BRAND IMAGE AS A WAY TO ENLARGE THE MEANING OF ‘AURA’

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Abstract: It's attempted in this study to apply Aura to brand image in an effort to determine whether or not brand image could widen the significance of Aura. The advance in reproduction technology makes Aura withered. Aura refers to a unique ambience of a specific work, and advertising is communicating through reproduction. The success or failure of brand depends on brand image, and brand image is a cognitive concept of brand and its nature is mythological. Advertising is the best way to create brand image, and can be defined as a process of generating a myth. If any particular brand is in possession of Aura and it is successfully advertised, receivers could be familiar with that brand, and it could win more sympathy from them, being differentiated and original.

Key Word: Aura, brand image, advertising, brand

1. Introduction
Modern society is called an era that Aura is missing. The growth of reproduction technology results in declining Aura. Technical reproduction is one of the unavoidable phenomena (Benjamin, 1934). Advertising is communicating through reproduction, and from this point of view, it's not rational to speak about Aura, which Walter Benjamin advocated, in Ad business. However, there also is Aura of its own in reproduction age, because Aura is what man is craving for.

Brand is one of diverse Auras in reproduction era. According to Stephen King from London-based WPP Group, products are manufactured at factories but consumers buy brand, and products could be reproduced by rival companies but brand is an only thing that cannot be reproduced (Randazzo, 1995). This describes the importance of brand. The attribute of brand is associated with Aura, and the success or failure of brand relies on brand image. Advertising is viewed as the best way to create brand image (Aaker, 1991; Kirmani & Zeithaml, 1993; Krishnan & Chakravarti, 1993). That symbolizes coherent perception and targets the most immediate reaction (Kim, 1999), and brand image appears in the form of mythology. Accordingly, advertising can be called a process of creating a myth (Rancazzo, 1995). That myth needs for Aura.

The purpose of this study was to delve into Aura advocated by Benjamin as a means to create brand image, and to discuss brand image as a way to extend the meaning of Aura through a case study.

2. Brand Image
Brand image could be defined as consumer's perception of a specific brand through association. Favorable and original brand association and its intensity are important factors to elicit differentiated consumer reaction, which comprises brand equity (Keller, 1993). According to Farquhar (1989), brand equity that invokes favorable consumer attitude could be yielded by coherent brand image.

Kirmani and Zeithaml (1993) defined brand image as consumer's cognitive concept of brand, and Krishnan and Chakravarti (1993) argued that advertising could serve to have consumers aware of advertised brand and make it more likely to be considered by them, and that their conscious or unconscious memory caused by advertising contributes to enhancing its brand image.

3. ‘Aura’
Benjamin (1934) explained that there are four features in Aura: rareness, core, onetiming and presence. Aura refers to a unique ambience of a work, and makes it differentiated from others. The most fundamental features of Aura are onetiming and continuance, whereas reproduced or mass-produced products are characterized by temporaries and repetition. And he argued that one couldn't feel Aura in reproduced things for that reason.

Yet what matters above all is that viewers feel Aura differently according to their experiences. Aura becomes different mostly according to their experiences except some works that stimulate human instincts (Benjamin, 1934).

4. Advertising As a Means to Extend the Meaning of ‘Aura’
Modern people are inclined to make up for an one-time use of things through reproduction. They are truly eager to own things around them by imitating or reproducing them through art (Benjamin, 1934). People desire something when their needs are stimulated. A psychologist Abraham H. Maslow argued that there are five-stage human needs: physiological needs, needs for
stability, needs for love and belongings, needs for respect and needs for self-realization. And people try to meet the higher needs after their lowest ones are first satisfied (Pelton, 1994).

In advertisement, Aura can be generated when one finds out what consumer needs imply, since advertisement basically talks about future dreams, not about the present (Waker, 1983). There is a message in human needs, and that might be an image or concept. If an ad is expressed in a way to address consumer needs, that can win his or her sympathy. And sympathy differentiates the advertised product from others, which is called the very brand image and Aura.

Aura is more of mind than of external form (Benjamin, 1934), and the same can be said of brand image. In an Ad, a strong vehicle to build brand image, Aura is generated by expressing one's needs. That is, a particular brand is perceived to be sole and absolutely different from others. Let's take a look at Malboro and Absolut Ad campaigns as examples of Aura as brand image.

4-1. Malboro Ad Campaign: Aura of Cowboy

Like Coca Cola, Levi's and MacDonald, Malboro is one of the best-known products that represent the United States, and is the best-selling cigarette not only in that nation but in the entire world (Lee, Park, Choi, 1994). That is the symbol of masculine beauty, being viewed as what's owned by heroes or by romanticists, and that reminds every American of Utopia where cowboys lead an pastoral life. For American men, the Malboro Ad is like a myth, as it successfully builds Aura by stimulating their masculinity.

As Hell Stavins said that one's mind should be moved to move products, Malboro has continued to stimulate American nostalgia toward the old country days, and that becomes a myth for every man in the world as well as Americans to the extent that cowboys need to borrow its Aura. Malboro is successful in building its own unique Aura by reading what's on consumer mind.

4-2. Absolut Vodka Ad Campaign: Aura of Absoluteness

USA Today, the largest daily newspaper in the United States, describes complex and subtle Absolut Ads over the past two decades as 6S (smart, showy, sassy, sophisticated, silly and stylish). Absolut Vodka has kept creating an unprecedented, sole brand image for about 20 years by using just ordinary bottles. That company has coherently sticked to a basic format but continued to come up with different unique ideas for every ad to build its own Aura and make its product differentiated from others. As a consequence, its market share in the United States stand at 60 percent.

What contributes to building Absolut Aura, namely uniqueness, is the round nimbus that reminds viewers of something absolute that penetrates into the whole. That successfully describes the perfection of Absolut, and such an image turns into its own sole, unique originality. As Thomas Hine, an architecture critic, said that packing understands humans better than humans understand it, what makes Absolut Vodka the best-selling product is its packing, namely brand image that refers to Aura.

5. Conclusion and Suggestion

Benjamin defined Aura as what associates something hidden in unconscious memory. When there is Aura in a piece of poem, photograph, painting, movie, ad or brand, they give a friendly impression to receivers, win their sympathy, and make themselves different and original.

Just a different external form of a particular brand cannot let it survive keen competition. The only way to do that is creating Aura that makes it different internally and appeal to consumers. A brand image can stand out and describe its own identity more clearly when there is Aura in it. Nowadays, people want God, and brand substitutes for God. Aura is the indispensable, mandatory factor to generate a successful brand image.

6. References