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Brand Addiction

It has come to my attention that most people will buy any item, regardless of the price, or even if they don't need the item: simply because of the brand. Since so many people will spend ridiculous amounts for a brand, re-selling brands has become very popular. In fact, some people are able to make a living off of it. I have taken notice in this particularly in the company Supreme. A skateboard and clothing company that originated in New York City, Supreme has captured the audience of the youth, because it is highly advertised by young artists such as ASAP Rocky, Michael Jordan, Kermit the Frog, Earl Sweatshirt and more. The retail price for Supreme is known for being quite high. However, these items are limited and seemed to sell out within seconds. Why? Because Supreme is like no other company. Every item made by Supreme is limited edition, making Supreme a company with low supply, yet such a high demand. Thus, making the resale value of the brand reach incredible prices. Throughout this paper I will find out why resellers have so much success. Why is someone willing to pay \$200 for a t-shirt, just because of the brand on the shirt? Why are people addicted to brands?

Throughout history people have been known for spending ridiculous amounts of money in order to own an item with a certain brand on it. It's as if consumers do not pay for the product itself so much as the ideas associated with the brand name. For example, people think of athletes like Michael Jordan when they see a Nike brand, and therefore buy Nike in order to feel more athletic. Obviously, this is a personal issue. People are using brands to fill some personal need. Wearing a popular brand makes you feel comfortable and happy with yourself. It is like any

other addiction, once you start you cannot stop. Which can cause a person to spend way too much money. “These creature comforts are now wrapped into our identity and self-worth – they are bonds that are hard to break, even if that means spending more than you can afford” (Margolis 173). Yet, still I seem to be confused as to why brands became such a big deal in the first place? What is it that makes them so desirable for some people? The answer lies within the concept of social proof which can be defined as the influence created when one discovers that others are doing something. This influence comes from friends, co-workers, and most importantly social media. “Being mentioned in the media is extraordinarily effective, as having your brand or company featured” (Merilee 2). This seems to be what makes top brands sell even more, especially when a famous person is seen on social media wearing the brand. Our social life influences everything we do, including what we desire to wear. What happens during our social gatherings take a huge part in influencing our decision making. “Brands are having a more important place in our lives each day. We may neglect it, but we all find brands extremely attractive, whether it is because they make us feel wealthier or more self-confident, because we think they have a higher quality than generic ones, or for any other reason” (Hibic and Poturak 1).

The real question is how this all ties into the company Supreme. Supreme sells for so much money because they are great example of all the points made above about brand addiction. Supreme has a certain reputation, a reputation that fits all aspects of a young “cool” person, making all people want to be associated with the brand in some way. They seem to stay away from trends allowing them to create their own. Making them unlike any other brand. To summarize, Supreme is a melting pot of culture. When shopping for the brand you'll see items

that (whether born in the 90s, 80s, 2000s) are reminiscent of special moments for you when you were growing up. This is what has allowed the company to capture such a huge audience. The brand is unique, making the demand for their products extremely high. I think social proof has brought Supreme to a whole new level. People see famous people wearing the product on social media and automatically feel a need to wear Supreme. Consumers buy Supreme regardless of the price in order to feel wealthier and in order to be self-confident. Wearing the brand makes any person seem “cool”. Once a person begins to wear the brand then all their friends will follow, and then the links of social networking will continue until everyone is wearing the brand. Making this brand unlike and more desirable than any other generic brand.

Supremes greatest asset and value is restraint. They always keep supply under control and have never released a ton of pieces, making the supply low and the demand higher than any other. This had led to another way of purchasing the brand. Resellers are a byproduct of a culture fueled by the need and desire to have one thing that not everybody else has and wanting to “flex” on other people because you have something they can’t have. Reseller products can go up to 1200% of the original cost. For example graphic tees (made by Supreme) usually sell for \$33-40 but the resell value can go as high up to \$600. It is brand addiction that has led to the success of resellers. Even resellers do not think that the clothing is worth the resale price but according to Andre (a reseller in New York City) “at the end of the day it’s worth whatever a fool is willing to pay for it.” It may seem ridiculous to spend so much money on one little t-shirt, but we must remember that this is exactly like any other addiction. Resellers were the first to realize this and now are making enormous amounts of money.

Today, the brand has become so powerful that people will buy anything with the name on it, even crowbars. Due to the popularity of reselling Supreme has set limits as to how much a person can buy at the store and yet resellers still find ways around it. For example, if a reseller who wears an XL t-shirt tries to buy a medium the store would be suspicious. This is why the reseller must hire people who would wear certain sizes to buy the items. The fact that people are able to make so much money off of reselling creates a whole new world for buying clothes. A world where there is not competition between stores, but resellers. How do resellers stand out? Most resellers use social media like Instagram and Facebook to promote their products and then exchange their money through PayPal, but only resellers with a good virtual presence with acceptable product experience and consumer gains will increase a consumer's decisions to buy from them. Personally, I know many people who have attempted to buy Supreme through apps or sketchy websites online. After making the purchase all the person received was an empty box. Purchasing items from a resale market is a huge risk because you can easily lose your money. However, recently customers have been able to decipher the difference between legit resellers and those who rip someone off. Since customers have figured this out, resellers now make sure they have a great virtual presence with great reviews. They will even go as far as having loyal customers promote their business. The competition between resellers is quite high and most resellers do not get along with each other, one can only fear how this market will develop.

Although Supreme may be a very cool brand with a unique style unlike any other. We must try and control our brand addiction, simply because it's not worth the money. Of course there are ways around wearing Supreme without going broke, but this requires a person to camp a few days out in front of the store and be the first in line for items to drop. Or buy within the

hour of online releases (yes they sell out this quick). I now know what it is that makes people what a brand, and I now know what Supreme does to make them such a powerful brand.

However, what will become of the brand? How will the resale market change? Will it ever disappear? I think we have underestimated the power of brands, and cannot let them take over.

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