

MYTHOLOGY INSPIRED BRAND NAMES AND BRAND AWARENESS AMONGST END-USERS

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Abstract: The brand name is the one element that consumers immediately recognize and which creates a connection in their minds with a certain product or a given producer. Modern businesses have discovered that there is no marketing strategy more powerful than coming up with a catchy name or image that will stick to the consumer's mind and generate a certain association of qualities with that specific product based on the meaning of that name. Myths and legends have always been fascinating; they appeal to the consumer's inner most core. Using the names of deities that people can relate to or relate to their powers means transferring some of these deities' features onto the product, and thus onto the user. This seems to have been a quite successful marketing strategy. This paper takes a closer look at some of the most famous company names and brands inspired by ancient deities, and attempts to discover to what extent end-users are knowledgeable in terms of ancient mythology, aware of the meaning of the brand name, as well as of the connection between the brand name and mythology.

Keywords: *brand name, consumer, mythology, end-user, brand awareness*

1. Introduction

In a world ruled by the dictatorship of profit, businesses will do whatever it takes to attract consumers to their product in an ever increasing number. In their endeavour to get more consumers to use their product, companies will try to come up with various marketing strategies, deploy complex advertising campaigns and so on. As part of their effort to lure the consumer towards the given product, businesses will try to entice the former with *the* one element that first catches the end-users eye: the name and/or the logo.

With this in mind, some companies are quite creative in their choices regarding their name. They hire people with special training in consumer psychology and these will work towards the common goal of profit by

providing a catchy brand name, an interesting logo, ever more expensive advertising campaigns and marketing strategies. In creating a brand name, as well as perceiving and interpreting it, “an individual’s cultural belonging, level of education, temperament, beliefs, values and aesthetic sense play a decisive role” (Felecan 2016:101).

We attempt hereafter to take a closer look at some of the most famous company names and brands inspired by ancient deities, and undertake to interpret not so much their meaning but rather the perceived impact on the consumer from the perspective of their meaning. The criteria used when choosing the brands analysed within this paper are the famousness of the mythological event or of the deity whose name was chosen as the brand name, as well as the popularity of the brand amongst users in general. All the brands were analysed by first describing the company or the brand in terms of its activity, then presenting the mythological significance behind the name, and finally interpreting the impact that the specific brand name or logo has on the consumer considering the image it projects. The final endeavour – that of interpreting the impact of the brand name/logo on the consumer – was carried out by applying a questionnaire to a sample group of 86 students considered as end-users.

2. Brand names and their meaning

Throughout the world there are thousands of company names inspired by mythology, either Greek or Roman, or any other mythology for that matter. We have chosen some of the most famous European and American brand names and focused on these two types of business culture because they are the ones that we are more familiar with due to the vicinity with the former and the worldwide popularity of the latter. We also included some Romanian companies, which are more famous at local level, i.e. within the borders of our country. The brands included in this study are, in alphabetical order: Ajax, Apollo, Hermes, Mars, Nike, Olympus, Pegas – the Romanian name for Pegasus, Trojan, Venus and Versace (for the Medusa logo), of which Apollo and Pegas are Romanian brands.

We shall present hereafter these brand names in terms of the company’s activity or business, as well as the mythological circumstance or character which inspired these names, proceeding with the analysis of their impact on the consumer from the point of view of the more or less hidden message they project.

AJAX

In terms of the name, *Ajax*® is mainly known as a brand of household cleaning products. Yet there are numerous other companies which carry this name, but whose business focus is rather different. In this paper we focused on the former since these products are available on the European marketplace, Romania including. The brand is part of the Colgate-Palmolive Company which, according to Forbes magazine, ranks 29th in the *Global 2000: Top Regarded Companies* (Forbes, 2017). In Greek mythology, Ajax distinguished himself as a great hero in the Trojan War, fighting for the Greeks. He was actually their greatest hero after Achilles, he being the one who fought Hector in single combat after Achilles initially decided to leave the fight.

Generally speaking, companies do not provide any explanation as to their choice of the name; Colgate-Palmolive Company is no exception. One can only assume the underlying rationale of their choice of name for this particular range of products. Ajax being a powerful warrior who needed no assistance from the gods, may have been chosen as the name of cleaning products because it implies that these products are capable of cleaning up in the house without assistance from other products. One could speculate further, yet it seems quite evident that associating a name which suggests power with the image of a cleaning product was by no means an accident, since this association projects the characteristic of the mythical hero onto the product: a cleaning product as powerful as its mythical namesake.



Historically speaking, **Apollo** was a famous Romanian chemical plant founded in 1886, which operated for many years during the communist regime, and produced detergents, as well as pigments, paints and lacquer. The product for which it is remembered by older generation Romanians is the brand of soap called *Cheia* (= *the key*). After the political change engendered by the 1989 Romanian revolution, there came huge economic changes as well, the country quickly moving from a strict state monopoly to capitalism, which brought about the privatization of the vast majority of the previously state-owned companies. Unsurprisingly, this was the fate of

Apollo as well: in 1995-1996 it was privatized, and that marked the beginning of its downfall and eventual dissolution. The year 2009 gave it the final blow, when the buildings were bulldozed and the machinery was sold as scrap metal. (<https://adevarul.ro>)

As a mythological character, viz. Greek mythology, **Apollo** is known as one of the most complex and important gods, and is the god of many things, including: music, poetry, art, oracles, archery, medicine, the sun, light and knowledge. He is also known as a masterful magician who delighted Olympus with tunes played on his golden lyre, which was made by Hermes, and accompanied by the nine Muses. He taught men the art of healing, and is alternately referred to as the God of Light and the God of Truth, who served as an intermediary between the gods and men. Apollo is one of the few Greek gods whose name the Romans kept unaltered, yet while the Greeks worshipped him as the God of light primarily, in Roman mythology he was mainly known as the God of healing and prophecy. (<https://greekgodsnadgoddesse.net>)

In terms of the perceived message, associating this god's name to the image of a certain type of soap gave end-users the impression of luxury and glamour; its slogan even had a sort of glamour to it: "Săpunul cheia cucerește femeia" (in free translation: this soap conquers the ladies). Yet there was no glamour or luxury in this particular soap; the name was misleading, as anyone would expect, but the soap was the most popular one, as well as the cheapest. It had no perfume but a rather unpleasant scent, it was meant for washing clothes, available for camps, hostels, the army. So the glamour that it might have suggested was almost a farce, while the target group was low-end users. In terms of the psychological perception, none of the users were actually misled by the intended message, yet since consumers had no real options in a communist marketplace, the soap sold well. The moment it faced competition, after the company having been privatized, and after the country had turned to a capitalist economy, the brand vanished and today's generations barely remember it. It remains nevertheless a trademark of the communist regime in Romania, and those who used it still remember it as the plain product that it used to be, with glamour only suggested, yet never really promised and surely never provided.



At the opposite end of the spectrum there is *Hermès®*, the French high fashion luxury goods manufacturer. This name is instantly associated

with glamour and luxury, but it has not necessarily been so since 1837, when it was established. The logo, which is a Duc carriage pulled by a horse, is nevertheless the logo of affluence and prestige, and it was chosen as such because it very accurately presents the company's initial activity, namely manufacturing harnesses and bridles for a high-end consumer group, i.e. French noblemen. Taken out of its historical context, the logo might seem somewhat confusing to present-day consumers, considering the fact that it is mainly associated with handbags, fashion or luxury goods. Yet for the knowledgeable customer, awareness of the brand's historical background clears the confusion.

The name "Hermes" is indeed the name of the Greek god of messengers and commerce, yet in this specific case this is also the surname of the founder of the company, Thierry Hermes. At this point, the company is so well known that it would practically be pointless to begin to present its history. What we nevertheless consider worth presenting in terms of the company's historical background is the moment it actually became a *historical* brand (viz. a world-renowned brand), and that was the moment when the company produced their most recognizable and iconic creation, i.e. the *Sac à dépêches*, which became world-famous as the *Kelly Bag*, as it was designed for Grace Kelly. At present, the *Hermes* logo is one of the most recognized and desired images in the world. Starting as a harnessing workshop, 176 years later it is one of the world's most beloved brands specializing in leather, lifestyle accessories, perfumery, luxury goods, and ready to wear.

As for the mythological background, the association of the brand name to the god who was considered the cleverest of gods and a messenger to all other gods, the ruler over commerce, wealth, good fortune, fertility and thievery, as well as the deity of athletes, god of sleep and ruler of the winds (he wears winged sandals) is clearly an impactful one. And in order to increase the impact, his trademark was the caduceus (the bringer of sleep to men), as well as a *purse/money-bag* (as the symbol of merchants).

Considering the fact that the brand name is the actual surname of the founder himself, the association of this name to that of the aforementioned god was evidently made much later in time. In undoubtedly had an impact on the spread of the name, sparking debate of whether and to what extent there was a connection between the brand name and the said god. This in itself, according to advertising theories, is an advertising technique, i.e. word-of-mouth, probably one of the easiest ways to disseminate information about a certain product, and definitely the form of advertising requiring the least amount of money on the part of the company, if any.



Not unlike the previous brand name, *Mars*® too is originally the surname of the founder of the company. The name itself refers to both the company and a specific product included amongst their famous products (candy, chocolate bars, chewing gum etc.). The company is headquartered in Mount Olive, New Jersey, U.S. It is known worldwide as one of the leading chocolate manufacturers, featuring 29 brands in total, of which the most renowned ones are: M&M'S®, Snickers®, Milky Way®, Twix® and obviously Mars®. (<https://www.mars.com/nordics/our-brands-in-the-nordics/mars-chocolate>). The chocolate bar in question was first manufactured in 1932 in Slough, England by son of American candy maker Frank Mars.

And just like the previous brand name, initially there was no association to the Roman god of war; it was only later in time that people started associating the brand to the deity bearing the same name. Considering the fact that in Roman religion, Mars was a very important god, his role being second only to Jupiter, the leader of the pantheon, this association (like any other similar one) was only beneficial in terms of marketing. The same advertising strategy applies here as in the previous case.

Having ones brand associated to the god known as the Roman god of war bears an enormous impact on the perception people have of that specific brand, considering that consumers are actually aware of this connection. Mars was said to love violence and conflict. His persona represented military power and the noise and blood of battle. He was a military deity as Rome conquered its neighbours and a protector in times of peace. (<https://greekgodsnadgoddesse.net>). It is not necessarily the image that one would want to have their products associated with, yet in terms of marketing the association is impactful.



Nike® is an American sportswear company whose headquarter is in Beaverton, Oregon. It was founded in 1964 as Blue Ribbon Sports by Bill Bowerman, a track-and-field coach at the University of Oregon, and his

former student Phil Knight. They opened their first retail outlet in 1966 and launched the *Nike* brand shoe in 1972. The company was renamed *Nike, Inc.*, in 1978 and went public two years later. By the early 21st century, *Nike* had retail outlets and distributors in more than 170 countries, and its logo – a curved check mark called the “swoosh” – was recognized throughout the world. The company has been expanding and diversifying its product line ever since, moving from sports shoes to athletic apparel and equipment, products for extreme sports, as well as sports-technology accessories, including portable heart-rate monitors and high-altitude wrist compasses. (<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Nike-Inc>).

In this particular case, the association to the Greek goddess of speed, strength and victory was not an accidental one, but a rather conscious choice. The name *Nike* was chosen by the company founders because of her attributes of speed and victory. *Nike* is most often pictured as having wings, thus being also known as the Winged Goddess. She was worshiped by the ancient Greeks because she was able to grant humans strength and the speed they needed to be victorious in any task they undertook. She always carried a palm branch in her right hand as a symbol of peace. Another very important thing she carried was a wreath, always ready to crown a victor in battle or games of challenge.



Olympus® is a 3rd generation family owned company, holding a leading position in Greece in the field of dairy products, which appeared in the '50s, when the Sarantis family began being active in the area of cheese and yogurt production. “The brand is synonymous with quality and Greek authenticity”, as they advertise on their website.

(<http://www.olympusdairy.com/about-us/our-history.html>). As a brand born in Greece, the homeland of the gods, the choice of name is not surprising; neither is the choice of logo. The brand name is the actual name of the highest mountain in Greece, also known in mythology as the home of the 12 Greek gods. It is not the only business bearing this name, yet no confusion can occur. In this particular instance, as in the one presented above, the association of the name of a dairy product manufacturer with the name of the home of the gods, is a quite transparent, nevertheless clever, marketing strategy. And we are merely stating here the obvious: in the minds of consumers, the brand name *Olympus* will always be associated with the name of the mountain where gods used to roam and thrive, drink nectar and eat ambrosia, thus they will always associate it with high quality products.



Pegas, or Pegasus in English, is a famous Romanian brand of bicycles. Its story began in the '60s, when at the Weapon factory Tohan in Zărnești, the communist regime discovered the perfect recipe for streamlining production: to manufacture rockets, grenades, motorbikes and bicycles in one factory. And thus the Pegas bicycle division was born. The factory would produce 150-200 bicycles per shift, between 200 and 300 thousand annually. Employees would work in three shifts because demand was very high. And the even exported to Burundi. After the Revolution, the bicycle market was flooded with import bicycles, and the factory in Brașov could hardly handle competition. The factory had 23 bicycle models in its portfolio, but in the early 2000 the last bike would exit through the factory gates. Ever since that moment, the Pegas brand had no owner. About ten years later, when Andrei Botescu wanted to buy a Pegas, feeling nostalgic, he found out that not only had production been discontinued, the brand itself was no longer registered at OSIM (the Romanian State Office for Inventions and Trademarks). (<https://www.digi24.ro/special/campanii-digi24/romania-fast-forward/pegas-afacerea-romaneasca-nascuta-din-nostalgie-818461>) It was that moment that triggered one man's desire to revive one of Romania's iconic brands; and he succeeded. In 2012, two years after the heroic decision of bringing *Pegas* back to life, the company sold 500 bikes, with sales reaching ten thousand in 2016.

The story of the brand and of the product is one of the few success stories in terms of genuine Romanian brands. At the moment of its rebirth, the media associated the brand name to yet another mythical creature: the Phoenix, deeming it 'the Pegasus goes Phoenix' (http://dordeduca.ro/stiri/pegas_goes_phoenix/8486/), as an allusion to the brand's rebirth out of its own 'ashes'.

The brand logo – the winged stallion, Pegasus – was at the moment of the brand's first appearance a brilliant association, and it still is a perfect rendition of the qualities of the product it represents. Pegasus symbolizes "the divine inspiration or the journey to heaven, since riding him was synonymous to flying to the heavens". (<https://www.greekmyths-greekmythology.com/pegasus-winged-horse/>). Associating a ride on a bicycle to a flight to the heavens on the back of a winged horse is the epitome of brilliance in marketing strategy.



Probably less famous amongst European consumers, in the US this is the number one producer of condoms and a range of other products in the same field. In 1920, Youngs Rubber Company, founded by a 33-year-old businessman named Merle Youngs, introduced his brand, *Trojan*® as competition against Julius Schmidt, a fellow American businessman, who produced condoms he called Sheik and Ramses. By 1975, *Trojan* condoms accounted for over half of the condoms sold in pharmacies. Today, they continue to be the top seller in America.

(<http://www.trojanbrands.com/en/sex-information/sex-history>)

As to the mythological background of the brand name, it was inspired by the Trojan War, and the name for the product was chosen due to the association with the virility of the men who fought in the Trojan War, and not with the actual Trojan horse which, as everybody knows, was used by the Greeks to sneak warriors into the city of Troy, who then destroyed it, ensuring the Greeks' victory. There is another unfortunate association that people make, and that refers to another product bearing the same name, i.e. the Trojan virus, yet the latter took its name from the treacherous Greek horse.



Venus® is a brand name created by *Gillette*® as an exclusively female product. Back in 1901, King Gillette invented a safety razor that completely changed the way men shaved – and led to a new company dedicated to smooth skin. One hundred years later, that company introduced the original Gillette Venus razor, forever transforming women's shaving, and becoming the number one female shaving brand in the world.

(<https://www.gillettevenus.com/en-us/about-venus-history>)

Since it is a product exclusively dedicated to women, the choice of name was not surprising at all. As a marketing strategy, this choice of name was an extremely flattering association in the minds of the end-users. What better way to attract female consumers to one's shaving product than by inducing in their mind the notion of unequalled beauty, and not just any beauty but that of a goddess!

Venus was the Roman goddess of love, beauty, prosperity, fertility, and victory. She was so important to Romans that they claimed her as their

ancestress. However, in Greek mythology she was the goddess Aphrodite. The Romans adopted many of Aphrodite's symbols, such as the roses and myrtle, to represent Venus. Other symbols of Venus included the scallop shell, doves, dolphins, pomegranates, pearls, mirrors, and girdles. Many of these were also adopted from Aphrodite. So was her origin story; she was said to be born of sea foam.

(<https://greekgodsandgoddesses.net/goddesses/venus/>)



VERSACE

As to this last brand name in our selection, it is not the actual *Versace* name that we will focus upon but the choice of logo. The brand itself has been, for the past decades, “one of the most recognizable brands in luxury fashion, selling clothing and accessories that are right at home on the red carpet and are worn by some of the most fashion-forward celebrities in the world.” (<http://blog.logomymway.com/history-of-versace-logo-design/>). What is intriguing though and also the reason why this brand was included on the list of brand names analysed within this paper, is the brand's logo, i.e. the head of the Medusa.

Gianni Versace himself, the founder of the company, “said that he chose Medusa specifically because of the way she made people fall hopelessly in love with her with no chance of ever going back, and he hoped that his company would have the same effect on the people who purchased Versace products.” Yet it was not until 1993 that the company unveiled their famous Medusa head logo. (<http://blog.logomymway.com/history-of-versace-logo-design/>).

In Greek mythology, the Medusa is one of the three Gorgons, being the only mortal one and amazingly beautiful, unlike her sisters who were both immortal and monstrous. Yet she had the misfortune of being transformed by goddess Athena into the most hideous of them, with snakes instead of hair and a gaze so piercing that it could turn onlookers, men specifically, into stone. She was thus punished for engaging in a love-affaire with the god of the seas, Poseidon.

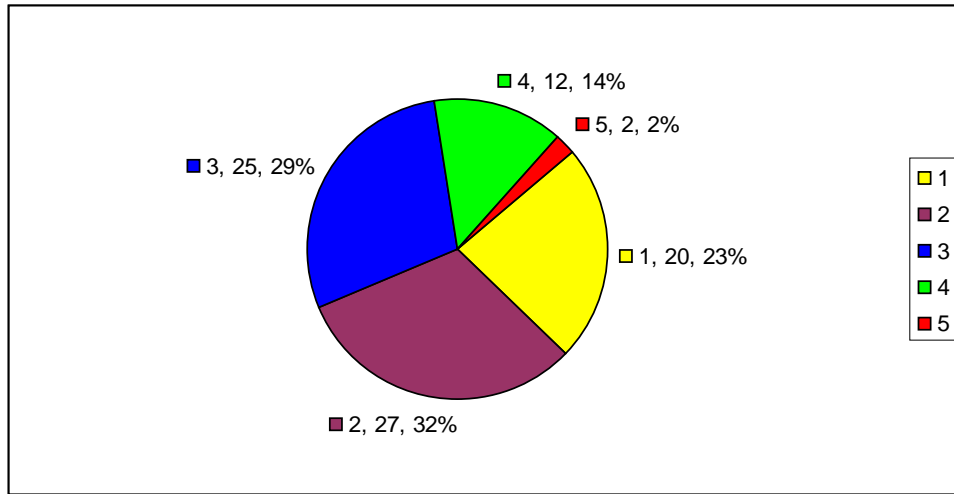
As for the reason why Gianni Versace may have chosen Medusa for his company, one can only speculate, as with any other brand name, that he did so due to “her magnetic appeal and his own connection to Greek artwork”, but it is not just that. There are several connotations to Medusa

“that make her an interesting, ironic choice for a high-end fashion brand”. Her story “is one that serves as a warning against lust and vanity. After seducing Poseidon, Medusa was punished by Athena and made to be so hideous that merely looking at her would turn men into stone.” The irony of the association results from the fact that just like any high-end fashion brand, Versace also “relies heavily on vanity in order to sell their products”. Herein lies the irony of Versace’s choice; the logo of his fashion company is “a woman who was made dangerously hideous because of her vanity”. And it will remain a further subject for speculation whether Gianni Versace was fully aware of this connotation. He was nevertheless familiar with the story, since he grew up in Rome. “This leaves everyone to wonder whether or not there might be a hidden message within the Versace logo – something of an inside joke that comes at the customer’s expense.” (<http://blog.logomymway.com/history-of-versace-logo-design/>).

3. Brand recognition and brand awareness amongst the students of the Technical University of Cluj Napoca, the North University Centre of Baia Mare as end-users

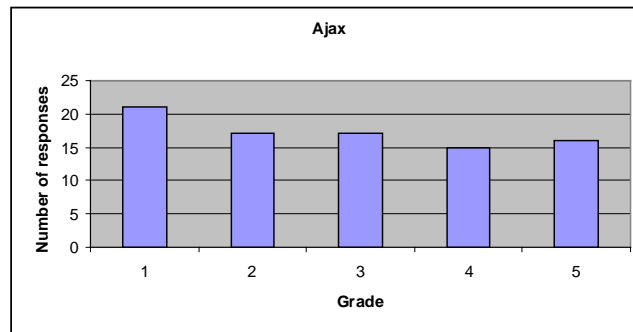
In order to get a glimpse into the issue of brand recognition and brand awareness we chose a sample of 86 students from the Faculty of Sciences and the Faculty of Engineering within the Technical University of Cluj Napoca – North University Centre of Baia Mare (TUCN-NUCBM) studying in Business Administration, Management, Electrical or Mechanical Engineering, aged 19 to 24. The students, who were considered as end-users of most of the products and/or brands under consideration in this paper, were given a questionnaire containing 4 questions related to the above ten famous brand names, of which two were Romanian brands and eight were well-known international brands.

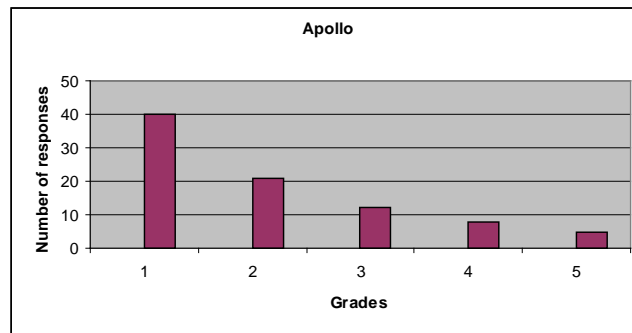
The first question was meant to assess the respondents’ knowledge in terms of Greek and/or Roman mythology, requiring them to grade their level of familiarity with the issue on a scale from 1 to 5, 1 being the lowest and 5 the highest. Unsurprisingly, the sample of end-users who answered the questionnaire proved to possess little knowledge with regard to mythology. Thus, as seen in table no. 1, 23% of respondents assessed their level of awareness of mythology as low, while 32% as fairly low. 29% considered that they had an average level of knowledge, and only 14% graded their knowledge with a 4. An insignificant 2% of the respondents appreciated that they had a high level of awareness of the subject.



There was nevertheless an aspect which impeded the objectivity of the questionnaire: the students' inconsistency in answering the questions. Thus, some stated in reply to the first question that they knew some things about mythology but when asked (in question no. 3) what each mythological character or situation actually meant, some of those who admitted to knowing some things about mythology, actually failed in providing any concrete information on the issue. Further down, when dealing with question no. 3 distinctly, we will get into depth regarding these responses.

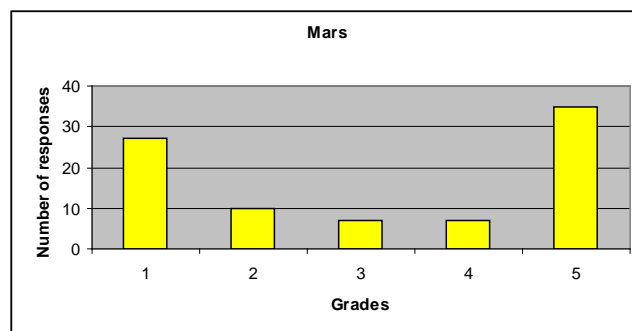
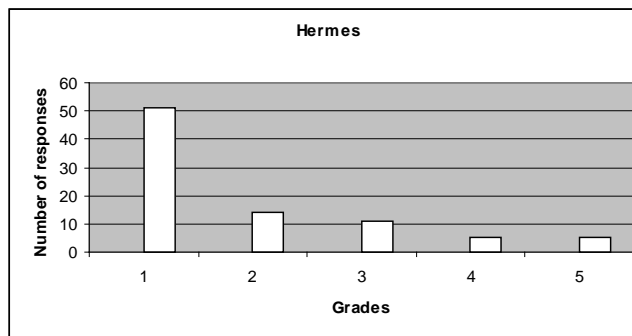
The second question referred to the students' level of familiarity with the ten brands presented in the previous section of the paper. Their responses are presented in the tables bellow. In order to render the data readable, we decided to present separate tables for each individual brand name.





As regards *Ajax*, the responses were quite close, with no big difference in terms of the grades given by the respondents. Yet one can notice that grade 1 – the lowest grade in terms of familiarity with the brand in question, did record the highest number of responses. As regards the other responses, one could say end-users are fairly aware of the existence of this brand.

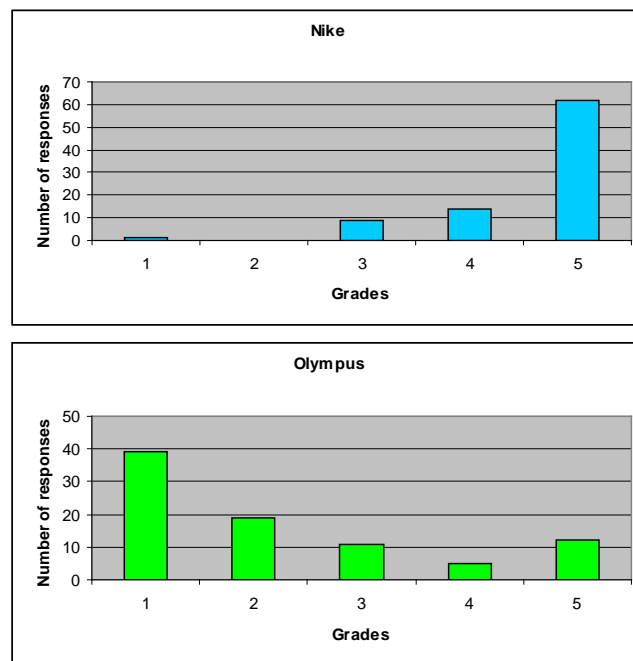
By contrast, the brand *Apollo* appears to be almost completely unfamiliar to the users. This is not surprising at all, since the factory bearing the name was closed long time ago, and the age range of the respondents actually justifies their lack of information on the specific brand.



Hermes, on the other hand, is surprisingly unfamiliar to the sample group of respondents, with the vast majority of them admitting to not knowing much about it (the brand scored 51 under grade 1). The reason for

their lack of information about this brand may arise from the fact that it addresses a quite exclusivist type of customer, producing high-end luxury items.

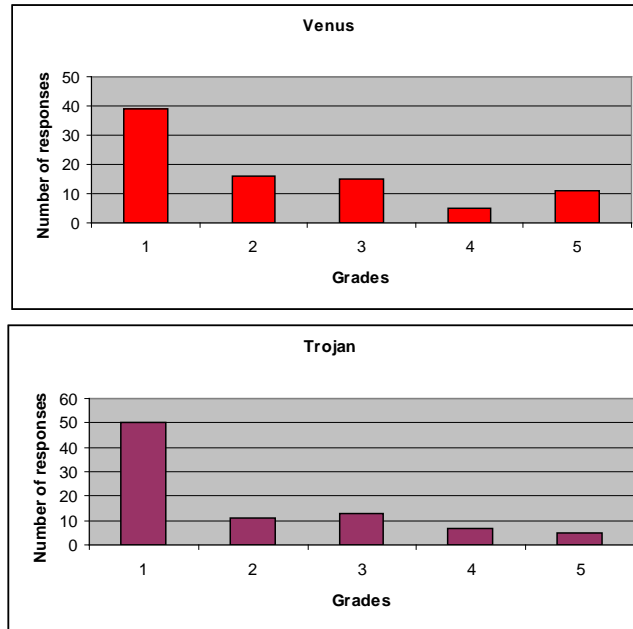
The next brand in our research is *Mars*. The midrange scores do not generate any level of surprise, and neither does the fact that grade 5, i.e. the highest score in terms of familiarity with the product or brand, gathered the majority of responses (35 to be more specific). What is nevertheless surprising is the fact that almost as many respondents (27) admitted to not knowing much or anything about the brand. And it is surprising from the perspective of the type of products this brand brings into the marketplace. One would expect that respondents of that specific age range be aware of the most famous chocolate bar producer in the world.



Nike is one of the brands in this group of brands that is clearly the best known of all. And in this case as well there is no surprise of the outcome of the questionnaire. The fact that the vast majority of respondents (76) are familiar or very familiar with the brand is explained by the brand's endorsement by sportspeople and the massive presence of the product in stores throughout the world. The high popularity of the brand amongst the respondents is also consistent with their age range, since this group of individuals is more active and more oriented towards comfortable footwear, requirements which a sports shoe would satisfy.

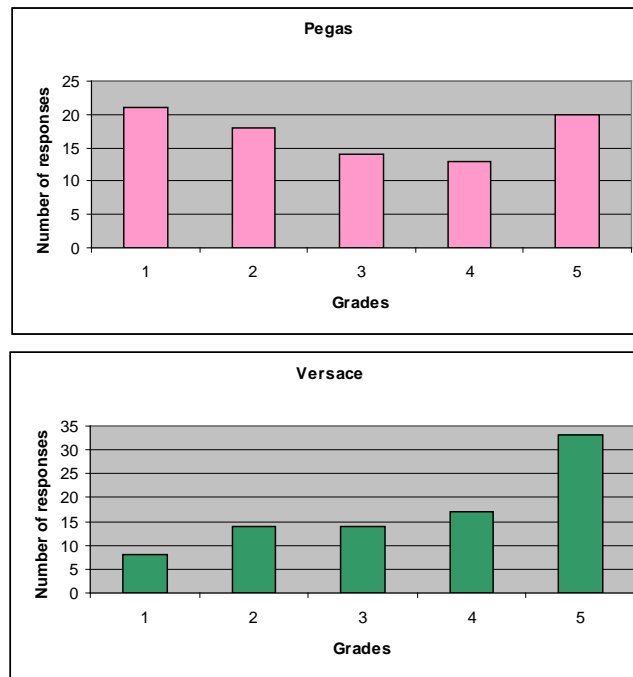
At the other end of the spectrum there is the brand *Olympus* with regard to which most respondents said they were not familiar with. In this

case, just as in the case of the previously presented brand, the age of the respondents can, to some extent, justify this result. They seem to pay little attention to the choice of brand when it comes to dairy products or food products in general.



In terms of *Venus* and *Trojan*, the responses provided demonstrate the same attitude on the side of the consumers. The vast majority of the respondents have very little information on these two brands. In the case of *Trojan* this is justified by the fact that the brand is less available on the European market, let alone on the Romanian one. In terms of *Venus*, the explanation resides in the fact that the majority of respondents were male, as well as in the fact that other hair removal techniques might be more familiar amongst female consumers present on the Romanian marketplace.

A note is required at this point: gender was not considered in the questionnaire for this specific paper, yet it will be included in further research since we noticed that it does influence many aspects of the consumers' behaviour.



The conclusion one can draw when analysing the responses the sample group provided regarding the Romanian brand *Pegas* is that they are quite eclectic in terms of their familiarity with the brand. All grades received a similar number of responses, so it is unclear whether the product is well-known or rather unfamiliar. Grades 1 and 2 collected 39 responses, while grades 4 and 5 collected 33 responses. In other words, almost as many respondents admitted to not being familiar with the brand, as those who said they were familiar with it. There seems to be an almost perfect balance between these two groups.

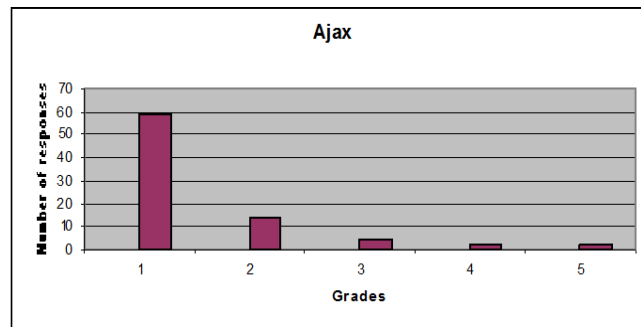
The situation with *Versace* is radically different. It is not surprising that there exists a vast majority of 48 respondents who are familiar with the brand and a mere 8 who have never heard of it, since the brand itself is famous worldwide. 28 admit to knowing something, yet apparently they seem too uncomfortable with the level of information they hold of the brand since they opted for the midrange responses.

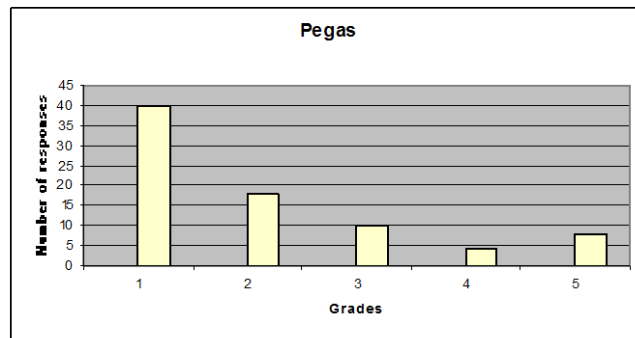
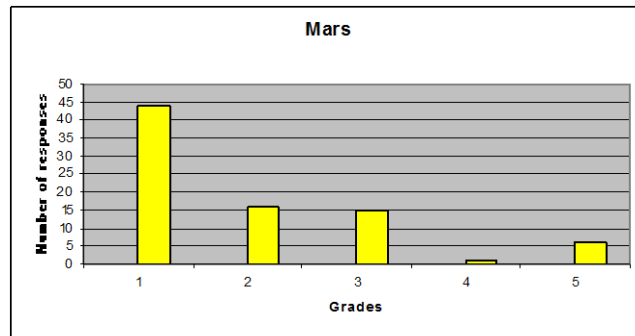
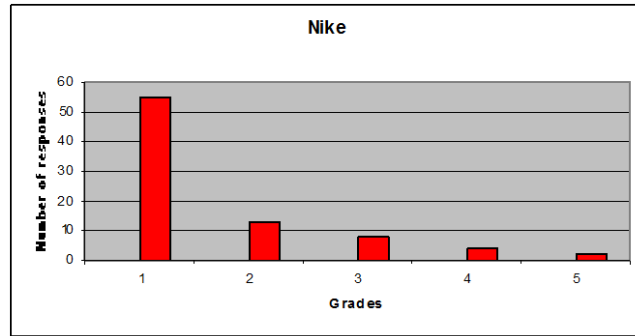
Question no. 2 also included a supplementary task which required respondents to indicate what exactly they knew with regard to these brand names. Surprisingly though, the responses provided here had no connection with the grade they chose; even those who graded their level of awareness regarding the brand name with a 2, knew what products could be found under the particular brand name. Thus most respondents, who admitted to a certain level of awareness, knew that *Ajax* produces cleaning products, that *Mars* produces chocolate bars, that *Pegas* is a brand of bicycles, that *Nike* is

known for sports shoes and apparel and *Versace* designs clothes. Generally speaking, they were accurate. There were some who knew that *Olympus* produces yogurt and dairy products, but others only knew they were somehow connected to the food industry, while another group identified the brand name with the camera and lens producer, which was quite an accurate answer. Yet since the vast majority of those who had heard about the brand name associated it with the dairy industry, we decided to present the former in the section where we described the brands and their association with mythology.

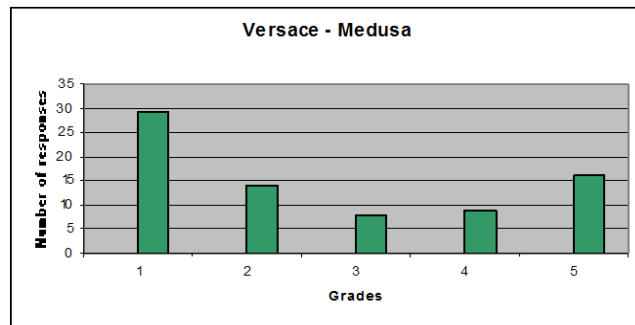
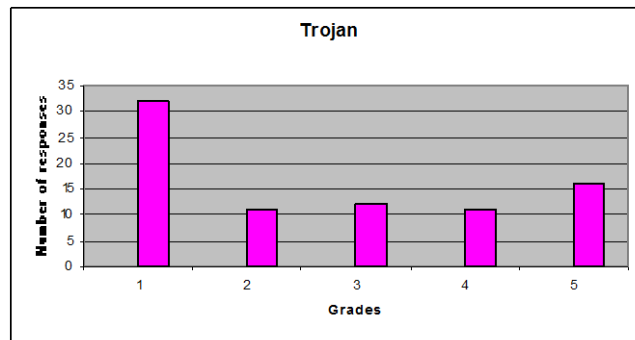
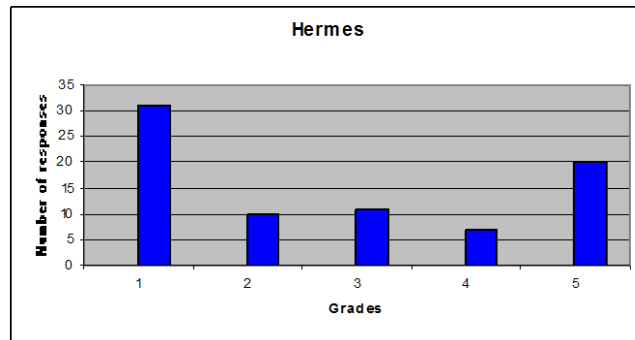
The third question referred to the extent to which students linked these brand names to Greek or Roman mythology. We proceeded as with question no. 2 and drew up individual charts for every deity. Thus the responses were categorized into three groups, considering certain similarities, the first group containing 4 charts and the subsequent two groups containing each three charts. The details and their interpretation are presented below.

The first group of charts contains four deities, of which three – Ajax, Nike and Pegasus – are considered minor in mythology, but the fourth – Mars – is quite an important god in Roman mythology. Nonetheless, all these four mythical individuals received a similar score in terms of the respondents' awareness as to what they represent in mythology. Thus all four are quite unfamiliar to the average student. This outcome, as in the case of the other six mythological characters or places, is not surprising since it is closely linked to the level of interest students have in mythology, which is radically decreasing these days.

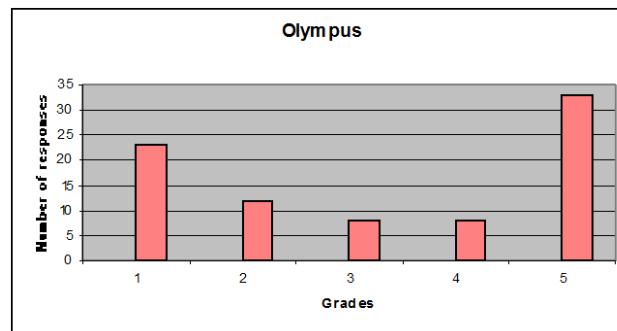
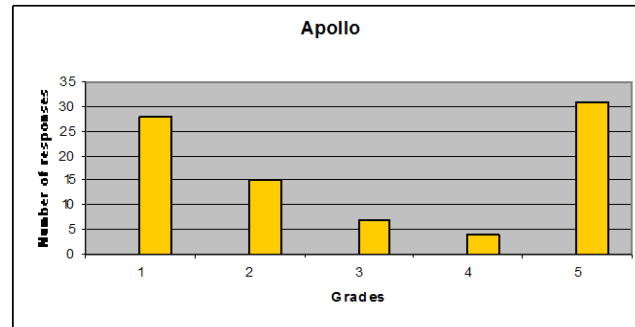
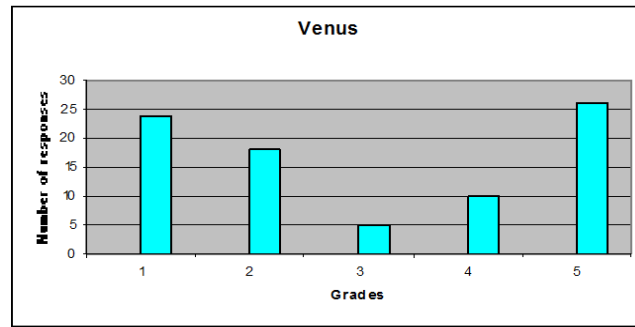




The second group of charts includes three characters – Hermes, the Medusa and the Trojan – of which respondents seem to be slightly more aware. In these three cases the predominant answer is still in the low range grades, yet the number of respondents who gave a grade 5, viz. who have a certain level of knowledge in terms of mythology, is quite high.



As regards the third group of charts, in this case the situation is reversed as compared to the previous group. This group include Olympus, of which students knew it was the home of the gods, Venus, known as the goddess of beauty and love, and Apollo of whom only 3 respondents said he was the god of Sun/light. In all these three charts, grade 5 exceeds all other grades in number of responses, but grade 1 still records high scores in all three instances. This means that in these three situations students do associate these items with mythology to quite a high extent, even if they are not exactly sure what each represents – as in the case of Apollo. There seems to be a certain balance in terms of number of students who link these names to mythology and those who see no link whatsoever, yet the former is higher.



This question also included a supplementary task which required respondents to provide some details on what these names represent in Greek or Roman mythology. We touched upon some above, yet most of the respondents provided little response if any for this task. It seems that have a certain level of awareness, they seem to recognise the fact that some names are from mythology, but they do not posses clear information on what each character represents.

The final question referred to the use of these products. The question was formulated as a yes/no question and it inquired whether they had used any of the products included in the questionnaire, while also including an open end question in case of an affirmative answer to the former. Thus if they answered in the affirmative, they would also need to provide the name(s) of the product(s) which they used. Most respondents answered in the affirmative, and the most frequently used products where,

unsurprisingly, *Nike* and *Mars*, as well as *Ajax*, but less frequent than the previous two.

4. Instead of conclusions

The present research focused on ten iconic brands whose names were inspired by or could be associated with mythological characters or places and the extent to which consumers on the Romanian marketplace are aware of this association. The level of awareness was tested through a questionnaire handed out to a sample group of 86 students in various fields of study (Business studies and Engineering in particular), studying within the North University Centre of Baia Mare, Technical University of Cluj-Napoca. After the interpretation of the results of the questionnaires, we realized that students are more aware of certain products than they are of others, but this is due to several reasons: one is the type of products the specific brands comprise, another is the specific group the company targets, and yet another refers to the student's interests and background. Thus the more high-end oriented the products, the less brand awareness the students proved to have.

In terms of awareness regarding mythology, be it Greek or Roman, the students' responses only confirmed what we had suspected in the beginning, namely that they have little knowledge in this regard. This aspect is not surprising, considering the ever decreasing interest students seem to have in mythology or other cultural aspects for that matter.

One of the shortcomings of this research resides in the fact that we did not include gender as an indicator. Since some of the products included in the research are gender-oriented, it would have been interesting to see if brand awareness was higher amongst females than it was amongst males. It would also have been interesting to see which gender group had more knowledge of mythology, but this will constitute a topic for further research.

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