Business, Anthropology, and Magical Systems: The Case of Advertising

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Magic is one of the oldest subjects of discussion and theorizing in anthropology. From time to time, anthropologists, as well as other scholars from other disciplines, have suggested that magic is not specific to "primitive" societies, but is alive and well in contemporary industrialised societies—witness advertising. Such discussions have been more general than specific. This paper applies Mauss' theory of magic more precisely to particular examples of advertising—in particular, his distinction between magicians, magical rites, and magical representations. It also argues that advertising's system of magi—encompassing related concepts of alchemy, animism, and enchantmen—is reflected in other business practices, which have developed their own parallel and interlocking systems of magic. Certain forms of capitalism, the—fashion, for example, or finance—may be analysed as a field of magical systems.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

The word "magic" refers to a broad range of beliefs that include the supernatural, superstition, illusion, trickery, miracles, and fantasies. It is also a simple superlative (Davies 2012: 1), and is one of the oldest subjects of discussion and theorizing in anthropology. From time to time, anthropologists, as well as scholars from other disciplines, have suggested that magic is not specific to "primitive" societies, but is alive and well in contemporary industrialised societies—in particular, advertising.

Raymond Williams (1980: 193) was one of the first to make such a critique of what he called "the official art of modern capitalist society": "The short description of the pattern we have is magic: a highly organized and professional system of magical inducements and satisfactions, functionally very similar to magical systems in simpler societies..." Williams regarded advertising as a "magic system" because it transformed commodities into glamorous signifiers (turning a car into a sign of masculinity, for example, or a perfume into one of enchantment), which present an imaginary, and thus unreal, world in which we conveniently overlook the inhumanity and exploitation of labour in capitalist enterprises. In this respect, Williams traced the formation of modern advertising to the development of new monopoly capitalism and the increasing emphasis on the market as a system of control. He thus aimed to "disenchant" capitalism by showing us how it really works.

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More recently Alfie Gell (1988, 1992) has argued that one way human beings distinguish themselves from other species is by their technological capabilities. We use—sometimes simple, sometimes comple—technical means to form a bridge between a set of "given" elements (the body, for instance, or a base material, or environmental feature), and a goal that we want to achieve by making use of these givens (the achievement of beauty, for instance, or the perfection of alchemy, or saving the rainforest).

One of the technologies that we often use is that of *enchantment*. The technology of enchantment is probably *the* most sophisticated psychological weapon we use to exert control over the thoughts and actions of other human beings, because it "exploits innate or derived psychological biases so as to enchant the other person and cause him/her to perceive social reality in a way favourable to the social interests of the enchanter" (Gell 1988: 7). Among its manipulations are those of desire, fantasy, and vanity.

Gell adopted a similar view to that of Williams when it came to seeing advertising as a magical system:

> The flattering images of commodities purveyed in advertising coincide exactly with the equally flattering images with which magic invests its objects. But just as magical thinking provides the spur to technological development, so also advertising, by inserting commodities in a mythologized universe, in which all kinds of possibilities are open, provides the inspiration for the invention of new consumer items. Advertising does not only serve to entice consumers to buy particular items; in effect, it guides the whole process of design and manufacture from start to finish, since it provides the idealized image to which the finished product must conform. (Gell 1988: 9)

He went on to argue that the "essential alchemy" of art—and I here include advertising, fashion, and beauty in this argumen—is "to make what is not out of what is, and to make what is out of what is not" (1992: 53). Technical virtuosity is the source of the prestige of advertisements, artworks, fashion items, and beauty products, as well as "the source of its efficacy in the domain of social relations" (1992: 56). This it achieves through:

> A wide range of imagery which provides a symbolic commentary on the processes and activities which are carried on in the technological domain… The propagandists, image-makers and ideologues of technological culture are its magicians, and if they do not lay claim to supernatural powers, it is only because technology itself has become so powerful that they have no need to do so. (Gell 1988: 9)

In this respect, we can agree with Baudrillard (1996: 266) that advertising is "a logic of fables and of the willingness to along with them. We do not believe in such fables, but we cleave to them nevertheless… Without 'believing' in the product… *we believe in the advertising that tries to get us to believe in it*."

But why is magic found only in some activities, and not in others? For Malinowski, as for many others, magic is used in "the domain of the unaccountable and adverse influences,

as well as the great unearned increment of fortunate coincidence" (Malinowski 1954: 29). In other words, magic accompanies uncertainty (Gell 1992: 57): we do not find it "wherever the pursuit is certain, reliable, and well under the control of rational methods and technological processes" (Malinowski 1954: 140). Malinowski illustrates this proposition by showing how, for Trobriand Islanders, lagoon fishing and open-sea fishing resulted in totally different attitudes towards the interplay between work and magic.

> It is most significant that in the lagoon fishing, where man can rely completely upon his knowledge and skill, magic does not exist, while in the open-sea fishing, full of danger and uncertainty, there is extensive magical ritual to secure safety and good results. (Malinowski 1954: 31)

This uncertainty is taken up by John McCreery, who says that his job as creative director in a Japanese advertising agency was to:

> Sell ideas to clients whose decisions he cannot control. They in turn must sell their products to consumers who spend their money as they please. All the efforts of marketing science do not determine the outcome. In an effort to shape purchasing decisions, we generate images, chant incantations, and tell each other stories that we hope will appeal to clients' and ultimately consumers' emotions. (McCreery 1995: 311-2).

So, where does this take us? Any discussion of magical practices in advertising becomes part of a broader discussion of cultural production, as well as of those spheres of business where uncertainty prevails (for instance, the world of finance). All forms of cultural production are characterised by certain economic properties, one of which is that demand is uncertain (Caves 2000: 4). In other words, until a particular product is placed before a consumer, it is not at all certain how s/he will react to it because it is an "experience good." Market research can be undertaken, of course, to find out the likelihood of sales, but still success is unpredictable. It is this unpredictability that leads to "technologies of enchantment," which include rituals surrounding cultural activities (competitive presentations in advertising; six-monthly catwalks shows of fashion collections; the awarding of prizes at film festivals), as all those concerned tend towards trust in the efficacy of magical practices.

Before expanding on this argument, let me first lay out the "system of magic" that characterizes advertising, and then analyse particular examples of beauty advertisements to show how their structure closely approximates those of magical spells used in Sri Lankan healing rituals (Tambiah 1968).

ADVERTISING AS A SYSTEM OF MAGIC

For magic to constitute a *system*, three elements are required: magicians, magical rites, and magical formulae or representations (Mauss 1972: 18). This tripartite structure of the system of magic was initially made clear by Malinowski (1922: 403):

> Magic all the world over… represents three essential aspects. In its performance there enter always some words spoken or chanted, some actions carried out, and there are always the minister or ministers of the ceremony. In analysing the concrete details of magical performances, therefore, we have to distinguish between the *formula*, *the rite*, and *the condition of the performer*.

In other words, there should be certain people repeatedly saying and doing certain things, in and for certain social situations, in a manner that is accepted by public opinion in any form of community. In the advertising industry, magicians correspond to "creative" personnel (in particular, copywriters, creative and art directors, but also photographers, makeup artists, hair stylists, and others called upon to produce advertisements); rites to competitive presentations and the production of advertising campaigns; and formulaic representations to individual advertisements.

Before going any further, I should make it clear that there is not an *exact* analogy between magicians in so-called "primitive" societies and contemporary creative practitioners. The latter do not generally inherit their role as magician in the way that the former often do: it is not membership of a particular group that determines whether they will, or will not, become creative practitioners (Malinowski 1922: 410).[1] Nor do they necessarily have a "nervous disposition," regarded as somehow standing outside society (Mauss 1972: 32-3), although they may do so temporarily during the exercise of their creative processes (Moeran 2006: 88; Malefyt and Morais 2012: 81-2). Nor are they usually concerned with the nature of their "soul," which can separate from the magician's body and, like a shaman, create a "familiar" (Howells 1985).[2]

Nevertheless, in other respects there are noteworthy similarities between magicians and contemporary creative practitioners. Creative personnel possess magical powers, not so much because of individual characteristics they display□ these may involve both physical peculiarities and extraordinary gifts□ but because of society's attitude towards them: they are regarded as able to accomplish things beyond the power of normal human beings (Mauss 1972: 33). At different stages in history and in different parts of the world, certain professions have been (and still are) seen to possess magical powers because of their dexterity and outstanding knowledge: in particular, doctors and others in the medical profession; blacksmiths, and other craftsmen; but also actors, barbers, executioners, gypsies, gravediggers, priests, and shepherds. In the contemporary advertising, fashion and beauty worlds, this list now includes copywriters, creative and art directors; fashion and creative designers; accessories, hairdressing, and fitness gurus; stylists-in-chief; makeup artists; exercise honchos—not to mention the divas, muses, icons, and plain old celebrities who are

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[1] Dion and Arnould (2011: 509), however, make a case for the transmission of charisma in retail luxury brands by means of kinship and fictive kinship.

[2] In this respect, a strong argument can be made for a parallel between shaman and fashion designer who creates a "muse" (generally in the form of a model, actress, or other celebrity), a kind of "guardian angel" (the shaman's *emekhet*) who then provides the designer with peculiar qualities and powers. See, for example, Harlech (2009).

used by and sustain them. As Marcel Mauss (1972: 29) put it: "it is their profession which sets them apart from the common run of mortals, and it is this separateness which endows them with magical power."[3]

Magic includes one or more central operations in which the magician acts. It becomes, then, ritual action whose symbolic meaning is often associated with a liminality characteristic of "rites of passage" (Van Gennep 1960; Malefyt and Morais 2012: 38-40), as well as with "social dramas" (Turner 1974; Moeran 2006: 65-9). In advertising, the central operation is the regular ritual of the *competitive presentation* by an agency to a client. This is a magical rite, whose time and place are strictly prescribed, as *transformations* are brought about in a liminal space between agency personnel (account managers, creatives, market researchers, and media buyers), through use of a special kind of chant (the "pitch") designed to persuade a client of a creative team's ability as a collective magician to transform a product into a brand (often infused with animisti—and animalisti—qualities). Like magic in general, then, advertising initially tends not to be performed just anywhere, but in specially qualified places, with special materials and tools (Mauss 1972: 46). Its "rites are eminently effective; they are creative, they *do* things" (ibid., p. 19).

Magical rites can be both verbal and non-verbal. While competitive presentations in advertising are primarily verbal, fashion collections are quite the opposite. Non-verbal rites make use of two kinds of magic. One of these is *sympathetic* (or symbolic) magic, which assumes that there is a causal relationship between things that appear to be similar, so that imitation of a desired end causes that end to appear (the perfume *Happy* causes its wearer to be "happy"). The other is *contagious* magic, which is based on the premise that things that were once in contact always maintain a connection (continued happiness depends on continued use of *Happy*).[4] In particular, magic makes use of substances whose virtues are seen to be transmitted through contact and so provides the means of using objects sympathetically. Magic is cuisine, pharmacy, chemistr—the art of preparing and mixing concoctions, fermentations, dishes, and providing them with a ritual character which contributes to the efficacy of magic itself (Parfums Chopard: *The enchantment of the moment*) (Mauss 1972: 50-9).

Many rites, however, are verbal and make use of spells, which tend to be formulaic (consider, for example, the standardised use of headline, image, body copy, and tagline in an advertisement) and be composed in a special language (*Smashing Lashes*; *Drop Dead Nails*), but which are first and foremost composed as *actions* that achieve practical effects (Malinowski 1922: 423, 432).[5] One group of spells corresponds to sympathetic magical rites: they name the actions or things in order to bring about the sympathetic reaction ("Shades that don't

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[3] Witness fashion photographer Erica Lennard's description (2007: 528) of her work and its transformative ability: "maybe the magic of photography for me is how light can, at moments, transform reality. I don't want to lose that magic and be in a studio."

[4] Celebrity memorabilia epitomise contagious magic at work: witness the price of $350,000 paid at auction in 2009 for the white glove worn by Michael Jackson the first time he performed his "moon dance" in 1983. http://www.today.com/id/34084928/ns/today-today_entertainment/t/michael-jackson-glove-sells/#.Uy_mBaOwrcs

[5] Baudrillard (1996-7) points out that every advertising image is a *legend*, whose meaning is further narrowed by the addition of discourse, in the form of a subtitle which constitutes a second legend.

fade for eyes that wo—even 8 hours from now").[6] Sometimes the mention of a rite's name alone is enough to produce effect (*Clean Sensation*; *No Time to Shine*).[7] Verbal rites also comprise mythical spells which:

> "Describe the genesis and enumerate the names and characteristics of the being, thing or demon concerned in the rite. It is a kind of investigatory process by which the demon involved in the spell is slowly uncovered. The magician institutes magical proceedings, establishes the identity of the powers involved, catches hold of them and brings them under control by the use of his own power" (Mauss 1972: 56).

Magical representations, the third element in the system of magic, "are those ideas and beliefs which correspond to magical actions" (Mauss 1972: 61). Since ritual is a kind of language, it also translates ideas and representations of ideas. Here there is display of magic's *effect* (The Clinique *Happy* ad is illustrated by a wide-mouthed, laughing young woman looking happy). But every instance of a magical rite takes account of the general effects of magic, so that, no matter how different the results of each advertisement, together they are thought to have common characteristics involving a change of state. Either the objects or beings involved are placed in a state so that certain movements, accidents or phenomena will inevitably occur (*Persil washes whiter*); or they are brought out of a dangerous state (*Do you suffer from chronic halitosis*?) by means of a particular remedy (*Listerine kills germs that cause bad breath*) (cf. Mauss 1972: 61).

MAGICAL SPELLS

In "The magical power of words," Stanley Tambiah (1968) examined the use of words in ritual and the fact that the uttering of words is itself a ritual. Most ritual systems, he argued, progress from word to thought to power, and finally to dee—a *dénouement* that characterises the structure of cosmetics and skincare advertisements, designed to enchant and entice their readers, by means of words and images used as magical representations, to go out and buy actual products.

So far as Tambiah was concerned, verbal forms in ritual were in many ways "spells," whose power derived from their being uttered in a very special context.[8] The example that he gave to illustrate this was a Sinhalese healing ritual, which made use of three kinds of verbal form. The first, a *mantra*, adopted an archaic language of command—accompanied by a language of entreaty and persuasion—to summon the demons responsible for the disease. Then followed the *kannalawa* which "states why the ceremony is being held, describes the nature of the patient's affliction and makes a plea for the gods to come and bless the ceremony and to the demons to act benevolently and remove the disease" (Tambiah 1968:

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[6] Revlon Overtime Shadow.

[7] Both Cover Girl skincare products.

[8] For Malinowski, too, spells—with their "magical order of expressing" (1922: 432)—were by far the most important constituents of magic (1922: 403).

177). The major part of the ceremony was then taken up by highly lyrical and literary quatrains called *kaviya*, designed to define, objectify, and personify evil and disease, and to present them realistically, so that appropriate action could be taken to change the undesirable to the desirable—a necessary precondition of the cure. Finally, the ritual ended with a repeat of the *mantra* which enacted the expulsion of the demon itself.

The parallel between a healing ritual in distant Sri Lanka and many contemporary beauty-related advertisements placed in fashion and beauty magazines by corporate giants in Paris and New York is rather remarkable. Firstly, every advertisement carries a *headline* summoning a particular part of the body, which is demonised by omission for not being what it should be (*Lash Potion*™ *Mascara*, *Drop Dead Nails*). Alternatively, a headline will summon a particular effect sought by purchase of the advertised product without specific mention of a part of the body (c*an your smooth pass the second-day test?*). Or it will summon a product or product range (L'Oréal's *Magicsmooth Soufflé*).

Secondly, each headline is usually accompanied by a *sub-heading*, which provides an explanation of the "problem" addressed by the ad (*Discover instant smooth perfection*). This is followed, thirdly, by an advertisement's *copy*, forming the "body" of the written part of the ad. It defines, names, or at least by omission hints at, the affliction—dryness, lack of endurance, artificiality, imperfection, difficulty in handling, and so on—that the ad seeks to remedy. For example: "Start your look with skin-matching makeup—a weightless foundation that goes on white and self-adjusts to match your natural skin tone. In 5 shades with a flawless finish."[9]

Finally the closing *mantra* of every ad is the *tagline*, which is used to announce the necessary condition of the cure provided. Thus we find makeup mantras like: *The most unforgettable women in the world wear Revlon*; *Because I'm/you're worth it* (L'Oréal); and *For beautiful human life* (Kanebo).[10]

Tambiah (1968: 177-8) notes that, in Sinhalese healing rituals, the *mantra* is in many ways incomprehensible to ordinary people because it makes use of an archaic language no longer spoken by ordinary people. Again, there is a slight, though not exact, parallel here with advertising headlines, which are not always immediately or fully comprehensible, even though they clearly make *some* sort of sense: for example, *Drama Queen*, *Just Bitten*, or *Magnified Shine Feels So Divine*. Headlines, though, differ from body copy in ads in much the same way as sacred language differs from vernacular or profane language used in ritual. There is a sequence of forms which starts out by chanting aloud sacred words, moves to readily comprehensible vernacular language (short phrases, plenty of punctuation), and finishes with a combination of the two.

As in ritual, advertisers use language in ways that connote their power (over beauty) to exorcise the demons of unattractiveness. First, they are possessors of secret knowledge that they reveal to consumers ("A lipstick only Lancôme could create"). This kind of knowledge is expressed through *formulae* which, once voiced, act and influence the course of events

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[9] Revlon Beyond Natural.

[10] Wolf (1981: 108) also points out that advertisements "have used a mysterious language, the way Catholicism uses Latin, Judaism Hebrew, and Masons secret passwords: as a prestigious Logos that confers magic power on the originators of it."

(Tambiah 1968: 184). They are so special that they have aetherial or *magical qualities*: "At the heart of the success of Les Majeurs are Lancôme's exclusive microbubbles. These minute, supple spheres rest invisibly on the surface of the skin… The magic of makeup."

Next, cosmetics and skincare companies' specialized knowledge invites consumers to participate in a dream world of fantasy and *belief* (*Shades that flirt with fantasy*).[11] "Believe it. Revitalizing Makeup. Only by Maybelline." Both rituals and advertisements, then, make use of the magical power inherent in sacred words to persuade adherents to believe in what is displayed. Three notions form an interrelated set in each. First, there are magicians in the form of cosmetics manufacturers, who institute speech and classifying activity. Then there are the people—usually in the form of the fashion magazine women readers—who use this propensity. Last, there is language, which has an independent existence and the mystical power to influence the reality of beauty. Advertising is a heightened use of language that aims to combine word and deed (the persuasion to purchase and make use of a product) by using spells especially constructed to effect a magical transfer. As in many magical practices found among tribal peoples around the world, beauty advertisements isolate and enumerate "the various or constituent parts of the recipient of the magic" (a woman's eyes, hair, lashes, lips, nails, skin, and so on), and then make a magical transfer that enables them to become "dazzling," "healthy," "luscious," "kissable," "soft," "natural," and so forth (Tambiah 1968: 190). By building up these parts, we are able to form a realistic picture of the whole□ a metonymic technique that lends realism to the rite of makeup, transmits a message about beauty through redundancy, and allows the storing of vital technological knowledge in an oral culture of women's gossip.

Moreover, in these rituals, verbal formulae are often accompanied by the manipulation of objects of one sort or another, which then become charged with special potency. This is similar to the construction of beauty advertisements, which make use of highly-charged images of beautiful women—in particular of celebrities, who make use of their own enchantment through *glamour*[12]—who show that the intended effect of the magical formulae can be achieved (Tambiah 1968: 190-1). In conclusion, beauty advertising, like ritual, attempts to:

> Re-structure and integrate the minds and emotions of the actors. The technique combines verbal and non-verbal behaviour and exploits their special properties. Language is an artificial construct and its strength is that its form owes nothing to external reality: it thus enjoys the power to invoke images and comparisons, refer to time past and future and relate events which cannot be represented in action. Non-verbal action on the other hand, excels in what words cannot easily do – it can codify analogically by imitating real events, reproduce technical acts and express multiple implications simultaneously. Words excel in expressive enlargement, physical actions in realistic representation. (Tambiah 1968: 202)

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[11] Lancôme, First Blush.

[12] *Glamour* derives from the old Scottish word, *gramarye*, once meaning magic, enchantment or spell, and now transformed into (*bombshell, drop-dead, film star*, or just *added*) glamour.

DISCUSSION

The argument presented has theoretical, methodological, and business implications. It also offers opportunities for analysis in empirical situations.

Features of Magic

First, as hinted earlier, the system of magic described and analysed here is applicable to other spheres of business: in particular, to those which, like advertising, are forms of cultural production in which uncertainty prevails. An obvious example here is the fashion industry, whose primary magicians are designers, ably supported by a cast of photographers, hair stylists, and makeup artists working together to weave magical effects upon models (whose features should, ideally, be not too pronounced to enable the magicians to transform them into chameleon-like characters). This they do primarily in seasonal collections and advertising campaign—those ritual occasions during which "fashion" is revealed to its public.

As I said earlier, magic both breeds and accompanies *uncertainty*.[13] The magician's aim is to substitute what is uncertain with something that only he (or she) knows and makes public through magical action ("When the cameras catch you, make sure you've got your best features on show—sleek, smooth hips and thighs").[14]

Magic also involves *revelation*, for through revelation uncertainty is overcome. In the fashion industry, this is the task of the fashion magazine ("Three stylish women reveal how they'll be updating their wardrobes for winter").[15] Revelation involves showing what is unseen, by means of secrets, illusions, tips, and tricks:

> A flawless complexion has long been the Holy Grail for beauty-seekers. But most of us need to create the illusion with cosmetic cover-ups. Emma Bannister reveals a fistful of products that you can rely on if you haven't been lucky enough to be blessed with perfect skin.[16]

Revelation also leads to *reincarnation*—either of a fashion item (*The rebirth of the twinset*),[17] or of style (R*eplaying classic Parisian chic*),[18] or of a person (*Every day your skin is reborn through the wonder of SK-ii. Discovered by a Japanese monk, SK-II combines the magic of nature with the advances of science*…).[19] In this last case, reincarnation, or "the gift of rebirth," acts as magical potion and antidote to the perennial problem of ageing.

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[13] Gell, 1992, p. 57.
[14] *Marie Claire* USA, April 2001.
[15] *Vogue* UK, October 2000.
[16] "The cheat's guide to good skin." *Marie Claire* UK, April 1997.
[17] *Vogue* UK, April 1993.
[18] *Vogue* UK, September 2001.
[19] Advertisement for SK-II by Selfridges. In *Vogue* UK, May 2001.

Magical rites should have *immediate* effects ("surprisingly wearable looks leapt from the catwalk straight into women's wardrobes."[20] *New Year, new you*.)[21] They also effect *transformations* (*Figure flaw fixers*).[22] Mostly, these go together (*Get a better body by tonight)*.[23] Still, such transformations must be done in the *right* way by the *right* magician ("Don't let just anybody transform your body").[24]

However, the fashion magazine goes beyond particular instances of magical rites to create a general aura of magic in the fashion world. In *Pukka Party*, we learn that "Cartier International Polo at Windsor Great Park was one of the most glamorous events of the year. Not only did Cartier command a star-studded guest list, they somehow arranged for the sun to make a brief appearance, too."[25] As the anthropologist John Middleton (1967: ix) noted many years ago:

> The realm of magic is that in which human beings believe that they may directly affect nature and each other, for good or for ill, by their own efforts (even though the precise mechanism may not be understood by them), as distinct from appealing to divine powers by sacrifice or prayer.

Magic And Economic Properties

As I said, a similar argument to that presented here may be made for other forms of cultural production in which uncertainty prevails (which is why it is applicable to the world of finance, too). But at least four other economic properties mentioned by Caves aid and abet the development of a magical *system* in advertising, fashion, film, and elsewhere. One of these properties he calls *art for art's sake*; another *motley crew*; a third *infinite variety*; and the fourth *A list/B list*.

As Bourdieu (1993) noted many years ago, there is, in all forms of cultural production, an opposition between their "commercial" and "non-commercial" activities. This opposition acts as a fundamental, occasionally disavowed, structuring principle of the fields of fashion, music, film, and so on a principle which then generates many of the judgements made about their products. The fact that both fashion and fashion magazines, for example, are products of "a vast operation of social alchemy" (Bourdieu 1986: 137) means that there is often no clear measurement between their cost of production and commercial value.

The opposition between "creative" and "humdrum" aspects of the field of fashion leads to a focus on interpersonal relationships, rather than on "the bottom line" characteristic of most industries (Moeran 2014: 119-40). As a director of *Elle*'s international editions put it during an extended interview:

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[20] *Elle* UK, January 2001.
[21] *Marie Claire* USA, January 1997.
[22] *Marie Claire* USA, January 2001.
[23] *Elle* USA, April 1998.
[24] Advertisement for Transform Medical Group, *Marie Claire* UK, June 2000.
[25] *Vogue* UK, October 2001.

> Relationships are the most crucial aspect of my work. And relationships with editors can be difficult because they are very, *very* special people. We are managers. They are *artists*.

This organizational preference is reinforced by the fact that demand is uncertain. But, in addition to the *market* uncertainty epitomised by the *nobody knows* property of creative industries in general, there is *aesthetic* uncertainty arising from the fact that copywriters, creative directors, fashion designers, photographers, makeup artists, and so on care about their work. As a result, they can rarely—if ever—be pinned down beforehand about the aesthetic choices that go into the design of a dress or the composition of a fashion photograph.[26] As fashion designer, Angela Missoni, once put it: "I start with the palette but I have no recipe, it just comes."[27] This aesthetic uncertainty (what Caves calls the *art for art's sake* property) stems in large part from the often unanticipated transformations of a concept as it takes on two- or three-dimensional form and is then re-used with its own internal transformations (*Summer's peacock feather skirt had morphed into a coq feather cape*). Just how an inner vision will materialise in a product partly explains the *nobody knows* property, but it also adds to its perceived magical quality.

Third, putting together an advertising campaign, film, music concert, or fashion collection requires diverse skills on the part of account executives, market researchers, directors, actors, designers, musicians, sound recorders, producers, layout artists, hairdressers, and so on. This is known as the *motley crew* property, and who is recruited for what purpose often depends on personnel availability within a desirable pecking order because of time constraints (the *time flies* property). From freelance professional to complex organisation, the advertising, fashion, film, music and other creative industries require all kinds of different expertise. Yet, because their products must all attain a certain level of proficiency and conformance, creative activity has what Caves calls a "multiplicative production" function: with every step along the way to completion, all the necessary personnel must come together and do their necessary work. This involves considerable negotiation among the different creative magicians about how best to persuade their audience to believe in the efficacy of their magical practices.

Fourth, since it is known that success is not guaranteed, and since fashion and beauty tend to have several dimensions along which people make their comparisons, their technologies of enchantment have *infinite variety*. This refers both to "the universe of possibilities from which the artist chooses," as well as to "the array of actual creative products" available to consumers. It guarantees the success of at least *some* magical practices, even if all others fail, and so sustains belief in the system of magic as a whole.

Fifth, because of the uncertainty of both demand and supply (in terms of the aesthetic choices made, combinations of personnel, and so on), and because cultural products differ in the quality of skills they display, "creative worlds" in the advertising, fashion, film, and other

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[26] This is a major difficulty facing every ad agency involved in a client presentation. As a result, participants study every facial, gestural, non-verbal and verbal reaction exhibited by members of the client company in an attempt to "read" which of their creative ideas they like, and which not.
[27] Suzy Menkes, "Face-off: womanly allure vs. sexy styles." *International Herald Tribune*, Friday, February 25, 2005, p. 12.

industries negotiate a ranking of its personnel: designers, photographers, models, hair stylists, makeup artists, associated celebrities, brands, and so on, for fashion. Known as *A List/B List*, this ranking of talent highlights one style of magical practice over another (as well as accompanying economic rewards for services rendered), on the one hand, and, on the other, is used to overcome uncertainty of demand. This uncertainty ensures the rapid turnover of peripheral magical personnel, such as celebrities and models.

In sum, although the argument presented here is based primarily on content analysis of advertisements, rather than on ethnography, the idea of a "magical system" can and should be used in the field, to find out how informants themselves regard their practices. In other words, this theoretical paper opens up possibilities for new directions in empirical business situations. After all, if many forms of business are little more than "fields of magical systems," are we as anthropologists then able to bring a sense of reality to business people and organizations who are mesmerised by the search for "profit" and "growth" at the expense of the environment and the future of mankind?

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