

**“Do Packages Talk?”**  
**Mind Meandering with Message and Meaning on Everyday Packaging Products**

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**Abstract**

The packaging products of the industrial society -amongst other cultural artifacts- continue to shape our perceptions of the world around in drastic measures. Notions such as consumption culture or commodity fetishism are some of the effects of this shaping, or mind managing process. All the mass media products which are defined as message bearers that reaching many at once within the terms of this study are believed to be contributing this process in one way or another. This study delves into that assumption by conducting semiotic analysis on cottage cheese packaging products from a single shelf in order to decode the message they bear, and then evaluate these messages with relation to each other and literature around the subject.

**Keywords:** Packaging Products, Consumption Culture, Commodity Fetishism, Semiotics, Mind Management

**“Ambalajlar Konuşur mu?”**

**Günelik Ambalaj Ürünlerinin Üstündeki Mesajlar ve Anlamlarla Zihin Dolandırma İşlemleri**

**Özet**

Endüstri toplumunun bir ürünü olan ambalajlar -diğer kültürel ürünlerle beraber- etrafımızdaki dünya ile alakalı algılarımızı deęiştirmeyi sürdürmektedir. Tüketim kültürü ya da meta fetişizmi gibi olgular bu şekillendirme, daha doğrusu zihin yönlendirme sürecinin etkilerinden bazılarıdır. Bu çalışma bağlamında birçok kişiye ulaşabilen mesaj taşıyıcıları olarak tanımlanabilecek kitle iletişim ürünleri bu sürece şu ya da bu şekilde katkı sağladığı düşünülmektedir. Bu çalışmanın içerisinde bu düşünce, tek bir rafta bulunan süzme peynir ambalajı ürünlerinin semiyotik incelemesi ile bunların üstünde bulunan mesajların deşifre edilmesi ve ardından bu mesajların birbiri ve konu üzerinde yapılmış çalışmalar ile ilişkisi saptanarak test edilecektir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Ambalaj Ürünleri, Tüketim Kültürü, Meta Fetişizmi, Semiyotik, Zihin Yönlendirme

*...But I lie, lie straight to the mirror  
The one I've broken, to match my face.  
(Hetfield & Ulrich, 1997, track 11)*

### Introduction

Our perceptions function in order to gather data from the world around, and act upon accordingly. That link to the world guides us through life from start to finish, but our inflated trust in them would be misplaced on many occasions. The sight can be fooled with basic lightning tricks or a little speed, or hearing that is more or less limited in order to define something alone on most occasions, and others that are practically bounded by their own state of creation. To what extent they can be fooled? Is there any way we can truly trust them and how can this stage be achieved?

While these questions can never be truly answered -and out of this study's scope- since we are bound by the reality that our senses could provide as well; it is argued that the times we live in, the historical movement that we experience deceive our senses in certain ways, thus making people alienate from their own lives. The "myths" of the contemporary society are targeted to manage the minds of many and herd people into inaction (Schiller; 1973: 31). Terms such as consumption culture and commodity fetishism -which would not even be thought before the industrial revolution- are just some of the side effects of this process of deceiving and degradation. Since the packaging products are an emergence of this era, meaning that they came into the picture as they are pretty much the same time as the industrial revolution (Khan & Mufti, 2007); analyzing them as the cultural artifacts of this time period would prove valuable in order to understand the magnitude of deception today's society provides.

Within this study, diary packaging products out of today's market are analyzed in order to point out that they create a measure of alienation by creating a rift between production and consumption processes. Semiotics analysis are done in order to point out the alienation mentioned that was created by the consumption culture and meta-fetishism embedded into today's post-industrialist society. For study purposes; cottage cheese (*süzme peynir*) -a style of cheese made by filtering water within the cheese mix slowly in the manufacturing phase- packages that can be found in the Turkish supermarkets are chosen. Those products are picked due to their reasonable prices and high sales amount.

### **Consumption Culture and Commodity Fetishism**

Post-industrial culture; which strongly influences the lifestyle in the Western world and others trying to follow their path, is constructed around the notion of consumption. Actually, consumption merely changes shape throughout history; and at every given point, how people consume is argued to yield sociological information about that “consuming” society (Baudrillard; 1997: 254). Not only consumption changes shape by the hand of society, but it becomes a force to create change in other areas; therefore a culture can be analyzed by examining consuming habits (Bocock; 1997: 13). In short, how we consume shows a great deal about how we live, and how we perceive the world around us (Mullins, 2011). Today’s state of things is narrated by Benjamin (1969: 34) stating that “... (Mankind’s) self-alienation has reached such a degree that it can experience its own destruction as an aesthetic pleasure.”

Commodity fetishism refers to the denial of social relations within production -and consumption as a part of that process-, and focusing on economic relationships instead. The act creates a shift in value systems, declaring commodity as the main value to be had. In other words; at the point of consumption, people -mistakenly- tend to give a self-sustaining role to the commodity they consume by attaining it human traits; therefore create a fetish of that commodity (Marx; 1976: 163-177). In a psychological perspective, those objects wrongfully attain traits that define something a little more than a mere person (Aaker, 1997). While this act of praise is strongly embedded to our society, it is seemingly problematic in details. Any consumer who is charmed by the mere appearance in a single glance does not even bother themselves with thinking the limits of the production (Marx; 1976: 176). They consume without thinking about the quantity and magnitude of consequences, even if “their own destruction” will come out from that process.

From that point of view, it can easily be seen that this sociological function exists in controversies. This fact is partly concealed by the suddenness and fragmentation characters of contemporary perception, namely the loss of meaning in sequences and causalities due to the drastic rise in speed caused by technological advancements (McLuhan; 1964: 23-30). In a domain such as cultural production, where another layer of absurdity is added on the existence of that blind consumption; those controversies needed to be addressed -or seem to be addressed, more properly- in a definitive manner. With the power bestowed by the modern communication technologies, the culture industry created loopholes that serve as a kind of explanation, and not explain anything precisely at the same time. This task is accomplished by the help of advertisement front, causing even language to shift to a more uncertain place; turning people’s perceptions back to the dark ages of magic (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002).

This would not be possible without mass media technologies that can reach out and influence millions at the time, so it could be said that the process of creating consumption relations is centered on media (Schiller; 1973: 45). Because of those, Berger (1972: 131-139) argues that “publicity is the culture of consumer society” as it is the way people influenced into buying and consequently changing their lives according to the needs of the economic system. In order to understand that media centered change more effectively, one must examine the “myths” of modern people that are serving as a working mechanism within media, and therefore cultural production.

### **Influence of the Myth Today on Meanings**

Whether we see it as machines of just another industry (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002) or a powerful weapon for the state (Althusser, 1971), cultural production is a complex function where some variables can be shaped by it and ultimately shape the function itself. Regarding the inner mechanics of that function; Saussure's (1959) identification effort on language is another step towards -if such a state can be achieved- a complete understanding.

The analysis starts by underlining a common mistake; which is seeing language as "a naming process only". Rather than linking some word to something; language defined in this perspective as a set of connections between sounds and concepts. That binding process between the signifier and the signified is arbitrary in nature and linear regarding time variable (Saussure; 1959: 65-70). Asserting from that line of thought, arbitrariness of any bond at any point distances language from a highly organizational structure; but linearity throughout time shows there is some form of a logical functioning when regarding signifier and signified are considered as a whole.

Analysis is continued paralleling those notions; so the sign function is divided into vertical and horizontal planes for evaluation purposes. Units on the horizontal plane or syntagmatic relations are the ones within the articulation level. It exists in the order of phonemes or other small elements in a structural sense. On the vertical plane there are associative relations produced within the thought stage unlike the former kind. With links of associated meanings in a reasonable way or otherwise; one can conjure a web of relations without order and probably without a definite magnitude. The combined effort of those two is also coupled with a measure of arbitrariness the whole language system is created, meaning that the words contain different degrees of arbitrariness, considering terms such as suffixes, prefixes, or compound words do not completely sewer the relationship between the base word and the one created (Saussure; 1959: 122-134). Within the terms of those mechanics, languages and other message bearing code sets can properly be classified and analyzed.

Barthes (1972: 111-115) argued that there is another layer of language mechanism, another layer of meaning that forces people's understanding on a certain path. While all ages of human society -probably- had their own set of those "myths", today's "bourgeois society" created their own generated from their dilemmas and poorly designed growth plan (*pseudo-physis*) for tomorrow (Barthes, 1972: 137-141). Today's myths usually works as admitting a little of the wrong doings in order to make people accept "the devil they know", and this fact can be traced in advertisement front easily (Barthes, 1972: 40-42); paralleling the culture industry discussion.

In any way possible; today's myths are targeted to keep society in a non-responsive state. Those ways can be divided in two grander groups, the *Essences*, and the *Balances*, as in every notion's essence is or should be degraded into a plastic, molded shell and thus they can be counted and conquered. Serving as a summary of pretty much the whole bourgeois universe; myths make people pick one of two extremes. One can either allow the false promises and molds to shape him or herself and become *ideologized*, or seek out a greater meaning in things or become *poetized* (Barthes, 1972: 150-160). Meanings created within this vast system considering both perspectives influences how people live their lives in a thorough way, so this works are also essential in order to understand how the culture exists.

By examining the process from a linear communication perspective, Hall (1980: 128-138) illustrates that broadcasting- or any other mass communication system for that matter- is a process of balance. On one end, a set of messages are encoded within the content, which then decoded by the receiving end of the scale during the consumption process. The catch here is that the encoded message and the decoded one are not bound to be equal, and actually they very rarely are. The ultimate goal of the media producer is to make audiences receive the encoded message in the intended way as a natural response. Since the links between language units and concepts are arbitrary to a degree, this is not an easy task.

A more reliable way to accomplish it may lie within how our perception works. Since human eye is constructed as a part -or an overgrowth to be exact- of the brain and it is a complex, yet effective sense apparatus, maybe the most complex of them all. Along with that "gadget", roughly 30% of the human brain is devoted to sight purposes; which is highly dominant amongst other senses considering that hearing takes up only 3% for example (Grady, 1993). In other words, human is a creature of sight; so one can say that visual messages can have the most effect on its perception. Since those senses are there to detect outer world and react accordingly, persuasion in this way employs people's own nature against themselves.

Adding to this fact, as Hall (1980: 133) argues; “Iconic signs are, however, particularly vulnerable to being “read” as natural because visual codes of perception are very widely distributed and because this type of sign is less arbitrary than a linguistic sign...” In other words, visual signs work in a distinct way that they are perceived faster, cover more area in our minds, and they tend to be read as the absolute truth at least more often than words and sentences. It is just because of that logic that symbolic meanings targeted towards more consumption is argued to be a reliable marker when studying the economic and cultural mechanics of the consumption society, even though the process is too complex to analyze from a singular vantage point (Robins; 1996: 124-125). To leave little to chance though, intended meanings of any commercial images are anchored with other signs such as written texts in order to direct the limited attention of the consumer even more (Barthes, 1964). In short, especially a reading on today’s commercial products such as a packaging product could rarely be something other than what was intended, the myth -although still being ambiguous-guided in so many levels to be misread.

#### **Mind Management Utilizing Myths towards Passivity**

It should be pointed out on this point that there is a drastic difference between two distinct forms of behavior towards works of art, namely the one generated from the cult value of the old times, and the other from the exhibition value of the new. The former one challenges the consumer -spectator- to concentrate through a considerable amount of time, and the latter confuses and distracts him or her in an instant (Benjamin, 1969: 32-33). Today’s packaging products arguably are not anywhere distant from that scale, since consumers are argued to make purchase decisions in a state of haste, distraction, and even confusion to an extent considering most of the product stimuli cannot be traced on memory and future choices (Simonson, 1990). Considering those two lines of thought, one would argue that packaging holds the essence of “art” in modern times, which is distracting people in a desired way within a limited time span.

Since “the medium is the message” as stated by McLuhan (1964: 107) meaning that the quality and the fabric of the message change shape and thus change how people communicate a bit in order to accommodate to the given medium. After being shaped by the visual elements, visual products take one more step here before reaching to the consumer and there is no shortage of media channels for visuals to be shaped accordingly. Especially in multimedia cases -meaning that the same visual will be covered on different media apparatuses- the product has to be shaped for every channel in a specific way while maintaining the sense of connection between each instance. Since there are multimedia events

(and even for a singular medium situation this would be the case), there are multidisciplinary activities of shaping the message. The essential design work can be consisted of professionals from different branches such as photography, graphic design, television, and any other kind regarding the issue. Since the medium can be almost anything according to McLuhan, contemporary cultural artifacts such as packaging products can be regarded as medium that reaches a -professionally designed- targeted message to the masses.

Schiller (1973: 8-24) in his analysis of today's myths and their effects on media, argues that media transmits people a "packaged consciousness". Created in order to mediate people into immobilized masses, packaged consciousness has a certain method of hypnotizing people -so to speak- that is constituted of five main myths:

- *The myth of individuality and personal choice* or the repeated emphasis on individualism in media content made to raise efficiency and productivity in the society.
- *The myth of neutrality* can be narrated as not leaving any trace of manipulation behind. Content seems neutral, and serves as a continuous state of denial.
- *The myth of unchanging human nature* is the means for preventing great aspirations that people may hold for society. Some acts are shown as "natural" in order to make people turn from the ideas of change, and hopes for the better.
- *The myth of the absence of social conflict* refers to the denial of any social conflict -as the name suggests- on the society scale. Problems and their social roots are seemingly nonexistent. Quarrels can manifest between one person or another, not between different fractions of the society.
- *The myth of media plurality* is closely linked to the personal choice because in order to make choices valuable, there should be a variety of options to choose from.

Along with the final layer of fragmentation and information overload, media entities cripple people into inaction and consequently total passivity (Schiller; 1973: 24-31). This systematic approach gives us a better understanding about the myths in general and directs the analysis efforts in a certain way, since it focuses more on the end results rather than trying to divine what is the meaning in any given message. Whether the ends justify the means or not is completely another question for another study; but in order to uncover what effects that a packaging product -or possibly another message bearer of sorts- that is encountered countless times by any consumer on the yearly, even monthly basis may or may not have on consumers' minds, this approach would probably prove useful as a checklist of sorts.

We have listed several perspectives to approach this certain topic, now the only thing left is to approach it. Starting from defining how the analysis is made, the next phases are about the cottage cheese products and their alleged effects on people.

### **Case Study on Cottage Cheese Packaging Products**

Within this study, a single shelf from a single market is chosen for analysis purposes, meaning that every cottage cheese packaging product that is sold in a single, designated supermarket is in focus of this study. Amongst 18 products that are on the picked product classification 12 are either a glitch on the website of the supermarket -meaning that they are not cottage cheese entirely- or some other versions of the same product -varying in volume or oil amount-; so only 6 distinct packages from 6 different companies are picked (MIGROS, 2020). Since they are presented to the consumer on a single shelf -or nearing ones at the very least- and that consumers are expected to choose one of them in the matter of seconds; those products are in competition with each other, but at the same time they are similar in the terms of what they contain and theorized to be similar in what they tell to the consumer.

“Migros” supermarket chain is picked for the analysis because it is the most long-established brand in its line, taking its roots from the Swiss roaming shopping trucks from 1950s. It is even argued that supermarkets in Turkey are cultivated with the emergence of Migros chain (Özkan, 2017). Therefore, the company is established and well known by the Turkish public, sustaining an image of quality for decades. In other words; people trust Migros to provide them with reliable products, in reliable means.

After determining the targeted product group, the messages they carry are decoded using the three layered semiotic method that Saussure (1959) and Barthes (1983a) conducted. Products are analyzed here in alphabetical order, and only the front labels are examined since only they are intended to be seen by the consumer at the first glance. The messages are reduced to a sentence or an adjective up to this point, so they can be evaluated regarding similarities and differences between them. Considering that this shelf in general are narrated in a complete sense regarding what it invokes within the consumers’ minds; what is invoked, namely the mind managing done at the spot should be easy to read. So; results from semiotic reads further interpreted regarding the context that is structured under mind managing and consequently consumption culture and commodity fetishism titles.

The studies are consisted of two main phases; the decoding and the interpretation. In decoding phase all of the picked products are analyzed in alphabetical order. After that, the decoded messages are interpreted in order to generate a comprehensive understanding about



the content on the whole shelf; rather than singular products. Those interpretations are cross-examined with the perspectives on literature review at the conclusion section.



**Figure 1:** Front view of Bahçivan Bembeyaz cottage cheese package

*Bahçivan Bembeyaz* cottage cheese is the first product in this study. On the denotative level; there is a wooden board with a white and blue contoured written message on it, some other white writing with green contour below, and a wooden plate with cheese slices, tomatoes, and some leaves on. There is a green field and a clean blue sky on the background. There are light beams around the wooden board. Dominant colors here are blue and green.

Written messages on the wooden board are the company logo and the product line marker; and the one below them is the product name. The wooden plate with cheese slices, tomatoes, and leaves on points to a breakfast theme. Field, clear sky, and the sun -indexical to the light beams- are connotations of naturalness. The overall message, the myth here is that “This cheese is the one you can eat in a *natural*, authentic *Turkish village breakfast*.” So; there is a message about a *pastoral life* and a significant *taste* as in the product being delicious for all.



**Figure 2:** Front view of İçim cottage cheese package

*İçim* cottage cheese product is a little less colored than the first one, but their message actually is parallel. Starting from the top left, there is a white written message with dark blue strokes. There is another written in dark blue on its right, and a dark blue shape to split the first one from the rest. There is a small golden shape with dark blue writings on and a white writing below that on a red painted shape. On the background; there are cheese slices on a plate, which rests on a blue squared cloth. Dominant color of the label is blue.

Written message on the upper left -the one split from everything else- is the company logo, and the one on the right is the product name. The two are separated with a graphic movement. Golden and red shapes -and the writings on them- define taste and proposition of the product inside the package. Cloth and cheese slices again connotative to the breakfast theme, and this certain cloth type mildly suggests an activity close to the natural side, such as picnics or a travel to the village. The message here can be narrated as; “This cheese is from a delicious breakfast somewhere, possibly from a village”. Needless to say, this one again suggests *a pastoral life* and the certain *taste* of the product -meaning that it is far more delicious than any other-; bigger emphasis being on the taste part.



**Figure 3:** Front view of Migros full-fat cottage cheese package

Our third product is the store brand; namely the *Migros* full-fat cottage cheese. On the upper left of its front side; there is the letter “M” with a green, illustrated background. A bigger; dark purple geometric shape with green shadow is put on the center right, and this one has a green and white written message on it. There is another green shape with dark purple shadows on the lower left. Going in depth; there is a wooden plate with cheese slices, honey, and bread pieces at the center with honey in a glass cup. There is also a certain wooden spoon that is used to get honey in the cup. On the back of it, a purple illustration -seems like watercolor- of a farmland with a single house at the upper center. Dominant colors of this label are purple and green.

White “M” letter is the company logo -or an applied version of it- and its background is consisted of grass, daisies, and a green bucket that seemingly used to contain milk. Written messages on the dark purple shape define product’s type and amount. Green shape on the lower left works as a page slightly turned and showing its back, which is green in order to emphasize naturalness along with creating a balance in general. Cheese slices and other food related items -not to mention the wooden plate- connects with the breakfast theme strongly; and the illustration on the back evokes the village theme. All added together, this product says the consumer that “This cheese is the one you can find at a *Turkish village breakfast*, and it is produced in that village too in *natural ways*”, hence this product does not breaks the line of emphasizing a *pastoral life* and a certain *taste*.



**Figure 4:** Frontal perspective view of Pinar full-fat cottage cheese package

Looking at *Pinar* full-fat cottage cheese package, one can see a quite plainer, blank product that those listed before. There is a written message in dark green at the center top, which has little blue and red shapes around. There is also more writing at the bottom left in green and dark blue colors. There is a green jug illustration with some other writings on it on the upper left and considerably bigger slices of cheese down on it on seemingly background. Green and blue colors are dominant on this label as well.

Dark green writing on the middle is the company logo -along with the small red and blue shapes-, and the writings on the lower left define the product inside, as a long product name. Green jug illustration and the writing inside it -which translates as fresh milk-, and the cheese slices below mildly taps into the naturalness, breakfast, and therefore pastoral life theme. This connection is further underlined on the cover label, on which there are leaves attached near the slices. The conveyed message here is “This fresh and delicious cheese is produced from fresh and natural materials”, so it could be said that they intended to underline the *taste* -natural and fresh- factor precisely, while nodding to the *pastoral life* theme a little.



**Figure 5:** Front view of Sütaş cottage cheese package

Next item on our list is *Sütaş* cottage cheese. The background generally left blank on this one too. At the very top, there is a white written message that has a green ellipse as a background. A considerably bigger ellipse is under this one, serving as a border for the main illustration. On that illustration, there are several trees, a green field, a little village house, and two cows; one of which is closer to the spectator to the point that it is no longer inside the ellipse. There is also a green writing on the lower right with a red, hand drawn circle around. Although the rest is left black, dominant colors here are blue and green.

The writing at the top within the green ellipse is the company logo. The illustration under it clearly links to the village theme again, and the closer cow suggests that consumer is also close to this little, close to nature village. Adding on that leaning, the written message on the lower right says that this product is 100% natural. In one sentence, this one tells “This cheese produced in a place that remains natural, where cows roam freely and everything is green” suggesting *a pastoral life* again with emphasis on both village theme and naturalness.



**Figure 6:** Front view of Torku fresh cottage cheese package

*Torku* cottage cheese package is the last one on our list. The left side of the label is covered with a blue background shape from top to bottom, and there is a green set of illustrations on the upper left. A white writing with dark blue background is on the right of that illustration, and there are some other written messages in dark blue and green colors. There is another written message on the lower left, white on blue background. There are slices of cheese, tomatoes, and peppermint leaves on what seems to be a wooden plate on the lower right of the label. The far right side of the label -nearly turning to the right side of the package- there is a dark blue, stamp like image. Dominant colors on this label are again blue and green.

Blue background on the left creates a graphic movement on the label, and gives the product a sense of cleanness. Along with the written messages on right of it, the top one is the company logo and the ones under it list product's properties. The green illustration set on the upper left -which consisted of something that looks like a plant, and two birds around it- yields a message of naturalness. Cheese slices and other edibles on the wooden plate -just as the ones mentioned before- connects with the village breakfast theme. Stamp assures the "particular" taste of the product is protected and sustained by the firm. The message on this product can be narrated as "This cheese can be found in a delicious breakfast, and it is produced in good hands and in natural ways", again underlining the *taste* with hard strokes and also nodding to the *pastoral life* theme.

All six packaging products are made in order to convey pretty much the same message that targeted to make people choose that exact cheese amongst the others that are pretty much the same. The dominant colors are blue -that conveying cleanness, and being natural in some



instances- and green -underlining naturalness- in almost all of them; only exception being the store brand of Migros -with purple and green- which generally made to look cheaper and therefore more undesirable than the others. Discussion on this newly uncovered data revolves around the following points:

- The fact that messages on each label can be narrated as pretty much the same way (underlining a pastoral life and superior taste of the product), and the products they contain is also similar in the terms of taste and ingredients; to choose one out of them seems redundant. This can be shown as another example for *the myth of individuality and personal choice* theme, and it is also perfectly in line with *the myth of media plurality*.

- The state of the messages can also be linked to *the myth of the absence of social conflict* since whole another way of life; the ways of another social group is used on those labels in order to convey a marketing message. Urban people, some of whom did not even see a cow from a distance closer than five meters are buying this product in a completely clean container from a supermarket that they trust in to sell them “good” products; which is frankly the exact opposite of what pastoral life and its processes require.

- The ways that milk for producing those cheeses are gathered was never addressed on this products; but by tapping to the pastoral life theme, they create the illusion of cows happily roaming the ever-green fields and giving their milk to people as a gift. Also adding the urban people’s distance to the cheese manufacturing process, this act can be seen in the domain of *the myth of neutrality*.

- This system also denies the change in how people live, which can mildly be seen as a grounds for *unchanging human nature* theme due to previously listed reasons.

- Adding to those; there is fragmentation by the number of products; since this analysis covers only a handful that actually contains the same products, but there are different volumes, light and half-fat options, countless other styles of cheese, other dairy products, and so on. Listing the contents on the supermarket itself creates a confusion of sorts. Information overload -which contains no meaningful information-, is also done in this way.

- In another front, information overload is also done by the written messages and especially the contents section. Messages such as “100% Natural” or “Soft and Delicious” becomes meaningless when perceived on its own; since there is nothing natural about gathering some form of processed milk of another animal inside a white -and mostly green and blue- container from a sterile building, and adjectives such as soft and delicious are subjective to each consumer.

- The messages on the labels are direct and can be read without any mistake, which is seen as the defining quality for this medium (Barthes, 1964) as stated, and seemingly that messages adapted to this feature of the packaging product medium, positing McLuhan's (1964) argument.

- The weird nature of purchasing a "natural" product in completely unnatural means, and how it is accepted by today's society with almost complete silence can be shown as a testament to how iconic signs can be perceived as the absolute truth. All it takes for people to believe in product's natural state is a splash of green as it seems.

- The messages contain fractions of a pastoral life, and this was not a coincidence. The value created here by underlining a distant lifestyle, which urban people have a taste for in a superficial way. In other words, this message works because of the distant, pastoral way of life has become a fetish object for people. This misplaced lust turns into profits for these dairy firms amongst many others. Influence to buy disguised here as a *pleasure* of taste, and *benefit* of accessing this natural and healthy product; in line with Berger's (1972: 132) argument on publicity.

- In a way, this form of consumption leads to our doom, since we use -mostly- white, sterile, plastic containers to gather these items and those containers do not have any other function whatsoever. Polypropylene; which is predominantly used to manufacture these containers because of its price range, takes almost 30 years to decompose on nature and is one of the least recycled commercial plastic varieties (Leblanc, 2019); and we use this durable material to get cheese from the supermarket to our homes or wherever we consume the food inside. The journey takes up roughly between ten minutes to an hour.

- Needless to say that the image of naturalness and pastoral life separated the production and consumption phases which were consisted one, long process before this type of manufacturing. Consequently this separation creates a specific form of alienation; within which people participate in actions exact opposite of what they believe they want in order to obtain a sense of this desire. So, the consumption carries on and on because people are in nowhere near to what they desire and the only action they can take is to consume more; paradoxically this becomes a form of inaction.

### **Conclusion**

We people cover a strange place of existence; we perceive the universe not as a whole regarding time and space, but as a tiny, irrelevant fraction of it and try to find a way forward with that extremely limited data. That fraction and data set it provides can arguably be



misleading and controlled as shown in a singular example in this study. As stated; our perceived reality and the translation we conjure from it can be influenced -to say the least- by myths of the concerning time and society. Packaging products, such as cheese packages that are analyzed, as a form of cultural message bearers can be seen as a substantial example of how myths guide our perceptions, and therefore our minds for better or worse.

This study mainly delves into the magnitude of the influence that myths and the mind management guided by them have on the perception of an average citizen within the society. Such a vast, yet fundamental issue around the existence of humankind surely has attracted the attention of many scholars since there were scholars to perceive the mechanics of life; but this study focuses on the remarks made by Schiller (1973) on the matter of myths and how they can be applied to the world around. The notions such as consumption culture and commodity fetishism, which can be narrated as the end products or the side effects –at the very least- of the myths created by the industrialized society are mentioned as the analysis efforts consequently targeted towards that domain.

In order to examine those guiding forces in their “natural habitat”, cottage cheese packaging products out of a certain shelf of a supermarket are chosen. These products’ labels are analyzed regarding the overall message they were meant to convey and how those messages create the bigger picture which is a certain perception gathered from a look to the shelf they are on. Since those products are the cultural artifacts of the industrialized society – if there is one-; the message they carry, their narration arguably aimed to serve as an understanding around the mind management actions and thought mechanics of the society.

Regarding their intended messages, the products are found to have been not so distant from each other. Adding to their similar themes; their distance from the real events, and overall reality to a degree make them be in line with the myths of the “bourgeois society” in variable degrees. Since the messages they yield are plain and direct than those of newspapers or other mass media entities, those variation in links could be seen as a feature of this specific medium. One way or another though, these packaging products are found to be generating a form of alienation amongst the consumers by creating a rift between production and consumption phases of this kind of food. Those two were formerly seen as directly connected, which made them one great process rather than divided two.

Having stated all of those; this method of analysis needs to be conducted on a grand scale -meaning that many more product lines should be analyzed in this way- in order to reach a more generalized point of view, and therefore a path to salvation; because this world of “might and magic” cannot be sustained for long. This might as well be a utopian sentiment

which is shared by Bourdieu (1998), but the change will start at the point that people become aware of this manipulations. They only have as much power as they seem natural.

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