

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

Jeremiah J. Whiddon for the degree of Masters of Arts in Applied Anthropology
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Title: Advertising Strategy and Anthropology: A Focused Look at Consumers and
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Redacted for privacy

Abstract approved

Nancy R. Rosenberger

This thesis was designed and written with advertising stakeholders in mind.

The aim of my thesis is to illustrate how listening to and understanding the behavior and voices of consumers from the perspective of a trained anthropologist can improve advertising strategies. My instruments for conducting this research include an in-depth investigation of 28 consumers who use organizing devices (e.g. personal digital assistants and paper-based organizers) and a qualitative analysis of two print ads from Palm, Inc.

In the first phase of my research, I employed ethnographic techniques and analyses to shed light on the usage-based benefits consumers realize by using organizers. In the second part of my research, I reveal my analysis and interpretations of print ads from Palm, one of the world's largest producers of organizers.

My research culminates with the placement of the Palm advertisers' decisions in a critical framework. I do this by illuminating the consonance and contradiction between the ways in which I found consumers using organizers and the ways in which they are promoted in the advertising.

Among other things, my research found informants using their organizers as a means to escape the tedium of commuting to and from work; I also found informants using their organizers to extend their memory capacity and create solutions to problems. In the end, my interpretations lead to pragmatic conclusions that potentially make advertising strategy more efficacious: Palm advertising should create scenes in which people are actively using their organizers to achieve benefits (e.g. memory, entertainment, etc.) they seek.

Advertising Strategy and Anthropology:
A Focused Look at Consumers and their Organizing Devices.

by
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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State Libraries. My signature below authorizes the release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Jeremiah J. Whiddon, Author

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DEDICATIONS

This thesis is dedicated to my entire family and especially my Dad who died from melanoma skin cancer on June 24, 2001.

Advertising Strategy and Anthropology:

A Focused Look at Consumers and their Organizing Devices

CHAPTER ONE ~ INTRODUCTION

Many marketers believe that firmly grounded advertising strategies appeal to the needs and wants of sought after consumers. Unfortunately, however, the wants and needs of consumers are sometimes neglected in advertising. While the consequences of this neglect vary, I believe the most effective advertising strategy to be one that is focused upon the consumer. Hence, the aim of this thesis is to illustrate how listening to and understanding the behavior and voices of consumers can improve advertising strategies.

I conducted and wrote this thesis with advertising stakeholders in mind. My primary objective with this research is to provide an example that advertising researchers and strategists—often called account planners—could use as a model for improving the way in which they understand consumers and thus more effectively direct advertising strategy. To this end, I use organizers¹ and their users as instruments for my research. Specifically, I immersed myself in three integrated phases of research. In the first phase, I conducted qualitative research with consumers in an effort to understand their usages, interactions, and behaviors with

¹ For the purposes of this thesis, organizers consist of personal digital assistants (PDAs), traditional paper and pencil organizers (e.g., Franklin), calendars, and other forms of organizing one's activities and time.

their organizers. I looked at how consumers use organizers in mundane as well as unusual settings. I asked questions about their interactions with organizers for work, leisure activities, and planning. In so doing, I sought and discovered usage-based benefits that consumers glean with their organizers.

In the second phase of research, I investigated and qualitatively analyzed the advertising of one of the world's largest manufacturers of organizers—Palm, Inc². In so doing, I interpreted the values and propositions employed in several Palm ads in an effort to evaluate the content and composure of their advertising.

The third phase is the most important for advertisers. It involved a critique and recommendation set based on the behavioral findings from my informants and the findings from my advertising analysis. The objectives of this phase were to provide advertisers—the Palm advertisers in particular—with a synopsis of where and how they were consistent with the behavioral findings exhibited by my informants, and most importantly, where and how they contradicted or omitted important features of these behavioral findings³.

The foundation of my research is built upon the philosophy that advertising strategy must include the voices and behaviors of consumers. To complete this

² Palm is the world's largest maker of PDAs. Palm PDAs are handheld computers that can be used for a plethora of applications. Most PDAs work with a pen-based interface that allows users to navigate and operate software installed in the devices. Virtually all PDAs include personal and business management software consisting of: date books, addresses, to-do lists, memo pads, calculators, and games. PDAs can be linked with computers that facilitate downloading from computer to PDA, or vice-versa. More advanced versions include such options as: digital cameras, global positioning systems, and modems for mobile Internet and email access.

³ The behavioral findings that I find and present later in the thesis include my informants' opinions and interpretations of their activities and relationships with their organizers.

mission, I believe the keen eyes and ears of an applied anthropologist are best adapted to elicit important data from consumers. Accordingly, a recurrent theme in this thesis is my notion that advertisers—specifically account planners—and practicing anthropologists should join forces. Consistent with this theme, throughout my data collection, my analyses, and my interpretive recommendations in this thesis, I uprooted anthropological techniques from their traditional (i.e., academic) uses and applied them towards better understanding consumer needs and wants in the marketplace. With the possession of these techniques, along with the perspectives and interpretations of an applied anthropologist, a more in-depth understanding of consumers was possible. All together, I believe the actions I have taken in this thesis show promise in making advertising strategy more efficacious in its promotional influence.

CHAPTER TWO ~ METHODOLOGY

My methodological approach is anchored in phenomenology and subjective interpretation whereby I am attempting to capture the behaviors and attitudes of my informants in their own words. My field research consists of documentation of consumer behaviors and advertising artifacts. This chapter provides an overview and explanation of my data collection components (Part A) and my analysis procedures (Part B).

Part A: Data Collection

The Informants

Demographically there are certain parameters to which each of my informants conforms. My requisites at the outset of conducting primary research were to gather data from college educated individuals between 20 and 35 years of age, who were also active consumers (i.e., users) of some type of organizing device. I chose these parameters because I assumed they were similar to those of the market segment targeted by the Palm ads.

I began collecting data from my informants via interviews at the end of February, 2002. Two months later, by end of April 2002, I finished collecting data from my informants. In total, I interviewed 28 informants between 21 and 31 years

of age. More specifically, there are 11 females and 17 males, most of who are in there mid to late 20s and white. Occupationally, there was great diversity with the 28 informants ranging from educators and lawyers, to salespersons and a veterinarian. For a more detailed demographic synopsis, see Table 1 on the next page entitled: Informant Segment Demographics⁴. As the table illustrates, all informants were college educated, including 27 of 28 with bachelor's degrees. Fifteen of the 28 informants were from Midwestern states; this is reflective of the connections I have in Michigan and Illinois, the states in which I lived previously.

Each individual informant also shared, in a broad-sense, similar consumption features. Each was an active user of an “organizer” method or device—formalized or not—that augmented organizing their schedules, addresses, activities, etc. Specifically, 15 informants used PDA devices; consistent with their strong presence in the market place, most owned Palm PDAs. The other 13 informants used a variety of organizer devices. The majority reported using prefabricated organizers such as DayRunner, Franklin, and Mundi planners. Others were less formalized in their methods, using a clipboard with handmade daily to do sheets, a scratch pad, post-it sticky notes, or wall calendars.

⁴ Due to the similarities in demographics and product usage, as a group, I refer to the informants in this thesis as the informant segment.

Table 1: Informant Segment Demographics

#	Name	M/ F	Age	Occupation	Education	State	Organizer
1	Adam	M	31	Financial lender	Bachelor's	Oregon	PDA
2	Amy	F	29	Physical therapist	Master's	Illinois	Non-PDA
3	Betsy	F	25	Administrative asst.	Bachelor's	California	Non-PDA
4	Cliff	M	27	Business manager	Bachelor's	California	Non-PDA
5	Craig	M	29	Waiter/Actor	Bachelor's	Illinois	PDA
6	Dan	M	25	Benefits manager	Bachelor's	Illinois	Non-PDA
7	Darcie	F	22	Recent graduate	Bachelor's	Michigan	Non-PDA
8	Greg	M	28	Army prosecutor	J.D.	Virginia	PDA
9	Jane	F	28	Veterinarian	D.V.M.	Michigan	Non-PDA
10	Jennifer	F	29	Social Worker	Bachelor's	Washington	Non-PDA
11	Joseph	M	27	M.B.A. student	Bachelor's	Washington	Non-PDA
12	John	M	25	Technology specialist	Bachelor's	Oregon	PDA
13	Joan	F	28	Doctoral student	Bachelor's	Tennessee	Non-PDA
14	Julie	F	24	Teacher	Bachelor's	Oregon	Non-PDA
15	Katie	F	30	Foundation rep.	Master's	Michigan	Non-PDA
16	Kent	M	25	Accountant	Bachelor's	Michigan	PDA
17	Kevin	M	29	Sales rep.	Bachelor's	Michigan	PDA
18	Marilyn	F	28	Marketing director	Master's	Wisconsin	PDA
19	Melanie	F	25	Non-profit manager	Master's	California	PDA
20	Mike	M	25	Benefits service agent	Bachelor's	Illinois	Non-PDA
21	Patrick	M	21	Student/Construction	Associate's	Michigan	PDA
22	Shelly	F	25	Administrative asst.	Bachelor's	Oregon	Non-PDA
23	Steve	M	31	Financial executive	Bachelor's	Illinois	PDA
24	Stacy	F	28	Education specialist	Master's	Oregon	PDA
25	Stan	M	28	Attorney	J.D.	Maryland	PDA
26	Ted	M	27	Business manager	Bachelor's	Michigan	PDA
27	Tim	M	27	Manufacturers rep.	Bachelor's	Michigan	PDA
28	Vinnie	M	26	Events coordinator	Bachelor's	Michigan	PDA

Briefly, I discuss my choice to include both PDA users and non-PDA users in the data collection. By examining both types of consumers—that is users of PDAs and users of pen and paper organizers—this thesis is endorsing a hybrid strategy that could be useful for both consumer development as well as retention. Although not a specific objective of this research, I do deem it wise for companies and advertisers to look at ways to retain current product category users (i.e., users of PDAs) while simultaneously looking for ways to develop new consumer relationships (i.e., with those who are potential buyers). Thus is my rationale for utilizing both types of consumers as my informant base.

The informants were gathered via nonprobability sampling methods. Initially, I selected informants with whom I was friends or was acquainted. In so doing, I recruited two family members along with several old friends and acquaintances of mine from my undergraduate college in Michigan. I also recruited a number of informants from Oregon and Washington with whom I have more recently come to know. After exhausting these networks of informants, I asked selected individuals to name others who would be likely candidates for my research and interviewed them as well. This technique is called “snowball sampling” (Bernard 1994: 97).

The Interviews

One-on-one semi-structured interviews were conducted with 16 informants. The first of these interviews was conducted at the end of February 2002 and the last was conducted in late April 2002. Each of these interviews was audio taped and later transcribed verbatim. The interviews were conducted in a place of the informant's choosing, which included: coffee shops, my home, the informant's home, and restaurants. Typically, each interview lasted between 60 and 90 minutes. Throughout these interviews, a relaxed and informal dialog was engendered. The primary areas of inquiry revolved around the informants' behaviors as they related to organizing their time, activities, etc., and their interactions with their organizer devices. Follow-up questions and probes were utilized when necessary to elicit detail or examples of behavior and interaction.

Structured online interviews were conducted with 12 informants who I was unable to interview in person. These interviews were first sent out to informants in the middle of March 2002. By the end of April 2002, all were completed (including follow-up questions and answers). These informants were geographically dispersed primarily in the Midwest and the east coast. Initial contact with these informants was conducted via E-mail. In this correspondence, they were informed of the purpose of my research and provided with a hotlink to the appropriate online interview. Each of these interviews was similar in scope and content to the ones used for the one-on-one interviews (see Appendix A). Each

online informant was asked to estimate they spent answering the interview questions. Their responses ranged from 30 to 60 minutes of time; the average time was 40 minutes.

With the one-on-one interviews, the quality of the data tended to increase as each interview progressed from start to finish (this is likely attributable to a gradual increase of comfort between myself and the informant). Follow-up questions and probes also proved to be helpful in eliciting better data from these informants. On a whole, most of the one-on-one interviews revealed a solid and deep understanding of the interactions and consumer behaviors had between these informants and their organizers.

The online interviews, on a whole, also rendered a solid understanding of the interactions and consumer behaviors had between these informants and their organizers. However, they lacked some depth of insights. For instance, the details of how an informant would interact with their organizer were often abbreviated when compared to the responses given in the one-on-one interviews. My evaluation is that the informants who were given the online interviews were less detailed because their responses were typed versus oral. In an effort to expand upon interesting online interviews that seemed to lack some depth, I sent individualized follow-up questions to nine informants via email. This effort helped increase the level of interactivity—it created an online two-way dialog—between the online informants and myself. In essence, I found it to be the best possible

manner in which I could recreate the personal interaction that seemed to augment the depth and quality of the one-on-one interviews.

Overall, the online interviews were an acceptable, though slightly less desirable, form of data collection. I say this because, as an anthropologist, I am trained and have a predisposed preference towards working with my informants in a more intimate and face-to-face situation. Nonetheless, when the end products are compared—that is the transcriptions from the one-on-one and the online interviews—there are in fact far more similarities than differences in the compositions of these data.

Ethnography: Participant Observation

Alexander Erwin describes participant observation as “...an approach that contains a variety of information gathering techniques that involve various forms of observation—from unobtrusive ones to full-scale participation by a researcher...” (2000: 142). This description is befitting the type of ethnographic work I attempted to conduct in my research. More specifically, I conducted participant observations on two non-discrete levels: the emic and the etic. Originally coined by the linguist Kenneth Pike, the emic and etic perspectives can be described as “internal” or “domestic” and “external” and “alien” respectively (Sands and McClelland 1994: 33). Gaining these perspectives for this research was important to better illustrate

and understand the vantage points and consumer behaviors that the informants shared with their organizers.

Becoming an insider, thus garnering the emic perspective, was a fairly simple endeavor for me because I fit the demographic and consumption parameters similar to the majority of my informants. I had used a DayPlanner organizer for over nine years when I began my thesis research. This organizer was my centralized source for keeping addresses, notes and schedules.

In an effort to gather another emic perspective, I decided to purchase and use a PDA. First, I became a consumer in search of this product. I conducted research online and in retail stores to better understand the various PDA choices the market had to offer. After several weeks of deliberation, I finally completed my mission to become a PDA owner with the purchase of a \$150 Visor Handspring. I chose this brand over that of Palm. One thing this indicated to me personally was that the Palm advertising had not compelled me to purchase their product. Nevertheless, the Handspring product uses the same operating system as all Palm PDAs; for all intents and purposes it is the same device, but it is a little more aggressively priced than the Palm. Upon becoming an owner, I proceeded to becoming a user of my PDA by linking it with my computer and inputting various data into the software. As a means of tracking my behaviors and activities as a PDA user I instituted a journal where I have documented any extraordinary as well as mundane uses of the device.

Becoming and remaining an outsider and thus garnering the etic perspective was slightly more challenging than my participant observation from the emic perspective. Observing a person in the act of using their organizers is a rather difficult, if not fruitless, task. Often times it is impossible to know or understand what actions people are performing when they interact with their PDAs and other forms of organizers. However, one instance that has proved to be insightful has been my wife's interactions with her PDA. For nearly a full year I actively observed and recorded her behaviors as a PDA owner. Moreover, I have had many informal conversations with her regarding herself and her coworkers that yielded notable anecdotes about people and their organizers.

Utilizing my wife as a key informant for observing how people interact and behave with their organizers is worthy of a pithy critique. Perhaps the most beneficial aspect of using my wife as a key informant was my ability to observe her in a variety of settings. Often, I was able to observe her at home and in the car as she would use her PDA to prepare for her workday; such intimate observations would not have been possible with most informants. Likewise, I was able to observe her behaviors with her PDA while we were on vacations using the device as a digital map. I found these observations invaluable in my quest to observe and better understand real-life interactions and behaviors between a consumer and her organizer.

Although the majority of my interactions with my wife as a key informant would be considered positive, there is a caveat to observing someone so close to the

researcher. For instance, when I asked my wife certain questions regarding her interaction and behavior with her PDA, her answers were sometimes at odds with my observations and inferences. This speaks to the assumptions that can sometimes be held, quite subconsciously, between people who are extremely close to one another. As such, I had to make a concerted effort to confirm that my inferences from observations of my wife were correct and not just assumed to be correct. To this end, I made a point of specifically asking whether or not what I thought was correct; however, I am not certain that I was not always successful in thwarting my assumptions about my wife's behaviors and interactions with her PDA. While this might be a limitation, I would consider it a necessary one given the overall quality of the data gleaned from my observations and conversations with my wife.

Advertising

A total of two ads from Palm's "Solutions" promotional campaign were purposefully selected and decoded (these ads will be introduced in chapter five). Although I discovered them in the company information section of the Palm Website, most consumers would have viewed these ads in the likes of news, finance, or electronics magazines.

Part B: Analysis

The Interviews

The analysis of the interviews was consistent with the qualitative approach of the interviews themselves. After conducting several iterative readings of each transcript, informant insights and quotations similar in scope and nuance were grouped together. I established nine so-called “thinking units”, or broadly structured sorting files (Ely 1999: 143) by which various findings were inventoried. Each of the nine thinking units summarizes a set of findings as it relates to the behaviors, attitudes, and interactions, between informants and their organizers. In particular, I looked for usage-based benefits (i.e., activities that satisfied some sort of consumer want or desire) as well as product dissatisfactions extant in informant behaviors and interactions. Eventually, all nine thinking units were labeled (e.g., *Creating Solutions with Organizers*) to indicate the type of consumer behavior phenomena discovered.

In addition to generating the eight thinking units that corresponded to the consumer behaviors and interactions between the informants and their organizers, another thinking unit, called “other” was established. According to Ely et al., the “other” thinking unit is an obligatory component that helps account for data that might otherwise be discarded in the analysis process (1999: 143). With my analysis, the “other” thinking unit consists of general findings about the informant

segment. These general findings and my anthropological interpretations provide, what I consider to be, an important area of insight for marketers and advertisers seeking a better understanding of specific market segments. Upon completing my analysis of these general data findings, I divided them into three separate sections (e.g., *Liminal Lifestages*) according to their content. Included in these three sections are a variety of important information on the lifestyles and influences exhibited by the informant segment during the interviews. Each section concludes with a paragraph on the business and advertising implications of the finding.

Data gleaned and analyzed from each of the 28 informant interviews is included in this thesis. I used my interpretive skills in concert with my overall understanding of the general culture and context of organizer usage in consumers' daily lives to conceptualize and evaluate meanings from my informant quotations. There was no specific or scientific rubric utilized to this end. However, when a series of quotes by different informants yielded similar interpretations they were afforded greater attention due to their reliability.

As mentioned in the previous section, two different types of interviews were conducted in my data collections: the one-on-one and the online interviews. Despite the difference in interview techniques, the only discernable difference in the handling of these data related to transcription. According to their format, the online interviews were answered via computer and were therefore delivered to me in a transcribed form. Conversely, the one-on-one interviews were conducted verbally and were transcribed, by myself, at a later time.

Irrespective of either interview technique, I made a concentrated effort to conduct my analyses and interpretations in a similar manner. The backbone of this effort lies in the simple, yet regimented, treatment of the data as a whole set. For instance, I did not begin to scan my data for themes and important consumer insights until I had completed the transcription of each interview (including all of the follow-up questions and answers from the online interviews). Only after I was able to randomly shuffle all 28 transcriptions, and thus view them as one set, did I begin to read and begin the analysis of any data. By following this basic regiment, I believe I was able to blur any lines that may have existed between the two interview techniques. With these measures in place, I believe I was able to control for potentially subversive biases and create a more valid data analysis.

In total, over 40 quotes and insights were selected from 19 informants to be included within this thesis. Specifically, each quotation selected and included shares two qualities: (1) it is representative of at least one of the consumer behavior “thinking units” discovered in my analyses (e.g. *Creating Solutions with Organizers* or *The Locomotive Cocoon*, etc.); and (2) it is a quote (or part of a series of quotes) that could be of potential importance to advertisers seeking a better understanding of the benefits consumers seek and glean as a result of their behavior and interactions with products.

Before concluding this section on interview analysis, I find it important to comment upon my heavy inclusion of insights and quotes from PDA users over those of non-PDA users. Specifically, 13 of the 19 informants highlighted in this

thesis were PDA users. This unbalanced inclusion was not purposeful; however, it was necessary because the vast majority of quality insights stemmed from my interviews with these informants. Continually, I have asked myself how and why this was, and continually my intuition leads me to the same conclusion. One of the questions asked in the interviews was, *how long have you been using your organizer?* On average, non-PDA users had been using their organizers three or more years. In contrast, the average PDA user had been using their device for less than one year. Herein lays the answer: for PDA users, the novelty of their devices was still strong; this was not the case for non-PDA users. Accordingly, PDA users were much more interested, willing, and perhaps able to speak about their behaviors and interactions with their organizers than were the other informants. Thus is the reason for a preponderance of quotes and insights from PDA users in this thesis.

Qualitative Advertising Analysis: My Field of Vision

It is imperative to note that my approach to decoding advertising was a process of viewing a compilation of texts and images and commenting upon them. In his book *Ways of Seeing* (1972), John Berger captures what I would consider a critical paradigm for advertising analysis:

Seeing comes before words. The child looks and recognizes before it can speak. But there is another sense in which seeing comes before words. It is seeing which establishes our place in the surrounding world; we explain that world with words, but words can never undo the fact that we are surrounded by it. The relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled (p. 7).

According to Berger, the way we see things is inextricably intertwined with shards of our knowledge and beliefs. While I wholly agree with this notion, for the purposes of my advertising analysis, I also find it germane to highlight the specific motivations and lenses that I brought to the examination table. In its entirety, I refer to my way of seeing as “my field of vision.”

Backgrounds in marketing, academic training in applied anthropology, and a keen interest in consumer behavior, combine to influence the knowledge portion of my field of vision. I do not believe that advertising is inherently evil or bad for society; nor do I believe that all advertising is good or even ethical. Instead, in my decoding of Palm advertising I had a rather specific aim and lens that constituted my field of vision. Specifically, my field of vision was constructed on three basic planes or stages: the format, the frame, and the themes.

The first stage, the format, refers to the advertising medium. As mentioned previously, the format of both examined ads is print. Some of the tangible properties of the two chosen ads are: one-dimensional magazine style (typically 8.5” x 11”), multiple colors, multiple images, and textual.

The second stage is the frame. In a general sense, frames are considered very broad thematic emphases in ads; they are parameters or boundaries for

discussing a particular event, image, text, etc. For instance, in a study of the news media, David Altheide highlights two divergent frames in a news story: one treats illegal drug use as a “public health issue and the other treats it as a “criminal justice issue” (1996: 30-31). For the purposes of the qualitative advertising analysis, the frame employed was values⁵. Hence, I searched for and revealed what I considered to be references and uses of several values extant in the Palm ads. These values constitute a principle part in the sales proposition employed in the ads.

By utilizing the value frame, I amalgamated a set of three values in each of the two Palm ads. These three values coalesce as themes—the third stage of my field of vision. Themes are implicit or recurrent ideas or motifs that run through, in this case, ads. In the qualitative advertising analysis, each of these three values will be highlighted as they appear in the Palm ads. Each value will be further explored and discussed in terms to their relation to other research as well as their contributions to the ads’ selling propositions.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter outlined and discussed the anthropological methods that I chose to employ in an effort to gain an increased understanding of how consumers interact and behave with their organizers. Likewise, it outlines the anthropological

⁵ The nature and composition of *values* will be addressed and discussed in detail in chapter five.

method I use in an attempt to estimate and evaluate the motivations of the Palm advertisers. Together, these methods are the cohesive mortar that helped me navigate the field when I was collecting data; they are also the drivers of my research findings and interpretations that are revealed and discussed in the remaining chapters of this thesis.

CHAPTER THREE ~ LITERATURE REVIEW

The State of Consumer Research and Advertising Strategy:

A Critical Examination

Within the fields of marketing and advertising, an ideology called the marketing concept mandates a strong customer focus. Its principle tenet is to define the benefits customers seek in the market place and gear marketing strategies accordingly (Assael 1998: 8). While the marketing concept is realized in a plethora of forms, nowhere is it more critically needed than in advertising. Why? Advertising is arguably the most fervid and penetrating branch of marketing. It is an amalgam of images, symbols, words, and thoughts that coalesce in a choreographed effort to reach out and persuade consumers. Sometimes explicitly, but many times very implicitly, advertising imbeds values (e.g. cultural values) and messages within its parameters in order to better meet the so-called needs of the consumer⁶. The reasoning for this practice is that consumers become accustomed to their culture's value systems, beliefs, and perception processes. Not surprisingly, it is well documented that advertising messages that are congruent with their target's culture reward the advertisers who understand that culture and tailor ads to reflect its values (Zhang and Gelb 1996: 29).

⁶ In chapter five, part A, I have included additional literature regarding the various definitions of values. Additionally, in chapter five, part C, I augment the discussion of specific values with additional literature.

Accordingly, advertising managers aspire to a dialogue with their consumers in an effort to better know them (Sherry 1995: 209) and understand the values they hold. Yet, despite the widespread acceptance of the marketing concept and its notion of being intimately in touch with consumers, advertisers rarely understand consumers in a holistic sense. I would contend that several factors preclude advertisers from fully grasping and understanding the many consumer gradations.

The first problem lies in the fact that well-crafted, consumer enriched, advertising is complicated. However, in a simplified manner, three broad dimensions characterize the development of great advertising: strategy, creativity, and execution (Wells et al. 1992: 7). While the dimensions of creativity and execution are fundamentally important to advertising, they do not fall within the realm of inquiry for this thesis. Strategy, however, is at the heart of this thesis's inquiry and a brief look into its composition will help illuminate some of its potential shortcomings.

Advertising strategy is intimately tied to the bottom-line: individual ads or ad campaigns are, at their most elementary level, meant to increase sales and profits (Winer 2000: 207). To meet the prescribed objectives (e.g. increase of sales by X percent), advertising strategy determines what type of message is most appropriate for the product being marketed (Winer 2000: 230). Herein lies a potential problem within some advertising strategies—the ads are more product oriented than consumer oriented. A relevant question at this point would be, what about the

marketing concept? Unfortunately, under the stewardship of some (potentially many) advertising strategists, the consumer voice is relegated to the periphery.

Nonetheless, in this thesis, I propagate the following axiom: sound advertising strategy should focus less on the features of the product it is selling and more on the benefits sought by the consumers in the targeted audience. Fortunately, this type of consumer focus is not unheard of, nor unused; perhaps it is just underused. Yet, many researchers and practitioners alike have extolled its virtues. The reasons are clear: consumers assess products in terms of benefits rather than attributes (Lai 1995: 383). The problem with an advertising strategy focused on the product itself is that, "customers are less interested in technical features of a product or service than in what benefits they get from buying, using, or consuming the product" (Hooley and Saunders 1993: 17). Hence, in this thesis, I make a concerted effort to look at the manners in which products are consumed. My contention is that this orientation will yield a better understanding of consumers and the benefits they seek so as to better inform advertising strategy.

According to anthropologist Grant McCracken, another factor that inhibits an enhanced dialog between advertisers and consumers lies in the womb of conventional models of consumer behavior. The typical consumer behavior textbook has a frequent tendency to place culture in the periphery when in fact it should be placing it at the heart of consumer inquiry (1990: 3). Generally speaking, usual models of consumer behavior have ignored culture because of their reduction of the individual consumer into a so-called "economic man." From a

neoclassical economic perspective, consumers operate in a utility-maximizing vacuum: the consumer judiciously gathers price and product information in the creation of product choice. With this line of thinking, there is no room for understanding consumers as part and parcel of the culture and behavior dyad. The consumer is effectively placed outside of the cultural context (McCracken 1990: 4).

Most anthropologists, including myself, have rebuffed this simplified view of consumers and its consequent marginalization of culture. Instead, we claim, with Karl Polanyi, "the human economy is embedded and enmeshed in institutions, economic and noneconomic" (Appelbaum 1998: 323). By extension of this thought, culture and consumer behavior are interrelated.

In his book *Culture and Consumption* (1988), McCracken outlines a theoretical model illustrating a process of meaning transference that involves consumer products and advertising. He states that meaning begins as something resident in consumer societies (pp. 72-73). He goes on to suggest that consumer behavior is a process: consumers take possession of cultural meanings manifested in the "culturally constituted world" (or culture as we know it) via material goods that embody sought after values. These material goods (e.g., organizers) and their assemblage of cultural meanings are then "pressed into service in the creation of self and the domestic world" (1990: 5). In other words, consumer products are used to communicate meaning to one's self and outwardly to others.

One might ask, how does all of this take place? According to McCracken, the answer is advertising. Advertising is a means for delivering meaning from

culture to product. In this process, advertising teams first identify cultural meanings they hope to imprint upon a product (McCracken 1990: 6). Next, advertisers develop and focus upon a particular population for whom the product is intended. These populations are often particular cohorts of people with somewhat homogenous demographics and lifestyles (not unlike the informants I chose to interview). McCracken refers to these cohorts as “cultural categories” (1988: 73-75); most advertisers would simply refer to them as target segments or target audiences.

Once all of the strategic details have been worked out, a creative team begins the work of selecting the “symbolic elements” with the ability to communicate or evoke intended cultural meanings and responses. This process is really one of research; it entails “surveying the culturally constituted world for objects, persons, contexts and motifs that make the sought after cultural meanings live in the ad” (McCracken 1990: 6).

The final component of McCracken’s transference of meaning occurs at the level of the consumer. If the ad is presented in such a way that the consumer is able to recognize the “essential similarity” between the symbolic elements and the product, then we have a transfer of meaning. In other words, the McCracken heuristic for meaning transfer is determined by the consumer’s individual interpretation of the ad. If the values in the ad are (1) compliant with the values of the consumers and (2) recognized by the consumers, then the ad is likely to be

successful. However, if these two requisites are not achieved, then the ad is more likely to fail in its transfer of intended meanings.

McCracken's theoretical model for meaning transfer seems to be logical and sound. Accordingly, in the efforts to more accurately yield the motivations and reasons for consumers' behaviors I find it imperative to understand and accept culture as a dominating entity. With this doctrine in mind, marketing and advertising will more effectively achieve a dialogue with consumers versus its more frequent monologue (Sherry 1995: 209). Moreover, by looking at consumers and the benefits they seek, we can begin to better understand what Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry (1989) have referred to as "the talismanic relationships consumers form with that which is consumed" (p. 31).

The Need for Anthropology and Advertising Synthesis

Understanding consumers in the context of cultures is perhaps the most valuable trait that anthropology can offer marketing and more specifically advertising. Unfortunately, this is an endeavor often side-stepped by those trained in anthropology. Cohen (1977) offers an insightful critique of this disciplinary bias accompanied by a strategic vision:

Hunting, gathering, cultivation, herding, distribution, reciprocity, and so forth, are the business activities of tribal and peasant groups, though we are careful not to use the term. If anthropologists studied

industrial business organization and activities with the vigor which they approached horticultural or pastoral business, our insights into our own societies would be greater. Unfortunately, however, it seems to be in too many people's interests to have us perpetuate the myth that kinship, religion, visiting, marriage, socialization, and the like in industrial societies are on one side of the fence, while "business" is on the other. Some of the best ethnographic data on cultures (not the culture) of the United States are in the daily Wall Street Journal and the financial pages of the New York Times. That is where the relationship between anthropology and business should begin...Anthropology begins at home, and we have lost the art of anthropologizing (pp. 382, 395).

Since the time of this writing some 25 years ago, contemporary paradigm shifts have moved some anthropologists away from the traditional quagmires of the discipline towards a more application-centric style. In a manner consistent with these applications, this thesis is a model for illustrating the effectiveness of bringing anthropological insights into the realm of consumer advertising.

Within the fields of marketing and anthropology the environment appears ripe for syncretizing these seemingly dissimilar enterprises. One marketing practitioner argued that his field requires a "greater commitment to theory-driven, programmatic research, aimed at solving cognitive and socially significant problems." Likewise, within anthropology it has been argued that there exists a need to "transcend the narrow, reactive, advocacy role of championing the alienated worker and to assume a more proactive, advisory role in drafting and implementing humane strategic plans at a corporate organizational level" (Sherry 1995: 11).

Increasingly, research trends have blended features from marketing and anthropology in studies on consumers. Ethnography, the cornerstone of all anthropological methods, is now in vogue with consumer researchers. Arnold and Wallendorf (1994) use the term “market-oriented ethnography” to refer to an ethnographic focus upon the behaviors of people who embody a market for a product or service. Utilizing this type of focus, McAlexander and Schouten (1995) conducted an ethnography for Harley-Davidson Motorcycles. From an emic perspective, they learned the behaviors of the various individuals and groups that constituted the Harley-Davidson “biker” market. Studies such as this one provide evidence of benefits anthropology can afford business.

In a deliberate manner, this thesis was constructed with advertising stakeholders in mind. As such, the research wing of many advertising agencies, often referred to as account planning, is primed for intervention and incorporation of an anthropological set of methods and perspectives. In fact, many account planners and ethnographers share similarities in their disposition and penchant for understanding people and behavioral phenomena. According to Leslie Butterfield, an advertising practitioner, the onus of the account planner is to be the representative of the consumer within the advertising agency. In Jon Steel’s book on account planning, *Truth, Lies, and Advertising*, Butterfield states:

...the most vital part of their job is the understanding of the consumer. The best way to understand the consumer is to talk to them—and the best way to talk to them is first hand. If a planner is

not good at talking to consumers first hand, he probably is not a very good planner. Therefore, a good planner ought to be a good qualitative researcher (Steel 1998: 210-211).

As a discipline, anthropology has a host of qualitative methods that could be instrumentally applied to the account planning mission of informing advertising judgment. Methods aside, however, the anthropological perspective is critical to gaining consumer insights. As mentioned before, anthropology thrives on being holistic. It does so by thwarting parochial attitudes; instead, anthropology's focus is upon turning over stones that other disciples would likely leave concealed. By examining and interpreting everyday experiences, such as this thesis seeks to do, the anthropology perspective can provide important insights into our cultural systems. On this subject, Sherry states:

Such a perspective promises an amplified understanding of what is conventionally known about marketing and consumption and an improved practice of these activities in both positive and normative senses (1995: 13).

The anthropological imperative is clear: the methods and perspectives of anthropology are necessary implements for marketing and advertising practitioners and researchers alike. The synergy of anthropology and advertising has the potential to revolutionize both disciplines in dramatic and positive manners. With anthropology, advertising will enhance its ability to understand consumers. As such, the consumer-centered focus mandated by the marketing concept becomes more viable; in turn, the benefits consumers seek are more likely to be illuminated

and imbued upon products and promotions. With advertising, anthropology has the potential for bringing its unique toolkit into uncharted waters. It has the ability to discover and understand what is unknown in our own backyard. As Cohen (1977) stated in his vision, “anthropology begins at home.” This means we must look at the commercial activities of business. For my thesis, this means examining consumer behaviors and advertising through the apposite eyes and ears of an anthropologist. By embracing these perspectives and methods, the body of knowledge on marketing and consumers will be substantially increased and improved.

Chapter Conclusion

In this chapter, I revealed my estimation of the current state of consumer research for advertising. My basic contention is simple, there are deficiencies in some of the processes and thinking in contemporary consumer research circles. Consequently, I am an advocate for the merger of anthropology and advertising. I believe, along with others, such action will provide a much needed boost in comprehending one of the cornerstones of successful marketing: the need and wants of consumers. Moreover, this chapter addresses the mutual benefits of collaboration between anthropology and advertising. In subsequent chapters, I demonstrate the value and competitive advantages of combining these two disciplines through a series of consumer and advertising analyses. Ultimately, with

the help of this convergence, chapter six chronicles a series of recommendations that would benefit advertisers seeking to be more in touch with their existing and would be consumers.

CHAPTER FOUR ~ ETHNOGRAPHIC DISCOVERY:

BEHAVIORAL FINDINGS

This chapter represents the first of three phases of research in this thesis. Split into two parts, this chapter consists of primary data discoveries from the 28 informant interviews and my participant observations. Part A is a compilation of eight behavioral findings. By applying anthropological methods and analyses, I was able to amalgamate and ultimately translate the voices of my informants into these eight themes. Consistent with the qualitative approaches by which the data was gleaned, each theme consists of relevant quotes and insights revealed by the informants' behaviors, interactions, and relationships with their organizers.

Part B is comprised of three discoveries related to general insights and behavioral findings about my informant segment as a whole. With each of the three findings, I (1) highlight and substantiate the importance of these discoveries as they relate to the informant segment, and (2) place them within a frame of implications for advertisers.

Part A

Expected Transformations: To Have Is To Be

Dittmar (1992) spoke extensively about the materialistic notion *to have is to be*, by suggesting that the symbolic meanings of belongings constitute a means by which we express our own identity and perceive others (pp. 5-7). In harmony with this notion, 11 informants expressed a desire to redefine themselves via their interactions and behaviors with their organizers. They sought and expected to create or recreate a new person—a more organized and effective person—with their organizer consumption. In this section I will highlight and discuss several informant statements that reinforce the notion of expected transformations with organizers. For instance, Adam, a 31-year-old financial lender in Oregon, stated:

I have a relationship of desire with my PDA. By this I mean a desire to get organized and put things together in my life. I was slacking with using my planner. I just wasn't real effective with it so I needed to change venues; this is where the PDA will fill-in.

Adam seeks a transformation at the hands of his PDA. Wiseman (1974) notes the Cinderella fairy tale as a story of self-transformation through the power of money. According to the fantasy, fundamental changes take place that essentially make one stronger, wiser, less fearful, less vulnerable, and so on when money is added to the equation. Much like Cinderella, Adam is seeking a renovation of his

life. In the fairy tale, money (its purchasing power) is endowed with magical powers that change Cinderella (Belk 1988: 155). In the same vein, Adam seeks greater organizational powers and he wants to be more effective (meaning efficient) in his activities. To achieve his objective Adam looks not to money but to a PDA.

With Adam's statement and the analysis that followed, it is evident that he holds high expectations for his PDA. Adam believes and expects that consuming a PDA will transform him into a more organized state of being. By extension, he hopes to be a more successful and happy person. Unfortunately, at the time of this interview, he had only been using the device for a few weeks and a verdict was yet to be had regarding his successes or failures with it.

Reflexively, one of the material meanings I sought via my purchase and interactions with a PDA were analogous to Adam. Typically, my organizer collected more dust than usage. For example, I was a year behind in purchasing new calendar inserts for my organizer—my most recent inserts were from my first year as a graduate student. Likewise, I had not updated many of my friend's new addresses; it was very difficult to keep in step with their transience, they seemed to move constantly. While discussing and justifying a \$150 purchase for a PDA with my wife, I specifically remember citing my expectation for a renewal—a rebirth of sorts—in my organizational behaviors. My cogitations were fully aligned with the notion that *to have is to be*. Thus, at least at the outset of my ownership, I expected that my consumption of a PDA would in fact create a change in my behaviors.

Nevertheless, frankly, my expectations were, for me, unrealistic; I never experienced the anticipated organizational rebirth.

Another interview, this one with Craig, a 29-year-old from Chicago, illustrates a more symbolic interaction between possessions and persons. McCracken (1988) and Dittmar (1992) suggest that consumers use products, in this case the PDA, as a sort of “quasi-language” by which they define themselves and their surroundings. Echoing these sentiments, Craig’s interview showcased his PDA as a symbolic manifestation of a variety of meanings for both himself and others. As an aspiring actor, Craig mentioned that his PDA is intimately linked with his image. He stated:

In certain situations appearance is everything and appearing organized with my Palm is something that makes you seem more responsible and put together...this is really critical for an actor trying to get a part. People need to know you are going to learn your lines, show up for practice, and so on.

With his statement, Craig is making an argument that other people respond to individuals in terms of their associated assemblage of possessions. Dittmar (1992) states that by simultaneously taking the perspectives of self as well as others (i.e. those with whom you come into contact), individuals come to understand the meanings of their own possessions as parts of their identity (p. 86). Hypothetically, casting directors may accord Craig more consideration for a part that requires a great deal of dedication to detail based on his ownership of a Palm. In turn, Craig

can interpret his Palm as a symbol of his meticulous detail, or responsibility, and interpret his social standing. The response that consumers, such as Craig, receive from others' estimations leads to an affirmation of who they are and ultimately what they believe. Solomon (1983) articulates this point in a pithy manner:

The individual's reflexive evaluation of the meaning assigned by others to self is influenced by material possessions with which the self is surrounded. The (real or imagined) appraisal by significant others is...incorporated into self-definition (Dittmar 1992: 86).

To reiterate the crux of this passage, I am suggesting that one of the critical influences in Craig's attitudes and behaviors is conditioned by the evaluations that people have of him and his possessions. Given this paradigm, we can see that Craig's surrounding influences reinforce the importance of responsibility. Consequently, Craig extends the importance of responsibility as a need to be professional: know one's lines, show up for play practice, etc.

In total, Craig uses his Palm as a symbolic communicator of his sense of responsibility. He views the Palm as a positive embodiment of the responsibility attribute. Thus he appropriates its meaning in an effort to yield good impressions from people—in particular, people within the theatre business. For Craig, his expected transformation seems to have been actualized by the opinions of others. Of course, meaning interpretation from others can be unpredictable and nebulous; it

is feasible, though not likely in this context, that Craig's usage of a PDA may actually elicit feelings that are negative rather than positive⁷.

John, a 25-year-old technology specialist in education, exhibited another example of symbolic communication concerning the value of materialism. As a PDA user, John related stories about the assumptions others make regarding one's usage of the device. He stated:

If you have it (a PDA) and use it people assume you are organized. They assume that you are thoughtful about doing things that you are supposed to do. There is a certain level of sophistication that comes with it. I definitely want to be seen as responsible and I care about keeping things in order.

With this statement, John adds currency to McCracken's notion that consumer products are residences for social meaning (McCracken 1988: 24). John illustrates that the PDA is a depository of a bevy of meanings for the user as well as those with whom the user interacts. He spells out what he sees to be other people's evaluation of a PDA: they see it as a symbol of organization, thoughtfulness, and responsibility. As a result of these external appraisals, John reflectively identifies his PDA as a manifestation of these attributes. Belk (1988) articulated this phenomenon well when he stated:

Objects in our possession...symbolically extend self, as when a uniform or trophy allows us to convince ourselves (and perhaps

⁷ Negative dispositions such as these were found and will be discussed under the theme *Negative Inferences and Images*.

others) that we can be a different person than we are without them (p. 145).

John exhibits two basic themes with his PDA behavior. Firstly, he uses it as a symbolic communicator with other people. Much like Craig, he views the PDA as a sign of responsibility. Secondly, John's PDA use gives his psyche a sense of sophistication. This comment is a self-reflexive manifestation of his PDA's ability to symbolically communicate and transform. In other words, John defines himself as more sophisticated individual and expects others to see this transformation because he feels this is the image his PDA reflects to the outside world.

Another manifestation of the *to have is to be* phenomenon was found with Patrick, a 22-year-old student and part-time construction contractor. When asked how he liked his PDA, Patrick responded:

My PDA is actually a very cool thing to have...I would say that a lot of people think it is pretty stylish. I know a lot of people who are really impressed by my PDA. Sometimes it is fun to show off this little toy. It's fun to talk about.

In analyzing Patrick's statement about his PDA I found it instructive to think of a PDA as a clothing ensemble. In fact, it is actually a spirited metaphor when the two are linked with their expressive consumer qualities. Often times, consumers use clothing as a means to express their personality, their allegiances, their tastes, etc. By taking the clothing metaphor a step further, it becomes apparent that Patrick often "wears", or shows off, his PDA as a conversation piece

with other people. He views his PDA as a “cool” object, and he has determined that others consider his PDA to be “pretty stylish.” The point here is actually quite basic: when Patrick comes into contact with people, he often receives positive feedback regarding his PDA. He finds that people are interested in its novelty, features, and abilities. As a result, he has fun talking about his PDA.

In essence, Patrick’s very visible PDA usage is akin to wearing popular clothing around people whom he is attempting to impress. Symbolically it is as if he wears his PDA; this device is linked with the image he seeks to develop. From Patrick’s perspective, it is as if the PDA has transformed him into a person who is understood to be in touch with today’s latest styles—technology styles.

Negative Inferences and Images

Referred to as inferences, consumers develop beliefs about products based upon their past associations (Lim et al. 1988: 308-316). When asked about their feelings towards organizers, the majority of my informants responded in a neutral, if not positive fashion. The conjured image of an organizer—PDA or otherwise—was typically inferred to be an object that most people use in a utilitarian manner for storing and maintaining information. However, a vocal minority within the informant segment expressed negative feelings towards organizers—PDA’s in particular. This section is dedicated to highlighting and discussing some of these findings.

Several informants exhibited incommensurability between their conception of self and their conception of the material meanings they derived from organizers. For instance, Mike, a 25-year-old service agent for a benefits company outside of Chicago expressed his disposition towards “organization” when he stated, “If I am lucky I might use a scratch pad and pencil...I am very disorganized, but I guess it keeps me from looking like a yuppie.”

Mike believes that the symbols of organization—organizers, calendars, PDAs etc.—are not worthy of the image that precedes them. As Mike explained it, looking like a yuppie is akin to the axiom of “keeping up with the Jones’s...” From Mike’s perspective, he sees no innate utility in the organizing devices that many people use. Instead, he seems to view organizers as a reflection of a symbolic or idealized identity that people are seeking. In a similar light, research by Wicklund & Gollwitzer (1982) found that MBA students who were less secure about job prospect adopted more consumption patterns of the stereotypical businessman (Belk 1988: 153). The relationship of this research to Mike’s statements does not insinuate that people who use organizers are less secure than those who do not. Instead, the research confirms the notion that people adopt certain products for more than simple utilitarian rationales. People sometimes do, as Mike seems to suggest, adopt products so as to produce a certain image: yuppie and otherwise. Moreover, people sometimes reject certain products, as has Mike, in their efforts to maintain the image that they prefer.

Later in my interview with Mike it became evident that he wore his lack of organization as a badge of defiance. His contempt towards symbols of organization, and PDAs in particular, was highlighted by an extremely sarcastic tone when answering certain questions. For instance, when asked if he was satisfied with his methods of organizing his time and activities he responded, "No...using a plain wall calendar and pad of paper doesn't have fun games or hand writing recognition." Then, in response to a question asking what he likes about his method of organization Mike stated, "Well, it isn't \$450 and you don't look pretentious using it in front of others."

Impudence aside, Mike's point was clear: the meaning he derived from the consumer goods of organization are very negative if not combative. For a diversity of reasons, Mike and consumers like him exhibit incommensurability between their own self-conceptions and the symbolic conceptions they project upon certain products.

Jennifer, a 29-year-old social worker from Seattle, is indicative of a similar form of incommensurability between self-concept and product. Jennifer, a person I have known for years, considers herself to be very adventurous and fun loving. However, she looks at her organizer as "boring and unfun." Why? Because she equates it with work, it is a work tool that she uses exclusively for work activities. Moreover, work is a means to an end; Jennifer works to live rather than lives to work. The result of this equation is that Jennifer fails to realize benefits from the

usage of her organizer that are consistent with her own self-conceptions as a fun and adventurous person.

Not surprisingly, similar sentiments of incommensurability were discovered when PDA nonusers were asked what they thought of PDAs. For instance, an informant named Betsy stated:

There is only so much technology I can handle. When I see a PDA, the image of a corporate executive comes to mind. I am not that sophisticated or busy to need one.

There are several interesting things about this statement. Betsy associates a PDA with a corporate executive who she implicitly assumes to be a sophisticated and busy person. Meanwhile, Betsy, a 25 year-old administrative assistant for small business, does not consider herself the type of person to be sophisticated or busy enough to necessitate the assistance of a PDA. Once again, much like Jennifer in the previous example, I have found that there are certain categories and definitions that consumers ascribe to themselves that seem to guide their evaluations of products. In this case, Betsy's conception of her self is inconsistent with the mold she envisions for a PDA user. Consequently, she is unlikely to even consider a PDA as an alternative to her organizer.

Several other PDA nonusers responded to PDAs in a negative manner. When asked what they thought, they responded by saying PDA's look "nerdy" and, "they are for very anal organized people." These comments are similar in scope to Mike's comments regarding yuppies. As mentioned previously, past consumer

research has shown that people develop inferences about products from past associations. Thus, when PDA nonusers look at PDAs and their users as “nerdy”, “yuppie”, or “anal”, they are creating negative inferences as a result of past experiences and interactions with people that embodied those descriptors. From my perspective, I have experienced reactions from people—negative and positive—while using my PDA. Just recently I pulled my PDA from my backpack to check my schedule, which prompted my friend to say, “you’re a bigger dork than what I thought.” My friend’s ad hoc response to my PDA is indicative of the elicited image that some people have towards this product.

Tools for Work

Every single informant considered, in one way or another, their organizers to be tools for conducting work. Their devices were used in a variety of fashions ranging from the mundane to the unique. The most common behaviors included using organizers for creating to-do lists, maintaining work contacts, and scheduling meetings, appointments, and deadlines. Other usages were less common: Craig used his PDA to calculate and track his gratuities and taxes owed on them; Tim, a 27-year-old manufacturer’s representative for automotive parts in Detroit, used his PDA to electronically store notes from meetings that he would later email to his clients; and Joan, a 28-year-old doctoral student in Tennessee, used her organizer to schedule and note different biology experiments for her cancer research.

Regardless of the particular usage, ordinary or extraordinary, almost every informant reported using their organizers at least once during their workday. On average, the frequency of organizer usage was approximately three to five times per day while at work. Although none of the 28 informants overtly claimed that their organizers made them more productive or “a better worker,” their actions clearly show these devices were a means for augmenting production at work.

Freedom with Mobility

A marked difference in usage patterns was discovered between those informants using PDAs and those using different types of organizers. Specifically, my research found that the majority of PDA owners interacted with their devices virtually everywhere they went (the office, while traveling, at home, etc.). The compact construction and lightweight characteristics were highlighted (independent of any probes, etc., in my interviews) by 10 of the 15 PDA users. By contrast, those informants who used organizers other than PDAs demonstrated more static behavior: often their organizers were used only at work and were rarely transported elsewhere. Several of these informants mentioned their organizers’ “bulkiness”, or “heavy weight”, as a shortcoming of their devices.

To better understand a PDA’s design I examined my Handspring model. It weighs in at a mere 5.4 ounces and is only about a third larger than my wallet. Undeniably, the engineering of these devices gives them an inherent mobility

advantage over most other organizers. Accordingly, most of my PDA using informants expressed feelings of freedom with the mobility of their devices. Specifically, two variations of freedom were extant: the freedom *to do something* with a PDA and the freedom *from something* with the assistance of a PDA. Both of these variations are similar to the license and liberty behaviors displayed by members of the Harley Davidson subculture (McAlexander and Schouten 1995: 51).

Vinnie, a 26-year-old event specialist from Detroit, illustrated how the mobility of his PDA afforded him the freedom to do something. In this instance, Vinnie's freedom was founded by using his PDA for a multitude of tasks. He stated:

It is my mobile secretary. The PDA represents the ultimate in portability. I use it in the car, at my home, on the computer, on the go, planning my wedding, on vacation, anywhere. My laptop is too cumbersome so the PDA works well here. You name it; I have used it virtually everywhere for almost everything I can imagine.

Vinnie indicated that he was a busy person, a person constantly "on the go," due to his job and personal commitments. His PDA's mobility made for an ideal partner given his need to conduct activities in a variety of situations.

In a similar manner, Patrick likened his PDA to another, even more ubiquitous, device: the cellular phone. As a construction contractor he often found himself in a different location each day of the week. Patrick revealed that mobility

and compact size gave him the freedom to conduct business while on the road. In an unusual and potentially dangerous fashion, Patrick highlighted his regular usage of his PDA while driving his truck, "I have actually become rather skilled at accessing addresses, even writing notes on the screen as I drive."

Further substantiating the PDA's ability to engender freedom with mobility were the behaviors of a user named Stan. A 28-year-old lawyer for large food supply and catering corporation in Maryland, Stan described vacationing as one of his passions in life. However, coming from a large family with three brothers and two sisters he said that vacations were often more tedious than fun. Unlike his family, Stan's philosophy on travel was that it should be adventurous and dynamic. To this end, he has traveled by himself to Europe and Mexico and extensively around the United States. In his travels, Stan was turned on to the travel resource books by *Lonely Planet*. More recently, he began downloading self-guided travel tours of various cities into his PDA from the *Lonely Planet* Website. With these downloads, Stan has what equates to a mobile tour guide inside his PDA.

On the subject of vacationing and using a PDA, Stan revealed a sense of bliss attributable to the mobility of his organizer. His attitudes and behaviors illustrate that he embodies both variations of personal freedom: the freedom to do something and the freedom from something. He stated:

One of the biggest reasons I enjoy my vacations is because I get to do what I want to do. I like learning things, but I hate going on a tour groups. They are cheesy and way too restrictive. Doing things

on my own timeline is important...using the tours on my PDA is cool because I can learn about a city on my own.

Via his PDA's mobility, Stan realizes personal freedom by utilizing *Lonely Planet* travel tours (the freedom to do something). Simultaneously, Stan realizes personal freedom from the vacation styles his family once took as well as the idea of traditional tour groups that he considers, "cheesy and way too restrictive." In essence, the PDA and the data in it provide him the defacto liberation and license to yield what he considers a more superlative vacation.

Another PDA user named Tim, the automotive manufacturer's representative from Detroit, provides a valuable illustration of the linkage between mobility and freedom. Tim is a highly committed user of his PDA; it is an integral tool in many of his daily work activities (details on his PDA activities will be discussed in later chapters). When asked what he likes most about his PDA, he responded:

You see, I am fortunate enough to have a position where I don't have to punch in and out on a time clock. The PDA has given me the freedom to leave the four walls of my office and not feel worried or feel as though my job will not get done. It has helped me get out of the typical boundaries.

For Tim, the PDA's mobile features are literally and figuratively a conduit for enhanced freedom and independence. The device allows him to keep in step with the necessary operations of his job while actually operating outside of his workplace. With his PDA he realizes freedoms from the confines of work.

Rebellion

A small minority of informants expressed rebellious dispositions against their organizers when they felt as though these devices were encroaching upon their autonomy. For instance, Kevin, a 29-year-old sales representative for an electronics firm in Michigan explained that he used his PDA habitually to organize meetings and keep track of financial expenditures for reimbursement. Increasingly though, Kevin made mention of how the line between his work and leisure time had started to blur. In his efforts to thwart this from happening, he exhibited a very rebellious attitude toward using his PDA outside of the environs of work. Kevin made it clear that his PDA has no place in his leisure world when he explained his behavior:

When I have a free day I usually don't like to stay in town. For example, last weekend I went on a kayak camping trip and my Palm was the last thing I wanted to take into the wilderness. This weekend I know I am going to be on the river again and I don't want nor do I need to know what my schedule is the next day.

Another informant exhibiting a rebellious attitude was Jennifer. She uses a Sierra Club calendar as her organizer. Jennifer's commitment with her organizer could be described as trivial: rarely does she use it for anything other than mundane work scheduling and tasks. In our interview she stated:

My relationship with my organizer is one of reluctant dependence. I have to stick to a schedule, so I NEED it. But, I am reluctant to need something so boring and unfun!

Jennifer's actions and words exhibit a disdainful mentality towards a need and dependence on her organizer. In a wistful manner, Jennifer spoke about her desires to shed herself of a forced reliance on an organizer. Her view of her organizer is negative and she actively thwarts its intrusion into her personal affairs—highlighting her rebelliousness towards it.

Another informant named Joseph, a 27-year-old MBA candidate at a West coast university, demonstrated attitudes and behaviors that were analogous to Jennifer. In our discussion of his activities and behaviors on non-school days, Joseph often sought separation from his organizer. He stated:

Unless I absolutely have to tackle some homework at night or on the weekend I rarely reference my organizer at home. In fact, I make a point of steering clear of it. I need to create separation between work and play and for the most part I view my organizer as a symbol of work. So, most of the time, I simply leave it (the organizer) on my desk in my office and try not to think about it unless I have to.

Kevin, Jennifer, and Joseph demonstrated their desires to rebel against and be separated from their organizers. Perhaps more accurately these individuals want to rebel against or be separated from what their organizers represent and mean to them. My assertion is that people such as Kevin, Jennifer, and Joseph are closeted independents. They seek liberation from organizers because they are symbolic of

work, control, stress, and quasi-oppression. However, their dispositions are closeted because they continue to use their organizers; they have yet to take their behaviors to the zenith of rebelliousness, which, in this regard, would be a refusal to use an organizer.

Another manifestation of rebellion, revealed in interviews with Stacy and John, is perhaps more implicit. Employees for the same agency, Stacy and John as well as several other fellow workers were each given PDAs as a “gift” by Mr. Peter, their new director. Research on gift giving indicates that Mr. Peter’s distant, in fact nonexistent relationship with his subordinates was likely an attempt to create a set of expectations and obligations (Komter and Vollebergh 1997: 753).

According to Stacy, the new PDAs were a ploy by Mr. Peter, “it’s a stock and standard practice for a new boss to come and act like he knows how to run this place and attempt to win you over.” It is likely that Stacy’s assumptions regarding her new director’s motives were correct, however, the official line from Mr. Peter was that he hoped to increase organization and communication within the office.

Regardless of the motivations for giving PDAs to everyone in the office, several employees, Stacy in particular, were already extremely happy with their non-PDA organizers. Despite this fact, Mr. Peter was firm in his mission to convert everyone to a PDA. John spoke about the pressure and obligation he felt to actively use his PDA:

Now pretty much everyone in the office has one and if I forgot something or inconvenienced somebody I know I would be looked at like: you have a Palm, why don't you use it?!

From Stacy's perspective it appeared as though she felt deprived of her own autonomy. She stated:

I think my relationship with my Palm would be better if I had come to using it by my own choice...I don't like people telling me what to do...I was actually told (by Mr. Peter) when I was given my Palm that I could bring my Franklin Planner of 5 years into the office for one more week and then he didn't want to see it again.

Via his controlling motivations and actions, Mr. Peter established and ostensibly declared himself the autocrat of the office. With this hierarchy in place, Stacy and John often equated their PDAs with Mr. Peter and his attempts to control their choices. As such, Mr. Peter's attempt to instill a sense of obligation with a PDA gift failed. Instead, Stacy, and to a lesser extent John, rebelled against Mr. Peter as well as their PDAs by not using them for certain tasks. Indeed, it was almost as if they felt duty-bound to rebel against compulsory adaptation to their PDAs. After all, being forced to use a PDA was a metaphorical attack on their individualism; it was also an affront to their personal freedoms of choice and therefore they reacted rebelliously.

Creating Solutions

Many informants exhibited a propensity to use their organizers as a means of solving problems. Their problems and solutions took a variety of forms. In particular, many of my findings revolved around informants realizing and gaining a sense of control with their organizers. Often, though not always, the various problems and solutions were work related. For instance, within informants' organizers, bits and pieces of valuable information—phone numbers, account data, memos, etc.—were stored and accessed to create a singular location by which problems could be assuaged and solutions created. In this section I will highlight three very different informant problems and solutions. Each selection is anecdotal, yet, important for better understanding the intricacy and breadth of ways consumers behave with organizers so as to create solutions.

As mentioned before, Tim is an account representative for a parts manufacturer that sells their products to major automakers. Within his industry, product and part recalls due to slight or sometimes catastrophic failures are commonplace. Any product “glitch” that his firm might encounter is treated as a potentially detrimental recall. Therefore, prevention or what Tim calls “firefighting in the field” is paramount to his firm's success. The PDA, as it would be, has been an integral tool in “firefighting” problems. The following story, as told by Tim, outlines a problem and its remedy with a PDA. Here is what he said:

We had a technical problem with a suspect part. I was able to receive an email with a picture attachment of the part and I saved that on my PDA. I traveled to the manufacturing floor of the Chrysler Jeep plant and brought my PDA. When I got there I took my PDA out of my bag, opened up the picture viewer and he (the engineer) could see first hand what the problem was. I was able to translate the problem to this client without physically having the part that was 500 miles away in Illinois. I didn't have to fumble around with the right words or sketch something out on paper. Instead, it was precise—very exact.

Tim's reflection places his PDA at the reverent center of his success story.

My analysis of this story reveals Tim gaining control of a problematic situation with his PDA. He used it as a translator; the power of his PDA was able to transcend 500 miles of separation and bridge the gap between a part in Illinois and an engineer in Detroit. Moreover, with the PDA, Tim was able to control the translation of the problem part. In his words, he did not have to find "the right words or sketch something out on paper," instead, he was able to be "precise" and "exact" in his handling of the problem. Lastly, a level of efficiency was had with Tim's organizer: the implication is that valuable time was undoubtedly saved with the help of his PDA and its ability to forge disparate spaces.

In a different and slightly esoteric manner, an informant named Shelly illustrated a solution to a problem with her adherence to the value of technological enablement. Shelly is a 25-year-old administrative assistant for an agency associated with the department of education in Oregon. On the job and at home she uses a hybrid of methods for organizing her schedule as well as others in her office, including: Lotus Notes, post-it notes, scratch paper notes, and an overhead

projection pen on her bathroom mirror. In particular, Shelly's behavior with the mirror and pen method is most interesting and germane:

The mirror is an unavoidable reminder first thing in the morning. It reminds me of projects and errands early on so I can prioritize the rest of my day. Plus it is handy to record things that occur to me while I am planning my day, like: Remember to call the gas company tonight!

Given lifestyle impingements whereby Shelly works a day job and her husband works a night job, effective communication between the two often proved difficult if not impossible. Hence, the bathroom mirror and the pen became a communication device and "group update" for the two. For instance, before Shelly left to go to work on the day of our interview she wrote her husband a note on the mirror asking, "So what did the electrician say when you called him dear?"

While Shelly's informal device consisting of an overhead projector pen and a bathroom mirror may seem antiquated, it nevertheless creates solutions. The communicative qualities of the mirror provide Shelly and her husband a level of control and efficiency they may not have realized without the device; they are using technology, albeit low-level technology, to deal with a situation that was previously uncontrollable and inefficient. With their pen and mirror method, they were enabled to create a solution to one of their problems: communication.

To conclude this section, I thought it would be appropriate to look at Steve, a 31-year-old financial executive from Chicago. Steve is an avid PDA user. He mentioned using it for a variety of work applications, including: task management,

planning appointments, and for input and retrieval of data on business trips. When I asked him what he liked most about his PDA, in a pithy manner, he responded, "It does what I tell it to do and it never bitches."

This short response is a loud and lucid embrace of technological enablement. A central component of Belk's (1988) research on the extended self finds possessions that can be controlled, or provide control and power, will be most closely aligned with one's core self. Accordingly, it is obvious that Steve's PDA occupies a close proximity to his core self.

Although it may be presumptuous to deduct from Steve's one sentence statement that he has a domineering personality, it can nevertheless be said, that he seeks a high level of control in his relationships. His solution to this desire for control is engendered vis-à-vis usage and a relationship with his PDA.

Extension of Memory

Organizers and PDAs played a pivotal role in the extension of memory, for many of my informants. Katie, a 30-year-old account representative at a large midwestern community foundation, spoke extensively on her need to remember scores of dates, numbers, and activities.

At work, a large portion of Katie's job involves interacting with various constituents to determine and help implement their philanthropic missions. In this capacity, she uses her eight-year-old DayRunner organizer extensively for

establishing appointments, storing addresses and phone numbers, and planning future activities. Additionally, she uses her organizer to log appointments to the appropriate account codes for billing purposes; much like a lawyer she tracks time with each account and charges the foundation's fees based upon time spent on that account. On the personal front Katie also uses her organizer extensively for things such as planning ahead for bill payments, vacation plans, and events like birthdays. When asked about her relationship and interactions with her organizer she responded:

It helps me remember projects and break them into smaller steps and plan ahead to make sure all of those steps are completed on time. My organizer is like an appendage for my memory. It is with me or near me at all times. It is crucial to my daily life. It tells me where to be and what I need to do when I get there. It helps to bring my work life planning and my personal life planning together.

With this statement, it is obvious Katie is a committed user of her organizer. She controls her activities by dissecting projects into smaller more manageable pieces. The analogy that her organizer is like "appendage" illustrates her organizer's function; it is an extension of her abilities to remember. It facilitates her control of: what things need to be done, where she needs to be, and when she needs to go somewhere.

Returning to Tim provides another example of extending memory with one's organizer. A self-described "technophile", Tim uses various technologies extensively in both his personal and professional lives. In particular, Tim's work

environments are dynamic and hectic, necessitating a high level of organization to serve a multiplicity of client needs. Metaphorically, Tim's PDA is a pillar of memory support. Exemplifying this, he stated:

From a standpoint of knowing what I need to do and when I need to do it I put all of my faith and trust into my PDA. The whirlwind of scheduling takes a toll on your memory and I use it as a crutch to make sure I don't miss a meeting or assigned task. It is kind of an extension of my mental faculties. It substitutes for my short-handed memory.

The crux of this statement is that Tim recognizes he has a memory deficit; yet, he is able to overcome this issue with his PDA. Reminiscent of the Kate and Varzos (1987) research findings, whereby objects contribute to capabilities (Belk 1988: 145), Tim's PDA enables him to extend his memory. With his PDA he no longer suffers a memory deficiency and is able to reel in his schedules and activities.

Lack of Control

Overall, the majority of informants tended to gather some sense of control by using their organizers⁸. However, there were several instances where the opposite occurred: informants tended to illustrate a lack and a loss of control in

⁸ Examples of informants gaining control of activities and schedules was illustrated throughout many interviews and is illustrated in many of the behavior themes discovered.

their behaviors with organizers. This section is dedicated to chronicling two findings that illustrate this phenomenon. The first case involves a loss of control associated with a switch from a paper and pencil organizer to a PDA. The second case involves a loss of control associated with the individual's lack of developed identity in his workplace.

In a general sense, this extant loss of control is attributable to Stacy, a 28-year-old content developer for a public education Website in Oregon, was unable to adjust to using all the features of her Palm. Specifically, she could not switch over to using the digital "to-do list" on her Palm. Stacy much preferred her old method with a Franklin Planner where she was able to physically write things down, and in a "cleansing manner" scratch them off her list when they were completed. Here is what she said:

Because of my Palm, I feel less efficient with my time. Before, I was able to take notes in my planner and work off of its to-do list. I knew what I needed to get done. Now, since my planner is gone I write on all of these little random sheets of paper and I spend time finding the papers in order to figure out what I need to do. It is far less efficient!

When Stacy used a Franklin Planner she gleaned control and efficiency by physically writing down and scratching things off of her to-do lists. However, her Palm usage has failed to render her these abilities. She has, according to her own words, reduced her efficiency because of her preference for a "paper and pencil"

based organizer. The result of this situation is simple: Stacy lost a sense of control and efficiency over her activities when she switched to using a PDA.

John⁹, a 25 year-old technology specialist from Oregon, was another informant exhibiting feelings that his PDA, not him, was in control. Overall, John's PDA is the centerpiece for a variety of contradictory attitudes and behaviors. On one end of the spectrum, John praised the virtues of his PDA. For instance, he championed his PDA as the device that consolidated all of his activities into one little package. Moreover, he spoke about its quickness and efficiency in the retrieval of information. However, at the other end of the spectrum John painted a bleaker picture whereby his PDA seemed to control him, complicate things, and engender anxiety. John extols his desire to lead a "more simplified life" but says that his reliance on a PDA undermines his efforts. He stated:

I find myself constantly messing around with my Palm, putting in all of the information that I need to remember. Updating everything kind of habitually just because it has to get updated, it has to have all of the updated information!

During our conversation, I noted John's body language and intonation. The sense of domination and stress he felt at the hands of his PDA was palpable. He went on to say:

⁹ Both John and Stacy work for the same agency and share the same director, Mr. Peter.

I have this huge list of things that I have to do and I have to remember. I go back to my Palm periodically to see what is the highest priority on here so I can get that out of here...I try to check as many things off as I can. I have a lot of stuff to do and it really stressful and frustrating just looking at my Palm.

Before diving into the statements above, it may be instructive to first examine John's current station in his career. At the time of the interview, John had been working at his job—his first and only job since graduation from college—for less than a year. When I asked him about his job duties and his overall satisfaction he was somewhat ambiguous, he seemed uncomfortable with the questions. Upon reflection of our interview, my analysis is that John seems to be in a liminal state between the autonomy that he had as a college student and the ridged constraints of his new job.

In a classic work published in 1908, Arnold van Gennep introduced the concept of rites of passage whereby rituals mark one's passage from one identity to another. In essence, there are three phases to rites of passage: (1) a ritual separates the person from an existing identity; (2) the person enters a transition phase; and (3) changes are incorporated into a new identity for the person (Robbins 1997: 141). By looking at John according to the phases in rites of passage, it becomes clear that he is stuck in the transition phase. John seeks a return to a "more simplified life," which appears to be a life more like the one he had in college. He has yet to find his niche and create his new identity in his job. As such, it seems at though he has many issues regarding his current status as an employee.

Transition states such as the one in which John is situated were endemic to my informant cohort; in various ways, most were in some sort of transition¹⁰. In John's case, these transitions seem to be important factors in determining his attitudes and behaviors—the effect of which created a feeling that his PDA, not him, was firmly in control. The essence of this scenario led John, and several other informants, to feel a lack of control with regards to their busy schedules. Consequently, they blamed their organizers for these frustrations. Accordingly, John makes his PDA a scapegoat for the chaotic pressures he feels at work. Instead of exerting control or being in control of various things with his PDA, he appeared deflated and held prisoner at the hands of it.

The Locomotive Cocoon

On a whole, my informants were technologically comfortable and savvy individuals. Most of them were regular users of computers, the Internet, and email. Likewise, most were owners of a variety of consumer electronics. Not surprisingly, those with PDAs consistently utilized the gaming and downloading features available on these devices.

Among the most popular PDA activities were playing video arcade games. For instance, as a resident of a Chicago, Craig often used PDA video games as a

¹⁰ The transition phenomenon will be further discussed in the general findings in Part C.

way to pass time while waiting in a traffic jam, at the airport, or on the “El” (the elevated train). “It’s just nice to have a way to pass the time, I do a lot of waiting in the city,” he said.

Steve, another Chicagoan, would download music onto his PDA and use it as an MP3 player, “it’s like a mini juke box,” he said. Frequently, Steve would download news and sports resources from the Internet to his PDA with AvantGo. A popular software application for PDAs, AvantGo allows users to browse Internet resources both on and off-line.

For informants like Craig and Steve, they find entertainment in their PDAs when they want to be entertained. In this sense, the PDA is able to satisfy the transient and transitory whims that consumers' exhibit. If they want music they can play music; if they want to play a game, then they play a game; if they want to browse the Internet, then they can browse the Internet—virtually anywhere. Yet, it is cursory to conclude that consumer merely seek entertainment qualities with their PDAs.

A more incisive look places the leisure attributes that a PDA embodies into a much larger puzzle within the contemporary consumer lifestyle milieu. Accordingly, a short discussion regarding a consumer behavior phenomenon called cocooning is necessary. The term cocooning was coined in 1981 by New York marketing consultant Faith Popcorn, who defined it as “the need to protect oneself from the harsh, unpredictable realities of the outside world” (Lever 2001). Often, the phenomenon has been associated with consumers spending more and more of

their leisure and entertainment hours at home. In the wake of the September 11th terror attacks, there was talk that cocooning would become even more prevalent in today's society. Whether this is the case or not is uncertain. Nonetheless, technologies such as PDAs are leading the way towards a different breed of cocooning. Instead of a cocoon within the homestead, the PDA engenders what I consider to be locomotive-cocooning.

The locomotive-cocoon could be defined as an itinerant place where consumers seek and find refuge in their PDA use; it has the abilities to affectively transport a user to a different place where they can escape their surrounding environments and cocoon for a given portion of time. For instance, Craig was able to escape the tedium and frustration of standing in a line for three hours, to get a new driver's license, by playing games on his PDA. Much the same way, Steve remarked how he could escape into other places by using his PDA on airplanes. He would listen to music and read the news on his PDA as a way to find solace from work or boredom.

Another manifestation of the locomotive-cocoon phenomenon is the symbolic sense of security that is garnered vis-à-vis PDA usage. For instance, the behavior of taking the PDA everywhere with himself was comforting to Ted a 27-year-old manager for a placement agency in West Michigan. He stated:

In a weird way I feel safe when I have my Palm with me. So, I always have it with me wherever I go. I guess it is there for me in

case I need something: my schedule, phone numbers in case I need to get a hold of someone. I hate being without it, I feel naked.

For this user, his PDA is akin to a security blanket. The meanings he yields by using it go far beyond the utilitarian features; the PDA is intertwined with his sense of well being. Analogously, a study by Knight (1968) noted that people say they feel naked without their pocketbooks (Belk 1988: 155). In this case, a sense of security is had by people who carry with them money and other components of a pocketbook. This sentiment is very similar to the desire to have one's PDA nearby—it is comforting and seems to provide this type of consumer with a soothing sense of well-being.

Another PDA user named Melanie, a 25 year-old operations manager for a non-profit company in Southern California, made a statement reflective of locomotive cocooning. She stated:

I use to smoke and my PDA is like a cigarette in a way. Not that it is addictive; rather, it is sort of comforting to have in certain situations. Like when I go out to eat with my boyfriend, if he heads to the bathroom and I am alone at the table I will often clean out my PDA or play a game or check something on it.

Melanie, much like Ted, is using her PDA as a source of comfort. It gives her a sense of well-being when she is alone (this being a place and time where she is evidently not at ease). Symbolically it is as if her PDA usage in the above

situation creates a protective cocoon around her when she is alone, a place in which she is protected from the outside world.

Part B: General Discoveries about the Informant Segment

The Daily Grind as a "Busy Bee"

The day-to-day experiences of the informant segment seemed to exhibited thematic similarities cohesive enough to paint an understanding of lifestyles in broad strokes. An important discovery as it relates to lifestyle is the notion of being busy.

Socially constructed and socially shared notions about things such as days of the week provide some insights into the nature of being busy. For instance, if asked about one's activities on a Monday, answers often yielded a sense of beginning a new work week where it was necessary to once again immerse into activities that were job/school related. Frequently, work activities lasted from Monday thru Friday. For some, there was also work brought home to be done outside of work. Others rarely or never brought work home with them but were nonetheless busy socially or physically: they workouts at a gym, go out for drinks, or go shopping at the grocery store. Conversely, during most weekend days, personal chores or social and leisure activities were more prominent; work related activities often took on less importance during the weekend.

Objectively, the informants appeared to be involved and busy individuals. Yet, the action of being busy was interpreted in dissimilar manners. The average response, with regards to hours worked per week, was approximately 50 hours

Table Two: Informant Work Hours

Work Hours Per Week	Informant Segment (n=28)
35 or more hours	28
40 or more hours	25
45 or more hours	15
50 or more hours	9
55 or more hours	3
60 or more hours	1

(table two gives a synopsis of the work hours performed by the segment). As such it might be assumed that an individual such as Joan, a 29-year-old doctoral student from Tennessee, who reported working between 60 and 80 hours per week, would consider her work schedule excessive if not burdensome. However, she did not find her work schedule to be a burden. In a dissimilar manner, Darice, 22-year-old from Michigan working in retail, reported working about 35 hours per week and felt fairly burdened with respect to her schedule.

Collectively, the informant segment exhibited a high level of being busy with a variety of work, personal, and leisure activities. This is an important lifestyle trend to which marketers need be privy. Likewise, it is important to note that the cognitions of being busy do not seem to follow any reliable patterns. In

other words, because one is, objectively, a busy individual we cannot assume, subjectively, that they see themselves as busy and vice-versa.

Liminal Life-Stages

In his study on undocumented immigrants, Leo Chavez speaks of a concept called liminality, a place "betwixt and between" different stages or zones through which people travel (Chavez 1998: 50). These liminal stages are physical and symbolic places that correspond with marked changes in lifestyle. For the undocumented immigrant, it is not hard to imagine how the transition from one's country of origin to the United States could be a traumatic event punctuated by questionable status and uncertainty. At the risk of trivializing the experiences of undocumented immigrants, it is evident that many of my informants were likewise in a liminal stage of their lives.

As John so aptly demonstrated, the liminal life-stage is a byproduct of the rites of passage. Often times, informants demonstrated that they were currently in transition between important life occurrences and had not yet determined their identity. For instance, John was experiencing a transition that led him from college to a career. In similar fashion, other informants were getting engaged to be married; some had just been married; and one was separating from her husband. Moving from one location to another was another common experience. Even those not actually doing the moving are experiencing ramifications associated with their

friends moving to different areas and parts of the country. Lately in my life, I have been witness to four-sets of friends who are embarking on parenthood. These couples are experiencing very dramatic changes in their social, economic, and personal dispositions.

In contrast to the soon to be parents and their transitions from couples to families, my wife and I have constantly pushed back our timeline for having our first child. Why? Once again, the liminality of our life-stage is a cause for our behavior. My wife has an excellent job working for the state, however, given her lack of seniority there is always the concern that she maybe laid-off. This concern is doubled given the budget constraints and parsimony with which many state agencies are currently contending. For myself, as a soon to be anthropology graduate, I am uncertain about my future job, where it might be, what I will be doing, and what I will be able to earn. The fusion of all of these unknown variables places us in a somewhat dubious, though typical, situation. Accordingly, as a young couple, my wife and I are in a stage of transition that will undoubtedly last for several more years. In terms of consumer behaviors, I think that we need to purchase a new automobile before we can even begin to think about entering parenthood.

The impact of constant change and transition with regard to my informant segment is difficult to measure in exact terms. However, it unabashedly influences the behaviors and attitudes of this group. In the liminal life-stage there is a fleeting sense of self-identity. Am I a student? No, not anymore. Am I a partner within the

firm? No, not yet. Am I a father or mother? Well, not yet. Who am I? The contention here is actually quite elementary: those who do not have a self-identity seek self-identity. As such, one of the most salient themes with this informant segment might be a lack of understanding who they are and what they will become. A liminal state can be a quagmire from which individuals seek exodus. In other words, a construction or reconstruction of identity is sought; these individuals are searching for meaning, implicitly and explicitly, in most of their consumer behaviors. Herein lays marketing opportunity on a grand scale. Marketers attempting to glean business from this subculture must render gateways vis-à-vis product and messages that enable transference from the state of liminality to a state of self-definition.

Group Influences

A persistent element in the quest to better understand consumers is determining who influences their behaviors and attitudes. At its widest point, culture has the most robust influence on consumer influence. Simultaneously, culture is the lens through which all phenomena are seen and the blueprint that directs all activity (McCracken 1988: 73). Despite the importance and explicitness of culture as an influencer, at the macro level it is too abstract to allow much more than a cursory understanding of the influences upon consumers. As such, this thesis looked toward individual experiences to discover more poignant and

pragmatic vantage points. Subsequently, I have found evidence, among my informants that different groups—formally called reference groups—serve as key reference points in the construction of their needs and wants as consumers.

Several different reference group dimensions were discovered as having influence. The first dimension is the familial reference group, consisting of the family to which one belongs. Kent, a 25-year-old CPA at an accounting firm in West Michigan, provides a nice snapshot of the influence rendered by family members in the construction of his behaviors with his organizer. During our interview Kent humorously made a parallel between his PDA and an obviously influential family member when he stated:

Instead of calling them PDAs, they should be called Moms. To me, my PDA is just a fill-in for my Mom—the constant reminders and the to-do lists that never seem to end.

With this statement, and other components of the interview, it became evident that Kent's mother is still influential to him, even at his age of 25-years. Often, the familial reference group is highly influential due to the credibility it has with its members; it can provide a sort of schematic that establishes a set of roles and standards for conduct (Assael 1998: 533, 535).

Another dimension is the peer reference group, consisting of friends and co-workers. Informants often looked at members of their peer group for information on various products. For instance, this group played an important informational

role for the brand selection of many PDA users. The peer group also played a substantial role in establishing behavioral norms. John revealed his desire to be compliant with group norms of organization and punctuality. As a consequence, he felt the obligation to publicly illustrate his compliance with the group by using his PDA in others presence.

Another dimension is the aspiration reference group, consisting of a group that one desires to join but is not yet included. For instance, it was found that aspirants (those seeking acceptance to a particular group) to the Harley Davidson subculture would purchase Harley apparel, collectibles, and promotional items in their attempts to illustrate their commitment to be a part of that subculture (McAlexander and Schouten 1995: 55). In a similar manner, I found that certain PDA users were employing their PDA devices in their attempt to become part of their respective aspiration groups. For instance, Craig aspires to be an actor. To this end, he used his PDA in an attempt to enhance his image in the eyes of those he sought to impress. Hence, what we find is an interactive process: the aspiration groups exert influence upon aspirants; in turn, the aspirants attempt to influence the aspiration groups by utilizing products that are symbolic of the values held by the group. Translated, this finding shows that people like Craig use material possessions to gain favor in hopes of being accepted into certain groups. This finding becomes even more powerful and germane to marketing and advertising when we remind ourselves that those in liminal life-stages actively seek admittance into a variety of aspiration groups.

Many informants in this thesis exhibited conformity with reference groups. However, another dimension was also discovered; the reference group consists of denying membership with certain groups. This type of consumer influence can be a slippery slope for marketing. Consider Mike for a moment. Mike does not want to be seen as a yuppie; for whatever environmental reason, he has a disdain towards this subculture. Inherently there is nothing damaging about Mike's disassociation with yuppies. However, when Mike begins to associate the image of a yuppie with a product, much like he did with PDAs, this type of dissociative reference group can be extremely damaging. Once again, an insight into these types of group influences is critical for the success of products and brands. The daunting challenge for marketers is to create meanings that reflect positively upon the image of their products.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter was the first of three integrated phases of research in this thesis. This stage consisted of behavioral findings from my 28 informants. In the first part of this chapter, I presented eight behavioral findings—each finding represents a specific collection of informant quotations along with my interpretations of their meanings. In the second part of this chapter, I looked beyond the specifics of my informants' behavior, towards a more general and holistic look at my informant segment. In essence, I gathered and presented these

various findings and interpretations in an effort to bring my readers closer to the ways in which consumers behave with their organizers.

This chapter consequently sets the stage for chapters five and six by providing a fairly detailed understanding of my informants' behaviors. In the following chapter, I move away from the behavioral findings chronicled in this chapter and take an incisive look at advertising. Accordingly, chapter five is the stage for the next phase of research, which is concerned with defining, analyzing, and discussing, advertising values.

CHAPTER FIVE ~ ADVERTISING: VALUES, ANALYSIS, AND DISCUSSION

This chapter represents the second of three phases of research in this thesis. In the Part A of this chapter, I discuss and define values. In Part B of this chapter, I present the qualitative advertising analysis for two Palm ads. In Part C, I expand the discussion on the values found in the qualitative advertising analysis; this part is intended to add greater substance and focus to the sales propositions of the Palm ads.

Part A: Values

Advertising is a ubiquitous institution within American society; millions of people interact with it daily. Appropriately, advertising works in tandem with values—they have an intimate and important relationship. Han and Shavitt (1994) explain this concept in their article on persuasion and culture by stating:

Persuasive communications transmit and reflect the values of a culture. Persuasive messages are used to obtain the compliance that achieves the personal, political, and economic ends valued in that culture (p. 327).

Examples of values are abundant in ads. For instance, the penchant for youthfulness is a value commonly expressed and reinforced in the advertising of

beauty products. Neutrogena, a Johnson & Johnson Company, offers cleansers, moisturizers, and cosmetic products. In agreement with the value of youthfulness one of the advertising taglines for a Neutrogena facial cleanser is, “visibly reduce the signs of aging” (Neutrogena Website: 2002). Ads like this are common and lucidly illustrate the so-called compliance between product advertising and values.

For this thesis, before I can amalgamate and interpret the values manifested in Palm advertising, a more focused understanding of values themselves is required. To augment this understanding, a brief look at various definitions of values will be helpful. Anthropologist Clyde Kluckhohn provides what many consider a classic definition of value as it relates to culture:

A value is a conception, explicit or implicit, distinctive of an individual or characteristic of a group, of the desirable which influences the selection from available modes, means, and ends of action (Hofstede 2001: 5).

In concert with this definition, Milton Rokeach defined values as beliefs that a general state of existence is personally and socially worth striving for (Assael 1998: 461).

The working definition for which I have a preference is Court Smith’s in his work with natural resources and community values. Smith places values upon an ideological plane within society, claiming they are central to understanding culture and commonly discussed as they affect behavior. He states:

Values are what people think is right or wrong, good or bad, desirable or undesirable. People's values are reflected in their actions, what they say, what they write, what they do, and what they purchase (Smith 1999: 1).

Additionally, values are present in more abstracted forms such as symbols and images. Context is highly important for delineating the meaning espoused by various values. For instance, the American flag is a symbol of a great diversity of meanings. Yet, as it flies over the Vietnam Memorial it has a different contextual meaning than it does on the wall in a second-grade classroom.

Part B: Qualitative Advertising Analysis

The following analyses are formed by what I see, what I know, and what I believe. My interpretations are influenced by things as macroscopic as the culture from which I come; I am duly influenced by things as microscopic as my upbringing and personal relationships. Accordingly, it is appropriate for me to state that my interpretations may contradict those of others. I may see things that others do not and similarly others may see things that I have missed. Decoding advertising is not about right and wrong. Rather it is quite simply about processing what the viewer sees.

In each of the following analyses, I will first briefly describe the ad as it is contextually framed. Next, I illuminate features within the ad as they pertain to

three value themes: technological enablement, personal freedom and independence, and work ethic.

Biker Ad (see Appendix B)

Upon first glance what we see is a lonesome biker riding his motorcycle through a desolate and picturesque scene. Yet, with a second glance, we notice that he is actually not alone; accompanying him is a Palm with a Rand McNally map on it. His apparent destination is Independence.

Value of Technological Enablement

The Palm is a companion to the biker. This is indicative of its compact and mobile technological abilities; the Palm is small enough to be brought along on a bike ride, yet powerful enough to afford its user a myriad of faculties. As a technological object, the Palm seems to come alive with features of enablement. It exudes attributes of power and control for it can provide its owner with a digital map (powerful technology) and a means to navigate to the desired destination (control of orientation). Moreover, it carries with it the attribute of efficiency by providing the quickest route to the destination.

The combination of the advertising text at the bottom of the page and the image of a biker speeding down a desert road evokes feelings of a dream-like,

fantastical, place. It reads: "When you dream, dream in color. Maps, photos, games, and an ever-growing world of applications can now be seen on a IIIc handheld in colors as vivid as your imagination. Because while a Palm handheld can make your life more productive, isn't it pleasant to find it can also make it more interesting? Simply Amazing."

In effect, the advertiser's message in this copy and imagery is highly hedonic (i.e. pleasurable). The dream is not especially realistic; the Palm itself is unlikely to engender the scenario put forth in the ad. However, the potency of such a pleasure-saturated appeal is alluring. In fact, research on hedonic consumption indicates that although a given scenario—this ad for example—might not be real, consumers may actually "visualize" the event as mental phenomena (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982: 92-101), as I have, and associate the product with positive abilities. Thus, the value of enablement is at play: the ad has endowed the Palm with the ability to provide its users a pleasurable and fun lifestyle.

The Value of Personal Freedom and Independence

Another pervasive component of this ad is the implied bond between the Palm and the value of personal freedom and independence. The imagery clearly creates a feeling that the biker is a master of his own destiny. With his grip on the handlebars, the biker is the sole determinate of his direction, speed, and destination.

He and his Palm are uniquely autonomous as they coast down the center of an unoccupied road.

Not surprisingly, the biker is alone in the ad. His separation from the rest of society is a critical component in the establishment of his independence and freedom. A brief look at McAlexander and Schouten's (1995) work with Harley bikers is appropriate here given its analogous content features. In their ethnography, they state:

The myth of Harley and its supporting symbolism is one of total freedom. The reality of daily life is usually one of multiple sources of confinement. For the biker it is the reality of confinement that makes the myth of liberation so seductive and the temporary experience of flight so valuable (p. 52).

If we assume the demographic targets of the Palm market to be mostly white-collar workers, then it can be further assumed that these individuals—much like Harley bikers—feel confinement in the form of their office, hectic work schedules, time deprivation, etc. Consequently, this Palm ad symbolizes the Palm itself as a defacto license to break oneself from these confines. The ad is stressing to its viewers: you too can be free with the usage of a Palm.

Continuing with the same manifest value of personal freedom and independence, I was immediately drawn to the ad's boldly framed "Independence" as the destination on the road map image. Certainly, this was not accidental or coincidental. Undeniably, it is an explicit appeal to the viewer to bridge the gap between product and lifestyle. Independence is an American value that summons a

myriad of positive connotations. If one thinks of Independence Day, the 4th of July, it will create visions of celebration and liberation from the workplace on a holiday. Impressions that are more acute relate the word to its historical underpinnings. The word "Independence" conjures up notions of the preamble of the Declaration of Independence: "...all men are created equal...they are endowed...with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Simultaneously, the ad is telling the viewer: Palm is your gateway to independence and, in turn, independence is the key to your endowed and unalienable rights of life, liberty, and happiness. While these extrapolations may seem elaborate, possibly even far-fetched, the point of the ad is actually quite pragmatic. The advertisers are promoting freedom and independence for the consumers of Palm because these values are intrinsically compliant with the personal and political values within the culture.

The Value of Work Ethic

The boast of increased productivity via the Palm is an implicit and explicit feature of this ad. Explicitly, Palm taps into the value that people place upon working hard—the work ethic—with its claim that, "a Palm handheld can make your life more productive." The concept of a "productive" individual is a metaphor for work ethic. The text is telling us that the Palm will make us a better worker, a more productive individual.

Implicitly, the ad is espousing the value of working hard—being productive—as a means to realizing goals and dreams. The ad's main character is living out a dream made possible by the implied productivity he garners from his Palm.

Pond Ad (see Appendix C)

It's a beautiful day to be outside. It appears to be hot, a great time to go swimming. Enabled to enjoy this spectacle, a man grasps hold of a rope swing and propels himself into the blue waters of a rural pond. It is 1:37 in the afternoon.

The Value of Work Ethic

In his classic account of the life of the Nuer of the Sudan, Anthropologist E.E. Evans-Pritchard noted that:

The Nuer have no expression equivalent to "time" in our language, and they cannot, therefore, as we can, speak of time as though it were something actual, which passes, can be wasted, can be saved, and so forth. I don't think they ever experience the same feeling of fighting against time because their points of reference are mainly activities themselves...Nuer are fortunate (Robbins 1998: 46).

Time, as evidenced by this passage, is relative to each culture. Thus, if the Nuer were to view this ad they would likely come to very divergent interpretations

from mine. Perhaps they would not even pay heed to the advertising copy that reads "1:37 pm Personal." Yet, to me, the time of day is intimately linked with the work ethic value.

Work is an omnipresent part of most people's daily existence and increasingly more time is spent working. The consequence of more and more work has created ripples in people's conception of time. As a commodity, time has come to rival even money (Assael 1998: 435). Feelings of "time starvation" have undeniably infected American society. For instance, the share of people claiming they "almost never had excess time on their hands" rose from 46 percent in 1965 to 61 percent in 1995 (Assael 1998: 434). These phenomena are byproducts of the American penchant for working hard: the employer expects more work; more work at work; more work at home; more work around (on and for) the home, etc.

This ad speaks to these phenomena by championing the Palm as an instrument of productivity. The text reads, "Palm Powered handhelds can help you do practically everything, even nothing." With this line, the ad empathizes with people's sense of having to do "everything"; this acknowledges the pressures put on people to produce and work hard. Implicitly, Palm is framing its PDA as a partner in your work endeavors.

Another link to the value of work ethic is represented, once again, in the portrayal that hard work deserves reward. The text reads, "Email a memo, then plan your getaway." In other words, be productive and work hard with your Palm—afterwards you are deserving of reward. Swim in the middle of the

afternoon. The appeal begs indulgence: you can relish in the fruits of your labor by doing exactly what it is that you want to do, “even nothing,” if you so desire.

Value of Technological Enablement

Functionally, Palm boasts personal organization software that, in effect, divides time into miniscule measurements. The technologies of the PDA enable users to control, or at least realize a sense of control, over the pressures associated with time. By utilizing Palm’s technological features of time organization, the character in the ad garners the ability to have “Personal” time during traditional work hours.

The ad connects the technological enablement of the Palm with the benefits (the fun and pleasure) that we see in the image. By enacting the technological vigor of the Palm, the user of the PDA is implied to have the ability to do things that would be impossible without the device. With the Palm at one’s disposal, the implication is that time, schedules, work, activities, etc., can be manipulated and controlled. In essence, man, with the technology of a Palm is able to conquer time.

The Value of Personal Freedom and Independence

Arms spread in a “V” and legs flailing outward, the imagery of the main character in the ad haphazardly plunging into water from a swing are expressive of

the value of personal freedom and independence. The implication is that the Palm has released him from any inhibitive confines so as to be free. In one simple leap from a rope swing, this ad is emphatically telling us we can do what we want with a Palm. We can even rebel against the traditional mold of a sedentary occupation (e.g., by getting out of the office on a beautiful day).

In this ad, much like the previous one, there is no visible indication of the rest of society. No influences. No responsibilities. No superiors giving orders. No chores to be done. The only realities in this ad are a rope swing and water. Symbolically, the ad quietly attributes this environment with freedom and independence. The Palm, places the character within this world of freedom and independence. Without the Palm, he would likely be trapped in his usual afternoon routine. The contention of the ad is that Palm makes the intangibility of freedom and independence more tangible.

Part C: Values Discussion

This section is designed to add greater substance, focus, and detail to the values that I found in the Palm advertising. Each subsection—work ethic, personal freedom and independence, and technological enablement—includes a discussion of my general interpretations of the values themselves. Additionally, I have included outside literature that introduces a wide variety of important insights on

the nature and form of these values within the context of business and culture in general.

Work Ethic

One value that emerged from the qualitative advertising analysis is work ethic. According to the American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, "work ethic" is "A set of values based on the moral virtues of hard work and diligence." Essentially, it is the belief that one is "good" because one has worked.

The exact origins of the so-called American work ethic is unclear, however, it is likely that this value was influenced greatly by religion. For instance, Calvinist doctrine stated that the will of God was hard work. Many of Europe's earliest immigrants to America were believers in this faith. In his work *American Beliefs*, John McElroy posits that primary American cultural beliefs derive from the initial experiences of the European settlers. Work was their key to survival and success in a harsh and utterly unfamiliar wilderness. "It was the peculiar experiences of work—what was done, who did it, how it was rewarded—that began the process of distinguishing American behavior from European behavior..." (McElroy 1999: 37). Moreover, the New England Puritans, the Pennsylvania Quakers, and others of the Protestant sects believed a moral life to be one of hard work and determination. In fact, the Protestant Work Ethic, first proposed and studied by Max Weber to account for aspects of capitalism, has been extensively examined and is still

considered by many to be a desirable path to follow. Thus, while Protestantism and religion in general may not be the social and moral compasses they once were, it seems work ethic is still active in the value milieu.

Another likely force behind the value of work ethic has been the political and economic ideology of capitalism. Ultimately, the forces of capitalism were behind a shift from an agrarian based economy to one of industry. With industrialization, social relations among members of society were recast into consumer, laborer, and capitalist (Robbins 1999: 7). As a result of these new social roles, the emphasis upon work and productivity was reaffirmed. The capitalist seeks greater production output from the laborer in order to “feed” their role as a consumer. Likewise, the laborer acknowledges the “work ethic” as a means to “feed” their consumer role. Appropriately, a report by the International Labor Organization shows that U.S. workers are working longer hours than any other industrialized nation in the world. Per capita, Americans are clocking nearly 2,000 hours annually, a four percent increase between 1980 and 1997 (GCIU.org Website 2001).

At the individual level, labor statistics reveal that the average hourly employee continues to work the prototypical 40 hours per week. However, what these figures fail to reveal is that many salaried workers—people not paid on an hourly basis—generally log longer hours. Results of a 1991 Gallup Poll show that nearly 40 percent of men in the U.S. labor force put in more than the standard 40 hours per week and a full quarter work in excess of 50 hours per week. These

figure tend to inflate even more within the professional and managerial ranks (Wuthnow 1996: 21). Women too have changed the dynamics of today's labor market: 81 percent between the ages of 25 and 54 are now gainfully employed versus 37 percent in 1950. If we look at these figures according to the typical American household there is a dramatic increase of hours spent working. In her book *The Overworked American: The Unexpected Decline of Leisure* (1991), Juliet Schor suggests that the combined effect of all the various work sources might represent as much as an extra month of work per capita per year versus two decades ago (Wuthnow 1996: 22).

Palm's advertising appeals to consumers to adopt PDA technology. The advertising recognizes that productivity demands are high and implicitly it frames the Palm as a solution to working harder and being more productive. For a moment, let us return to the two characters in each of the ads. The ads make us believe that both the biker and the swimmer are where they are because of their Palms. With the Palm, work was performed and completed. The characters' sense of work ethic was upheld with the Palm; now they are indulging in the rewards of having worked hard by swimming and riding a motorcycle.

In all, work ethic is a deeply ingrained, yet somewhat implicit, value. The value of work ethic is often nothing more than a metaphor for being a productive person. Accordingly, advertisers often seek to promote their products as tools of productivity. Moreover, their messages state that you, as a hard working

individual, are deserving of consumer indulgences. In the case of the Palm advertising these indulgences are brought with vivid imagery.

Personal Freedom and Independence

Among the most enveloping values in advertising are the values of personal freedom and independence. Independence is described as a state or quality of not wanting to be held subject to others control. Relatedly, personal freedom is the liberty of the individual person to exercise their choice and will. Combined together, the features of these values coalesce to create an efficacious motif by which advertiser's communicate and comply with their audiences.

A variety of literature has examined the value of personal freedom and independence in American culture. In their research on conceptions of self within societies, Richard Shweder and Edmund Bourne contend that the American self is "egocentric." According to them, in the egocentric view, each person is defined as a replica of all humanity, the locus of motivations and drives, capable of acting independently from others. The individual is the center of awareness and they are free to negotiate their places in society. In the egocentric view of the person, a high value is placed on individualism and self-reliance (Robbins 1997: 136). Paralleling these notions, it is worth noting that the individuals in each of the two Palm ads are: completely alone (acting independent of others); and committing acts (riding a motorcycle and jumping in a pond) that are of their own choosing.

Other researchers have revealed similar characteristics regarding the American value of personal freedom and independence. For instance, in their ethnographic work with Harley-Davidson Motorcyclists, McAlexander and Schouten sought to understand their informants as a subculture of consumption. As a result of their fieldwork, they were able to reveal the "core values" of these bikers. In many ways, these "core values" resemble American cultural values. Specifically, the most dominant value exhibited was personal freedom. Two types of personal freedom were found to be particularly important: liberation (i.e., freedom from) and license (i.e., freedom to). Bikers seek freedom from constraint; they use metaphors such as "cage" or "coffin" to describe the confinement of automobiles. The motorcycle, meanwhile, is a portal through which they can escape such restrictions. Moreover, bikers seek freedom, or a license, to live their lives in a manner that they alone dictate. Once again, it is the motorcycle itself that provides the means to do so (1995: 51).

Another manifestation of the value of personal freedom and independence found in the fabric of American culture is that of the consumer as a rebel. Instances of the rebellious consumer range from the mundane to expressively loud and colorful. Particular appearances, mannerisms, hair and clothing styles, cigarettes, or Harley Davidson motorbikes might be some of the more explicit examples of rebellion (Gabriel 1995: 138). More ordinary behaviors such as riding a bicycle might even represent a form of rebellion against pollution or oil companies.

Nonetheless, the imagery of a motorcycle that looks like a Harley Davidson in the Palm ad is enough to implicitly, if not overtly, produce a rebellious zeal.

With regard to rebellious consumers, there exist distinctive variances in their content and action. Two general forms are notable. Firstly, there are the consumers who fail to consume certain (or sometimes virtually all) products. They may express themselves by boycotting products based on ethical issues such as animal testing. Conversely, these consumers may boycott because of more utilitarian rationales such as cost. Others may even boycott because of a sense of self that is inconsistent with the product. The most acute version of this form of rebellious consumer is the one that stands in opposition to the religion of consumption. These consumers rebuff the “shop ‘til you drop, spend ‘til you end, buy ‘til you die” dictums of consumerism (Gabriel 1995: 149). In the second form, consumers tend to illustrate their nihilistic leanings vis-à-vis products. For instance, a rebellious youth might purchase a pack of Camel cigarettes as some sort of symbolic protest against authority. Contrary to the first form where consumers boycott, the second form of consumer rebellion results in the adoption of certain products that tend to reinforce versus undermine the power and significance of the products themselves. Such behavior has actually served to fuel new areas of commodity production (Gabriel 1995: 144). Consequently, marketers sometimes appropriate rebellion and engrave it within the multiplicity of advertising themes. The Palm ads are, to a degree, examples of this type of appropriation.

Individualism is another attribute that plays a factor in the value of personal freedom and independence. Geert Hofstede, a social psychologist who built his academic pursuits on comparing cultural values and behaviors, has conducted “national culture” (a.k.a national character) studies of more than 50 nations throughout the globe. In his book, *Culture’s Consequences* (1980, 2001), Hofstede presents his classic study of the measurement of national differences in individualism. Using “work goals” questions with IBM employees from 53 countries from North/South America, Europe, Asia, and Micronesia, an individualism index was established and tested statistically. According to the index, the United States scores a 91 out of a possible 100 for a first place ranking as the country exhibiting the highest level of individualism (Hofstede 2001: 214-215).

In a parallel, cross-cultural study of Korean and U.S. advertising, the ubiquity of the value of personal freedom and independence was once again illustrated. Conducted by Han and Shavitt (1994), the first phase of the research consisted of a content analysis of 400 randomly selected product ads from Newsweek and Redbook magazines and their Korean counterparts. As the authors had hypothesized, U.S. ads rated as more individualistic than Korean ads typically emphasizing self-reliance, self-improvement, and personal rewards (p. 334). In their second phase of the study an experiment was conducted to determine the effectiveness of these appeals. A series of statistical analyses of informant attitudes confirmed that ads emphasizing individualistic benefits were more persuasive to

Americans than ads that emphasized family and in-group benefits (Han & Shavitt 1994: 343).

Taking the value of independence one step further, Spence (1985) states that individualism is linked with consumption. Individualism being central to the American character is a catalyst for individual achievement and material prosperity (Zhang and Gelb 1996: 33). If we consider this link between consumer behavior and the cultural value of personal freedom and independence to be viable, it is demonstrative of the influence that cultural values engender with consumers. Consequently, it is not surprising that the Palm ads repeatedly highlight this value to add an empathetic sustenance to their messages.

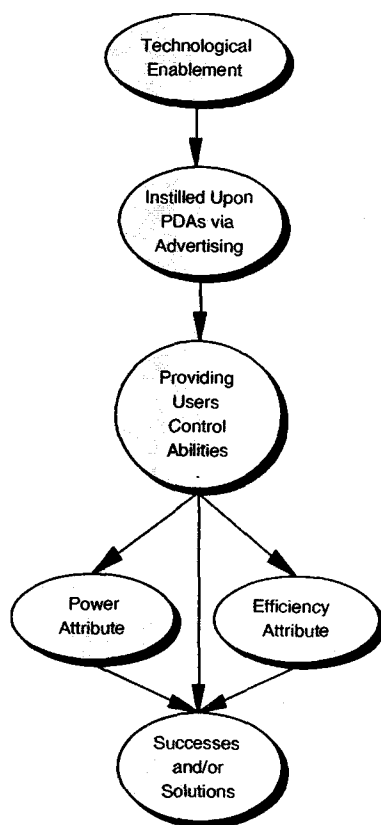
Technological Enablement

The value of technological enablement is the belief that technology proliferates human abilities. The abilities to control and be in control are the primary pillars of this value. In other words, technological enablement is a value that endorses the usage of technologies as a means for extending human abilities to exert control and be in control.

Because many people are enamored and reverent towards technology's abilities, advertising often attempts to tap into this phenomenon. Within advertising, the abilities of control are often instill upon technological products such as PDAs. In turn, these technological products can yield abilities of power

and efficiency to those who use them. The end results, as portrayed in the advertising, are successes and solutions with technological enablement. To better understand the nature of this value and its relation to advertising, I have included the diagram on page 93.

The crux of technological enablement rests upon the three interrelated abilities of control, power, and efficiency. As mentioned previously, the abilities to



exert control and be in control are at the core of this value. Control abilities are extant in much of the Palm advertising, not to mention other advertising. Control is manifested in a variety of manners; harnessing and maintaining (controlling) one's schedule and appointments is one of the more common consumer behaviors as it relates to PDAs.

Secondarily, the abilities of control can yield power and efficiency. The power ability refers to the strength of the objects' faculties and aptitudes. Palm's claim that its PDA will

provide its users the wherewithal to navigate to their destination is a telling example of the power attribute. Efficiency refers to the ability to produce results with little waste. Be it in the form of not "wasting" paper by doing things

electronically, or by gleaning information from the Internet, enhanced efficiency is a latent component of virtually all of Palm's advertising.

In tandem, each of the three abilities coalesces to form the value of technological enablement. As authored by advertisers, these abilities are meant to convey positive attributes that will reflect the notions of success and/or solution off the veneer of promoted products. In the remainder of this section, I will highlight and discuss literature as it relates to the various abilities and manifestations of this value.

The value of technological enablement can be examined from a variety perspectives and ideological horizons. At the macro level, Agnes Heller's work on culture and civilization gives an important perspective on the nature of technological enablement. Heller refers to the issue of "technological civilization", a concept that, in essence, paints a picture of conflict between society and nature. She states:

Nature and society are believed to be in an eternal struggle with one another; yet, finally, thanks to technology, society will win the day. It is technology that makes society able to control nature. And, so the story runs, society does not simply control nature insofar as it subjects nature to itself, but also in the sense that it can use the forces of nature themselves against nature—it can put all of the resources of nature into the service of society/man (Heller 1999: 162-163).

According to this statement, technology is a hegemonic tool for society's use against things that were previously uncontrollable or even impossible. This

passage is indicative of how society comes to fetishize technology. In essence, technological products—like PDAs—become trump cards to mitigate problems. They are, under this guise, the essence of enablement, for they afford the abilities to exert control and be in control.

The heart of technological enablement is fueled by people's fetish of technology. In its most basic form, fetishism is about endowing objects with excessive reverence. A technology fetish renders inanimate objects (e.g. PDAs) full of life, power, and autonomy that they do not intrinsically possess (Jhally 1987: 28). Consumers will often fulfill this fetish by ascribing humanistic characteristics to products, a process known as anthropomorphizing. Research by Belk (1988) and Rook (1985) on person-object relationships finds people often assign selective human properties to a variety of consumer goods, including technological products (Fournier 1998: 345).

At an individual level, Russell Belk's examination of the relationship between possessions and sense of self provides a plethora of research supportive of the value of technological enablement in consumer behavior. Central to his research is the notion that items, objects, persons, and places are all "possessions" that have a place in the conception of each individual's sense of self. Each possession can be visualized as having a place somewhere within concentric layers around the core of self. Where the possessions are placed is dependent upon the individual, the culture, and the time. Notably, however, there is a tendency for possessions that can be controlled, or from which control and power can be

exacted, to be more closely aligned with the core of one's self (Belk 1988: 152).

Clearly, the Palm advertisers have attempted to place the PDA on the inner layers of one's core self. Simultaneously, the Palm is a possession that can be controlled by its users, as well as provide a sense of enablement in the form of power and control over activities, scheduling, communication, etc.

Illustrating the intimacy of certain possessions with the concept of self, Tanay (1976) suggests that a handgun is a symbolic penis for their owners. This interpretation essentially argues that the possession of the object *is* symbolically a combination of power and control for its owner. Kate and Varzos (1987) made an alternative interpretation of the power/control and technology dyad whereby greater credence was afforded to the actual versus symbolic power of guns. They state the gun is an enhancement of personal power. What one can do with a gun—or other technological products like PDA's—contributes to our capabilities of both doing something and being something (Belk 1998: 145). Similarly, a preponderance of advertising appeals exhibits the very same constructs of enablement: to do something or to be something or someone. Accordingly, consumers who are technologically reverent, have a tendency to look at technology and its throng of products to solve all of their problems and make them permanently happy (Strivers 1999: 12).

As illustrated in my earlier diagram (see page 92), invoking the value of technological enablement in advertising creates a roadmap to the enabling attributes of power, control, and efficiency. These attributes, in turn, provide a means by

which consumers can potentially achieve their sought after desires. In his book *Technology as Magic*, Richard Strivers suggests that with exposure to visual images in the media (i.e. advertising, television), individuals see how consumption yields power, which yields success for the end user (Strivers 1999: 26). Visually, the Palm ads extol this very same power with the consumption of a PDA. In the ads, the characters that used the Palm are enabled with the power, or faculties, of a handheld computer; success is the end result as we see the users navigating to their destination and enjoying themselves in the ad.

To reiterate, the trio of interrelated abilities characterizes the value of technological enablement: control, power, and efficiency. American culture comes has come to fetishize technology because of the abilities it affords people. Consequently, the value of technological enablement is often manifested in advertising. In particular, the Palm advertising has appropriated this value in its efforts to establish the PDA as a “technological enabler.” Under the guise of their advertising, the PDA is purported to be a tool that yields solutions vis-à-vis its abilities.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter was the second of three integrated phases of research in this thesis. In the first part of this chapter, I discussed the nature of values and touched upon their usage and appeal for advertisers.

The heart of this chapter was the qualitative advertising analysis. With this analysis, I interpreted three advertising appeals extant in the Palm ads: work ethic, personal freedom and independence, and technological enablement. Each value had its own place in what I considered to be the promotional appeal of the ads. Carefully, I examined form and content of each of these values and provided an analysis of their nature. Furthermore, in the last part of the chapter, I supported my value findings by cross-referencing consumer behavior and other literature in an effort to better understand the substance of these values utilized in the Palm advertising.

CHAPTER SIX ~ CRITIQUE AND RECCOMENDATIONS

This chapter represents the third and final phase of research in this thesis. In the previous chapter, three values were discovered in Palm advertising and discussed. Undeniably, each of these values—work ethic, personal freedom and independence, and technological enablement—has a function in the sales proposition of each Palm ad. In fact, in many ways, I consider the advertising values utilized by the Palm advertisers to be very alluring. However, there is room for improvement by employing an advertising strategy that involves a greater attention to the wants and needs of consumers. This is where the critique in this chapter gains its currency.

Throughout my research I have utilized the tools of an applied anthropologist, including: subjective interpretation, a holistic perspective, participant observation, ethnographic interviewing, and qualitative analysis. I have found these tools efficacious in revealing important elements that are missing from the motif of the Palm ads. As such, this chapter is concerned with placing the advertiser's decisions in a critical framework. I do this by looking at the consonance and contradiction (or outright omission) between the ways in which organizers are used and the ways in which they are promoted¹¹. By highlighting

¹¹ Many marketing researchers maintain that detailed analyses of consumption behavior are fundamental for creating superior customer value and informing marketing strategies. For further details, see Day 1990; Boyd and Levy 1963; Treacy and Wiersma 1993; and Norman and Ramirez 1993.

these elements, this chapter demonstrates the prudence and added value of an applied anthropologist, such as myself, conducting consumer focused research for the development of advertising strategies.

The organization of this chapter is broken into two parts, both of which are based upon my critical interpretations as an applied anthropologist. The first part, Part A, involves my critique between the Palm advertising and six behavioral findings themes from chapter four. In this part, I critically discuss the behavioral findings in comparison to my analyses of the Palm advertising. I finish each section with a singular or series of recommendations based upon how I think the advertisers could improve their strategies. In the second part, Part B, I discuss several caveats—developed from three behavioral findings from chapter four—which advertising practitioners should heed when developing advertising for consumer segments.

Part A

Anthropological Interpretations: how to improve upon existing advertising strategy

Work Tools

Interviews with the informant segment revealed organizers being used as work tools for a variety of tasks. Without exception, every informant used his or

her organizer at work on a regular basis. Many of the principal benefits gleaned by using organizers were directly related with augmenting productivity at work.

Within the Palm ads, however, the mention of work related usage and benefit was a muted, if not marginalized, feature of the ads. Both ads create scenes that are devoid of work. Perhaps Palm does not want to declare its PDA as a “work tool” because they fear it having boring or possibly negative connotations. Instead, in a subtle manner, the imagery used in the Palm ads suggests that the rewards of hard work can be yielded with the usage of a PDA. The ads’ characters are manifestations of the rewards that can be realized by those who utilize a PDA: they are enjoying themselves (biking, swimming) in a setting outside the realm of work.

The advertisers are asking viewers to bridge the gap between what a PDA does and the possible benefits it can afford. In other words, the ads are very implicit with regards to the promoted benefits. As mentioned earlier in this thesis, the Palm ads are using a hedonic needs approach. As such, they are working off the assumption that consumers have a need to achieve pleasures from the products they consume. Although the configuration and composition of the ads are fantasy-like—and as such might never actually occur—research on consumers has found such hedonic advertising creations to be influential (Hirschman and Holbrook 1982: 99-101). Therefore, I find it hard to argue with the advertiser’s usage of a hedonic approach, for it appears to have legitimacy for appealing to their market.

However, in a critical sense, one of the flaws of the ads is a neglect to show the PDA being used in a workplace setting. As an alternative to the hedonic

approach, I would argue that the Palm advertisers would be wise to utilize imagery that illustrates PDA usage as a means for enhancing one's productivity in the work place. Such an ad would be less abstract and more direct with regards to the benefits that consumers would garner with the consumption of a PDA¹². One recommendation for the advertising strategy could be to utilize both approaches in two different ads (i.e., one with a hedonic appeal and one work related appeal). At this point, other marketing factors such as the advertising channel (i.e., a computer magazine versus a news or sports magazine, etc.), would play an important role in determining which ad would work best in a particular venue. Nonetheless, those considerations are beyond the scope of this critique.

Freedom with Mobility

The value of personal freedom and independence is alive within the Palm ads: the PDA is implied to be the mechanism through which users are able to leave work and be mobile. Similarly, the behaviors of the informant segment exhibited an appetite for several manifestations of this value. Firstly, I found that the informants sought products (e.g., PDAs) that gave them the freedom to conduct actions (i.e., business, personal, entertainment) and remain mobile. From my

¹² Straightforward advertising such as this is intuitively less difficult for consumers to decode properly. As McCracken (1990) stated, consumers are the final authors of advertising meaning. Therefore, less complex, more direct meaning structures, can be a boon to the effectiveness of advertising.

informants' perspective, this freedom is a metaphor for a license that gives people the ability to do what they want and need to do while on the go. Secondly, independence, or freedom from restraint (i.e., work, a place, time pressures, etc.), was a sought after commodity. From my informants' perspective, this type of freedom is akin to liberty from other people, places, and things, they sometimes seek to escape. Thus, I believe the Palm advertisers have tapped into and utilized these forms of the freedom and independence value to their benefit.

Critically speaking, however, the freedoms that many of the informants derived from their PDA usages may reveal only a mirthful side of a larger story. There is a potentially subversive side to some of the so-called freedoms that informants glean by using their PDAs. According to the way that I have read the Palm ads, the advertisers are promoting the PDA's abilities to remove its users from the confines of work—they are saying you can conduct business outside of one's four-walled office. However, this action—that is taking oneself outside of work to conduct work—might be construed to consumers as a mechanism by which employers attempt to flesh more work out of employees.

This subversive interpretation is not far fetched according to several scholarly sources. Consider this for a moment, in direct relation to the notion of mobility—that is work anywhere and anytime—Benjamin Hunnicutt, a historian of work and leisure, says, "work has become a new belief system, a new religion." In connection with this statement, sociologist Arlie Hochschild has noted a blurring of the lines between work and leisure. People's time and activities are increasingly

being enveloped by work. For many employees, she says, “work is home and home is work” (Ward: 2002). Therefore, in certain cases, the ability to remove oneself from “the typical boundaries” of work with the use of a PDA may not be contiguous with the value of freedom and independence espoused in the Palm advertising. Instead, it could actually be a manner in which the lines between being at work and being off of work are indiscernible. As such, I believe the Palm advertisers need to understand their limits when stressing the value of freedom and independence. Otherwise, the benefits conferred by highlighting the mobility of a PDA might be interpreted as an impingement on one’s freedom because they associate it with more take-home work.

Locomotive Cocoon

An emotional and cerebral consumer adaptation to various surroundings—physical and mental—the locomotive cocoon is the most unique finding in this thesis. This phenomenon revealed informants using electronics as a means to escape the usual boredoms and delays that life predicates. Moreover, they tended to embrace the notion of personal space—a place that is uniquely their own, regardless of location. Mobile products such as PDAs were a response to contending with the realities of waiting in line, traffic, the airport, etc. Among the benefits yielded with PDA usage were escapism and personal space; the combined

benefits could be summarized as the autonomy to do as one wishes despite one's surroundings.

The behavioral phenomenon of the locomotive cocoon places an onus upon advertisers: link their product with the benefits afforded by the behavior. Thus the question: have Palm advertisers have succeeded in this endeavor? The answer is mixed. In one sense, the advertisers have managed to create scenes of autonomy—scenes in which personal space is achieved and an escape from the realities of life materialize. Yet, once again, no explicit link or usage of the Palm is witnessed within the confines of the ads. Conversely, when informants were found using their PDAs as a locomotive cocoon, the PDA seemed to emerge as their focalization; it became their itinerant hub of interaction. The ads fail to mimic this phenomenon and thus fail to genuinely capture the potential clout of this consumer behavior. My recommendation would be to create advertising scenes that depict people utilizing their PDAs as locomotive cocoons. Thinking back to Craig in chapter four, he used his PDA to escape the tedium of standing in line. An ad depicting that type of situation could be a powerful way of empathizing with consumers while providing them with adaptations to life's frequent inconveniences.

Creating Solutions and Extension of Memory

Manifest within many of the behaviors of the informant segment were propensities to utilize organizers for the benefit of control. Specifically, it was

found that organizer usage afforded informants control of situations in order to solve problems. Relatedly, informants utilized organizers as a means of controlling—thus rectifying—their lack of memory. On a whole, control was the most profound functional benefit discovered in the behaviors of the informant segment.

The value of technological enablement in the Palm ads promotes the PDA as an organizer product that has the ability to control (something) and the ability to place the user in control (of situations). The Palm advertisers have effectively painted a picture that shows two characters that have been afforded the ability of control. The implication is that the characters have—with the abilities of their Palms—been able to realize control of time, work schedules, and activities so as to lead the lifestyle they choose. Both are in control; they do as they choose, when they choose to do it. As such, I find the Palm ads doing an exemplary job of imbuing the ability of control upon the PDA.

Despite the ads' strong points with regard to the notion of control, I still believe some logistical material could be improved. On several occasions (including those illustrated in the behavioral findings), I found the organizer itself being hailed for its abilities. The organizers were often placed at the reverent center of the informants' stories; they were, for lack of a better word, heroes that augmented the ability to control and be in control. The organizers were enablers, without them the experienced solutions to problems would not have come to volition. Therefore, the Palm advertisers would be keen to reenact scenes that

make the PDA an integral partner for success. Such ads would place the PDA in the forefront of viewers minds by demonstrating, not just asserting, that it can and will provide control.

Transformations: To Have Is To Be

I found informants using their organizers in an attempt to symbolically communicate to themselves and outwardly to others. Often, they sought the benefits of transforming their sense of self from one type to another vis-à-vis their product usage.

As discovered in chapter four, by and large, my informant segment was in a liminal state of existence; they were in transition between different identities. Consequently, the Palm advertisers would likely render an impassioned and powerful ad were they to illustrate some sort of symbolic communication and transformation of one's identity via PDA consumption. Unfortunately, however, the Palm ads selected for this thesis are lacking in symbolic communication. There is no expressive usage of the PDA—publicly or privately—that would lead a viewer of the ad to think of their PDA as a symbolic communicator.

In regard to the transformation of self from one identity to another, there are underpinnings of this action within the ads. The transformation from the assumed professional identity to a biker identity is an example. Likewise, the transformation from the assumed worker identity to the playful and carefree identity (jumping into

water) is another example. However, I am uncertain these transformations are explicit enough to lead a viewer to believe the PDA is the transformer. This is a creative structure of the ad that could potentially be amended and improved upon by placing the PDA at the center of the equation that equals transformation. Additionally, the advertisers should note that my informant segment seemed to desire a more permanent identity transformation versus the temporary one the Palm ads may have created.

Negative Images and Inferences

From the interviews, a small, yet important, minority of informants revealed negative interpretations of organizers—especially PDAs. To better critique these product images and inferences, a turn to semiotics is appropriate.

Semiotics attempts to determine the role consumers assign to symbols via three components: (1) the object; (2) the symbol associated with the object; and (3) the meaning of the symbol (Mick 1986: 196-213). Following this semiotic paradigm, I think the Palm advertisers were looking for their audiences to equate the PDA as the object; they wanted to equate organization as the symbol associated with the PDA; and, they wanted to equate a positive meaning with the PDA as a result of its symbolic association. However, as stated before, not all the informants' interpretations followed this direction. While they seemed to associate the PDA as the object, yet they failed to equate organization as the symbol

associated with the PDA. Instead, they equated it with negative meaning (e.g., yuppies, dorks, and nerds) rather than positive. Therefore, the concepts espoused and the concepts interpreted were incommensurable. This, quite obviously, is not the intent of well-crafted advertising.

To alter these product images and inferences, it is important for the Palm advertisers to understand why they exist. Secondly, it is important to rebuff the conception in certain consumers' minds that PDAs are a product exclusively for "certain types" of people. For example, if consumers believe PDAs are only for busy business executives, the PDA market would be well defined, yet insidiously small. To remedy this problem, advertisers have to thwart such negative images and inferences by promoting benefits that appeal to a wider audience; the onus is to utilize symbols that evoke positive meaning for the majority of their target market.

Part B

Anthropological Interpretations: advertising caveats

Lack of Control

As expressed in the sections on *Creating Solutions* and *Extending Memory*, the informant segment found the attribute of control highly desirable. Therefore, advertisers must promote products in a manner that evokes product abilities that

confer the benefits of control. I believe that if advertising follows this blueprint, it is likely to reap rewards. Dichotomously, any lack of control must be effectively erased from a product if it is to be successful; otherwise, consumers might lose confidence in such products and cease to use them altogether.

By promoting technological enablement in the Palm ads, I think the advertisers made an adequate effort to paint the attributes of control upon the veneer of their PDAs. However, they may want to consider taking an extra step towards countermining cognitions that their product might appropriate control from its users. This may be a difficult prescription for advertisers to fill. Knowing exactly what makes consumers feel out of control or lacking in control is somewhat nebulous. Nonetheless, as a caveat to the Palm advertisers, it is imperative that they actively promote the benefit of control while making certain consumers do not feel as though they are held prisoner by their PDA.

Rebellion

Advertisers can and will garner consumer applause by painting their products with rebellious hues. One need not look further than Harley Davidson to see a model for successful incorporation of rebellion into product and promotion. Analogously, in an attempt to appeal to their audience, the Palm advertisers seemingly appropriated a rebellious ambiance. I think they want PDA users to feel

like they are cool; they want to instill a feeling that the PDA will allow you to get away with what you really want to do.

However, as a caveat, advertisers must heed the pitfalls of associating their product with ideals and symbols that are rebelled against. Case in point, I found that rebellion against products—especially those that impinged upon the idea of being autonomous—were a reality for several of my informants. They felt as though their organizers were taking over. Their organizers were products that they pointed their fingers towards and rebelled against. Why? For these informants, their organizers were attributed with work and other pressures.

I find it difficult to say whether advertising utilizing rebellious overtones will be a boon or a detriment to an advertised product. One thing is certain, rebellion is a potentially slippery slope for advertisers: it could be a key reason for successes or it could engender failures. Advertisers should be certain of their intent and target audience when they use rebellion as a promotional motif, otherwise the effects could be negative.

Chapter Conclusion

This chapter was the third and final of three integrated phases of research in this thesis. I consider the content of this chapter paramount for those seeking an example of how advertising strategy can incorporate the behavior and voices of

consumers. Moreover, this illustrates what the techniques, perspectives, and interpretations of applied anthropology have to offer advertising.

CHAPTER SEVEN ~ CONCLUSIONS

In practice, my thesis illustrates the merger of anthropology and advertising. With this merger, I do my part to move anthropology beyond its traditional academic orientations and apply its many virtues to the endeavors of product advertising. I have illustrated that advertising—even competently manufactured advertising such as Palm’s—could potentially be augmented and improved with a research blueprint that involves an in-depth, anthropologically oriented, examination of consumer behaviors. To this end, I used myself as a research tool and reflect on my behaviors as a consumer of organizers; I qualitatively observed and interviewed informants; I qualitatively analyzed advertising; and lastly, I critically interpreted the consonance and contradiction between the ways in which consumers use organizers and the ways in which they are promoted in Palm advertising.

The summary of my research—including the most important information for advertisers—rests in chapter 6. It is a critical interpretation involving in-depth behavioral findings from my informants and the findings from my advertising analysis. Merged with my recommendations, the content of this chapter is a lynchpin for a variety of advertising implications and recommendations. In particular, I found that the Palm advertising was often deficient in capturing and promoting the usage-based benefits that consumers achieve while consuming their PDAs. To overcome this problem, as well as other problems similar in scope, I am

suggesting that advertisers—specifically account planners—and practicing anthropologists join forces.

By uniting the methodological toolbox and interpretive acumen of trained anthropologists with the advertising awareness of account planners, I strongly believe advertising can become more perceptive, potent, and remunerative for companies seeking increases in consumer business. This is possible because anthropological techniques along with the perspectives of an applied anthropologist such as me have the ability to provide a more in-depth understanding of consumers than most ordinary research techniques. In turn, these consumer insights can be used to create advertising strategies that, in my opinion, are more likely to harness empathy, attention, and action, from audiences.

For instance, I employed holistic and qualitative investigations in my observations and interviews with informants. In doing so, I revealed adaptations such as the locomotive cocoon. With this phenomenon, I found consumers using their PDAs to connect with something familiar when they were in very public scenarios; they used the PDA as an escape from the outside world. I believe this finding could represent a real competitive advantage for advertisers that successfully integrate flavors of this consumer behavior into an ad.

Moreover, it is my estimation that many of the typical research techniques utilized to inform advertising would have failed to render my findings. Focus groups and close-ended surveys—tools often used by account planners—may be too clinical and restrictive to yield many usage-based consumer benefits. Yet, I

believe the usage-based benefits founded in this thesis are vital to informing themes and motifs that help form well-crafted advertising. Therefore, while the locomotive cocoon finding is just one of many important insights stemming from my research, it effectively demonstrates the significance and importance of utilizing anthropological methods and practitioners for the improvement of advertising strategy.

My research is exploratory in nature; therefore, my interpretations and conclusions are not absolute. Nonetheless, I find it fair to state that this thesis has laid a solid foundation for the process of syncretizing anthropology and advertising. With these two merged together, advertising strategy will be more focused upon its consumer audiences and therefore more efficacious in promotional influence.

In conclusion, I end this chapter with several brief suggestions for future studies in the realm of anthropology and advertising research. My first suggestion stems from the finding that my informant segment seemed to be significantly influenced by reference groups. As inferred earlier in this thesis, reference groups can be critical to the success of products and brands. More pointedly, I believe a better understanding of reference groups could unlock important keys to consumer evaluation of advertising. Research that examines this subject would reveal critical data and influences upon selected market segments that might normally be omitted from consideration when informing and creating product advertising. This thesis has illustrated the import of understanding consumers; now anthropology and

advertising should turn their heads to better understanding the influences driving consumers.

My final suggestion for future development in anthropology and advertising research concerns organizations. Anthropologists can be radiologists for organizations; they can take an X-ray, or scan, of an organization, or an organized group of people, with a variety of methods; then, they process the scan and interpret its meanings. Specifically, it would be insightful and instructive for an anthropologist to become immersed within the organization of a full-service advertising agency. In fact, similar ethnographic work has been conducted with a large advertising agency in Japan¹³.

An anthropological account of the practices, interactions, negotiations, and behaviors of a full-service advertising agency would provide key understandings on the formation, creation, and evaluation of advertising. It would reveal the processes whereby various meanings are appropriated from culture and pressed into the service of advertising. More importantly though, this insider's look at an advertising agency has the potential to reveal and sustain practices that yield well-crafted and comprehensible advertising.

¹³ For an account of this work, see Brian Moeran's 1996 book entitled, *A Japanese Advertising Agency: Anthropology of Media and Markets*.

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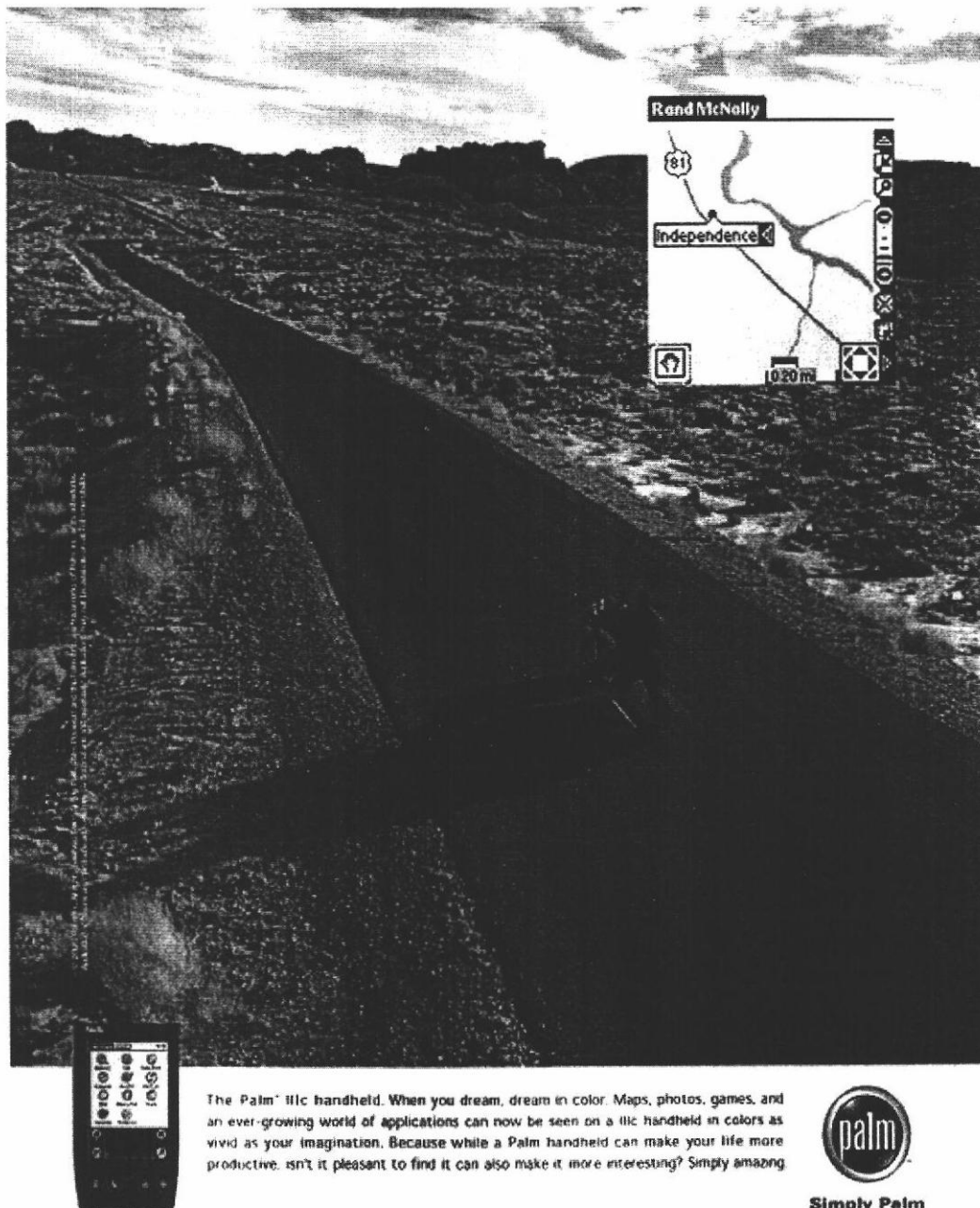
APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview Questions

1. What do you use to organize your schedule, addresses, make notes, etc.?
2. Do you use a particular name brand or type of organizer? Which one?
3. Did you purchase your organizer yourself? How long have you been using this method of organization?
4. Why do you use (whatever they use) as your organizer? Are there any particular reasons?
5. During an average week, how often do you use your organizer? (Frequency)
6. How do you use your organizer on work days? Explain this with some detail or perhaps an example.
7. How do you use your PDA on off/free days? Explain this with some detail or perhaps an example.
8. Typically, where are you when you use your organizer? Office, meetings, home, etc.? Do you take it with you a lot?
9. What things do you like most about your organizer?
10. What things do you like least about your organizer?
11. Has the usage of your organizer changed your lifestyle in any way? How? Why/Why not?
12. What were your expectations of your organizer when you bought/received it? Explain this...were they met?

13. If you had to explain your relationship with your organizer, how would you characterize it?
14. Have you ever considered changing your method of organization? If yes, what types have or do you consider? If no, why not?
15. Are you familiar with PDAs? Would you ever consider replacing your current method with a PDA? Why/why not?
16. Do you consider yourself comfortable with high-technology devices? For instance, do you use a computer on a regular basis? Do you own a cell phone?
17. What is your occupation?
18. What is your age?
19. Where do you reside?
20. Do you consider yourself a busy individual? Why/why not?

Appendix B: Biker Ad



The Palm[®] IIIc handheld. When you dream, dream in color. Maps, photos, games, and an ever-growing world of applications can now be seen on a IIIc handheld in colors as vivid as your imagination. Because while a Palm handheld can make your life more productive, isn't it pleasant to find it can also make it more interesting? Simply amazing.



Simply Palm
palm.com

Appendix C: Pond Ad

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1:37 pm Personal

Palm Powered[®] handhelds can help you do practically everything, even nothing. Email a memo, then plan your getaway – take the Net with you. Simply amazing.

palm

Simply Palm
palm.com