” modeled on Hindu religious ceremonies. This was a winning combination in the hippy-spiritual 1960’s and 70’s and TM became so widespread it had to be excluded from being taught in public schools.*

**LOVE BOMBING**

- A key human need which cults meet is belonging
- Imagine stumbling across a weird and wonderful community where everyone instantly loves and accepts you!

*Only those cult members who have shown an aptitude for attracting and reassuring potential recruits are included in these introductory sessions; and a relationship is built across a series of convivial social meetings.*

**MATRICULATION**

- This is a critical process and is carefully managed
- You can’t just walk in and ‘join’ - you have to be invited and experience an initiation
- This is the “brainwashing” stage; intense, isolating, aimed at breaking you down, getting you to internalize and identify with certain problems, then building you back up as a believer

*After the introductory sessions an instructor interviews you and decides if you’re ready for a private session. The aim then is to get the recruit to declare themselves ‘ready for the knowledge’ and to accept the Maharaji as the only source of this ‘inner truth’. When you ‘pass’, you get to the ‘knowledge session’ where you are shown the techniques.*



**THE TACTICS:****3. Customs – JEHOVAH'S WITNESSES****PYRAMID**

- Cults know that treating everyone the same means making no-one feels special or motivated
- They act as an emotional pyramid scheme, self-sustaining and administering through many levels
- Communication is mainly vertical

*The Jehovah's Witness organization is known as the Watchtower. Each Kingdom Hall is led by elders. Witnesses are not allowed to take any initiatives of their own, but in all matters must await orders from their immediate superior; 'meat in due season'. Anyone who questions an order is kicked out for 'disfellowship'.*

**DUTIES**

- Cults keep people very busy (too busy to stop and think)
- Cults are about far more than fundraising - every member has many basic duties: do the leg work: recruit, improve whatever needs fixing, sell crafts...
- Members get promoted through hierarchies as reward for loyalty and achievement

*Idleness is a sin! The most common complaint of ex-cult members is not the spiritual content, so much as that all their spare time is devoted to work, like mending the Kingdom Hall roof and trudging from doorstep to doorstep.*

**PSYCHOLOGICAL TWISTS**

- Cults are fuelled by commitments of time, money, activities...
- Contrary to their image, they seldom coerce members into this
- Rather they create a context where there is competition (and strong peer pressure) to have your commitments accepted
- If there is resistance they turn this on the individual; it's clearly something they need to work on!

*Jehovah's Witnesses live by an exceptionally strict code. They must avoid "bad association" (non Witnesses) and cannot lie or cheat or drink... The psychological twist is called "Theocratic Strategy"; which means they can for instance lie for the cause, to anyone who doesn't 'have the right to know'.*

**MOMENTUM**

- Cults stay relevant and vibrant through momentum
- If there is nothing much happening, cults rely on apparently random acts of insanity and tests of loyalty
- Deadlines and dates are common tactics

*The cases of Witnesses refusing medical treatment are famous. And the Watchtower has been saying that Armageddon (the end of the world) is "soon" since 1884.*



**THE TACTICS:****4. Ideology. THE SCIENTOLOGISTS****THE LEADER/THE APOSTLES**

- Cults tend to be personality cults
- The leaders' story is the story of the cult, their word is law
- Access to the leader is an exclusive reward to the higher ups
- These act as apostles, evangelists and gate-keepers

*L. Ron Hubbard is revered in the Scientologists to the extent that everything he says is taken as the literal truth; his writings are described as "data". We see here a sophisticated conceptual branding lexicon. Which is another fascinating feature of cult identity...*

**THE WORD**

- Cults have their own vocabulary, way of speaking
- This has a powerful effect; words are concepts are thoughts
- Cults also foreclose awkward debate with 'wise sayings'
- There is implicit social pressure; to speak like us is to belong

*Scientology has developed an extensive proprietary language system. LRH's techniques are "the tech." The hierarchy is "the gradient." Progress is across "the bridge." Recruitment is "stats." Disciplinary action is "ethics"...*

*The lexicon is designed to convey scientific authority and foreclose debate. (A bit like business jargon really).*

**BELIEF SYSTEM**

- Cults are masters of disciplined, simple formatting
- Part of their appeal is a simple black-and-white view of reality, far from the mess of real relationships and life conflicts
- This is pinned to a general vision few would argue like Peace or Clarity  
A constant repetition of the same format displaces all else with this simple core; chanting, reciting, committing...

*The clarity of Scientology is based on the fact that it is 100% right and if you don't get it you need "handling." If you don't absorb something then you have to resit a course at your own expense. If this fails you have do "ethics." It's your fault.*

**THE RULES**

- Arbitrary restrictions and rules, oddities and experiences reinforce a way of life "through the looking glass"
- And ritual experiences underline the 'otherness of this world'
- Cutting ties with your mundane old existence is key to making this alternate reality the reality

*Scientologists are not supposed to wear spectacles (because L. Ron Hubbard once asserted that "the tech" could cure vision defects). Scientology is anti-psychiatry and once even deliberately orchestrated a Prozac health scare.*



## The Sub-Conscious Techniques of Cult Brands

The link between the activities of secretive religious cults and those of respected, household-name brands may not be immediately apparent. But there are some examples from the 'innocent' world of branding that do show a remarkable similarity to the four key activities of cults;

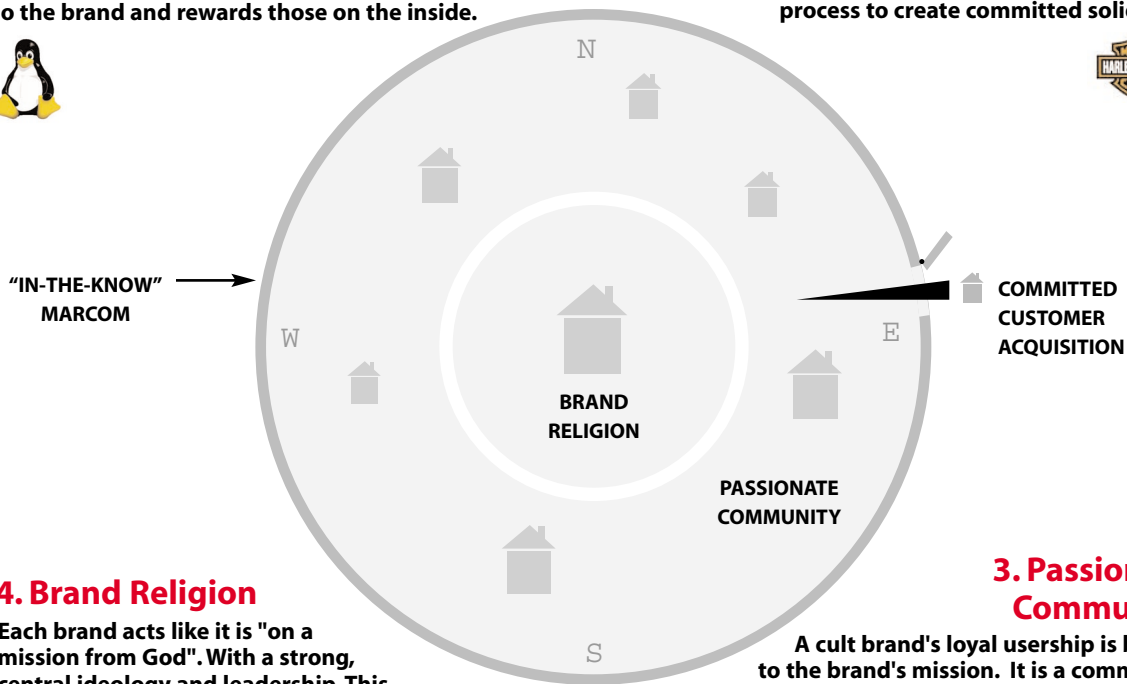
### 1. "In-the-know" MARCOM

Cult brands communicate with the market in unusually scarce, deliberate and very targeted marketing, PR and promotions. This adds mystique to the brand and rewards those on the inside.



### 2. Committed Customer Acquisition

Cult brands are an exclusive club. They deliberately sacrifice a larger market for a smaller inner circle that is taken through an elaborate "initiation" process to create committed solidarity.



### 4. Brand Religion

Each brand acts like it is "on a mission from God". With a strong, central ideology and leadership. This gives the brand much larger meaning.



### 3. Passionate Community

A cult brand's loyal usership is bound to the brand's mission. It is a community with its own rituals, vocabulary -- and often -- hierarchy. They become not mere users, but crucial ambassadors for the brand -- in effect unpaid employees.





## Translating Cult Tactics into Marketing Tactics

Cults are religious sects. Companies on the other hand are places people work and others buy stuff from. It doesn't do to get too carried away with the analogy (although John Grant's former agency St Luke's went further than most!)

That's why our analysis centres on the social activities (rather than the religious themes); to ask if there are there analogous strategies in the marketing realm that could be deployed? And at this level it's quite easy to see the possibilities;



**Full cult marketing is not for the faint-hearted. It is a last resort, because like major surgery, the 'cure' has its own dangers.**

That's not because of the "cult" stigma necessarily. Just because some accuse cults of abusing their members, it doesn't mean their tactics are in themselves evil. There's a simple answer to the stigma; don't tell anybody "this is cult marketing". Just do it.

The reasons why cult marketing is a last resort are;

When **Playstation** created a waiting list for PS2 ("Turning the tables"), or **Disney** limits the times that videos of their films are available ("Deadlines"), nobody accuses them of "brainwashing".

- *it excludes the majority of your potential audience*  
 - *it is slow*  
 - *it is difficult to transition out of again*

It is these very factors that have made the cult phase a millstone for Harley in later life.

Now it's struggling to transition to a more mainstream clientele, because diehard HOGs are scaring off new white-collar customers, dismissing them as "rubbies", rich, urban, riders.

**Cult marketing is indicated for;**

- A brand which is in a life or death situation
- They have a genuine ideology (you can't fake this)
  - ...but this is out of sync with the current context
  - ...and/or they have a crisis which has put them on the defensive
  - ...and/or they have a product that isn't working fully yet
  - ...or a product that's fallen behind
- They are small enough to be the underdog (but not so small that they're not worth fighting for)
- The cult activity is for a limited period, to buy time
- All other avenues have been exhausted

**That was pretty much where we found ourselves with Napster.**

**Even then we knew this was a last resort strategy. The risks - of e.g. alienating the record labels forever - were sky high.**

**As it turned out, we managed not to implement a full cult marketing program ("help us to save Napster") because a route to relaunch was found instead.**



## CULT CASE 1:



## “IN-THE-KNOW” MARKETING COMMUNICATIONS – LINUX

“The Open Source” movement was a reaction from within the geek community to the commercial empires being built on what used to be common land. The O/S had always just been shared as free source code until then. The movement’s manifesto was the famous white paper titled “The Cathedral and the Bazaar.” The Free Software Foundation, IRC and other initiatives soon followed.

So what would it take to build a new operating system? Who could take on Microsoft head-to head? The only chance you’d have is to **compete outside of capitalism**; with no financial interest yet with moral superiority. That’s what makes it cult; the early Christians vs the Roman Empire.

The cult founder came in the unlikely figure of Linus Torvalds; a shy, young student at Helsinki University. He was trying to improve an existing OS with a passing resemblance to Unix, as a project at Helsinki University. Linus put the result on a bulletin board for reviews and feedback. And Linux was born...

**i. Members-only.** The Linux community for years extended as far as other hackers, and no further. It was buried in the bulletin boards and campuses. Even now that there are 15 million Linux users, they have a mystique and solidarity which comes from their invisibility. For the establishment it was seen no threat if seen at all. It was like Hannibal coming over the Alps with elephants!

**ii. David vs. Goliath** Linux is a lot like Unix, only free. This limited it to powerful servers and expert coders. But the spiritual enemy has always been Microsoft. And this has finally become a real confrontation, as Linux is being touted as the affordable alternative to XP for small businesses. Microsoft executives certainly recognize that this is a revolt. One, Jim Allchin said: “I’m an American. I believe in the American Way. I worry if the government encourages open source...”

**iii. Internal vs External PR.** On the internet no-one knows you are a moonlighter. The Linux code was developed in spare time by people whose every waking thought was officially contracted and owned. There’s a story that one Silicon Valley CTO sent an anonymous note about a secret Linux meeting at his company, to find that 100 people turned up, including some of his direct reports!

**iv. Leaks & Stunts.** When it went public, it went PUBLIC. Remember the open source movement had its share of Silicon Valley veteran insiders. They knew that the one event that could put Linux on the map was a “coronation” on Wall Street. So with the cult’s blessing, companies like Red Hat raised billions to take the Linux dagger to Microsoft’s throat.



## CULT CASE 2:



## COMMITTED CUSTOMER ACQUISITION - HARLEY-DAVIDSON

Harley was the stuff of history. And that's where they were heading in the early 1980's after the Japanese motorbike invasion. Faced with bankruptcy, decades behind on quality, the turnaround started with a management buyout and, in 1983 the formation of a bikers cult; the Harley Owners Group or "HOG."

As a result of these initiatives, improved quality and retro design, Harley Davidson has enjoyed twelve continuous years of growth. HOG is also the largest company-sponsored motorbike club in the world with 365,000 members in 940 chapters.

- i. Inner-Circle Targeting.** The initial HOGs were mostly Hells Angels. They drew their ranks from blue collar America, the very group whose jobs were threatened by Japanese imports. They also drew on the patriotism, pride and disenfranchisement of a generation. One HOG went as far as to thank Rich Teerlink the Harley CEO...*"For giving me the parade I never got when I returned from Vietnam."*
- ii. Rallying Cry.** They had a simple, powerful message; "Help Harley Survive". This transcended the usual "them and us" marketing divide and brought HOGs into a shared cause. There were strong overtones of "Save America", the Harley symbolizing an industrial nation's plight in chrome and steel. In true cult style they added innocent elements like fundraising for the Muscular Dystrophy Foundation.
- iii. Charismatic Events.** Harley rides and rallies (already a feature of life in the Hells Angels) were the social glue. They culminated in five-year anniversary rallies, which made even Moonie mass weddings look low key.
- iv. Driving Loyalty.** One tactic the company uses to lure new riders is called Rider's Edge. This three day driver's training course is organized by dealers for new motorcycle riders. Lara Lee, director of Rider's Edge sees it like this: "We wanted to take the person who felt like an outsider and turn them into an insider." Harley also introduced a Ride Free exchange program where, if you bought the starter model (Harley Sportster) then you could trade it in at full value a year later for a bigger bike.



## CULT CASE 3:



## PASSIONATE COMMUNITY — E-BAY

In 1997, e-Bay found itself in a full nelson, when major fraud scandals threatened their credibility and business model. They were in danger of turning from something that felt like a neighborhood car boot sale into a nasty and risky black market. But if they introduced draconian regulations they would kill that special, folksy vibe even quicker. So they turned to their community instead and established a whole architecture of trust;

**i. Loyalty Tiers.** The more you trade, the higher you get in the hierarchy, via a rating scheme. And if you cheat or defraud, you get thrown out. Sellers with a higher rating can actually command a premium of up to 30%. Some people make a living just selling on e-Bay and this is supported through an extra tier – the Power-Selling program - with added services.

**ii. Participation Marketing.** The average user spends 3.5 hours on the site (longer than any where else in e-commerce). You have to rate the other party after every sale. Some members also took it on themselves to coach newbies. One called “Uncle Griffiths” was so active in this that they were hired by Omidyar to be the company’s first customer support rep. eBabes, a club of ebay sellers have meetings to discuss strategies and issues.

**iii. Turning the Tables.** The ebay business model turns e-commerce into a gambling game. Instead of getting in and getting out, the bidding process encourages multiple visits as buyers check the status of their bids. There’s a thrill to winning a bid and people get addicted. As Nancy Wilson, self-proclaimed e-Bay Queen put it “I’ve never had anything I enjoy doing as much as doing this. I watch the bidding every day like a little kid

**iv. Brand News.** In quick succession they introduced; the ratings system, insurance of up to \$200 against fraud, a seller identity verification service (\$5, by Equifax), a ban on sellers bidding their own products, a ban on buyers who win the auction but do not complete the sale. They also cleaned the site up, banning firearm sales and relegating anything questionable to an Adults Only area..

e-Bay has also created their own news. Like the entire disgruntled Silicon Valley IT department who auctioned themselves off to another company. Or the woman who recently put her hand in marriage up for bids.



## CULT CASE 4:



## BRAND RELIGION – APPLE

If one company can lay claim to inventing cult marketing, internally and externally, it's Apple. And for nearly thirty years they've proved – to our principle that cult marketing is a only ever short term measure – that every rule has an exception.

We can only plead that the computing industry has properties in common with the spaces studied by Stephen Hawking, and a few black holes and neutron stars are the least you could expect.

Apple ticks every box on the cult scorecard.

They've done **Boundaries** with the only proprietary system to go it alone against Windows and shown IBM that open platforms are the house red wine, to their champagne. they have played on "Big Brother" as a constant refrain. They've also drawn a fence around profitable niches like the whole multimedia community.

They've done **Initiation** in the extreme. OSX broke every rule of product evolution (one of the authors is into his second year of waiting for music sequencing software to get with the program) but boy does it over-deliver, once you've got up the learning curve and found some OS10 drivers!

They've done **Customs** by changing the relationship between human and box. Their designs are rivaled only by Sony in their aesthetics and accessibility. And that pays. In a market that is supposed to be waiting for the renewal cycle to restart, 40% of new i-Mac orders came from first time computer buyers.

Not that they've neglected the core. Mac geeks still have a partisan spirit that's reminiscent more of fringe sects than hardware retailing. And more than anything that's down to the **Ideology** -- or in marketing terms: **Brand Religion**;

**i. Founder & Advocates.** Steve Jobs. The man who returned to save the company on a salary of \$1. It was Jobs who started the cult, with the secretive Mac team and their skull and cross bones emblem, a mystique which spilled over into the launch. And the apostles are hardly less impressive. Like Guy Kawasaki whose smart, impassioned articulation of the vision made him the original corporate evangelist. And Jonathon Ives, designer of i-Mac, Cube, T4... who is fast accomplishing a one man Bauhaus.



## CULT CASE 4:



CONTINUED

**ii. Brand Vocabulary.** Apple invented (or at least popularized) the whole language of graphical interface computing; folders, icons, mouse, double click.

They have also been masterful meme merchants; giving their loyal followers the ammunition to bring down their deluded pc-user acquaintances;

“C:/ONGRTLNS.W95”

“WINDOWS 95 = MAC 89 + 8MB”

“Saying Windows 95 is equivalent to Macintosh is like finding a potato that looks like Jesus and believing you’ve witnessed the second coming!!!”\*

“Macintosh. A religion, a way of life.”\*

\*It’s noticeable that the cult principles of the company have seeped into their language

**iii. Brand Manifesto.** Many Apple people genuinely believe they are making the world a better place. This was reinforced by the company’s initiatives in education and with disadvantaged groups.

And they have used cult media, like collectible t-shirts, to constantly refresh the Apple allegiance (you wear your commitment on your chest). As one contractor put it “Apple is the only place where you have to put your t-shirt size on your job application.”

**iv. Rituals & Principles.** Jobs introduced the ultimate counterpart to corporate normality; compulsory anarchy. They embraced diversity and soft values, but never lost sight of results aggression. As they say at Apple; “Great Developers Ship.”



## From Cult Marketing to Global Religion?

### So where is it all heading?

In an age when even the world's hottest brands are often to be found facing a firing squad - Coca-Cola (European dioxin scare), Nike (Child Labor), Gap (badly out of fashion) - it seems cult marketing is set to grow.

Cult marketing is an antidote to those fat, lazy years of "nice ads, steady growth".

It is unusual because it is defensive (in a world of offensive marketing).

It is also pointing to a new killer positioning; **non-premium exclusivity**. That's why it's also the natural tactic of companies like IKEA, whose exploits include banning customers with beards from their Bristol store, customer sleep-overs in Stockholm to launch IKEA beds and America's own DYKEA lesbian action group.

The broadest influence may be on mainstream marketing campaigns; cult as tactic, not strategy. Rather than the whole 16 point program, companies can cherry-pick the cult tactics.

- Brand Religion for internal fanaticism. Like the Nike Ekins sales force, with their swoosh tattoos.

- "In-the-know" MARCOM for niche audiences like developers, pharmacists or journalists. Like Volvo who sampled their new S60 to beautiful people, along with reservations at valet-parking restaurants.

But "cult" will never become a marketing "global religion" like brand image, because it only works in from the fringe. And some of us, who have caught the cult marketing bug, think that's ☺.

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