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Symbols that Unite
A Semiotic Analysis of the Vancouver 2010 Brand

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Abstract

Images assist in the propagation of mythological narratives, as is the case for the basic unit of analysis of this study, the Vancouver 2010 brand. The use of images gives material existence to abstract ideas such as nationalism, religion or the notion of unity. Using the notion of *triadic semiosis*, as well as the *social semiotic* model to which it belongs, this study analyzes contemporary notions of Canadian identity, as represented visually, through the Vancouver 2010 Olympic brand.

Two empirical findings have emerged as a result of this study: (1) The Canadian identity as conceptualized by scholars who have studied it in the past has undergone a process of change, namely a shift from a "traditional" Canada, deeply connected to the natural landscape and geography, to a "contemporary" Canada, composed of large metropolitan centers ready to do business with an increasingly globalized world. (2) A linguistic dualism continues to pervade within contemporary Canadian life, a fact visually represented within marketing materials used to promote the Vancouver 2010 brand.

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"Can the generous flame of national spirit be kindled and
blaze in the icy bosom of the frozen north?"
- Robert Grant Haliburton

1. Introduction

In the opening paragraph of the *The Unfinished Canadian,* Cohen (2007) describes the victory of the Canadian women's hockey team at the 2006 Winter Olympics, in Turin. The team successfully beat Italy 16-0, Russia 12-0, and Finland 6-0, but rather than this being cause for celebration, critics back home were outraged, individuals such as Don Cherry accused the team of "running up the score". "It's not the Canadian way", Cherry stated (p.1). Apart from Cherry's obvious dissatisfaction with the women's hockey team, his remarks illustrate something much more profound—the power of national myths. More specifically, myths have the capacity to bind a group of peoples together through a common narrative reinforced overtime through customs, rituals and values. Huckinson (2008) argues "[...] myth is a narrative pattern that gives significance to our existence, and given that we are creatures of individuality and collectivity, 'myth' refers to both our collective and individual stories" (p.3). In fact, a person who attempts to live without myth, or outside of it, "has no true link either with the past, or the ancestral life which continues within in him or yet with contemporary human society" (Jung, 1951, xxiv). History has shown myths play a foundational role in the lives of the individual; first in the form of religious movements (Campbell, 1988) followed by nationalism (Anderson, 2006 [1983]). And most recently, myths have come to be represented by consumer brands (Holt, 2004).

The following thesis provides a systematic analysis of the emblems used in the promotion of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games. Using semiotics as the main analytic framework, this thesis is chiefly concerned with how such emblems represent notions of Canadian identity.

It is important to note that the forthcoming analysis is not explicitly concerned with analyzing the role of sport in promotion of national identity. Rather, the present study will analyze the media used to promote the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.[1] It will further utilize a semiotic model to analyze the signs that are at work in these materials, and a social semiotic model to discern the extent to which such signs represent the Canadian identity.

I had originally designed this study as semiotic analysis of the Calgary 1988 Winter Olympics and the forthcoming Vancouver 2010 Olympic games. However, upon further reflection and research, I deemed it appropriate to instead use a semiotic and social semiotic methodology to evaluate the Vancouver 2010 brand by itself. The aim is threefold: firstly to compile a corpus of official Vancouver 2010 branded materials (those materials produced on behalf of the Vancouver Olympic committee), the corpus will comprise the following: print advertisements, event pictographs, supporting brand imagery, logo/emblem and web site landing page. Once the evidence has been assembled, the second step will be to analyze the materials using a semiotic and social

[1] Given the limitations of time and resources, an assessment of the Vancouver 2010 Paralympics Games will not form part of this study. In light of the fact that much of the promotional materials for both sporting events have been developed concurrently, an assessment of one of the Games will be sufficient for the purpose of this analysis.

semiotic methodology. For my own take I will be using among other materials Thurlow and Aiellos's (2007) analysis.

The study focuses on the visual images, thus emphasis will not be placed on minor typographic elements or Micro- and Mesotypography (i.e. the arrangement of single typographical characters in lines, which in turn form paragraphs), (Stockl, 2005).[2] Instead Macrotypographic elements, those that aid in the visual composition and design of a piece (i.e. words used in a logo), will form part of this analysis.

The following research questions have been used to guide this thesis:

RQ1. What specific linguistic and ethnic discourses are present within each of the communication materials used to promote the Vancouver 2010 brand?

RQ2. What kinds of signs are used in the promotion of the Canadian identity?

RQ3. In which ways and to what extent, if at all, do such signs represent a collective Canadian identity?

RQ4. In what ways, if any, have signs traditionally associated with the Canadian identity changed?

[2] Stockl (2005) differentiates between Micro- (fonts and colours), Meso- (configuration of text in lines and blocks), Macro- (graphic structure of an entire document) and Paratypography (instruments and materials used in the creation of textual documents) (p. 209).

1.1 The National Myth

Nationalism as an ideology, social phenomena and cultural movement first emerged in Europe alongside the rise of the modern state (Smith, 1991, p. 44). To date there exists no one singular definition of the concept;[3] however, Gellner (1983) is of the position that one must first begin by distinguishing between "the nation" and "the state" in order to begin to conceptualize what is meant by "nationalism" (p.5). He cites, "nations are the artifacts of men's convictions and loyalties and solidarities" (p. 7). While a state in contrast, is a common geographic region or shared language (Gellner, 1983, p. 7). In order to become a nation "members of the category firmly recognize a certain mutual rights and duties to other in virtue of their membership of in it" (Gellner, 1983, p. 7). In other words, residents of a specific geographic region must mutually agree upon a set of norms and standards that each party is to abide by. Once such an agreement has been made, then it is at this juncture a nation can be born. Anderson (2006 [1983]) in contrast conceptualizes "nation" and subsequently "nationalism" as a form of kinship or religion such that it orients a group of peoples to act in mutually beneficial manner. Anderson (2006 [1983]) speaks of the remarkable spirit that binds peoples of a common geographic region, even though these individuals may never come into contact with one another they are united by an "imagined" community (pp. 6-8).

[3] Apart from the scholars listed in this text, see Billing (1995); Luxemburg and Davis (1976); Canovan (1996); and Russel (1966) for contemporary reflections on the concept of nationalism.

Based on Anderson's (2001[1983]) definition, nationalism can be likened to a myth insomuch as it is the process through which customs, rituals, language and cultural emblems are used to produce a cohesive national narrative in which the citizen is an active participant. Such narratives encourage individuals to ask several questions related to their production: How do such cultural symbols, or more generally a picture, object, or thing that represents something else, reinforce national identity? Take for example the statement upon which the Canadian federation was founded, "Peace, Order, and Good Governance"[4]. Do these values continue to pervade within contemporary Canadian life? Can they be witnessed within everyday social interaction? And are they projected through the citizen's level of political engagement?

To begin to answer these questions, one must first take stock of the multitude of polemic and scholarly works that exist in the area of Canadian identity. A relevant, albeit lengthy passage, by famous Canadian writer Northrop Frye contextualizes many of the tensions, modalities and nuances associated with the Canadian identity:

> As a student going to the University of Toronto, in the early morning when the train came into Levis, on the south side of the St. Lawrence, and the great fortress of Quebec loomed out of the bleak dawn mists. I knew that much of the panorama was created by a modern railway hotel, but distance and fog lent enchantment even to that. Here was one of the imaginative and emotional centers of my own country and my own people, yet a people with whom I found it difficult to identify, what was different being not so much language as cultural memory. But the effort of making the identification was crucial: it helped me to see that a sense of unity is the opposite of a sense of uniformity. Uniformity, where everyone "belongs," uses the same clichés, thinks alike and behaves alike, produces a society which seems comfortable at first but is totally lacking in human dignity. Real unity tolerates dissent and rejoices in variety of outlook and tradition, recognizes that it is man's destiny to unite and not divide, and understands that

[4] Content extracted from section 91 of the *Canadian Constitution Act of 1867*, which available on the World Wide Web at http://laws.justice.gc.ca/en/const/index.html

> creating proletariats and scapegoats and second-class citizens is a mean and contemptible activity. Unity, so understood, is the extra dimension that raises the sense of belonging into genuine human life. Nobody of any intelligence has any business being loyal to an ideal of uniformity: what one owes one's loyalty to is an ideal of unity, and a distrust of such a loyalty is rooted in a distrust of life itself. (1971, p. xxvi)

In those sentences Frye manages to summarize the struggles that have plagued Canadian citizenry for generations. He describes the linguistic and cultural struggle that has created and continues to create a great divide within Canada, that between the Francophone and the Anglophone population of the country. Like other scholars of his time,[5] Frye was of the belief that it was the land, or metaphorically, the "imaginative and emotional" center of the country, that unites the citizenry (Frye, 1971p. xxvi). It is through this connection that peoples develop a common story, a narrative that is passed on from generation to generation, a myth that endures throughout history.

1.2 Brands as the new Myth Maker

Corporate brands have come to take on the mythological role of religion and nationalism. Holt (2005) writes "[b] rand symbolism delivers customer value by providing culturally resonant stories and images that customers use to buttress their identities" (p.273). Brands that posses iconic status "represent a particular kind of story—an *identity myth*—that [...] consumers use to address identity desires and anxieties" (Holt, 2004, p. 2). There are five groups of people whom co-author such stories:

[5] See Brooke, R. (1931); Dilks, D. (2005) [writings on the life and times of Winston Churchill in Canada 1900-1954]; Horne, (1961); Hutchison, (1943); and Massey, (1948).

companies, the culture industry,[6] intermediaries (including sales staff) and customers Holt, 2004, p. 2). At the center of Holt's (2004) thesis is the notion that "[i]dentity myths are useful fabrications that stitch back together otherwise damaging tears in the cultural fabric of the nation" (p. 8). This argument is founded upon the fact that individuals experience anxiety in their everyday lives. Myths in turn serve to "smooth over" these tensions and give individuals purpose, as well as establish their desired identities (Holt, 2004, p.9). As consumers witness the myth being reproduced, they come to believe that meaning resides within the brand's primary "sign vehicles" (logo, name or other elements of the organizations visual identity) (Holt, 2004, p.9).

1.3 Advertising as an Analytic Tool

In order to analyze the collective mythologies that bind human beings, a medium that possesses the capacity to transcend linguistic boundaries, must be utilized; art or forms of visual rhetoric, such as advertising, can assist in this endeavour; advertising is a process that uses metaphors and images to transcend linguistic boundaries leading to articulation.[7]

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[6] The work of Adorno and Horkheimer (2002 [1944]). outlines the existence of a culture industry— those groups that produce commodified forms of cultural expression.

[7] The concept of articulation is defined by Grossberg (1992) as "[...] the production of identity on top of differences, of unities out of fragments, of structures across practices (p.4). Hall (1986) similarly, defines the process of articulation as, a unity that occurs between particular discursive formations and the social forces "which can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected" (p. 53). The concept is mobilized by B'béri (2006); he argues agency is the process through which articulation occurs. In other words, differing spontaneous acts of creativity (i.e. independent filmmaking) can allow for the articulation of one's identity (p. 27).

Practitioners within the field of advertising utilize the elements and principles of design[8] to compose works worthy of communicating the merits of a particular product or brand.[6] It is thus possible to use analytical frameworks, such as semiotics, to analyze advertisements in order to consider, in a systematic way, their aesthetics qualities as well as their meaning-generating properties. Such a framework, also allows researchers to discover the mythologies that lie dormant within a piece of advertising. In particular, this is a tool that can be used to explore the myths and cultural signs that are present in national advertising initiatives produced on behalf of governments.

[8] Elements and principles of design are the universally agreed upon building blocks of any visual composition (Gatto, J., Porter A. and Selleck J., 1978). Elements of design include: line, shape, form, space, colour and texture, while the principles of design include: balance, emphasis, movement, pattern, repetition, proportion, rhythm, variety and unity (Gatto, J., Porter A. and Selleck J., 1978).

2. Literature Review

2.1 Collective Identities

Polletta and Jasper (2001: 285) define collective identity as "as an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution". This perceived connection may be imagined and it is distinct from personal identities, although it may also form part of one's personal identity (Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 285). Additionally, collective identities are embedded within cultural practices, such as names, symbols, rituals and clothing. Polletta and Jasper (2001:285) further argue that collective identities can be differentiated from ideologies, in that members of such a formation have positive feelings towards others within the group.

2.2 The Evolution of Semiotics

The notion of "semiosis", which is the central object of study for the science of semiotics, can be defined as the process in which one entity *stands in for* or is *representative of* another (Nöth, 1995, p.16). Signs exist in various forms including, smells, words, drawings, diagrams, as well as sounds, but in formal terms a sign can be defined as:

> [...] a thing which serves to convey knowledge of some other thing, which it is said to *stand for* or *represent*. This thing is called the object of the sign; the idea in the mind that the sign excites, which is a mental sign of the same object, is called an *interpretant* of the sign. (EP2.13)

For example, a sore throat indicates something else, insofar as it is the symptom of a forthcoming cold. Signs can furthermore be conceived as *natural,* those entities that posses a causal link with that which is being signified, or as *conventional,* those signs constructed by human efforts (i.e. words, sentences and figures) (Beasley et al. 2000, p.17). All human meaning is comprised of signs; without signs human being would have to experience things *anew* each time they encounter them, rather than possess a personal inventory of signs which can be drawn upon at any moment (Beasley et al., 2000, p. 15).

As Ransdell (1977) states, semiotics is "the conception of thought as a sign-interpretation process exhibiting an essentially triadic relation between sign, object, and interpretant" (p.159).

2.3 The Dyadic Method

Keane (2003) suggests that traditional structuralist thought has largely subsided as the dominant semiotic discourse, however, "its fundamental assumptions have had a sustained afterlife in post-structuralism" (p. 412). Barthes's (1972 [1957]) major contribution to the field of semiotics is his conception of myth. Myth, according to Barthes (1972 [1957]), is a type of speech that does not possess form. He argues it is a concept, an idea, or specifically a mode of signification (Ibid). For example, Barthes (1972 [1957]) uses the symbol of an arrow as an example; not only does it possess a functional meaning, namely an implement used in warfare, it also represents a challenge.

Thus in this regard the arrow is a kind of speech—a form of myth. A myth relies on a preexisting lexicon in order to generate meaning.

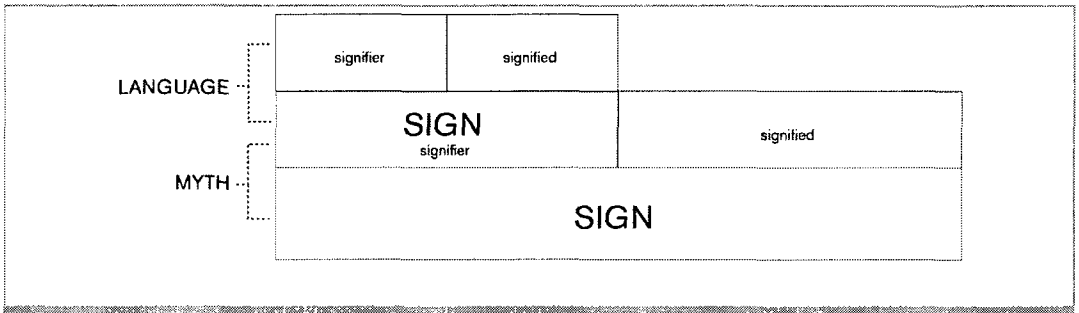


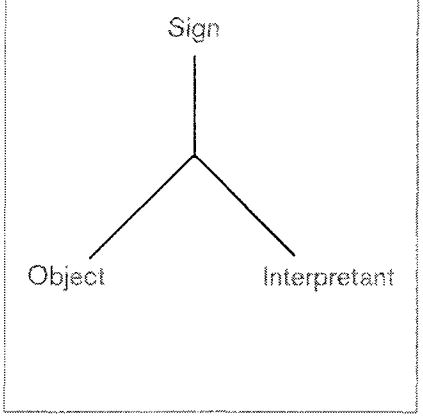
Figure 1 - Second-order signification (Barthes, (1972 [1957])

Figure 2 illustrates that a myth is a *second-order* signifier in which the original sign has gone through a secondary process of signification such that the original context of the sign has been mediated (Barthes, 1972 [1957], p. 110). Such signifiers are constitutive of the total sum of signs. However, when they are placed with other signs, they come to take on a new meaning, there history is used as a pretext for this new meaning generation (Barthes, 1972 [1957], p.5).

2.4 The Triadic Model

It was Peirce who first developed the notion of *semiosis*, which he describes as "...an action, or influence, which is, or involves, a cooperation of *three* subjects, such as a sign, its object, and its interpretant, this tri relative influence not being in any way resolvable into actions between pairs"

Figure 2 – Peircean triadic model



(EP2: 411).

Peirce describes a sign as any discrete element of meaning that conveys knowledge for, or is a representative of another (EP2.4-10). "A sign has the function of mediating between the object and interpretant, as the object is determined by the interpretant, and in turn determines the interpretant in reference to the object" (EP2: 4-10). Peirce's semiotic identifies three classes or types of signs, which result from the relation of sign and dynamical object: icons (likenesses), indices (indications) and symbols (general signs) (EP2: 5). An iconic sign can be defined as any physical pattern that resembles that which it stands for (Ibid). An index, Peirce argues, contains a sensory experience that in some way directs one's attention to something else. For instance, clouds can serve as index for an impending storm (Ibid). Symbols, in contrast, cannot represent a particular thing; rather they are capable of denoting a kind of thing (EP2: 275). More specifically, Peirce states a symbol is a sign "whose special significance or firstness to represent just what it does lies in nothing but the very fact of there being a habit, disposition, or other effective general rule that it will so be interpreted" (CP 4.44 as cited in Chandler, 2007, p. 39).

There are two types of objects: the dynamical object, and the immediate object. In the case of the former, he argues that it exists outside of a sign, while the latter hints at, or provides the potential meaning of a sign (EP2: 480-498). A dynamical object cannot be expressed by a sign, thus it is meaning is derived through "collateral experience" (EP2: 480-498). Leach (1976), for instance, uses flags to illustrate the immediate object. Despite there being an object which people are free to touch, feel, and wave, Leach

(1976) argues that flags possess meaning that exists *outside* their functionality (p.96). A flag stands for or represents the national character of a country (Leach, 1976, p. 96). In the case of Canada, the flag serves as a visual symbol of the vast geographical expanse—literally from sea to sea—by which the country has come to be defined.

An interpretant is the meaning derived from a sign, "or something created in the mind of the interpreter" (CP 8.179 as cited in Nöth, 1995, p.43). Peirce further argued that since every sign results in an interpretant, a second sign of the first, the process of semiosis occurs *ad infinitum* (CP 2.303, 2.92 as cited in Nöth, 1995, p.43). As part of his theory, Peirce defined three types of interpretants. The first kind is called the "immediate interpretant". This can be defined as "the Quality of the Impression that a sign is fit to produce, not any actual reaction" (CP 8.315 as cited in Nöth, 1995, pp.43-44). In other words the immediate interpretant is a "semiotic potentiality", "the unanalyzed effect that a sign may or is expected to produce" (Nöth, 1995, p. 44). The second kind is the "dynamical interpretant" which is the direct effect that a sign has on an interpreter. According to Nöth (1995: 44), the effect that occurs is different at each level of interpretation. The third kind is the "final interpretant", which Peirce argued is "the one Interpretative result to which every Interpreter is destined to come to if the Sign if sufficiently considered" (CP 1977b:111 as cited in Nöth, 1995, p. 44). More specifically, it is the final opinion reached regarding the meaning of a particular sign.

2.5 Social Semiotics

Drawing on the work of Peirce and semiologists (i.e. Barthes), social semioticians are concerned with "elements of signification, connotative/ cultural meanings and historical contexts" (Thurlow and Aiello, 2007, p. 312). In other words, social semiotics is the study and analysis of how meaning is produced through the careful selection, usage and combination of signs by an individual user or social group (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 156).

Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) propose a theory of "visual grammar", founded upon the notion that "expressing something verbally or visually makes a difference" (p. 2). Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) define visual grammar as the inventory of visual elements, signs, composed according to culturally specific rules that form visual communication (p.2). The rules of visual grammar are mutually agreed upon. For instance, that which constitutes "center" or "margin", "up" or "down" exists within cultures. Such constructs exist universally across all cultures, however, "with meanings and values that are likely to differ depending on that culture's histories of use of visual space, writing included (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 4). "In part, this is because the iconicity and perceptual availability of visual images make them potentially recognisable and meaningful across cultures" (Thurlow and Aiello, 2006, p. 159). Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) further argue that visual discourse has the capacity to transcend linguistic boundaries, "[i] n the era of multimodality semiotic modes other than language are treated as fully capable of serving for representation and for communication (p. 26).

For social semioticians, semiosis is a "social" practice embedded in the cultural, political and economic complexities of society (Thurlow and Aiello, 2007, p. 312). In this regard, social semiotics attempts to understand what "implications", cultural or otherwise, arise out the usage of specific signs (Thurlow and Aiello, 2007, p. 312). Kress and van Leeuwen (1996:6) argue that individuals seek to utilize signs in order to produce meaning through the use of these representations, which are heavily rooted in "cultural, social and psychological history of the sign-maker" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 6). Thus signifieds and signifiers do not posses the logical relationship that is typically attributed to signs by the study of semiology, instead Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) argue that the individual is an active participant in the production of sign meaning (p. 154). They argue, "signs-makers choose what they regard as apt, plausible means for expressing the meanings they wish to express" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 154). Analysis of this sort enables the individual, as a subject position, to "renegotiate" the structured meanings, that have become "fixed" or "naturalized" over time (Iedema, 2001: 201 as cited in Thurlow and Aiello, 2007, p. 312).

2.6 Cultural Symbols and National Identity

According to Smith (1991) a nation refers to "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all men" (p. 43). Although the nation, as a geographic boundary to which a set of peoples reside, has existed since antiquity, Smith (1991) is careful to point out that national identity, as a concept, was not present; it is true that a common set of myths, rituals and memories that served to

distinguish, for example Egyptians from others existed, however, these common elements were largely components of the religious institutions of the time (pp. 45-46).

Similarly, Anderson (2006 [1983]) outlines the history and evolution of *nation*, *nationality* and *nationalism*. Although Anderson describes how the collapse and rise of religions and dynasties set in place the conditions upon which the modern 'nation' could be conceived, he stresses it would be misleading to state that 'imagined communities' altogether replaced the former. Instead, he argues "beneath the decline of scared communities, language and lineages a fundamental change was taking place in the modes of apprehending the world, which more than else, made it possible to 'think' nation (p. 22). What Anderson is saying is that the individual was exposed to new forms of communicative distribution (i.e. printed books capable of being distributed to many people). Central to this point is the notion of "simultaneity", a concept borrowed from Walter Benjamin;[9] in which time and space become transfixed, that is to say, that a sequence of events occurs concurrently without reference to the other, as if by temporal coincidence. Anderson (2006 [1983]) further conceptualizes the nation as "sociological unit" that moves as a signal organism calendrically through "homogenous and empty time" (p.26). Although the individual as a member of an analogous collective identity, the nation, lacks any understanding of actions of other individuals or where such peoples reside at any given time, he or she is confident in their "steady, anonymous, simultaneous activity" (Anderson, 2001[1983], p.26). This phenomenon, according to Anderson, is an

[9] Although most commonly found within the field of mathematics the concept has gained further credence within the field of philosophy. The concept is further elucidated as it pertains to philosophy in the work *Illuminations* (Benjamin (P. 265) as quoted by Anderson, 2006[1983], Ed. 3, p.24).

imagined community. Anderson's thesis holds that there are two crucial elements that have evolved to allow for the maintenance of such a community, language and mass communications, specifically the advent of print media. Mass industrial society, Anderson (2006 [1983]) argues, has allowed for the mass distribution of written texts (pp.1-44). The newspaper, for example, purports to be distributed to national audiences, as evidenced by its masthead that reads "national newspaper", thus one takes this to be true without ever verifying the validity of the claim. The individual is comfortable believing that he/she is part of something larger than him- or herself the newspaper stands as proof this point, as it "is visibly rooted in everyday life" (p.36).

The conclusions drawn by Anderson (2006 [1983]) were twofold: firstly, the convergence of capitalism and print media set forth the conditions in which language could be transformed into the production of an imagined community; secondly, the dynamic and changing character of this community gave birth to the "modern nation" Anderson, 2006 [1983], p.46). Despite the potentiality of nationalism to possess a negative tone, Anderson further contends, "nations inspire love, and profoundly self-sacrificing love" (p. 141). Even in the face of abject oppression, Anderson points out that those who are victims of colonization find comfort in the one thing that binds them—their nation (Anderson, 2006 [1983], pp.141-143)

Kohn (1962) puts forth a similar definition, in which he states that nationalism is a binding force, which bestows upon a particular people a system of social order that serves to instill pride and participation in history and in the management of one's

personal affairs (p.12). Noting the difficulty in establishing a formal definition of the term *nationalism*, Anderson (2006 [1983]) suggests that rather than conceptualizing it as a form of ideology (liberalism or fascism), it is advantageous to think of the term as belonging to the category of kinship and religion (p.5).

2.7 The Olympics as a Source of National Pride

Dating back to the 750 BC, the Greeks glorified sport, a hallmark of Athenian culture. However, in AD 393 Theodsius banned sport as a public spectacle (Miller, 2003, p.12). It was not until 1894 that French aristocrat Pierre de Coubertin gave life to the Modern Olympic movement (Miller, 2003, p.12). The Movement can be categorized into four successive phases of development. The first phase was the most modest, in which the Games were hosted in low-key venues with little to no forms of urbanization (Liao and Pitts, 2008, p. 148). The second phase, which spans the years 1908-1928, was a period in which the complexity of the Games began to grow (Liao and Pitts (2008, p. 148). The event began to garner world attention, thus it required a more planned approach for managing the Games. In the third phase, from 1932-1956, Olympic urbanization began to increase (Liao and Pitts, 2008, p. 148). In the fourth phase, beginning in the 1960s, host cities were no longer seen as "an passive containers to serve the Olympic performances" (Liao and Pitts, 2008, p. 148), rather large-scale infrastructure projects were undertaken to enhance the cities image and improve existing facilities for future benefit.

The motto of the Olympic Games is "Citius, Altius, Fortius – swifter, higher, stronger" (Miller, 2003, p.12). The athlete, according to Tavares (2004: 139), stands in as a cultural metaphor, a "signifier" of these values. Athletes are often regarded within contemporary society as celebrities and their dedication to sport is seen as reflection of their moral certitude.

The Olympics as such are not only a venue to demonstrate a nations athletic prowess, for a host nation they represent an opportunity to promote a country's image abroad (Berkowitz et al., 2007, pp. 164–178). For Turin, the host city of the 2006 Winter Olympic Games, the Games represented one part of the city's strategy to re-brand its image from a one company town to an international creative hotspot (Vanolo, 2007, p. 326). China also used the Olympics as the means to change perceptions of the countries human rights record. As Dinnie (2008) writes, "[t] he hosting of international sports events such as the Olympic Games or the FIFA World Cup has been effectively used to favorably publicize and re-image [sic] a place on a global scale" (p. 123). However, the cost of hosting the Olympic Games is seen by some as outweighing any of the potential competitive advantages it might offer. Liao and Pitts (2008:145-146) point out that to host an Olympic Games a city must build and/or prepare 31-38 competition venues, up to 90 training sites, an athlete's village that can comfortably hold up to 15,000 participants as well as National Olympic dignitaries. These requirements are on top of all the other logistic, transport, telecommunications and entertainment facilities that need to be in place prior to the commencement of the Games. Whitelegg (2000: 801) points to the debt incurred as a result of the 1976 Montreal Olympics, a total of $2.4 billion paid

exclusively by taxpayers. That is why, according to Whitelegg (2000) successful Games seek private sector funding. The 1984 Los Angeles Olympic Games is often cited as the first successful public-private partnership of this kind, in which corporate sponsors assisted in mitigating costs incurred to host the Games (Whitelegg, 2000, p. 802).

2.8 The Canadian Federation

It is Grant's (2007 [1965]) contention that Canadian nationalism died at the defeat of former Primer Minister John Diefenbaker. As Grant argues, there was a concerted effort on the part of the elite, primarily those of higher economic and educational status, to mire the reputation of Diefenbaker and in doing so allow for the expansion capitalism. Furthermore, it is of the opinion of Grant (2007 [1965]) that Diefenbaker possessed a vision of Canada as a united nation in which citizens irrespective of race and religion could live without fear of class divisiveness (pp. 3-74).

Grant (2007 [1965]) illustrates that the Defense Crisis[10] of 1962-63 is a testament to Diefenbaker's steadfast vision of Canada. Despite pressures from the academic community, political and business elite, Diefenbaker would not to succumb to the wishes of he U.S. to accept nuclear missiles, in the wake of the Cold War (p. 33). He was of the belief that the U.S. would "swallow" the Canadian nation, culturally, economically and politically, as had been the case in the past. Pearson, who was at the time leader of the Liberal party, originally denounced the U.S. for asking Canada to harbour nuclear

[10] Also referred to by others including Abel (1966); Beggs (1971); Hillsman (1996); and Hunt (1996) as the Cuban Missile Crisis.

missiles (Grant, 2007 [1965], pp.33-35). However, he later changed his position and became Diefenbaker's staunchest critic. Diefenbaker maintained his position, upholding the contention that if Canada were to accept U.S. nuclear arms they would concurrently surrender Canadian sovereignty (Grant, 2007 [1965], pp.33-35). Canada could play a more fruitful role in the world should it remain distant from the U.S. during the Defense Crisis. Diefenbaker was later defeated by Pearson who would go on to label Diefenbaker as ineffectual, an opponent of individual rights and capitalist expansion, a demagogue and ironically "un-Canadian". According to Grant (2007 [1965]) 1963 is of historical importance for Canadian identity, as it marks the birth of Pearsonian Internationalism (pp.36-39). It was at this juncture in the evolution of Canadian identity that the enduring myth of Canada as a middle-power, helpful fixer and peacekeeper gained prominence.

Acceptance of the capitalist mode of production and subsequently liberal democratic ideologies has led to the debasement of a collective Canadian identity (Grant, 2007 [1965]). In this regard, the rise of the "Culture Industry"[11] has transformed Canadian symbols. Grant (2007 [1965]) describes capitalism as "the great solvent of all tradition in the modern era" (p.46). He further states "[w]hen everything is made relative to profit-making, all traditions of virtue are dissolved, including that aspect of virtue known as love of country. This is why liberalism is the perfect ideology for capitalism" (p.46-47).

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[11] Adorno and Horkeimer (2001[1973]) were the first to propose the term. The *Culture Industry;* it can be conceived as the production of culture akin to that of mass-produced products. Such cultural products are produced to *pacify* the masses, making the individual docile subject less likely to acknowledge his or her subjugated class position.

A recurrent theme found throughout many articles (see Berger, Harris and Mc Naught 1966) in Russell's (1966) anthology is that of Canada as a northern nation; this position is supported by the works of other notable Canadian scholars, such as Harold Innis (1930 [2001]). In fact, Berger (1966) argues that former Prime Minister John Diefenbaker was one of the greatest proponents of the *northern peoples'* myth reflected in the following passage taken from remarks he made in Winnipeg. "I see a new Canada"—not orientated east and west, but looking northward, responding to the challenges of the hinterland, its energies focused on the exploration and exploitation of the Arctic—"A Canada to the North" (as cited in Russell, 1966, p.23). The propagation of this myth has played a foundational role in the construction of the Canadian identity. In fact, Canadian values have come to represent self-reliance, strength and endurance, and such values are often attributed to individuals who reside within northern regions (Harris, 1966, p.5). In contrast, Harris (1966) challenges this myth. He contends that the increasingly urbanized landscape in Canada, in conjunction with increased technological advancements, have eroded the credence of the northern myth (Harris, 1966 as cited in Russell, 1966). To support this claim, Harris (1966) points to the widespread national identity crisis faced by Canadians. However, Mackey (2002: 21) points out other former British colonies, such as Australia, struggle with issues concerning national identity as well. It is the discourses that guide our understanding of "nationalism" that are to blame for this anxiety, writes Mackey (2002: 21), as they have the potential to breed "racism". A fact that is made evident in the scholarly material that exists on the matter, most of which originate from the U.S. and Britain; these two nations do not share, or more fundamentally, embrace the multiculturalism that is seen in such countries as Canada.

"This form of racism is new because it has shifted from a focus on crude ideas of biological inferiority and superiority to a language of race with nationhood, patriotism and nationalism" (Mackey, 2002, p.21). Nationalism in this regard privileges the "homogenous in its whiteness". However, in the case of Canadian nationalism, it is the state sanctioned *proliferation* of cultural diversity that is a defining characteristic of the nation's collective identity (Mackey, 2002, p.21). Therefore, to apply notions of nationalism as they are conceptualized in Britain and the U.S. can be misleading and as such result in anxiety or a state of crisis (Mackey, 2002, p.21).

2.9 Marketing / Advertising and the Advent of Branding

The origins of the term advertising can be traced back to antiquity, specifically the Medieval Latin word "adverto" "to direct one's attention to" (Beasley et al. 2000, p.9). The use of advertising, however, can be traced to as far back as 3000 BC, to Babylonian when storeowners would place signs in front of their stores to promote the service or product offered. As Beasley et al. (2000:17) posit advertising is both an art and a science, in that practitioners in the field utilize aesthetics to both influence and persuade the consumptive behaviors of individuals. Additionally, advertising uses the sciences of psychology, sociology and semiotics among others to analyze the level of success of persuasion techniques. The results from such assessments are in turn used to create more effective marketing and advertising campaigns.

Christensen and Askegaard (1999) assert that when speaking of the core of a

brand, its corporate identity, one is in fact referring to a collective or partly shared interpretant[12] that forms an image in the mind of the consumer (p.305). Building on the work of Peirce, Messaris (1997) argues that images can reproduce the appearance of reality and as such elicit a variety of preprogrammed responses. Such responses are forms of iconicity, which, according to Messaris (1997: 7) are fundamental to the creation of advertisements. The stylistic elements of advertisements are as important to their iconicity as are the photographs used, for they "also may bear an iconic relationship to our real-world visual experiences" (Messaris, 1997, p. xv). Additionally, Messaris (1997) argues that form produces meaning, both directly and/or indirectly, for example, hard lines in comparison to curved lines refer to masculinity while the latter refers to femininity (p.46). A photograph, Messaris (1997) argues, stands in for, or is a representative of a previous historical event (p. x). In the case of Michael Jordan, a photograph of him wearing a pair of basketball shoes serves as a historical record, or more aptly a testimonial of his endorsement of the product (Ibid, p, xxvi).

In contrast, Goldman and Papson (1996) describe contemporary forms of advertising as a *semiotic equation* in which "disconnected signifiers are entered and then recombined to create new equivalencies" (p.2). Practitioners within the field of advertising are experts at removing signs from their intended or *natural* context, and then placing them with other signs, which have also been abstracted, to form new signs of a conjectural nature (Goldman and Papson, 1996, pp.5-8). Peirce refers to this process as "semiosis", in which symbols have the capacity to grow (EP2: 10). Barthes (1972

[12] This term is defined in detail on p. 17 of this thesis.

[1957]), in contrast, argues that this process is caused by the formation of second-order signifiers, or myth, which "both notifies us and also imposes itself on us" (p.5) (See Figure 2). Although signs have a tendency to propagate pseudo-individualism, that is to say a false sense of individuality perpetuated by advertisements, Goldman and Papson (1996) argue that signs are necessary in projecting and maintaining identity, as signs stand in for social indicators; allowing the individual to differentiate the self from another (p. 41). Goldman and Papson (1996) conclude that advertisements have the capacity to "unintentionally capture our cultural contradictions" (p.18). In using this term Goldman and Papson (1996), are referring to the identities constructed by advertisers that do not fit seamlessly, thus acting as a counterpoint, to preexisting individual identities (p.18). For example, cosmetics companies who promote their products as a way to achieve beauty do so knowing full well that individuals will not be able attain the level of aesthetic perfection that is projected through their advertising. And while consumers know that no amount of makeup can make one perfect, they nonetheless consume the product. This phenomenon is now so pervasive that advertisers themselves challenge these cultural contradictions within their promotional materials (Goldman and Papson, 1996, p.18).[13]

[13] The company Dove and their campaign titled "Real Beauty" serves as an example of such a marketing strategy. The commercial "Evolution" produced by Dove, forms part of this campaign: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U.

2.10 The Practice of Branding

In his article Balmer (2001) argues that notions of branding, corporate identity and corporate marketing have come to represent ambiguous terms often misunderstood by scholars and practitioners alike. He cites fifteen reasons for this misunderstanding—for which the major cause is the inability of scholars to agree upon a definition for each of the terms.[14] The term "branding" is of particular difficulty, as it has entered into the everyday vernacular of professionals and academics across many fields of study. However, there is no consensus as to the meaning of the term. Perhaps some of the confusion, Balmer (2001) argues, can be attributed to what Giora (1998) describes as the existence of a multiplicity of fragmented identities within organizational communities (p.258).

Balmer (2001) along with other scholars (Aaker, 1996; Balmer, 1995, 1999; Ind, 1996; de Chwenatony, 1999; Gregory, 1997; Kapferer, 1992; King, 1991) contends that a *brand* contains a mix "of cultural, intricate, tangible and ethereal elements" (p.253). These scholars further agree that a brand is driven by both internal and external stakeholders—that is to say each party plays an important role in promoting, nurturing and evolving the brand. The brand must also be integrated into the overall organizational philosophy, or as Balmer (2001) states, communicated through total corporate

[14] See Balmer and Wilkinson (1991); Ind (1992), Olines (1978) and Van Riel and Balmer (1997).

communications (p. 250).[15] Christensen and Askegaard (1999) define corporate identity, borrowing from Gray (1986), as:

> [...] symbolic representations of organisations that appeal to many different audiences across formal boundaries and of organisational image as a composite interpretation (or set of interpretations) of these representations an interpretation composed of perceptions and impressions among both members and non-members of the organization (p.298).

Corporate identity is externalized for the consumption of both internal and external publics using various sign vehicles (i.e. advertising, public relations and other promotional activities). Secondly, in terms of articulating corporate image, Christensen and Askegaard (1999) contend that it is not possible to differentiate between external and internal perceptions, for employees of an organization are members of various social networks that in turn receive impressions of the organization (pp.293-94). In fact, given the cluttered semiotic environment in which organizations compete with one another by means of symbols to assert distinctiveness, the most important receiver of such forms of communications is the organization's own internal public. Thus corporate image can be defined as the sum total of perceptions of an organization. Furthermore, corporate image and identity are often used in academic literature interchangeably); however, Christensen and Askegaard (1999) have rightly defined the specific functionality of each. This definition is similar to what Oswald (2007) suggests; "A brand is a system of signs and symbols that engages the consumer in an imaginary/symbolic process that contributes tangible value to a product offering" (p.1).

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[15] Balmer (2001:250) defined *total corporate communication* as the philosophy whereby an organization views everything they do as a form of communication.

Scholars such as Anholt (2003) and van Ham (2001) argue that the 'nation' is representative of a brand. Anholt (2003) in particular states that "[c]ountry branding occurs when publics speak to publics; when a substantial proportion of the population of the country—not just the civil servants and paid figureheads—gets behind the strategy and lives it out in their everyday dealings with the outside world" (p.123). Large (1991) argues that although the Canadian Federal Government has not had a strong reputation for design, it has set in place a strategic graphics system to manage a government's various visual assets (i.e. logos, emblems and flags). First established on October 23, 1970 the Government of Canada Federal Identity Program (FIP) is charged with the mandate of ensuring that official Federal government's graphic elements are used consistently as set out in formal FIP policies. Large (1991) points out that one of the most important elements of FIP is its role in ensuring bilingualism is present within all official Government communicative materials, in fulfillment of the Official Languages Act of 1969.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study is qualitative in nature: an inductive mode of reasoning has been employed, in light of the way the research project came into being—beginning with a set of general observations, which have now been operationalized into a set of key research questions.[16] Berg (2007) states the "inductive approach begins with the researchers 'immersing' themselves in the documents (that is the various messages) in order to identify the dimensions or *themes* that seem meaningful to the producers of each message" (p.255). Additionally, this thesis is microscopic in scale as the unit of analysis does not form part of "a collective or larger social unit such as an organization, a community, or a social system" (McLeod and Tichenor, 2002, p. 14) it is rather, specific to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Games.

3.2 Semiotics

Semiotics as a theoretical approach has been utilized to analyze the Vancouver 2010 Olympic brand. This methodological approach has been selected as it is best suited for situations in which one wishes to extrapolate "all aspects of visual communication which could never be revealed...through content analysis" (van Leeuwen and Jewitt, 2001, p. 8). In other words, semiotic analysis differs from content analysis in that it allows for assessment of the more nuanced elements of visual texts (i.e. how images

[16] These questions are outlined on p. 15 of this thesis.

interact with one another to form new meaning potentials). More specifically, the present study has drawn upon the work of social semioticians Kress and van Leeuwen (1996) who propose the *theory of visual grammar*. Although the term "grammar" is often associated with a linguistic set of rules, namely how words are placed in relation to one another to construct sentences, phrases etc, the theory of "visual" grammar does not possess the formality of such grammatical frameworks; rather "visual grammar describes the way in which depicted elements – people, places, and things – combine in visual statements of greater or lesser complexity and extension" (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p.1). Furthermore, the methodological framework employed in Thurlow and Aiellos's (2007) paper titled "National pride, global capital: a social semiotic analysis of transnational visual branding in the airline industry" will be used for the purposes of this study. Within the course of their study a three-pronged analytic framework was used: descriptive text analysis, interpretive text analysis and critical text analysis. The descriptive text analysis is used to establish a "[...] semiotic repertoire used across all 561 tailfin designs" (Thurlow and Aiello, 2006, p. 313). In the second phase of the study, the interpretive text analysis, Thurlow and Aiello (2007) attempt to uncover the meaning potentials[17] of each of the tailfin designs. They do so while relying on fine art discourses (p.313). Finally, critical text analysis is used to make linkages to the economic – cultural and political usages of tailfin design in the airline industry (p. 313).

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[17] A more thorough discussion of the term meaning potentials is warranted given its importance in relation to this study. In Casas (2006) working paper titled, *Critique of Van Leeuwen's Introducing Social Semiotics,* "meaning potential" is described as "[...]'original' meaning that has undergone change to produce a new meaning in a text, whose 'original' meaning is nevertheless perceptible in the text" (p.1). **Note permission was obtained from the author to cite this article.

3.3 Sample Size and Selection

A convenient sample of images identified as being the most salient components of the Vancouver 2010 brand were collected. However, once this collection was preliminary assessed it became apparent that a single signature graphic was used consistently throughout all marketing materials. As such it was determined that rather than analyzing specific communications vehicles (i.e. website, brochures print advertisements etc.) it would be more advantageous to analyze the signature image. This graphic is composed of four key elements: a textured background, the Vancouver 2010 logo, an athlete pictogram and the slogan "With Glowing Hearts". These images were taken from the VANOC public website and in turn downloaded in an electronic format. As no persons were used in the course of the study and all visual materials were publicly accessible no ethical clearance was required.

3.4 Analytic Process

The present study is chiefly concerned with analyzing the visual discourse[18] produced and distributed in promotion of the Vancouver 2010 Olympic games. The study has focused specifically on the images and visual design of each of the materials. As Kress and van Leeuwen (2001) assert, meaning is located in the discourses that

[18] The term "visual discourse" is borrowed from Aiello and Thurlow (2006), who define the concept as "as the deployment of resources (rather than codes) for social action, and whose meaning potentials (rather than meanings) may be exploited for political, economic and ideological ends" (p.150).

contextualize and constitute the image or text (as cited in Aiello and Thurlow, 2006, p. 158). Thus the current study has analyzed the multiple discursive formations as well as myths that exist within each of the chosen visual materials. The term "myth", as it is proposed by Berger (1966:14), is used to describe the narratives intentionally placed within the signature image and rendered in a visual format.

I began by first using the Peircean tri-relative semiosis process to code qualitative visual elements into one of two categories *qualisign* (abstractions) and *sinsign* (physical manifestations), both of which fall within the larger category described by Peirce as iconicity (qualities) (EP2: 289-293). More precisely, a qualisign is any sign that is a quality and/or abstraction (EP: 2.294). Additionally, a qualisign, according to Peirce, is an icon (EP2.294). A sinsign, which can also be iconic in nature, argues Peirce, is the physical manifestation of an abstraction, an actual singular thing (E2: 291-292). Take for example "redness", as proposed by Peirce (EP2: 668-270). On its own the term exists as an abstraction, a possible colour, a qualitative thing (qualisign) and cannot be conceptualized unless it becomes materialized in physical form. However, when various pigments are combined to produce a patch of red paint, the abstracted notion of "redness" takes on a concrete physical presence (sinsign), the abstraction becomes a thing which *exists* in time and space which one can see, smell and touch.

In the final section of this analysis, I adopted a social semiotic perspective to assess the discourses produced. I first coded the number of times a specific sinsign (i.e. images of trees appear 17 times, while those of birds appear 13 times) appears within the

signature graphic. Those iconic signs possessing a similar context (i.e. trees and leaves are found within the natural world) were grouped together to constitute formations, in this case "Nature". To help explain the usage of discursive formations one can think about the concept of "Nature". The words "tree" and "leaf" will perhaps come to mind, thus people will interpret these concepts as belonging to the same semiotic category. Peirce supports this claim when he writes, "[...] symbols come into being by development out of other signs, particularly likenesses [icons] or from mixed signs" (EP2: 10). The production of such discourses is carried out through a process of linking together likenesses (icons), producing specific discourses, which in turn gives way to "discursive formations" (Hall, 1996). To understand what is meant by the term "discursive formation", one must first understand how discourse is conceptualized. To begin, Hall (1996) states that:

> Discourses are ways of referring to or constructing knowledge about a particular topic of practice: a cluster or formation of ideas, images and practices, which provide ways of talking about, forms of knowledge and conduct associated with, a particular topic, social activity or institutional site in society (p. 6).

Based on Hall's notion of discourse, the term "discursive formation" can in turn be defined as the appropriate usage of practices as they relate to a specific "subject or site of social activity", truthful knowledge and to what persons or subject(s) embody the discourses of particular characteristics (Hall, 1996, p.6). In simpler terms, "discursive formations" are the unity or the regularities that organize ideas, concepts and/or propositions such that these form "chains of equivalence" (Laclau and Mouffe (2001 [1985]), or the potential for new ideological possibilities. Take for example the image of a seagull, on its own this image does not possess the potential to articulate a specific discourse; however, when this same image is placed within the larger discursive

formation of "Nature", the interpreter can occupy various discursive positions. One might wish to discuss the seagull as part of the ecosystem, or focus on how the seagull is interpreted by those that reside within costal region as a symbol of their hometown. The seagull in each of the preceding instances represents more than just a bird; it possesses a specific discursive character, the meaning of which is arrived at through a process of coding and decoding (Hall, 1996, p.6). Hall (1996) argues that the meaning of any sign lies somewhere between the sender and the receiver (p.10). To return to the example of the seagull, the process of decoding the sign allows one to go beyond its intended meaning (simply a bird) to something much more complex (cultural symbol).

4. Analysis

4.1 Descriptive Semiotic Analysis

All marketing materials produced by the Vancouver Olympic Committee (VANOC) contain four elements: a primary brand identifier ([1] the Inukshuk logo), a supporting brand statement ([2] with glowing hearts tagline) and supporting brand imagery ([3] athlete pictogram and [4] textured background). Each of these elements embodies and seeks to visually reinforce the brand values outlined by VANOC; these include: team, trust, excellence, sustainability and creativity.[19]

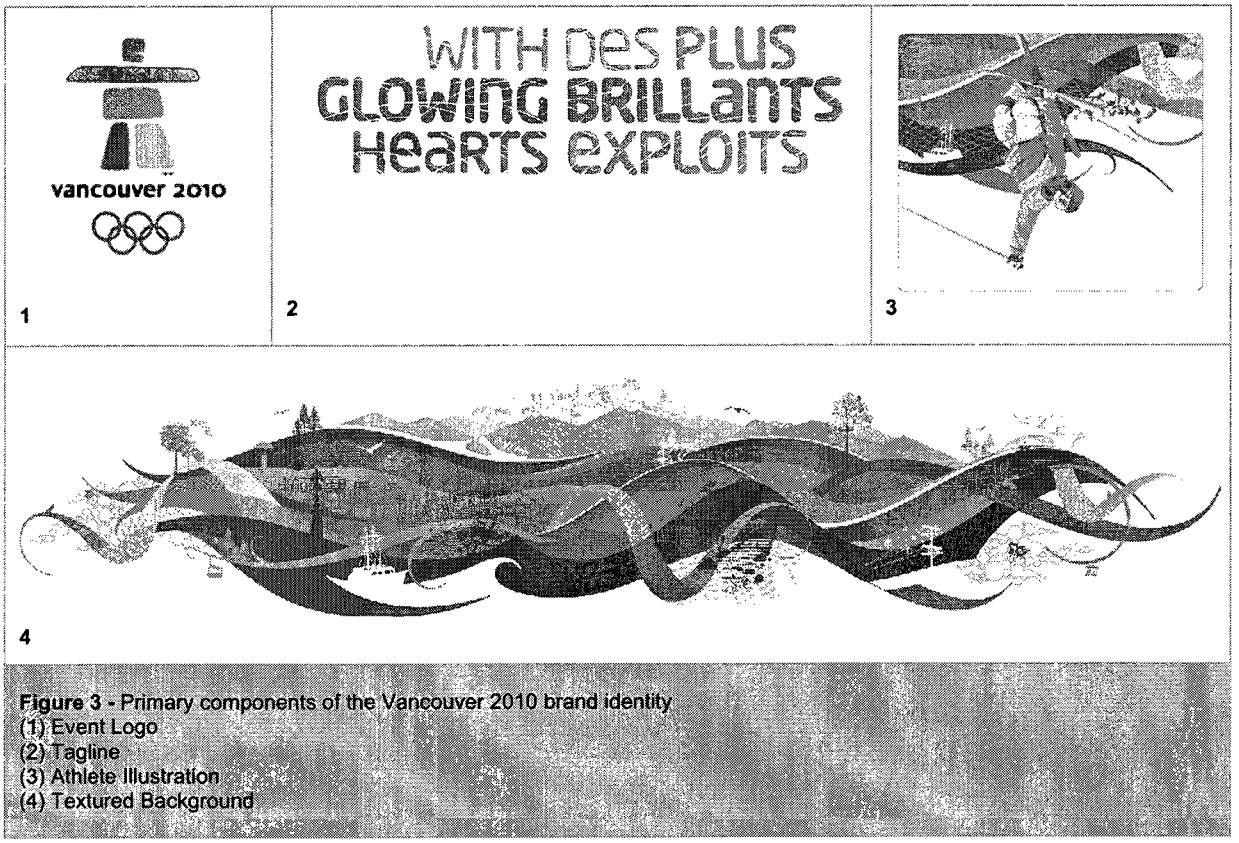


Figure 3 - Primary components of the Vancouver 2010 brand identity
(1) Event Logo
(2) Tagline
(3) Athlete Illustration
(4) Textured Background

[19] Text taken from the publicly accessible VANOC website at: http://www.vancouver2010.com/en/about-vanoc/organizing-committee/mission-vision-and-values/-/33424/14l0iph/index.html

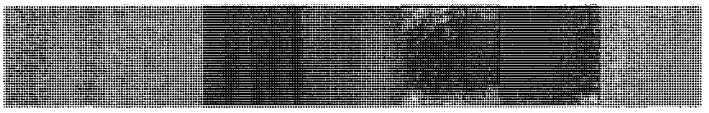
Of all the qualisigns used to compose the textured background, trees appear most frequently. In fact, there are 17 instances in which trees are depicted. Additionally, there are 16 images of birds. Geometric patterns are also a prevalent qualisign, such patterns are used 13 times within the within the textured background. And finally, there are a total of 11 cultural icons, which include Chinese lanterns as well as Aboriginal images, these iconic signs appear 8 and 3 times respectively.

When these forms of iconicity are grouped according to the number of times they appear within the textured background (see diagram titled Symbolic Categories – Textured Background) two discursive formations are constructed: Nature and Urbanity. These two formations were constructed based on there thematic relationship to the sinsigns identified.

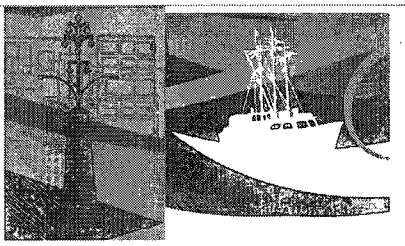
Textured background

Iconicity	
Basic Visual Units Qualisigns	**Visual Structures** Sinsigns
Colour Green Light Blue Blue White Line Organic Curvilinear Balance Asymmetrical Use of negative space	Silhouetted Images Seagull Goose Evergreen tree Wind turbine Lighthouse Traffic Light Aboriginal illustration of clouds Train tracks Cattails Power lines Ski lift Chinese lantern Wheat Kite Umbrella Fire hydrant

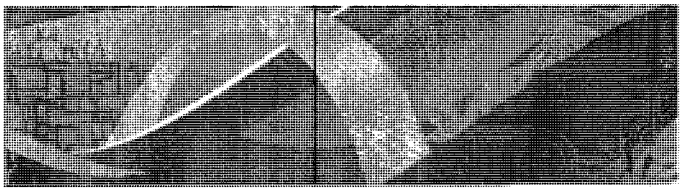
Repetition Abstracted textural patterns placed within amorphous shapes Texture Geometric Organic Stylization Illustrative Literal	Abstracted Forms Tree branches Interior of maple leaf Tree branch Tree leaves (deciduous) Spray painted graffiti Wood grain Circuit board Unidentifiable Abstracted Forms Fragmented diagonal lines Overlapping rectangles in a geometric formation A series of intersecting straight lines that form a web Aboriginal illustration of amorphous shapes rendered in a curvilinear wave like pattern



1



2



3

4

Figure 4 - Basic Visual Units Textured Background: Qualisigns
(1) Colour Pallet
(2) Asymmetrical Balance an Use of Negative and Positive Space
(3) Repetition of abstracted Textural Patterns
(4) Use of Organic Curvilinear Lines

Symbolic Categories – Textured Background

Iconicity		Symbolicity
# of appearances	**Visual Structures** Iconic Categories	**Discursive Formations** Legisigns
16	Birds	**Nature**
17	Trees (including tree leaves)	
1	Wheat	
1	Wood grain	
1	Mountain range (background)	
11	Cultural Icons (Chinese lanterns [8], Aboriginal iconography [3])	**Urbanity**
1	Cobble stone	
2	City Skyline	
1	Wind Turbine	
1	Ski Lift	
1	Umbrella	
1	Fire Hydrant	
13	Geometric pattern	
2	Microchip	
1	Kite	
1	Light House	
1	Traffic Light/street lights	
1	Plane	
1	Graffiti	

A. Urbanity

Designers of the graphic identity for the Vancouver 2010 brand state that a conscious effort was made to "visually depict urban life in Canada" (VANOC, 2008). To assist in promoting this discourse "diversity" is used as a theme, as cities are often cited as being diverse in cultural makeup (Carless, 1966, as cited in Russell 1966, pp.271-283). It is through the "collaging" of various "intertexual"[20] media that diversity is illustrated. The resulting effect is an interplay of iconic signs: a Chinese lantern, a fishing boat and an Aboriginal pictograph, for instance, when combined are interpreted as many cultures living in unison. Digital illustrations were used instead of photographs. This suggests an attempt to produce new symbolic meanings, by taking icons from their "natural" context and recombining them (Goldman and Papson, 1996, pp.5-8). In other words, the imagery that needed to be produced to promote the core values of the Vancouver 2010 brand did not exist, and thus photography was used to produce these values; since it is a medium used to "bear an iconic relationship to our real-world visual experiences" (Messaris, 1997, p. xv), designers instead reproduced "the appearance of reality and as such elicit[ed] a variety of preprogrammed responses" (Messaris, 1997, p. 7). These iconic signs (i.e. traffic lights, fire hydrant, graffiti) stand for human beings and thus represent life in Canadian urban centers. The depiction of cityscapes presents the city in a disembodied and detached fashion with "[...] seldom any indication of the more gritty, idiosyncratic aspects of city life" (Aiello and Thurlow, 2006, p.153). The result of

[20] Intertexuality refers to the shaping of a texts meaning based on other texts. More formally, Morgan argues intertextuality "defined generally as the structural relations among two or more texts, to any of the disciplines in humanities and the social scienes" (p.8).

omitting the social component of the city is a privileging of the built environment's materiality, such that it reinforces existing power relations as they are inscribed within the physical setting of everyday life (Soja, 1989, p.6 as cited in Aiello and Thurlow, 2006, p. 153). In other words, choosing not to depict the peoples that reside within these cities, but rather the architectural structures, as well as the other material elements, runs counter to the intended meaning of promoting a "diverse" cosmopolitan city insomuch as these digital landscapes suppress the truly diverse cultural ethnicities that reside within.

B. Nature

The many scholarly texts on Canadian nationalism arrive at consistent theme, the intimate attachment Canadians have with the natural environment.[21] There is evidence to support this assertion within the visuals used to promote the Vancouver 2010 brand. Trees, birds and other natural icons are placed within the textured background, representing traditional notions of Canadian identity (i.e. "Canada the land and its people" or "Canada: a northern nation"). However, upon closer analysis it is clear that traditional Canadian iconography was all but abandoned, those images that have historically been used to promote Canadian mythological narratives were noticeably absent. In particular the animal icons used were not of the polar bear, beaver or moose, all of which have traditionally been defined as possessing Canadian symbolicity (Coupland, 2004). Given that the Vancouver 2010 Games are to take place in the winter, there is a visual disconnect between the natural icons selected and what one would

[21] See Brooke, 1931; Hutchison, 1942; Massey, 1948; Horne, 1961; Porter, 1967; Harris, 1976; Malcolm, 1985; Saul, 1997)

associate with the winter (i.e. snow, white, the polar bear, beaver etc.). Instead emphasis was placed on vegetation and other plant life. This is not a matter of nuance, rather it demonstrates a much more profound distancing from historical Canadian mythologies and the privileging of a new mythological narrative. To further illustrate this point one should observe that the icons depicting nature appear to form part of the background. Thus their relative scale is diminished, as objects that appear in the foreground typically appear to be larger in size. There is a privileging of urban icons (i.e. wind turbines, electrical towers, and other modern forms of construction appear in the foreground and larger). To help demonstrate this point I have selected a cross-section of the textured background to ensure that icons appear as intended by the designers.

I will begin in the background and I will finish with the foreground: mountains (in light blue), evergreen trees (in dark green), ferns (abstracted form) bird (in grey), fire hydrant/umbrella, tree, cityscape (abstracted form), lighthouse/streetlight, fishing vessel. In this small cross section it is possible to see that all natural elements predominantly appear in the background, which diminishes their size and relative importance in relation to urban elements such as the fishing vessel and lighthouse. Also it is worth noticing the size of the fire hydrant/umbrella in

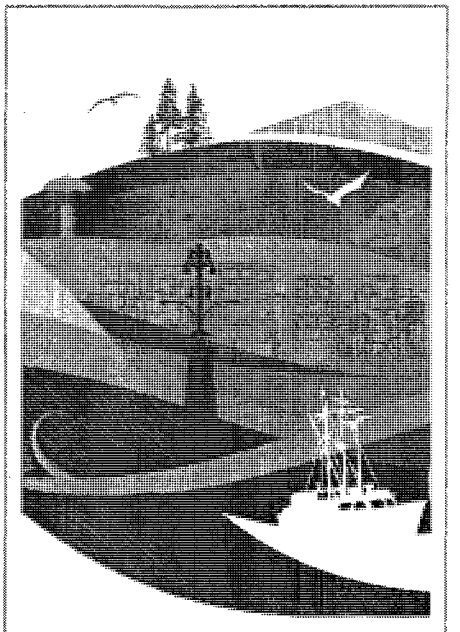


Figure 5 – Cross Section of Textured Background

relation to the evergreen trees, these two items appear in a similar location in the background and the size of each is almost identical, however in reality a fire hydrant is typically much smaller in relation to a full-grown set of trees. Thus the meaning of these two icons is equated, as both take up a similar amount of space within the overall composition.

Furtherer analysis indicated images that depict urbanity are primarily constructed using "hard" lines in geometric formations, which according to Messaris (1997: 46), connotes masculinity. While in contrast, all of the environmental, or natural iconic signs are produced using organic, curvilinear lines. The presence of each represents a discursive tension between "urbanity" and "nature", as masculinity is a trait often equated to strength, dominance and endurance, while femininity is typically thought to be weak, docile and subservient (Messaris, 1997, p.46). Thus in this regard urban forms are privileged over natural forms of iconicity.

C. Dimorphic Visual Structures as Symbols of Identity in Flux

By "fusing" images of urbanity (i.e. wind turbine) with images of the natural environment (i.e. tree), "disconnected signifiers" were recombined to form "[...] new equivalencies" (Goldman and Papson, 1996, p.2). These conjunctures or "dimorphic" structures (B'béri, 2007) point to a collective identity in "flux"; more fundamentally they point to the existence of "cultural contradictions" (Goldman and Papson, 1996, p. 18) generated by the Vancouver 2010 brand. Dimorphic structures are a conjunction of two

opposing visual images, that possess their own iconic meaning, and when juxtaposed with one another produce new meaning potentials (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996, p. 19). Dimorphic images are not found within everyday visual grammar (Kress and van Leeuwen, 1996), which makes it difficult to decode, reconcile, or interpret them. Although these images are fused, literally becoming one in the same, they appear visually distinct and make interpretation a difficult task. In this regard, viewers of such visual texts can only *predict* their meaning based on supporting visual elements.

The word "transmoflection" is used by VANOC to describe the textured background. Using "trans" as part of the graphic title connotes a kind of "change" or "evolution" from an existing thing to a new or undetermined thing.[22] This can be visually interpreted within the signature graphic, in that signs literally grow out of existing signs, so it suggests growth" and "maturation". The meaning of these two signs, when transposed, combine to form something new. They metaphorically represent the coming together of singular identities to form a collectivity.

The dimorphic images, furthermore suggest a paradoxical relationship between two identity formations, on the one hand, Canada and its traditional roots and on the other, a nation with vibrant cultural metropolises. As VANOC intended to depict Canadian cities the result of such tension is a "cultural contradiction", as the advertiser has created an identity that does not fit seamlessly within the identity of the consumer (Goldman and Papson, 1996, p. 18). The dimorphic images can be seen as a source of

[22] The term, according to VANOC officials, refers to the reflexivity of the graphic identity of the Vancouver 2010 brand.

anxiety insomuch as the two are conceptually irreconcilable. They create confusion and anxiety, because when these images are fused together they no longer belong within he bounds of cultural normativity, paralleling the notion of "cultural contradiction" as cited by Goldman and Papson (1996, p. 18) in which advertisers places contradictory images together that form.

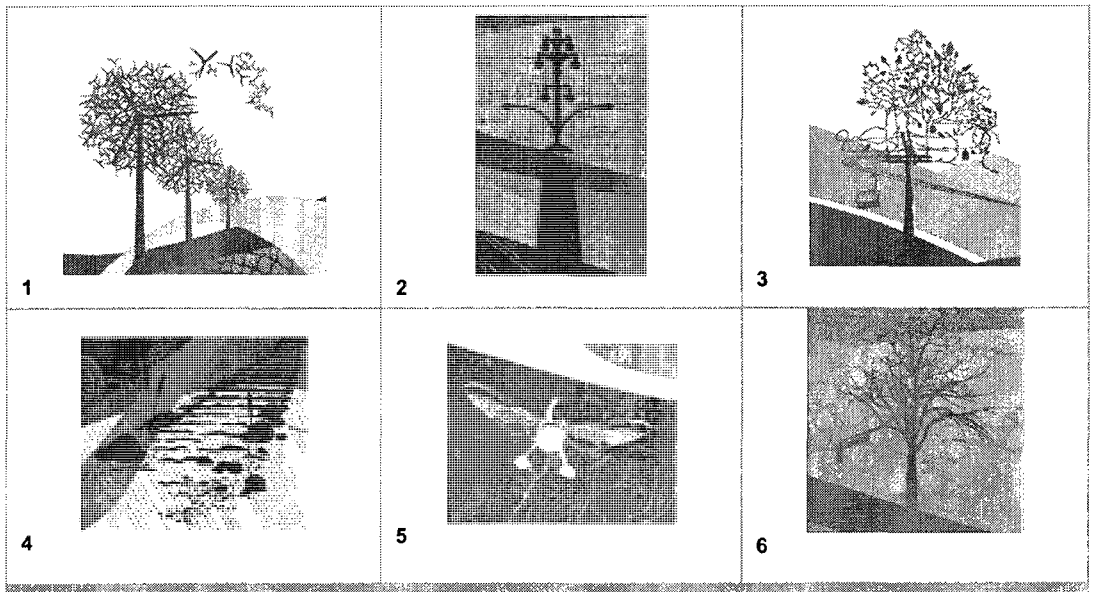


Figure 6 - Dimorphic Symbols
(1) Wind turbine / tree
(2) Lighthouse / traffic light
(3) Tree / ski lift
(4) Train tracks / marsh
(5) Plane / Insect
(6) Traffic light / tree

Other Semiotic Elements

A. Supporting Headline

There is a clear discursive tension between the two primary linguistic groups represented by the Vancouver 2010 brand. Specifically, the use of the slogan "With glowing hearts"—a text extracted directly from the Canadian National anthem—is placed back-to-back with the French equivalent "Des plus Brillants exploits" (see figure 7).[23] The placement of each of these phrases creates a French-English binary, in which privilege is given to English. Individuals who live within North America, those to whom the promotional materials are primarily targeted at, read text from left to right and as such would instinctively read the English text first, followed by the French. Thus based on placement of the text, a visual hierarchy is constructed in which English takes precedence over French, reinforcing a prevailing Canadian linguistic duality. This tension is made light of in Frye's comments cited earlier on: " [...] a people with whom I found it difficult to identify, what was different being not so much language as cultural memory" (Frye, 1971, p. xxvi).

Additionally the placement of French and English text literally back-to-back creates a visual barrier in which each of the linguistic slogans is viewed as a separate entity. Canadian identity has come to be characterized as primarily "multicultural" in nature. In fact the official government position on this matter is as follows:

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[23] For a full transcript of the national anthem in both official languages French and English visit the Canadian Department of Heritage website at: http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/cpsc-ccsp/sc-cs/anthem_e.cfm#h2

> Canadian multiculturalism is fundamental to our belief that all citizens are equal. Multiculturalism ensures that all citizens can keep their identities, can take pride in their ancestry and have a sense of belonging. Through multiculturalism, Canada recognizes the potential of all Canadians, encouraging them to integrate into their society and take an active part in its social, cultural, economic and political affairs. (Canadian Department of Heritage, 2008)[24]

This position, however, presupposes a "core English-Canadian culture" and that all other cultures as they relate to this dominant culture fit within the definition of multiculturalism (Mackey, 2002, p 2), evidenced within the Vancouver 2010 brand imagery. In support of this notion, a report published by the Government of Canada in 1991, which outlined the elements of Canadian multiculturalism, made the following recommendation:

> [...] Canadian national symbols of historical value be given a more evident importance so that any impression that Canadians are loosing their sense of country is dispelled and that ignoring this issue will further destabilize and weaken the feelings of Canadian unity, "especially among the English-speaking Canadians"(as cited in Isajiw, 1998, p.6).

Isajiw (1998: 6) asserts "The unequivocal implication was that the Canadian national symbols are the traditional Anglo symbols taken from the British colonial history and they include no room for any other ethnic symbols, save at best, for a few French ones". This appears to be enforced by the slogan used for the Vancouver 2010 Games.

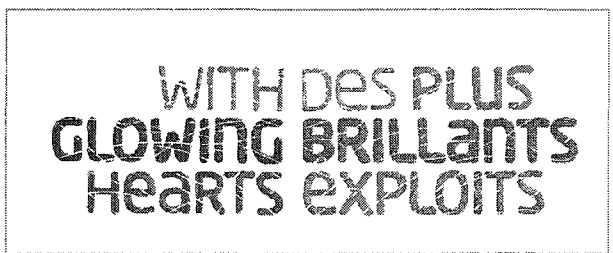

Figure 7 - Linguistic Dualism: The Vancouver 2010 slogan

[24] Canadian Department of Heritage. (2008). *What is Multiculturalism?* Retrieved Dec. 8, 2008, from http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/multi/what-multi_e.cfm.

B. Athlete Pictograms

The iconic images selected to form part of the overall composition are athletes engaged in winter sports. The composition as a whole possesses a visual hierarchy, one in which the athlete takes center stage. The athlete is placed in the foreground, as if he or she were about to leap off the page, while other visual elements remain in the background. Albeit intricate and textured in nature, these components appear secondary, while the emphasis is placed on sport. The athlete is represented iconically, that is to say, through a graphical likeness of a photograph of an athlete. The same shapes which are used in the background, namely curvilinear and undulating illustrative lines, are also used in the construction of the athlete. The athlete, however, is set apart from the background with the use of negative white space. The images of athletes are rendered in an illustrative form; they are figurative representations but they lack a definitive gender or specific sexual identity. These images are, furthermore, cross-cultural representations, as they do not possess a particular ethnicity; the meaning potentials of these images are broad in nature borrowing from a universal visual lexicon of what constitutes the individual engaged in sport. Thurlow and Aiello (2006) describe these universal symbols as "the nonmediatised globalising circulation of deterritorialised symbols" (p. 308). By not specifying the gender and/or race of the subjects depicted in the athlete pictograms, these images produce a homogenous view of the Canadian societal makeup, in which all peoples are equal irrespective of race and/or gender. The pictograms furthermore protect the creator from any potential admonishment that come as a result of the misrepresentation of any one specific group.

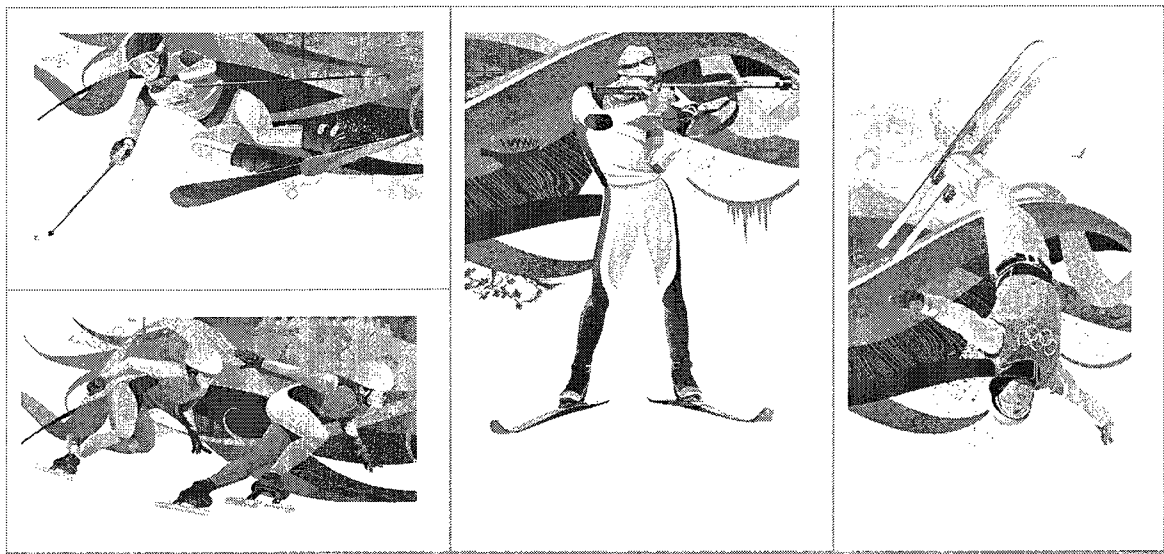

Figure 8 - Athleticism as Illustrated in the Vancouver 2010 Brand

Section 3 - Critical Analysis

In addition to the dominant discourses outlined in the preceding section, when a critical lens, namely that of a post-Marxist orientation, is applied several other discourses emerge. These, which are to be further explicated within the forthcoming section, the themes to be explore include: the stark departure from the Games original use of Indigenous iconography, the usage of dimorphic images illustrating the tensions between traditional and modern notions of Canadian identity, and the propagation of an institutionalized Olympic discourse.

A Departure from Indigenous Roots

The VANOC made it explicit that the Four Host Nation groups, including: Lil'wat, Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh, were to play a foundational role in the Games, as the Games would be held in the traditional territories of these groups. According to Vancouver 2010 officials, "VANOC's goal is to achieve unprecedented Aboriginal participation in the planning and hosting of the 2010 Olympic and Paralympics Winter Games. We'll do this by developing strong relationships with Aboriginal peoples – First Nations, Inuit and Métis – and the support of our Partners" (VANOC, 2008). [25] Despite such fledging support of Canada's First Nations Peoples, there has been, a marked departure from the original visual imagery used to promote the 2010 brand. The original imagery paid homage to the First Nations culture, which included the Inuit inukshuk as the Vancouver 2010 logo.[26]

Given the lengthy history of Federal Government—First Nations relations, the representation of Indigenous iconography both recognizes Canada's First Nations as politically independent peoples and it also attempts to present to the world Canada's historical roots. However, members of Canada's First Nations communities have cited that the use of traditional Aboriginal images is a form of cultural appropriation. In fact the position taken by some communities is such that the Canadian Government is

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[25] All references made to VANOC refer to text extracted from the official Vancouver 2010 website: http://www.vancouver2010.com, unless otherwise stated.

[26] According to the Vancouver 2010 Olympic Committee the Inukshuk was selected in light of its relationship with Canada's First Nations. The Vancouver 2010 Olympic Winter Games emblem is a contemporary interpretation of the inukshuk. It is called Ilanaaq, which is the Inuktitut word for "friend". This is the symbol of Canada's Games – our friend who will help us greet the world in 2010.

exploiting the *cultural value* of Canada's First Nations in an effort to promote Canadian values abroad. Peter Irniq, an Inuit elder, argues "Inuit never build inuksuit with head, legs and arms; these are not called inuksuit.[27] These are called "inunguat", imitation of man, imitation of a person".[28] Irniq further argues that Inuit elders should have been consulted prior to choosing a design.

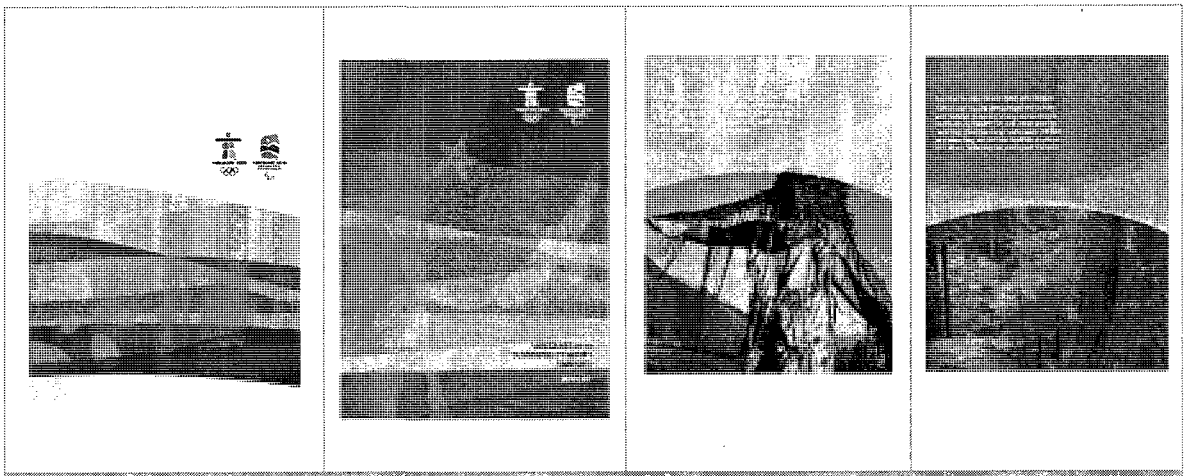


Figure 9 - Original Vancouver 2010 Brand Imagery

Propagation of an Institutionalized Olympic Discourse

The visual elements of the brand are furthermore reinforced by the institutionalized aesthetic of the International Olympic brand (see appendix 2). Apart

[27] Aiello and Thurlow (2006) argue "the exchange of capital hinges on the promotion of ideals, images and lifestyles in discourse – linguistic, visual or otherwise" (p. 148). Thus cultural value in this regard can be seen as the extraction of surplus intangibility found in images, symbols and other forms of visual expression.

[28] Quotation taken from: CBC. (2005). "Olympic inukshuk irks Inuit leader." CBC.ca Sports. 9 Mar. 2009 <http://www.cbc.ca/sports/story/2005/04/26/olympic-logo050426.html>.

from the obvious usage of the Olympic rings, there are several key iconic elements that have been borrowed: the use of abstracted shapes as background imagery, use of bright colours that exude a sense of energy and spirit. Usage of these iconic signs assist in producing consistency from one Olympic Games to the next. The presence of such images acts as an index of the Olympic movement—in essence the values upon which the Olympic brand was founded— excellence, friendship and respect —and that are in turn replicated through visual means by past, present and future host cities. As the International Olympic Committee (2007) states, "These values are powerfully conveyed at the moment of the Olympic Games" (p.2). As Maguire et al (2008) argue in addition to the values purported by the IOC to represent the Olympic movement, an alternative discourse is at play "[...] whereby the media / marketing / advertising / corporate nexus is concerned less with the values underpinning Olympism per se and more with how such values can help build markets, construct and enhance brand awareness and create 'glocal' consumers/ identities" (p. 63).

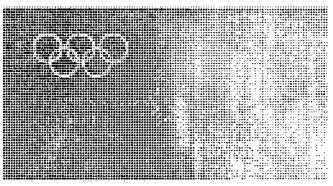
The presence of the Olympic rings provides credibility for the host cities; in more technical terms the host city is able to leverage the accrued symbolic capital[29], the intangible meaning that has come to represent the Olympics (Aaker, 1996), or cultural hegemony (Hall, 1996), in order to lend credibility to a host city's own promotional efforts. In doing so, the host city both takes on the intended meaning of the Olympic

[29] Symbolic capital refers to the increasingly semiotics nature of economies (Lash and Urry, 1994) in which symbolism and design have become predominate elements. "There is nowadays often little apparent materiality to the 'products' bought and sold; instead, the exchange of capital hinges on the promotion of ideals, images and lifestyles in discourse—linguistic, visual or otherwise" (Aiello and Thurlow, 2006, p. 149).

brand and also the meaning of any/all discourses that make up part of the brands meaning.

As Holt (2005: 8) writes as a brand performs its identity myth, consumers begin to perceive that the myth lies is part of the brand's primary visual iconography (i.e. logo/emblem), in turn becoming a symbol, or physical embodiment of the brand. In the case of the Olympic brand, spectators, athletes and sponsors associate the Olympic rings with the Olympic Movement, or more accurately with the Olympic myth.

It is important to note the visual relationship between the Vancouver 2010 Olympic emblem and the placement of the Olympic rings. The rings appear at the bottom of the emblem. As texts are read from right to left, top to bottom in North American society, one would first see the inukshuk, the primary signifying element, followed by the words Vancouver 2010 and finally the Olympic rings, rendered in blue. The Vancouver 2010 logo, which has its own symbolic meaning, is literally grounded by the Olympic rings, as they appear at the bottom of the graphic element, which subsequently pass on the symbolism of the Olympic brand. In fact, if one were to remove the Olympic rings, the meaning of Vancouver 2010 would be altered, one might in turn question what Vancouver 2010 means. Despite being rendered entirely in blue, as opposed to the traditional blue, yellow, black, green and red colour pallet, the rings remain an iconic image, alerting the viewer that Vancouver 2010 is a legitimate event that promotes Olympic discourse.



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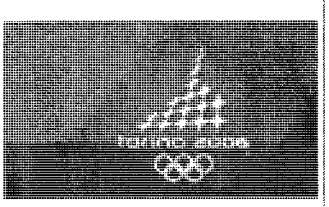

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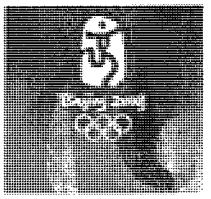

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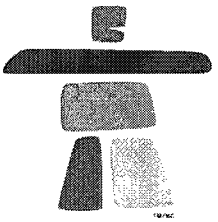
Figure 10 - Olympic Brand Element Comparison
(1) International Olympic Brand Visual Identity
(2) Torino 2006 Winter Olympic Visual Identity
(3) Vancouver 2010 Winter Olympic Visual Identity
(4) Beijing 2008 Summer Olympic Visual Identity



vancouver 2010

Figure 11 - Vancouver 2010 Logo

5. Discussion

An attempt has been made to construct a new mythology that places Canada at the center of modernity and in an increasingly globalized world. Additionally, VANOC officials have made a concerted effort to demonstrate Canadian technological innovation and Canada's "Incredibly vibrant cosmopolitan cities" (VANOC, 2008). This section will reconcile the questions laid at the beginning of this study, as well as touch upon some of the larger conceptual issues that have arisen out of this study.

Brand Manipulation and Political Party Interference in Canada

Specifically the tension between traditional and modern notions of what it means to be Canadian are evident within the visual texts produced and distributed in promotion of the Vancouver 2010 Olympics.

The political and economic aims of the current federal government must also be taken into account when analyzing the Vancouver 2010 brand, as the context in which such visual works are produced will have an influence on their intended meaning. As it stands, the current government is "Conservative", and it represents a set of values that are socially conservative in nature (Segal, 2006). Additionally the current government demonstrates a propensity to support less government intervention in market activities, thus officials of the government tend to uphold "free market economic principles".[30] This

[30] For a more rigorous discussion on such principles see Mankiw, Hakes and Harris (1997).

point is worth noting for the purposes of this study for two reasons: firstly it raises a question as to the extent of influence the government has had in shaping the Vancouver 2010 brand. In fact, the Vancouver 2010 brand, identified primarily through the inukshuk logo, represents according to VANOC president John Furlong "[...] a newage [sic] in Canadian national symbolism: the descent of the maple leaf, and the rise of the inukshuk" (Breans, 2005 as cited in Ruhl, 2008, p. 25). The use of the inukshuk Ruhl (2008, p.25) cites form part of larger strategy "to brand Canada". In late 1990's the Canadian government outlined the main tenets of a project titled "Brand Canada" (Breans, 2005 as cited in Ruhl, 2008, p. 25). As part of this project, the government identified a series of iconic images that were 'representative' of Canada, included in this inventory were the maple leaf, hockey, the beaver, as well as the Inuit inukshuk (Breans, 2005 as cited in Ruhl, 2008, p. 25). Starting first with the Jean Chrétien Liberal government (1993-2003) to the current Conservative government (2006-present), an effort has been made to promote Canadian economic interests abroad. The inukshuk has played a vital role in these promotional efforts as it symbolizes "a new Canada, ready to meet the challenges of a transnational world and an economy of globalization" (Ruhl, 2008, p. 26).

The second reason worth citing the influence of the current government is that it suggests that identity formations, as they relate to nationalism in Canada, are largely influenced by political parties and not by the citizenry itself, Nimijean (2005) describes this as "the political manipulation of the Canadian identity". Political parties often construct Canadian narratives that are based on a contrived set of core values. In the case of Jean Chrétien, Nimijean (2006) argues, the former Prime Minister set out a set of

progressive Canadian values, such as "caring, sharing and compassion" (p. 86). Chrétien was able to link key Canadian institutions, including federalisms and universal healthcare, to these newly established values, in doing so making the argument that these were "the Canadian Way" (Nimijean, 2006, p. 86). Over time Chrétien and his government linked the Liberal party with these values, in such a way that Canadians themselves began to identify liberalism with being Canadian (Nimijean, 2006, p. 86-87). Nimijean (2006) argues that the current government is attempting to copy Chrétien, in an effort to brand conservatism as most aptly reflecting the contemporary Canadian identity (p. 91). More recently the Department of Canadian Heritage has pledged $20 million to support the opening ceremonies of the Games. However, as Matas (2008) writes, the government will only provide the funding "in order to ensure that the event adequately reflects the priorities of the Government and helps to achieve its domestic and international branding goals," the memo says (2008, p. A1).

Thus I would like to formulate once again the question outlined at the beginning of this study: have notions of the Canadian identity changed in recent years and if so in what capacity? The present study has demonstrated that there has in fact been a concerted effort on the part of VANOC and the Canadian Government to present Canada in a new light—a sustainable Canada, with vibrant metropolitan centers, ready to do business with the world. Thus Canada is in the process of developing a new mythological narrative that reflects the globalized, economically interdependent world, faced in the 21st century.

From Religion to Brands: Collective Identity formations in the 21st Century

Another salient point that has emerged from this study is the role of mythology and its capacity to form collective identity myths. Collective identity formations serve the cultural and psychological needs of the individual. It is through hero myths that individuals gain insights into the self suggests Campbell (1988). As the present study has sought to articulate, governments borrow branding techniques from practitioners in the field of marketing and communications to assist in articulating national narratives or more precisely collective mythologies. In fact, van Ham (2001) argues this new approach to national identity construction has given rise to the "brand state": an ideological construct of the nation state, primarily built upon emotional attributes and reputation (p.3). A nation state that goes unbranded, writes van Ham (2001), will have a difficult time attracting foreign investment and will find it challenging to garner the political attention of well-branded states, such as the U.S. (p.2-3). What is of particular interest, is that foreign and domestic policies are no longer the primary means through which a nation promotes its image abroad; instead it is through advertising and marketing campaigns that such a task is achieved. But more specifically, it is through visual imagery that nations promote themselves abroad.

The point to be taken from this discussion is as follows: brands have come to take the place of the two other primary sources of myth creation, religion and nationalism. The role of the believer was transformed into that of the citizen, and more recently the change has been that from being a citizen to being a consumer. In each of these successive

transitions, the role bestowed upon the individual undergoes change, but in so doing the individual does not relinquish his or her former role, it simply evolves. Meaning grows as Peirce (EP2: 264) suggests, and as such the role the individual plays in interpreting meaning also grows. I am, for instance, a citizen of Canada, but I am dually a consumer, as I purchase brands to satisfy emotional, physical and psychological needs. What is important to note, however, is that the emphasis of this role changes over time. For example, one may feel disaffected as a citizen, lacking a voice. But as a consumer they have a larger influence on society at large.

Corporate Brands as Leaders in National Identity Construction

Given the preceding discussion it is apparent that citizens actively consume national brands much in the same way they do products. One conclusion drawn from this study is the notion that corporate brands, rather than governments, are more adept at constructing and propagating national mythologies. This is not to say that governments do not play a role in brand management. It is corporations, however, that possess the greatest influence on citizens. In fact, Canadian corporate brands, including Canadian Tire, Tim Hortons, Air Canada and Bombardier have all been successful at contributing to a national mythology. Additionally, corporations have the resources and autonomy to modify their corporate mythology based on the social, cultural and economic circumstances of the time. Returning to Holt's (2004) position, discussed early on in this study, corporate brands that endure the test of time become iconic; they have managed to "address the collective anxieties and desires of a nation" (p.6). These anxieties are shared

across a large cross section of a nation's population, given the fact that these citizens face the same historical challenges (Holt, 2004, p. 6). According to Holt (2004), iconic brands produce *identity myths* that "stitch back together [...] tears in the cultural fabric of a nation" (p.8). As the brand carries out this myth, audiences perceive that the myth resides within the brand primary sign vehicles, including the brand's logo, tagline and supporting visual identity (Holt, 2004, p.8).

Tim Hortons is a brand that has become a cornerstone of the Canadian identity. As Cathy Whelan Molloy, vice president of marketing and merchandising for TDL Group Corp., the parent company of Tim Hortons, "It's an unpretentious brand. It's very similar to how you would think of a Canadian: friendly, caring, dependable" (BrandChannel.com, 2005). In one of Tim Hortons' recent advertising campaigns titled "True Stories" the brand articulates a Canadian narrative that should resonates positively among the Canadian citizenry.

> It's so entrenched in Canadian culture [Tim Hortons]. People don't say, 'I'm going to Tim Hortons for coffee,' they'll say, 'I'm going to get a Tim's.' That's a reflection of how powerful that brand is (Harris, 2004, pp.25-26).

According to the advertising agency commissioned to execute the campaign, the values of—dependability, honesty, unpretentiousness, helpfulness and friendliness—are shared between the Canadian citizenry and the Tim Hortons brand (JWT)[31]. One commercial that most aptly presented the Canadian narrative and more specifically communicated these values via the relationship between Chinese father and son who visit their local

[31] Commentary taken from the corporate web site of JWT and can be viewed at, http://jwtcanada.ca/casestudies/timhortons.asp

hockey rink.[32] This commercial showcases Canadian intergenerational diversity, the Canadian winter, hockey, compassion, kindness and generosity, all in 30 seconds. In fact, Tim Hortons has methodically created a Canadian narrative, providing the Canadian public with the emotional taproot needed to massage "collective anxieties" (Holt, 2004, p.6). In an interview conducted by CanWest Global, reporter Proudfoot (2008) Professor Peggy Cunningham argues "Tim Hortons became a 'cultural icon' by tapping into deeply held values without being crass about it". She further argues that Canadians view Tim Hortons as a vital part of the Canadian identity (Proudfoot, 2008).

[32] The commercial can be viewed at, http://jwtcanada.ca/work/homepop/truestories.asp

6. Conclusion

Heroism has played and continues to play a foundational role in the lives of human beings. It is through the heroes' myths that individuals gain insights into the self. "The man who thinks he can live without myth, or outside it, like one uprooted, has no true link either with the past, or the ancestral life which continues within in him or yet with contemporary human society" (Jung, 1951, xxiv). Over time such myths have evolved, first articulated through deities, then through the nation, and finally through the brands that individuals consume. The Vancouver 2010 brand serves as an example of mythology promoted through visual texts. As the VANOC states "Inspired by the dynamic energy of Vancouver, Whistler and Canada, Vancouver 2010 imagery creates a space where nature and culture transform and grow—like the power, speed and spirit of the athletes" (VANOC, 2008).

Branding as a commercial enterprise, has taken hold within all sectors of the economy. Much has been written regarding the relevance of this phenomenon, specifically its usage by governments to promote national identities and as such, it is important to note the negative implications that would arise if nations were not to engage in such practices (Dinnie, 2008). Regardless of the tactic used to construct mythologies, the individual requires a larger collective identity, imagined or otherwise. Branding merely is a modern instrument through which these stories are articulated. In the event that a nation chooses not to promote its national culture through images, stories and rituals, the citizenry risks not feeling a sense of belonging; visual discourses, after all, are a [...] site for the negotiation, consolidation and naturalization of major cultural

narratives and collective identities" (Hall, 1997 as cited in Thurlow and Aiello, 2006 p.159). Conversely, branding must be not be used in haste, as "commercial agents" are rarely aware of "the ways their practices function ideologically and politically" (Thurlow and Aiello, 2008, p. 337) which risk perpetuating hegemonic discourses.

Visual discourse is a powerful medium that transcends linguistic expressions. They can highlight relationships between opposing ideological positions, while simultaneously uncover the discursive tension that exists between them. "In part, this is because the iconicity and perceptual availability of visual images make them potentially recognisable and meaningful across cultures" (Thurlow and Aiello, 2006, p. 159). It is thus important research in this area continues. In this thesis I have attempted to illustrate how visual texts, namely graphic identities, promote specific mythological narratives. I began first on a micro-level, by analyzing the signs used to promote the Vancouver 2010 brand. Then I concluded with macro-level interpretations that were made to help to decipher the meaning of the discourses produced relative to these signs. More specifically, the aim was to determine in what ways these "meaning potentials" contribute to or negate existing ideations of Canadian identity. This thesis has been written as a way to contribute to the extant literature on nation branding and mythology. Although much has been written regarding Canadian nationalism, few scholarly works attempt to analyze this area of study from a semiotic perspective. I hope that my humble efforts encourage others to continue research in this area.

Although every effort has been made to produce a work of a scholarly nature, there are some limitations that must be discussed. Firstly, the author of this study

approaches the subject from a strictly unilingual basis, specifically as an Anglophone. Certainly, if a bilingual researcher were to conduct a similar study he or she is likely to notice subtle linguistic nuances. Secondly, the study focused only on the Vancouver 2010 brand and did not evaluate the signs used in the construction of the Vancouver Paralympics Games, which is put on by the same organizing committee. Given the limited resources to complete this study it was thought that insights garnered from one of the Games would be sufficient enough to make inferences of the other. I believe, however, it would be a natural follow up of this work to embark on a semiotic analysis of the Vancouver 2010 Paralympics brand.

I would like to conclude by providing a few personal comments on this thesis. I approached this study as an instance of microanalysis of a much larger conceptual project which I wish to address in greater detail, in a forthcoming Doctoral Dissertation. Specifically, I wish to explore the three "great" mythological epochs of our time, including the institutions responsible for the production and propagation of such myths. I would furthermore like to analyze how such myths are mobilized to form collective identity formations. I would then like to evaluate the current mythological epoch we are faced with—consumerism.

Finally, I must admit how overwhelmed I was by the sense of vibrancy, creativity and passion that pervades throughout this nation. As a citizenry often characterized as being "unpatriotic" or "apathetic", it was a pleasant surprise to see such unity—so many glowing hearts—together, spread across this vast geographic expanse

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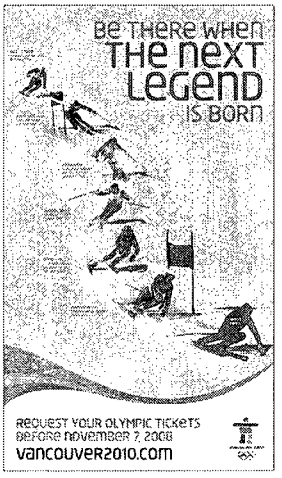
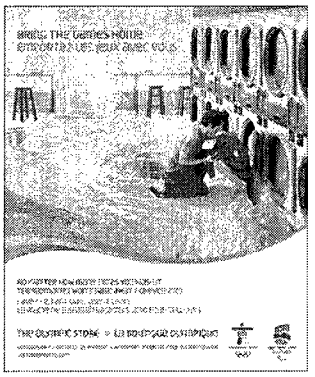
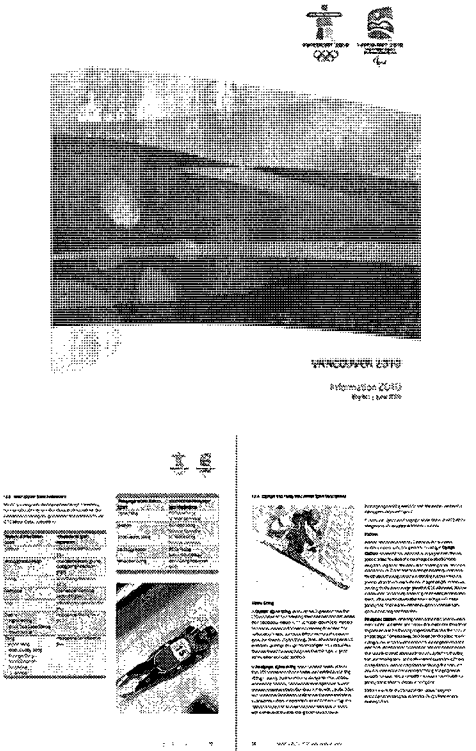
Appendix 1: Vancouver 2010 Sample Promotional Materials





Print Advertisements



Web site

Brochure

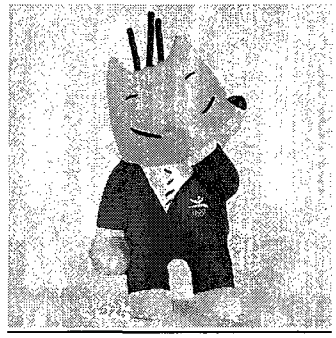
Images are courtesy of VANOC. Retrieved January, 2009 at: http://www.vancouver2010.com/en/fun-zone/multimedia-gallery/vancouver-2010-ad-campaigns/-/56198/1j10q3w/index.html

Appendix 2: Barcelona Olympic Emblem and Supporting Visual Imagery

Logo

Commemorative Coin

Poster



Mascot

Images are courtesy of the International Olympic Committee. Retrieved January, 2009 at: http://www.olympic.org/uk/games/past/index_uk.asp?OLGT=1&OLGY=1992