Chapter 2
Myth and Storytelling: The Case of the Walt Disney Company

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ABSTRACT
Myth and mythologization have been accompanying organizations, their leaders, and even their products. Considering management, the history of an organization, its models, and underlying values undergo the process of mythologization. Myths are conveyed via storytelling. Considering the case of the Walt Disney Company, which has become a “narrative company,” the myth used to accompany its founder, who carefully developed it. Applied by the company and always present, storytelling has contributed to the corporate hegemony, strengthening a new marketing paradigm – “mythocracy,” a belief that an organization that has something to sell cannot do so without storytelling. At the same time, while the cultural heritage of Disney is fully commodified, storytelling becomes closer to propaganda. In the environment of digital media, a lot of our knowledge about an organization comes as a result of storytelling marketing, and the marketing-ization of an organization identity takes place. It usually occurs when the boundary between an organization and its receivers (producers) becomes blurred.

INTRODUCTION

Myths have been developed since prehistoric era (Cassirer, 1953). Similarly to arts, religion and language, they are symbolic forms (Silverstone, 1976). They are neither (Silverstone, 1976) written down nor formalised – similarly to a primary yarn, they become tales only because of the commitment of a storyteller (Cassirer, 1953).

Myths describe some grand events, such as the origin of the world and cosmos, or they occur at some significant historic moment. Therefore, they provide us with some clues how to organise experience and how to form opinions in our violently changing reality (Barbour, 1984). They have been always very important to people, because they help to systematise an incomprehensible sequence of events (Berger refers to it as to “cosmologisation”) (Berger, 1997), and they explain issues which humanity has been struggling with since the beginning of its existence. They come as a defence mechanism against threats to people. They bring the sense of safety and peace, thanks to a symbolic form of displaying the problem. They also express some subconscious desires (Barbour, 1984).

Myths also perform social functions, integrating the society and intensifying solidarity. They have allowed certain social groups to survive, enabling people to identify themselves with such groups and to pass significant values, ideal and behaviour patterns from generation to generation, preserving memory about key events and forefathers and justifying the principles applied in that society (Barbour, 1984).

J. Campbell observes that myths and the architypes they refer to come as a source of universal knowledge, which can be useful for humanity, as well as a source of self-cognition at an individual level (Barbour, 1984). Henry Murray indicates five functions of the myth (Murray, 1959):

- Drawing attention/leading – in its version which is perceived with the senses, the myth is attractive for its receivers; it is beautiful, mysterious, fascinating and because of all that - it becomes fixed in numerous human minds, and then it is reproduced in various versions;
- Affective – it stimulates empathy, admiration and enchantment in receivers;
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