

The Cult of Macintosh

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In this study, we introduce the notion of a brand cult in an effort to better understand the extreme devotion consumers have toward certain brands. We use historical images plus interviews and observations with current Macintosh computer users to explore the cultic quasi-religious aspects of this consumption. We find several key sustaining myths, including a creation myth, a messianic myth, a satanic myth, and a resurrection myth. The accompanying video offers an account of what it means when a brand becomes a religion to its true believers.

Keywords: Brand Cult; Brand Loyalty; Brand Community.

In the beginning (of the Information Age) was the void. And the void was digital. But lo, there came upon the land, the shadow of Steven Jobs (and Stephen Wozniak). And Steven (Stephen) said, “Let there be Apple.” And there was Apple. And Steven (Stephen) beheld Apple. And it was good. And Apple begat Macintosh. And it was good. And soon upon the land there began to appear, The Cult of Macintosh. For they had tasted of Apple. And it was good.

The personal computer market is dominated by PC computers using operating systems and software from Microsoft. Although Apple Computer Corporation currently has less than 4% of the personal computer market, their customers are distinguished by their fierce loyalty to the brand and their personal identification with Apple’s Macintosh computers. Apple Computer continues to sell its Macintosh computers, operating systems, and software to a small and fervently loyal segment of the market, even as one of its products—the iPod—has reached a position of market dominance.

This fierce loyalty of Macintosh computer owners has been characterized as an instance of brand community which Muñiz and O’Guinn (2001, 412) define as “a specialized, non-geographically bound community, based on a structured set of social relationships among admirers of a brand.” Schouten and McAlexander (1995) called

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such groups “subcultures of consumption” that share a commitment to a particular product class, brand, or consumption activity. Characteristics of a subculture of consumption include “an identifiable, hierarchical social structure [based on status]; a unique ethos; ... and unique jargon, rituals, and modes of symbolic expression [to facilitate shared meanings in consumer goods and activities]” (Schouten and McAlexander 1995, 43). Boorstin (1973) called such groups as “consumption communities,” a more encompassing term than subcultures. He argued that in consumption communities, Americans’ sense of unity and commonality is increasingly more likely to be based on common consumption patterns than daily interaction due to living in geographic proximity to one another. Fine (1979) used the term “idiocultures” to refer to groups bound by a common consumption activity like Little League baseball. In this study, we introduce the notion of a “brand cult” to better understand the extreme brand-focused devotion. By introducing a religious motif, we believe we capture an important aspect of extreme brand devotion that is missing from other accounts. Furthermore, we explore the role of Apple in nourishing the corporate mythology and innovation that sustains this cult of loyal followers.

There are several other related literatures about communities of true believers (Hoffer 2002). Dedicated fans of a particular sports team are one common focus of such devotion (e.g., Guttman 1996; Holt 1995; Queenan 2003; Roberts 1976; Wann *et al.* 2001). Although sports fan devotion elicits passion, involves a number of rituals, and can be said to include worship of sports stars that play for the team, there are several differences from brand cults. The main focus of sports fans is on the competitive success of “their” team. Brand cults, on the other hand, often thrive on their brand’s relative lack of success in the market. For sports fans the play and the players are more important than the merchandise, whereas for brand cults the product dominates the personalities. And sports fans have more opportunities to collectively worship their team and participate in rituals showing their faith at regular games. Nevertheless, sports team franchises are themselves brands and have loyal followers who can be counted on to buy tickets and a variety of related merchandise (e.g., Hornby 1992; Lever 1983; Shindler 1998).

There is also a literature on fans of musicians, musical groups, and celebrities (e.g., Doss 1999; Hills 2002; O’Guinn 1991). Closely related are avid fans of television series and films like *Star Trek* and *Star Wars* (e.g., Kozinets 1997, 2001; Nygard 2003, 2004; Przywara 2001). Many of the same distinctions between fandom and brand cults made for sports fans apply here as well, except that rather than focusing on a competition, the focus is on people, their performances, and the media products that capture traces of these performances. Much of this fan reverence can be taken as an example of sacred devotion with a secular focus (Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989). However, as the lines continue to blur, the sacred/secular boundary is becoming less distinct and more permeable (Detweiler and Taylor 2003; Lyon 2000; Miller 2004). This is true both for the sacralization of products and for the secularization of religion.

In a book on cult branding, Ragas and Bueno (2002) cite nine cult brands: Apple, Harley-Davidson, Jimmy Buffett, Linux, Oprah Winfrey, Star Trek, Vans Shoes, Volkswagen Beetle, and World Wrestling Entertainment (formerly WWF). But what is

a cult brand and what makes Apple such a brand? Rushkoff (1999, 238–49) cites 20 characteristics of a religious cult and argues that cult brands are similar. Because we are focusing on the consumer aspects of the cult of Mac, we deal with a smaller and somewhat different set of cultic attributes in our analysis. Nevertheless, Deutschman (2000) finds that charismatic Apple leader Steve Jobs also employs a highly demanding managerial style that is not unlike those used by religious cult leaders. He also characterizes Jobs as alternating between being charming and being horrible. In Levy's (2000) account, it is only Jobs' charisma and vision that result in Apple having highly dedicated employees in spite of frequent explosive rebukes from the CEO. But, we found that consumer members of the cult of Macintosh don't see the negative side of Steve Jobs and revel instead in his visionary leadership.

Because we focus on contemporary Mac enthusiasts in dealing with the computer's cultic aspects we also ignore the history of the company, except as it has become a part of corporate mythology that has been passed on to current loyal customers. However, there is one aspect of corporate history that should be mentioned. Guy Kawasaki was hired by Apple in the mid-1980s in order to promote the original Mac computer to software developers. The technique he developed is called corporate evangelizing (Kawasaki 1989, 1992). He described it as using "fervor, zeal, and anything else to convince software developers to create Macintosh products" (Levy 2000, 162). To do this, Kawasaki attended Billy Graham's School of Evangelism in order to develop his evangelical skills (Kahney 2004). Kawasaki left Apple in 1987, but returned to the company in 1995 as chief evangelist. In this nomenclature we can see the seeds of the cult of Macintosh along with the potential for conversion experiences, unquestioning faith, dedication, sacrifice, and the search for salvation.

Methodology

For the purposes of this research we conducted fourteen in-depth interviews with Mac users in their homes and offices using snowball sampling. We began with ads placed in local Macintosh stores and solicited from the local MUG (MacUser Group). We followed McCracken's (1988) long interview model and used open ended and projective questions. We videotaped the interviews which ranged from one to two hours and transcribed them verbatim. The first author is also a Mac user for the past six years and has been attending Mac user group meetings. In addition to the interviews and observations, we also collected newspaper clips, advertisements, promotional materials, online material, and books related to the history and operations of Apple. We analyzed the data following a constant comparative approach (Miles and Huberman 1984) until the themes were fully saturated and further analysis became redundant.

Findings

The Mac and its fans constitute the equivalent of a religion. This religion is based on an origin myth for Apple Computer, heroic and savior legends surrounding its co-founder and current CEO Steve Jobs, the devout faith of its follower congregation, their belief

in the righteousness of the Macintosh, the existence of one or more Satanic opponents, Mac believers proselytizing and converting non-believers, and the hope among cult members that salvation can be achieved by transcending corporate capitalism. The cult status of many Mac followers is evidenced in a *Wired News* web site called "Cult of Mac." The web site is run by Leander Kahney who has also published a book, *The Cult of Mac*, in which the present video is discussed (Kahney 2004, 254–56). There are cult magazines like *MacAddict*. And there is a book *The Second Coming of Steve Jobs* by Alan Deutschman (2000) about Steve Jobs co-founding of Apple. Related Apple products like the iPod (Levy 2005) and the Newton (Muñiz and Schau 2005), have also been found to have religious aspects in the eyes of their true believers.

Apple has nourished the corporate mythology that sustains this cult of loyal followers. There are several cultic myths involved here, as we show through historical corporate footage of Apple's stockholders' meetings, advertising, newspaper coverage, and corporate promotions in our video. The myths detected involve those of creation, heroic quest, satanic opposition, and resurrection.

The Creation Myth

One of the functions of world religions is to explain how the world emerged and how things took their present forms. The origin myth for the computer world and the digital forms of contemporary life rests heavily on the story of Steven Jobs and Stephen Wozniak creating the first Apple computer in Jobs' parents' garage. The sale of Jobs' VW van and Wozniak's two HP calculators are portrayed as sacrificial acts in this creation myth. From this miraculous birth in humble surroundings, Apple Computer came to dominate the education market and at one point held nearly 15% of the overall personal computer market, with much higher market shares in certain areas of the market such as education, graphics, and desktop publishing.

The origin myth for Apple as well as the resurrection myth for Steve Jobs were discussed by most informants.

Q: 'Could you give us a brief history of Apple Corporation, key events, key people if you know?

A: About Apple? From what I've learned, it all started out with of course Steven Jobs and Michael Wozniak in their garage as a couple of young guys. And they created that Apple II, that first initial Apple and from there they created a company out of it all and it started to blossom and they made a lot of initial money off of it. And Wozniak left the company and retained some stock options and stuff like that and Jobs became the big guy. And I think then he got a little disillusioned with some of the movement early on and kind of went off on his own and created that NeXT systems. And then a whole series of guys like Scully and various different people came in as the CEO's of Mac, of Apple, and it never really quite had that initial flavor that Wozniak and Jobs had introduced into the system. And then when he reemerged and came back into it I think he brought a lot of life back into Apple and revitalized some things and brought it back to its initial vision. I think he's quite a visionary with regard to computers and so forth. (Mark)

As this quotation illustrates, users of Mac are knowledgeable about the founders and history of the company. Even from the early days of the Apple I and Apple II computers,

a large part of the following for these computers had to do with the image of the two founders. Both Steven Jobs and Stephen Wozniak were pranksters in the tradition of trickster figures like the young Krishna of Hinduism. This renegade rebellious image is also inscribed in corporate mythology together with legendary incidents. Steve Jobs parked his motorcycle inside the corporate headquarters in Cupertino, California, and this same headquarters once flew a skull and crossbones pirate flag in front. This incident is celebrated in the title of the fictionalized historical film, *Pirates of Silicon Valley*. Steve Jobs explained the appeal of being part of the Mac team saying “It is better to be a pirate than to join the Navy” (Linzmayer 1999, p. 72).

Wozniak once made “blue boxes” in order to make long distance phone calls without being billed. He planted a metronome that sounded like a ticking bomb in a friend’s locker. Steve Jobs was also a counter-cultural figure who had become a vegetarian, done drugs, dropped out of college, and worked at an apple orchard in an Oregon commune. Together the two Steves founded Apple Computer on April Fool’s Day, 1976.

The Hero Myth

Well, Steve Jobs is sort of a hero of mine simply because I think that he really kept the focus of the company and what they are trying to do. (Scott)

The history of Apple Computer has elements of classic hero myths, with both its founders and its various computers as the heroes. Steve Jobs’ rise and fall within Apple Computer is a classic example of the Heroic Adventure Myth as formulated by Joseph Campbell (1991). According to Campbell (1991), a classic heroic adventure myth like those of Odysseus, Jason, Christ, or Buddha, consists of these key elements:

1. The call to adventure
2. A helper
3. A wondrous journey
4. Trials
5. More helpers
6. Apotheosis
7. Flight
8. Resurrection, and
9. The boon that restores the world.

These elements seem to characterize Steve Jobs as he is construed in Apple’s corporate mythology and in the minds of its true believers. In brief, the *call to adventure* was Jobs’ membership in the Homebrew Computer Club, where he met his *helper* in the person of Steve Wozniak. Starting with the Apple I computer and the sacrifice of Jobs’ VW van and Wozniak’s two HP calculators, this began the *wonder journey* involving the rise of Apple Computer to become a multimillion-dollar corporation. The journey was magical, but it was not without its *trials*—witness the battles with IBM and Microsoft, and the flops of the Apple III and Lisa computers. But together with his *helpers*, the dedicated and talented employees hired by Apple, Jobs achieved his

apotheosis: his rise to become a sacred legend following the introduction of the Macintosh computer. But from this pinnacle of success, it was only a year before Apple posted its first ever corporate loss. Within two months, Steve Jobs was stripped of responsibilities and took *flight* in the form of his departure from Apple; to form NeXT Computers, where he was in exile for the next 11 years until his *resurrection* occurred with his reappearance as the CEO of Apple on the eve of its rumored demise, from whence he and his minion bestowed *the boon*: the iMac and a host of subsequent innovations which revitalized the world of Apple, saved the corporation, and restored the faith of the cult of Macintosh.

The Satanic Myth

The historic myth of Apple is also one of corporate irreverence that seems to counterpose it starkly against one-time archrival IBM computers. Apple has faced two major Satans in its history, first the threat of IBM and currently the threat of Microsoft and Bill Gates. To the cult of Mac, these opponents are evil incarnate. Perhaps the clearest and most memorable jab at fading rival IBM and rising rival Microsoft was the “1984” Big Brother commercial, first aired at the unveiling of the first Macintosh computer.

After the flop of the IBM PC-Junior, IBM declined in importance as a PC-maker. It then became clear that Apple was not just in the hardware business and that its chief rival in the operating system and software business was Microsoft and its leader, Bill Gates. The emergence of Gates as villain or anti-Christ was not lost upon Apple’s followers.

Q: Why does Mac still have the small market share that they do as opposed to the dominant market share for Windows?

A: Well, they were completely bludgeoned by the sheer marketing force of Microsoft in my opinion. There may be a thing that anti-Microsoft users can’t match. I think it goes beyond that. I think there are really some legitimate arguments from what I can tell that really indicate that Microsoft, simply, in one way or another, pushed their PCs onto the users as a whole, and kind of dominated the market in that respect. That’s kind of my theory on why there are many more PC users than Macintosh users ... I like Macintosh because it is anti-Microsoft. I like to see it more in an incentive fashion and that makes me even more energetic and emotional about it because I feel like it truly is a better product and they just need to get the work out. They are going to have a heck of a time doing it because it is so hard to make that transfer. (Fawcet)

Really, if you look at Windows no one can argue that Bill Gates didn’t steal the idea or at least borrowed a lot of the idea from Apple, in terms of the way the interface works—with the human being and the mouse, you know?. (Eric)

I have nothing personal against Bill Gates, but I try not to give him any more money than he already has. (Chris)

A part of the sense of righteousness among cult members is achieved in opposing the “evil empire” of Microsoft and the “antichrist” of Bill Gates. Numerous humorous demeaning depictions of Microsoft were found in the homes and offices of these true believers (e.g., “Pendulum Processors; Satan Inside,” “Think Difficult,” “Windows—a virus that you pay for,” “Windows NT: Nice Try”).

The Resurrection Myth

According to Young (1988), Steve Jobs appeared at Apple's first annual party in 1977 dressed as Jesus Christ. As suggested by the title of Alan Deutschman's (2000) book, *The Second Coming of Steve Jobs*, the founder's forced departure from the corporation and his triumphant return as CEO on the eve of the company's widely rumored demise, makes him a savior in multiple senses. Like the true believers in Leon Festinger's study, *When Prophecy Fails* (1956), on the eve of Apple's demise, Steve Jobs reappeared in that role and restored their faith:

... and now, when Steve Jobs came back—he must have been in business school or something while he was away—he divided it into consumer line and professional line. And it's been going great since then. The iMac, wonderful, it's neat because my wife, Martha, has said for years leading up to the iMac, somebody needs to get their industrial design right here all these beige boxes and they're finally doing it. The new line is fabulous. So, he's made a lot of good things. Apple has a lot of ground to make up, and I think they will. I really do. (John)

He [Steve Jobs] seems like a very charismatic, interesting guy with a, I think, very forward insight and vision with regard to what a computer should be and how it should work for people. Which is what I get the impression of that if you see the things that he's created and the vision he's created with Apple—which I think to a large degree is him. You know he must have a lot of good people that are linked in with him, but what Apple is seems to ebb and flow with *his coming and going* in the history of it. And I think when it's reached its high points is when he's been involved and when his vision has been involved. So, he seems like a pretty good visionary with regard to computers, you know. (Mark, *emphasis added*)

Other Cultic Themes

The video goes on to examine the feelings and beliefs of Mac owners, a local Mac Users Group (MUG), and the activities at several local Macintosh retailers. In addition to the mythological aspects referenced above, Mac believers engage in proselytizing and converting non-believers:

When I evangelize and witness to people, I make a few interesting points. I'm on the net a lot. I have no virus protection. There are about 40 known viruses for the Mac and there hasn't been a new one in several years. There are over 40,000 known viruses for Windows and I'm still waiting for the rest of the children of Melissa. Because Melissa was an interesting virus, when Windows 98 came out and Windows 2000, Microsoft ... they're very smart but they're kind of dumb ... they use visual basic for applications. Which if you're familiar with the programming code, they use that to record macros in like Microsoft Word. All macros are held as VBA code and imbedded in the document itself. So, when I write a document in Microsoft Word with a macro and I save that document and I send it to someone else, simply opening that can trigger the macro and that can be any kind of malicious macro you want. And now anybody can write one, but the worst part about their thought process was, "Well gee, you know, using visual basic for macros, why don't we just extend that throughout the entire system." The entire operating system can be controlled using visual basic macros imbedded in Excel, PowerPoint Presentations, anything! Anything that they produce that you can record things in recorded in visual basic for applications. So now you cannot only get into Outlook Express or Outlook or Net Meeting, or

any of those other things, you can take down the entire system. It's amazing! Notice in all of the viruses that have had big problems over the net, they've all been related to Microsoft products. That's not simply a function of 90% market share. They're sieves. They ship all of their server software for example with all the ports open, as opposed to shipping them all closed and opening the ones you need. They say it makes it easier. Of course it makes it easier—to get in!

Q: Now you used the words a minute ago “when you witness and evangelize.” Is this a religion?

A: To a certain extent, it is. I'm very bad about it. I wonder about myself sometimes because, Oh my gosh, I think about these people that ... it's like the old saying, *Nobody ever got fired by buying IBM*. Well, nobody ever got fired for buying Microsoft. This herd mentality that people seem to have to “Well, everybody uses Microsoft, so I guess I'd better, too.” If all your friends were jumping off a cliff, would you do it too? This lemming herd mentality has got to go! You need to “Think Different.” If one of their products satisfies your needs, use it by all means. When people talk to me about what computer they should get, I don't say, “Buy a Mac.” I say, “Write down a list of everything you want a computer to do; I want to check email, I want to surf the web, I want to doctor photographs, print, you know—anything like that ... write it all down. Then I want you to take that list and I want you to go find the best, most knowledgeable Macintosh person you can find and the most knowledgeable Windows person you can find; sit down in front of the best Mac and the best Windows machine, fastest, everything, latest stuff. Sit in front of it. You take the mouse in hand, have them talk you through doing every one of these tasks that you've designated that you want to do. Do it on the Mac side, do all these tasks, save something to a disk. Do this, do that. Do the same sitting in front of the Windows machine. Have them talk you through it. Self evident. I don't have to say anything else. If they do that, I have a convert. (John)

Q: So, you didn't have any familiarity with computers?

A: Not familiar what so ever. I did my little interview with [his roommate]. Why did you get a MAC instead of IBM? Why this particular model? What can you do with it? He ran through enough information to convince me that Macintosh was the way I needed to go ... he said to me that Macintosh has got everything that you need ... (Guy)

Q: Given your loyalty to Mac's, have you influenced other people—friends, family, students?

A: All the time.

Q: What do you tell them? How do you do it?

A: Well, for instance, my mom has been a PC person the whole time so I bought her an iMac. Took it down, loaded up Virtual PC for her, taught her how to flop back between the PC and the Mac on the Mac. Being a bilingual operating system, you can do pretty much anything.

Q: So, that was to help her make the conversion?

A: So now she's excited. She's got a little purple iMac sitting on her desk—she loves it. (Stroud)

Mac users also espouse a belief that salvation can be achieved by transcending corporate capitalism. Ironically, this is something they pursue through their purchases of hardware, software, and peripheral equipment from a large corporation: Apple Computer. Unlike arch-rival Microsoft, members of the cult of Macintosh believe that Apple is not so much motivated by the desire to make money as it is by the desire to

bring about the hierophany of offering the world truly “neat stuff.” This neat stuff is seen as both the boon that restored the corporation to solvency and as the font of true beauty and wisdom in a world otherwise dominated by shallow corporate capitalism and hollow temptations meant to deceive and seduce:

So, even though you really look at it, an IBM compatible, or as I call it a Gates compatible, just sitting there is nothing without software. And there’s a sole source for software, “Microsoft.” They are not a software company. They are a company designed to make money, period. Jobs and Wozniak, who created Apple, it was not to make money, it was to make cool stuff. It was to make the “new” new thing. To knock people’s socks off. And they still do to this day. But Microsoft’s whole goal, and we can tell by all their business practices, is to make money—simply put. So, I would much rather follow a cause that has a noble undertaking as opposed to one that’s mercenary. (John)

Francis Ford Copola, what he said that I thought was really neat was, “This is the neatest thing I’ve seen come out in the computer world.” And the interviewer said, “What would you like?” And he says, “I’d like to have three million of these.” And he says, “You need three million?” And he says, “No, I’d give them to three million young people so that they could try to become as creative and develop the art like what my vision of it is.” And so, it was really a neat little thing they did, trying to advertise the new iMac. (Mark)

The dominance of Microsoft, its Windows operating system, and PC chip makers like Intel, has given the cult of Macintosh additional feelings of persecution for their faith as well as the challenge of defending their minority loyalty in the face of the PC giants. This justification offered by members of the cult of Mac has taken on both personality aspects and moral overtones for these loyal followers.

I’ve been using Macs for about ten years, and to me, I always just cross my fingers and hope that it’s not going to go away. I try to promote and support the company because I think it’s a good thing. I really don’t promote a lot of things. I’m not the kind of person who will try to tell people to do something or read something, but this is one of the one things that I will go out and really talk about. (Alexa)

It is the satisfaction of using the machine ... sometimes I have problems with people sending me things with attachments, and I can’t always open them up even with my Mac link. I still feel as if I would support Macintosh and give it a good endorsement. (Guy)

Q: Is there anything that worries you about Apple or do you think they will continue indefinitely?

A: I think they’ve got it figured out. I think that they may not have the overwhelming part of the market, they may never get there. I don’t think they will but it doesn’t matter because there will always be people who want to buy Apple. There are certain things in society that says this is a much better machine; I like it and I am going to stick with it. (Guy)

Whereas IBM’s logo reminds some of corporate pin-stripes or prison uniforms, Apple’s logo is, as the president of Apple Products in 1999, Jean-Louis Gassée, put it: “the symbol of lust and knowledge, bitten into, all crossed with the colors of the rainbow in the wrong order. You couldn’t dream of a more appropriate logo: lust, knowledge, hope, and anarchy” (Linzmayer 1999, pg. 6) and jumbled colors of the rainbow. All this ties in nicely to a corporate name and logo that are redolent of the Garden of Eden story (Floch 2001).

- Q: Since you're an art director let me ask you about the logo of Apple versus the logo of IBM or Macintosh. What do they say to you?
- A: It says a lot, really. Basically you have the Apple as an image and it's not really written out, I mean there it is on the side of the machine; whereas IBM is the three letters. That sort of says it all. One is based on icons and the other is more technical. I think a lot of it is because they were developed the way they were and the way it's gone down through the years. I think originally the people that developed Mac's were more art-based or visual-based people in the beginning, and I think it's always been geared that way and I think that's why people in my business have always leaned toward them and used them. (Chris)

Even though Apple itself is a large corporation, the cult of Macintosh revels in the outlaw, anti-corporate, and rebellious spirit that form the romantic myth of Apple Computer. When IBM employees were known for their white shirts, clean-cut grooming, and conservative suits, Apple employees were known for their jeans, t-shirts, sandals, and long hair. As Steve Jobs once said, "Apple is an Ellis Island company. Apple is built on refugees from other companies. These are the extremely bright individual contributors who were trouble makers at other companies" (Linzmayr 1999, p. 541). Furthermore, the trickster spirit (Hyde 1998) is evident in the surprises Apple software code writers sometimes imbed in their software. These are called "Easter Eggs" and taking forms such as "Killer Rabbits," "Tibetan Yaks," and panels from Doonesbury cartoons about Apple.

Such legends, in addition to prominently remembered corporate advertising campaigns like the 1984 "Big Brother" campaign, the "Lemmings" commercial, and the more recent "Think Different" campaign, provide a counter-cultural image which members of the cult relish (Kahney 2004). They share a sense of irreverence and derive identity from the parallel image of the company. The 1984 ad run during the Super bowl depicted a young, athletic woman disrupting a Big Brother rally. She was the embodiment of Apple's self-image. The ad predicted that the introduction of Macintosh would mean that "1984 won't be like 1984" (Kawasaki 1990). The Lemmings commercial showed long lines of blindfolded businesspeople. They each had one hand upon the shoulder of the person ahead while carrying a briefcase in the other hand. Lemmings likened these DOS users to mindless rodents committing mass suicide. At the end, the commercial shows a Macintosh user who lifts his blindfold and stops at the brink (Linzmayr 1999).

- Q: You mentioned the herd mentality, the Lemmings, is there anything besides that to characterize PC user vs. Mac user. Are there different personality types?
- A: Oh, absolutely. Absolutely. The Apple campaign a couple of years ago, the "Think Different" campaign; it had people. Pablo Picasso, all sorts of different people as the renegades, the people who thought different. I thought that was very effective. Especially when it got all the people going, "well, that's not correct English." Well, no kidding. So is, "You got mail." I think, and I'd love to be able to put myself in this. I think creative people that can think for themselves, that can think (and I hate to use this term) "outside the box" want transparent tools. I don't want anything between me and what I'm producing. And that layer of complexity that other operating systems, including Unix, Linux, Windows, any of the varieties; is a complete hamper to the creative process. Complete. (John)

Asked in projective questions what kind of vehicle Mac and PC/Microsoft would be, the Mac was commonly seen as a fun VW bug or van, whereas Microsoft and PC were most often seen as old Chevrolets designed to fall apart:

- Q: Suppose Mac were a car and PCs were a car, what kind of cars would they be?
- A: Well, actually, Windows would be a Chevy produced in the early 80s. I had one, at 70,000 miles it fell apart. Phenomenally engineered such that everything could fall apart at the same time. I don't know how they could work it. Instead of using all that engineering prowess to produce a car that would last, they design it to fail. Planned obsolescence. And Mac? I'm tempted to say that it would be a Dymaxion car. Are you familiar with Buckminster Fuller's Dymaxion car? It would be a Dymaxion car. Aerodynamic, innovative. But, I'd have to say it's probably either a toss up between a Lamborgini, Diablo, or the car I have in the garage. I have a '73 Mercedes. It's built well, it lasts, it's classically gorgeous, and it works. That would be the comparison. Now, if Microsoft built cars you know that they would only run on Microsoft gas? You heard about the guys that were driving down the road in the car and one of them happened to be a Microsoft software engineer and the car quit. The guy says well, I wonder what's wrong with it? The guy sitting beside him says maybe it's the gas. The guy in the back says maybe it's the electrical system. And the Microsoft engineer says why don't we just all open and close the windows and try it again? (John)
- Q: Now, not the people using them, but the computers themselves; if the Macintosh and the PC were animals, what kind of animals would they each be?
- A: The Mac would be more like a horse or fish even, with the colors and swimming in water and fluidity, and the horse for the same activity. The PC—I just don't see it as alive. They're almost inanimate. (Alexa)

Some cult members go so far as to have the Mac logo tattooed on their bodies (see Kahney 2004). Other members of the cult collect Macintosh icons, posters, t-shirts, and other emblems of the focus of their devotion:

- Q: You mentioned that when you fly that your flight bag has a couple of Apple stickers on it.
- A: Yeah, my flight bag has Apple stickers all over it and, in fact, in my shirt pocket I've got a tri-colored Apple pen. Now I don't have any tie tacks or anything like that. I've got my Union tacks.
- Q: So, do passengers ever recognize that in you and say ...
- A: Yeah, and you know what? Apple people, Mac people are friendlier. Maybe because there's a lot more Windows users that aren't friendly, and so the percentage of friendly Windows users would be higher, no, I don't think so. The Mac people, they always are you know, "Oh, I've got one of those" or they've got a PowerBook bag or something, and they're always friendlier. I'm painting with a broad brush, but they're always friendlier. And we connect ... Mac users. As I started this out; Mac users swear by their computers and Windows users swear at their computers. (John)
- Q: Let me ask you a sort of stereotype question. If you compared a hardcore Mac user and a hardcore PC user—how do you see those people differ?
- A: The Mac users are definitely a lot more intelligent and have a higher IQ—I'm just kidding—no, I think there's a little bit of a tendency for someone who wants to be different and a little more individual kind of person would lean toward a Mac, and the PC is considered the big corporation and all the strings that go along with Bill Gates and his empire. Yeah, if you wanted to stand out you'd be a Mac user. Realistically, it just depends on where your first experiences are with the computer and for me, it was certainly external things that caused me to end up using the Mac, but once I started,

I've been in love with it. I know a lot of people who do web design, HTML coding, definitely still like PCs better. But I think it's certainly hipper to say you're a Mac user. (Eric)

Conclusion

As the fervent loyalty of members of the cult of Mac testifies, these Macintosh enthusiasts have ennobled and sacralized the "cause" of Apple and vilified and profaned opposing brands in the marketplace (cf. Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989). The cult of Mac appeared and sustained itself despite (or because of) their own trials in supporting a brand that has failed in its bid for market dominance, but has at the same time gained a following that is fiercely loyal in a way that seldom happens with industry leaders. As demonstrated by Schouten and McAlexander for Harley Davidson (1995) and by Muñiz and O'Guinn for Saab and Ford Bronco (2001), these groups of loyal followers form personal or virtual cult-like followings. They romantically ennoble their brand and engage in what Susan Fournier called intimate "brand relationships" (1998). Although there is some similarity to these studies in terms of commitment and loyalty, the concept of the brand cult developed in this video offers a more complete metaphor for understanding the phenomenon of extreme belief in a brand and for appreciating the potentially all-encompassing role that consumer brands can play in our lives. We believe that the cult motif and the perspective or corporate mythology adds a rich perspective on these phenomena, not only for Macintosh computers but for other brand cults as well.

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