Media Consumption in Malaysia

A Hermeneutics of Human Behaviour

Tony Wilson

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How do visitors immersing themselves in material places such as shopping malls or online video sites make sense of the experience, enabling criticizing – or consenting to content? How is this evident in behaviour? Reflecting on accounts by Chinese, Indian, Malay and Indigenous members of Malaysian society, this book addresses these questions from a practices perspective increasingly adopted by scholars in marketing and media studies. The volume provides an account of practices theory from its origins in critical hermeneutics (such as Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur), as reflecting on the processes of embodied understanding, developing alongside interpretive and reception theory. Part I draws upon authors as diverse as Heidegger and Henry Jenkins, with a practices perspective on media and mall consuming shown as developing from forty years of theorizing about audience activity. An empirical study of Malaysian blogging and branding on YouTube exemplifies this approach. Part II considers Malaysians absorbed in social media sites, as everyday visitors and the subjects of consumer research. The book then returns to the material world, exploring the horizons of understanding from which Malaysians enter their mediated malls, and concludes by positioning media practices theory within a spectrum of philosophical ideas. Recognizing the current (re)turn in consumer and media studies to employing hermeneutics as an account of our embodied human understanding, this book presents its major philosophical proponents, showing how close attention to their writing can now inform and shape research on ubiquitous screen users. As such, it will be of particular interest to students and scholars of media, Asian and marketing studies.

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Contents

Media Consumption in Malaysia: A Hermeneutics of Human Behaviour is dedicated to my wife Jenny Siow Ai Wei and the warm Malaysians who informed five years' writing.

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Preface

Audiences Everywhere: From Mall to Media – A Practices Perspective on Consumption

> Practice theory should develop more philosophical perseverance and at the same time not give up its embeddedness in empirical social and cultural analysis.
>
> (Reckwitz, 2002: 259)

> If one pauses to reflect on Asian traditions of thought dealing with language and communication, one would perceive a great affinity between these traditions and the approach of Heidegger.
>
> (Dissanayake, 2003: 26)

London School of Economics academics wrote recently that the 'critical repertoire of ideas and insights developed to rethink the mass television audience in the 1980s and 1990s' is 'only now coming into its own' to 'reveal its full analytic power and potential' (Livingstone and Das, 2013: 105) in the digital era. Consistent with this claim, their returning colleague Nick Couldry referred to media hermeneutics twenty times in his LSE professorial inaugural lecture (2013)!

Inspired by hermeneutics and later learning from student projects about the distinctive genre of Malaysian media marketing (from Digi to Maxis, Public Bank to Universities), my book seeks further to advance a phenomenology of audience-authoring practices.

Drawing on Silverstone's (1999) LSE initiative in proposing his 'repertoire of ideas and insights' from hermeneutic phenomenology (Huizinga to Ricoeur) for analyzing media consuming, my monograph considers how this conceptual toolkit can be developed as a practices perspective in reflecting upon Malaysian media audience activity. Here, practice theory's teleological, temporal and topological model of consumer understanding is applied to audiences producing meaning for marketing, shopping malls and social media – the ludic substratum of everyday life.

Media Consumption in Malaysia is addressed first to the hundreds of Malaysians in your universities both private and public, as well as in telecommunications, who have been co-authors, contributors in focus groups and collaborators over the two decades during which I have written Malaysian

media research. Your cultural capital sets high standards: your 'voicing out' tested my theorizing. I hope these pages enable your horizons of understanding to be shared internationally.

I am especially grateful to multilingual Bidayuh, Chinese, Iban, Indian, Kelabit and Malay large undergraduate classes that I taught for three years on the beautiful University Malaysia Sarawak east campus – enjoying efficiency and an earlier enabling Australia-Malaysia Institute fellowship. They were generous in their formal evaluation of my course on media marketing: several students whose accomplished projects I supervised can find references to their insights acknowledged and added to this volume. I thank their first year peers for volunteering involvement as participants in my social media research. Likewise, Sunway University students are invaluable contributors of mall practices in visiting Malaysia's Sunway Pyramid Mall (listed by Yahoo! among the world's top ten)!

Thinking Through a Research Method: How Actions Author Our Narratives in Media and Malls

> The 'social is a field of embodied, materially interwoven practices centrally organized around shared practical understandings'.
>
> (Schatzki, 2005: 12)

Since I set out on audience and consumer research and publishing from the philosophical perspective – horizons – of existential or hermeneutic phenomenology (i.e. Gadamer, Heidegger, Ricoeur) in Malaysia twenty years ago, I and Malaysian colleagues have conducted focus groups and interviews on a wide range of media topics: from advertising to mobile phone use and cinema, talk shows, television drama and tourist websites. All of this research is presented in earlier volumes.

These focus groups are almost always small (not more than four people), and they are never tightly structured, enabling we believe, participant narratives to emerge. When I started focus group research on media reception – in those distant days producing our recordings on micro-cassettes – I was 'overwhelmed by data'. This was for two reasons. First, Malaysian citizens generate interpretive 'voicing out' generously: thus our transcription took many hours (but finding research grant funded assistants to undertake this work took longer!). Second, from what perspective was it then possible to conduct the analyses, grounded as articulating our participant's cultural 'horizon of understanding'?

Nowadays, I listen repeatedly to our digital recordings, enhancing awareness of laughter, silences and so on, as significant: we transcribe that which is thematically relevant, always checking again for accuracy. How do we decide on what is 'thematically relevant'? I work analytically from the perspective of Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology or the philosophy of understanding-in-practice(s). He emphasizes understanding as an equipped embodied process,

elaborated in his *Being and Time* (1962). I believe it is important to write in as critically informed a way as possible within this conceptual schema. Thus his representing 'understanding' at its core as 'always already' concerned with a purposeful or teleological 'take' on experience is significant, allowing discussion of everyday audience practices as consumers or producers of meaning, immersed in mall or media. Practices are 'where understanding is structured and intelligibility articulated' (Schatzki, 1996: 12).

Our behaviour embodies narrative 'projection': people share a culturally (in)formed, practical 'fore-understanding' of their surroundings, initiating and instituting this perspective in activity. Projection of possibility is occluded by power: in Malaysia, fore-understanding is shaped by ethnicity. 'Long-standing beliefs about race and racial hierarchies impact upon marketing' (Tadajewski, 2012a: 486).

Focus groups are almost always convened by a Malaysian facilitator. My initial question in analyzing the results from these discussions is hermeneutic, focusing on a contributor's embodied, equipped constructing meaning: 'how is this participant understanding and hence using equipment (in mall or media), enabling in her/his practice "potentiality-for-being" (Heidegger) with others?' (Polt (1999) in his lucid book on Heidegger writes about this idea as the 'communal dimension of my own being-in-the-world' (60)). Sometimes, of course, our narratives incorporated-in-practice disenable, producing 'depleted' relationships with others. It is important to remember here also that Heidegger fundamentally (or 'primordially') challenges the prevailing (or Descartes') account of our experience as being human subjects viewing objects: he argues (as noted) for a phenomenology, in which he regards experiencing 'entities' as primarily instrumental (shaped by practical concern). As narrative of such ubiquitous understanding-in-use, offering a 'practice-based phenomenological take' (Ardley, 2011: 638) on activity, hermeneutics has achieved a renaissance in practices theory.

Accustomed Practices in Authoring Meaning: Ready-to-Hand Behavioural Narrative Production

> I think basically everyone visits the mall with a purpose, *lah*.
> (female, Chinese Malaysian student)

Within Heidegger's phenomenology (as a critique of subject–object dualism), it is possible to establish a framework or horizon of intelligibility from which one can begin to think through and to reflect on participants constructing narrative (in a 'fusion of (contributor/ researcher) horizons'). So understanding embodied in the practice of visiting a shopping mall, for instance, can be considered by convener as well as contributor to focus groups as (in)formed by regarding it as 'second home'. Such interpretive perspectives are often incorporated in little reflected upon consumer behaviour, activity so habitual or 'ready-to-hand' (Heidegger) it receives minimal monitoring. Instead, they

require to be 'presented-at-hand' (ibid.), consciously foregrounded for inspection in focus groups.

How can respondent stories (as sense-making equipment) be seen as instantiating a wider – or universal – pattern (e.g. social media meaning making), and grouped thematically, considered in generic sub-divisions of that pattern? Each tale told to us tacitly (or implicitly) represents a sought after 'hermeneutic circle of (coherent) understanding' (Heidegger). Consumers pursue understanding employing marketing's media tools but an uncertain brand identity or blogging can be challenging.

Screen consuming is ubiquitous: unlike watching domestic television, social media use is far from secluded but strung out through the city, prompting theory at every turn. Here our narratives in behavioural immersion online are considered as being plausibly parallel to the embodied articulation of narratives offline. Chapter Six of the current volume is based on working with a small group of colleagues in providing a thematic account of consumer experience while at a local shopping mall (the Sunway Pyramid Mall – the world's ninth largest – is arguably a cathedral of consumption). Their narrative tools differ depending on the gender of the source: accounts range from identifying with a group or alignment (both metaphorical and physical) to alienation from being-with-others.

In a familiar mall, of course, our behaviour is not frequently reflected on: first-person self-monitoring narratives will be elliptical (minimal 'narrative sketches') as visitors primarily actualize activities of conversation, choice, consumption. Nonetheless, if 'presented-at-hand' (Heidegger) across the threshold of reflection, their embodied stories, more fully formed, emerge to constitute meaningful thematic practices in focus group discussion with a Malaysian colleague.

In short, then, for this researcher, Heidegger's hermeneutic phenomenology wherein our understanding is practiced and tool-bearing but not much concurrently reflected on, signals a route through constructively analyzing recorded data. Engaging with familiar entities is always already ready-to-hand experience, not greatly analyzed beyond their failing to function or our focus group. But as Ess and Dutton note in their recent (2013) *New Media and Society* 'Internet Studies' editorial, 'Perspectives on a Rapidly Developing Field', 'phenomenology and narrative theories of identity' point to an 'emerging consensus on how we are to understand online (and offline) identity' (640).

Reflecting on the Ready-to-Hand: Presenting Practices Analytically At-Hand

Heidegger is thus a philosopher who emphasized the practical – and its proper extent. For him, our fundamental engaging with (always in some aspect, recognizable) 'entities' is as familiar 'equipment', which we 'understand' (*Verstehen*) as 'ready-to-hand' for us or other *Dasein* (humans). Accustomed use of already well-known equipment – from armchairs to watching

television – needs little reflection. But tools break down. Their functioning is then 'presented-at-hand' for analysis.

For instance, we are so accustomed to understanding screen narratives – in the cinema or on computer or on television – we don't often reflect upon the aesthetic processes or audience activity involved in manufacturing meaning from media. Yet, enabled by the content of mainstream cinema or television, audiences produce meaningful stories in their complex practice of connecting shots, sharing point-of-view or shot-reverse-shot sequences. Usually, we just immerse in looking through an apparent 'transparent window' on events. Engaging with these narrative tools is ready-to-hand.

But if narrative equipment does not meet its audience or user expectations, then we engage in present-at-hand reflection on these tools. 'For me, the reality of investing in HSBC is as complex as how to understand the image', to 'capture' meaning (a female Malay taming the bank's marketing at the University of Science Malaysia, Penang). How is story telling used as mediating equipment by the marketing people engaging it as a tool to sell products? And how do consumers comprehend?

I suggest that a need to analyze under such circumstances is shared whether one is dealing with the narrative experience of audiences, clients or consumers. People presume their world to be everyday intelligible. Both the tools enabling sense-making – and their failure – are of core import. From this perspective, one has to be open to the experience of the 'other', but always already with the presumption that the universal horizon of understanding entities is teleological, as equipment.

Such was Heidegger's radical challenging of the English empiricists, philosophers for whom human subjects experience objects having qualities lacking connection to any practice. Instead, the 'hermeneutic circle of understanding' is Heidegger's (and Gadamer's) spatial image of the mundane temporal process where we without reflection make integrated functional sense of entities every day.

A Heideggerian account of audience/client/consumer narrative, then, is of equipment as being customarily familiar or ready-to-hand but also encountering conflict or contradiction which requires present-at-hand analytical reflection (repair). Such a thesis seems appropriate, I suggest, from audiences encountering difficulty with media stories to the psychotherapeutic discussion.

Phenomenology – carefully articulated as in *Being and Time* – can guide practice: but also listening to participants in research finds philosophical perspectives embedded in their voicing out. Hence our theme, discovering ready-to-hand or tacit use of tools – narrative equipment – buried in behaviour, to make sense of experience. These are here presented-at-hand for fuller scrutiny.

Our Malaysian research interest is in *time* – the behavioural process of producing narrative.

For instance, how does our students' thematic understanding of the local mall – the ninth largest in the world – as a 'home from home' tacitly (in)form familiar experience in this place? Entering from this 'horizon of expectation' (Jauss, 1982) entails anticipating and actualizing destination.

To use Heidegger's concepts, in a focus group conducted at length by a Chinese Malaysian colleague, they are enabled to articulate ready-to-hand awareness of the mall as 'second home', or as a 'third place' (Oldenburg, 1999) – to present-at-hand for our shared reflection the narrative tools whose embodiment and use enabled them, mostly coherently, to visit. Here, they discuss their ludic immersive experience of the mall, contrasting with the media marketing of this space as offering 'adventure'. The 'horizon of intelligibility' implicit in understanding the practice of going to the shopping mall as revisiting a 'second home' rather than as an adventure 'implies a certain way of understanding oneself, others, and the events that occur as part of the practice' (Nicolini, 2012: 5).

The Phenomenology of Practices: Behaviour as Text How Actions 'Fore-Understand' and Fulfil Narrative

In narrative understanding, we have noted, we reconcile our anticipating with actuality: it is never instantaneous. Implicitly or explicitly, we measure our fore-conceptions against content. Our parading through the mall – as well as our perceptions – put projection of possibility to the test.

Heideggerian phenomenology's account of our narrative understanding as an incorporated process of (in)formed inferring and implicit inspection (checking out fore-conceptions) is central not only to literary reception theory but to marketing research focused on interpreting consumers' 'key patterns of meaning' in the 'narrative structuring of cognition and understanding' (Thompson, 1997: 438) (as I describe in Chapter Two). Elsewhere, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) (Smith *et al.*, 2009), influential in health psychology and increasingly beyond that discipline, is shaped by its origins in phenomenology as a philosophical account of understanding life-worlds.

Nonetheless, I suggest this shaping is selective (as, indeed, is similar use of phenomenology within Interpretive Marketing (Wilson, 2012)).[1] This would be a theoretical issue of concern only to philosophers, except that it may have limited the focus of subsequent practice. In research, IPA has drawn on phenomenology's arguments that people always already are culturally interpreting their experience – rather than seeing the world (somehow) as culturally-free 'sense-data' (a thesis which for several centuries has shaped English philosophy from Locke to Austin).

However, as indicated on the preceding pages, phenomenology (from Heidegger to Merleau-Ponty) has *also* argued in detail that as embodied beings we (from the first moment of our everyday perception) understand entities as equipment or tools: we see cups and computers, not mere objects. Narrative is such a tool, used to tell stories, not only in talking, but also in *how* we talk or walk. A mall can enable anticipation of a clean and comfortable stroll to be realized. But a patient's slow speech may disclose her or his depressed seeing a deficient life-world of objects (indeed) without meaning: belaboured behaviour can articulate as eloquently as speech a story of chronic arthritis.[2]

Where people have issues voicing out, reference to their activity (or its absence) may be 'data rich'.

Behaviour 'speaks'. How (indeed, *that*) we walk in a mall articulates a narrative enabled by equipment. Strolling securely embodies our silently – albeit sometimes outspoken – anticipating or projecting from a pre-formed/forming horizon of understanding that it will be coherently realized: 'conventions of "doing walking" are produced and reproduced by the members of the community involved and are consequently sensitive to culture and situation' (Shove and Pantzar, 2005: 47).

According to practitioners, IPA as research method can result in a dysfunctional dualism or an opposition between focusing on broad 'themes' disclosed in participant experience and 'ideography' or particular participant narratives. Yet autobiography/ideography can be considered philosophically from phenomenology's perspective as a narrative *process* of informed projecting and so establishing meaning (rather than as a completed account). Then a story becomes a theme which can be pursued by all – researchers and participants – across contributions or topics in a community of interpreters. This separation of ideas governing experience and particular accounts (or narratives of that experience) can be resolved by researcher and participant discussing the latter's process of building accounts. How does he or she come to make sense of issues? What are the indeterminacies or the uncertainties in doing so? Do we demonstrate our understanding through behaviour as well as talk? Horizons of understanding the problem with which a patient presents may be explored *together*. Analyzing the process of ideographic construction can be a heuristic theme in all IPA research. It could be regarded as the always present 'abstract' in the 'particular' monitoring of self.

Returning to his emphasis on recovering in 'our' analyses, ready-to-hand understanding as a little reflected upon process of using equipment (e.g. in constructing stories), Heidegger goes on to warn those researching in phenomenology of delusory data, that 'our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions' (1962: 195).[3] Instead, the participant's narrative is the focus of reflection.

In short, from phenomenology's horizon of understanding encompassing elicited interviewee narratives, they are viewed as emerging in *time* as the product of participants' embodied behaviour. Heidegger's concepts of 'fore-understanding' (projecting narrative from a horizon of meaning), and the productive integrating of its content through a 'hermeneutic circle of understanding' constitute a theoretical prism through which interviewee accounts can be everywhere presented for reflection.

Advancing Narrative Analysis

Theory as Enabling Tool: Perspectives in Practices Initiating and Incorporating Projects

The practice of *Verstehen* (understanding), I suggest, involves accomplishing a story (from arthritis to shopping mall), enabled by *Dasein*'s (humanity's) equipment or tools ('projection' from a socially shaped 'horizon of understanding' in the 'hermeneutic circle of understanding'). Projection, as Heidegger uses that term, can be embodied in behaviour (pre-conscious but ready-to-hand) or explicitly presented-at-hand as a result of issues arising in understanding or for interpretation.

At the core of Heidegger's wide-ranging authorship is his denial of the prevailing 'subject–object dualism'. That is, human beings are subjects who see a world of separate objects bearing no relationship to our goals in everyday living (Mumby, 1997: 4). Instead, as we have seen, Heidegger argues that people a priori (fundamentally or primordially) understand the entities around them to be 'tools', 'equipment' enabling their 'being-with-others'. So, interacting with familiar entities (he employs the mundane example of a hammer), we use them without reflection – or they are ready-to-hand. Only when issues arise (or the hammer breaks!) do people then regard these entities as object, reflected on as present-to-hand. This analysis of routine as *equipped practices*, I suggest, is open to being widely applied, from accounting for audience-media response to therapy.

The idea of 'practices' is 'foundational' in this analysis: 'they are meaning-making, identity-forming, and order-producing activities' (Nicolini, 2011: 602). In the terms used by Heidegger, the practice(s) of understanding (from walking through a mall to watching television) recounted in the tool-like tales emerging in our focus groups have a temporal 'fore-structure' (1962: 192) where they engage with enabling equipment: authors implicitly assume from varied horizons of understanding experience that it will evolve in a certain way and that its narrative can be coherently established in their hermeneutic circle of understanding. Subsequently, Ricoeur (1981a) argued that these practices were appropriated in forming personal identity or became the focus of alienated disidentification.

In the Malaysian context of cultural diversity, along with local colleagues, I have employed phenomenology's practices theory – with its model of narrative equipment enabling understanding – in considering multi-cultural audience

and consumer responses to a wide range of traditional as well as ubiquitous media, marketing and mall stories (Wilson, 2004, 2009, 2011). Marketing engages consumers with modes of understanding practices, skills with 'stuff', or Heidegger's term, 'equipment' (1962). In these studies, researcher and researched can share horizons of understanding actions as practices.

Silverstone wrote of liminal moving 'across a threshold' in relation to the ludic practice of media understanding in *Why Study the Media* (1999: 60). Qualitative research (as in this book's focus groups) likewise crosses a threshold, disclosing in participant narrative, pre-reflective play-like practices – a 'place ballet' (Seamon and Nordin, 1980) or tacit theatre of only momentarily monitored meaning making. Choosing apples while chatting to a companion are both meaningful activities. Embodied understanding is everywhere, constituted by regular habitual 'backgrounded' behaviour where we integrate anticipation with actuality, or 'fore understanding' (Heidegger, 1962) with fact in a 'hermeneutic circle of understanding' (Gadamer, 1975) displayed in bodily knowing.

Here, we are interested in the tacit theatre of routine consumer response to social media (e.g. YouTube's drama on screen) or shopping mall. For instance, in our research on visitors to the latter, a Malay woman understands a large shopping mall at length as being 'good for (a) bonding session' – her prioritized, momentarily reflected upon, presented practice. She talks of the shopping mall as projected or anticipated activity, produced with an established friend participating. Of her mobile phone photo record of the 'meeting' she asserts, 'It was a happy … happiness but is something more because I remember at this moment when we took the picture it was something that you want it to last'.

Phenomenology, asserts Scannell in his *Media and Communication* (2007) is 'an effort at an understanding of the world uncluttered by the usual academic baggage' (6). *Media Consumption in Malaysia: A Hermeneutics of Human Behaviour* is less ambitious: the volume seeks to present-at-hand the embodied horizons of understanding, enabling audience 'voicing out'. Phenomenology's 'practice theory should develop more philosophical perseverance and at the same time not give up its embeddedness in empirical social and cultural analysis' (Reckwitz, 2002: 259). Hermeneutics claims ubiquity for our understanding, a play-like projecting of meaning in/on practices.[4]

Acknowledgements

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Introduction

Why Our (Re)Turn to Hermeneutics? Understanding as Ubiquitous Practice

> Apple users, have you downloaded our cool mall app? Lion has been fiddling with it all day … hehehehe! Android users, hang on … we're working on (an) Android version!!
>
> (Ubiquitous mediatization@Sunway Pyramid Mall
> in Kuala Lumpur – Facebook page)

I

People parade, flowing through a shopping mall, 'voicing out', commenting aloud and online. Our responses to immersion in these spaces are mediated or shaped by informed expectation. Cafes, shops and branded boulevards are evaluated as advancing or evading their potentiality-for-being. Are they outstanding or merely ordinary experiences? *Our* consumer and *their* corporate stories – participatory and promotional branding narratives – mingle in the mall and far beyond, as marketing repertoire and mediated response, circulating in the material world and cyber-spatially on Facebook.

Passing through the 'gates' (McQuail, 2013: 18) of shopping mall or social media, absorbed in these cathedrals celebrating consumption, clicking on our mobile phones, we are doubly immersed as authoring audiences of branded narrative and its products on parade. 'Can there be a separate *media* sociology or *media* studies?' (Couldry, 2012: x; emphasis in original). Both our malls and media are immersively familiar 'second homes', yet can be 'foreign', encouraging in 'ever more mediated' 'participatory' (Livingstone, 2013: 25) projects easy engaging with 'equipment' therein, but also mobile territories for escape – 'adventure'. Mall and media visiting is now ubiquitous in Malaysia, signalling a defining core 'embedding of communication into social contexts' (Jensen, 2013: 203). We consider these everyday activities as analogous instances of immersive play-like social practice.

> As authors such as Heidegger and Wittgenstein made clear, *practice* constitutes the unspoken and scarcely notable background of everyday

life. Practices therefore always need to be drawn to the fore. (Nicolini, 2009: 1392; emphasis added)

This monograph presents a hermeneutics of human behaviour – disclosing for discussion our tacit (little reflected on) routine phenomenon of *understanding-in-practice(s)*, shaping spaces (and times) of anticipated and attained intelligibility both off and on screen. For our understanding is a 'ready-to-hand' equipped 'primordial' practice of 'projecting' (Heidegger, 1962) meaning – our exercising intelligibility from 'horizons of expectation' (Jauss, 1982), a fundamental '(in)form(ing) of life' (Wittgenstein, 1991).[1] In routine practices of visiting shopping malls (inscribed in particular actions), visitors (implicitly or vocally) anticipate and achieve coherent narrative accounts. We are (in)formed by a horizon of assuming that our 'being-in-the-world' (Heidegger, 1962) is intelligible.

Engaging with mall or media content need not – of course – be continuous. Distracted visitors converse. As with domestic television advertising, the visual environment is 'experienced partially and incompletely': 'responses are negotiated through everyday interpersonal contexts' (Jayasinghe and Ritson, 2012: 117). Practices follow from these wider horizons of understanding from which mall or media entities are constructed as equipment enabling re-viewed modes of being-with-others.

Meaning building is implicit through voicing out (speech) but also evident visually as visitors immerse in concrete shopping mall or social media cyberspace. Such routine 'practices consist of both doings and sayings' (Warde, 2005: 134) in which an understanding is developed and deployed. Studying enabling equipment in practices through which we make sense of particular surroundings 'highlight(s) nonpropositional knowledge, and illuminate(s) the conditions of intelligibility', the 'skills, or tacit knowledges and presuppositions, that underpin activities' (Schatzki, 2005: 10, 11). To invoke Denzin's ethnography of making sense, considering 'communication practices' (1995: 178), the 'contextual analysis of cultural practices' (ibid.: 182), involves tracing horizons of understanding.

Our being absorbed in mall or media is tacitly understood, perhaps, as our enjoying a 'second home': without reflecting on this practice, we implicitly anticipate in speech or strolling, fulfilling a sequence of events with confidence. We '(willingly or not) ventriloquize (cultural horizons) through our conduct and talk' (Cooren, 2012:10). Proceeding within such familiar – hence little considered – 'culturally framed' (Jayasinghe and Ritson, 2012: 105) understanding of surroundings – a template or typology – we regard these spaces as places, as in many aspects already known.

Such familiarity, as Pavlickova points out (2013), is the fulcrum or the 'underlying dynamic of hermeneutics' (37). For this philosophy of human behaviour reflects on how people's horizons of understanding are woven into (and weave together) 'activities that have become routine' (Tuomela, 2004: 79), practices for which a person's merely passing attention is at most usually appropriate.

We engage with entities (apples, narrative, tools) around us as equipment: our practices (dis)enable modes of being-with-others (consenting, complaining). Thus a practice's 'specific elements' are 'procedures, understandings, and engagements' (Echeverri and Skålén, 2011: 352, following the work of Schau *et al.*, 2009: 31): it involves 'implicit or tacit knowledge' shaping 'specific forms of practical judgements' (Echeverri *et al.*, 2012: 429). Or as can be subsequently reiterated in this brief post-Heideggerian definitional story – spanning nonetheless from business studies to sociology – a practice's 'constitutive elements' are 'meanings, competences, materials' (Shove, 2012: 5).

> As we know, practices consist of discursive knowledge and tacit knowledge sometimes grouped together as competences, materials and affective engagements. These elements are described in detailed theoretical discussions. … All the carriers of practice in a field are potential performers. (Arnould, 2014: 129)

Hence the 'meanings of the entities amid and through which humans coexistently live derive from activity' (Schatzki, 2002: 56). Mall-goers or media users engage from an informed horizon of understanding, albeit with minimal reflection, in anticipating and actualizing (projecting, positing) meaning, employing these tools for narrative building. Such visitors generate genres of identity-constructing consumer stories – heard, seen and analyzable in a hermeneutics of human behaviour.

A hermeneutic phenomenology of human practices reflects on '*routinized* way(s) in which bodies are moved, objects are handled, subjects are treated, things are described and the world is understood' (Reckwitz, 2002: 250; emphasis added). How do people's *ready-to-hand* (Heidegger, 1962) – because routine – processes of understanding, implicit or scarcely regarded in what we say and how we behave, enable us to make sense of the world? How is meaning-making involving our assumptions and activated skills – or 'tacit and embodied knowledges and procedures' – 'practically and relationally done', ask Halkier and Jensen (2011: 110, 106)? And how does digital marketing address this practice, our tool-use in producing meaning, or 'prosumption' (O'Neill *et al.*, 2014)?

To answer questions about meaning in familiar practices we need philosophical psychology

> [as] an essentially hermeneutic endeavor, one in which the role of the philosopher is to unearth the meanings of the complex ways fundamental concepts function in particular forms of life. This is a kind of conceptual anthropology. (Fay, 2000: 53)

As a contribution to southern hemisphere Malaysian 'reflexive knowledge of their own social existence' (Thompson *et al.*, 2013: 164), such thought is not a newcomer to the nation. Kamaruddin and Ghazali, for instance, writing

on an allied topic of alternative national media and participatory democracy, assert on method that 'within this research approach (of phenomenology), examples of the democratic phenomenon were analyzed to gain a sense of its general essence' (2012). We need to hear 'specific theoretical and societal voices which are systematically marginalized or excluded by a dominate narrative paradigm' (Thompson *et al.*, 1998: 110) – and reflect hermeneutically.

Phenomenology has long been critically assessed as seeming 'subjective'. Thus, Tadajewski argues, 'consumer behaviour is shaped in complex ways that we might fail to fully appreciate if we adopt the phenomenological stance associated with much consumer research' (2012b: 444–45).

People always already make sense of living and construct identities in accounts drawing upon institutional narratives. While phenomenology starts with the subjective or personal, an individual's view of her or his activity, its fundamental focus is on enabling – albeit contested – cultural horizons, 'structures of meaning-making' (Hine, 2007) from which we habitually, tacitly, materially engage.

Emphasizing social structure, Marxists (like my PhD supervisor, Colin MacCabe), attacked such philosophy in the 1970s as attempting to assemble an account of events in society exclusively by reference to the operations of the individual *psyche*. Yet defending phenomenology as support in underwriting media studies method, my argument (published (1993, 1995) by Polity-Blackwell as *Watching Television: Hermeneutics, Reception and Popular Culture*) was that such an explanatory program could only be located in Husserl's early work. For it was subsequently rejected not only by Husserl himself but by later phenomenologists, principally by Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty who both firmly rooted human beings not only in their bodies (as embodied) but in a *social life-world*.

More recently, I exchanged emails with the scholarly sources of a similar negative report on phenomenology, Søren Askegaard and Jeppe Trolle Linnet (2011). They argue that the deployment of phenomenology in consumer research has excluded (yet again) considering 'contextual factors' beyond those which are 'respondent appreciated' (e.g. social structures). Responding to my defence of such philosophy as opening a wider focus, Askegaard reiterated that their attack is directed at the *use* of phenomenology they find in consumer and marketing theory rather than a rejection of this analytical perspective itself. Thus he wrote in philosophical support, 'you are absolutely right in seeing that we are criticizing a particular stance on existential phenomenology in CCT (Consumer Culture Theory) rather than phenomenology as such – as you also correctly read into our paper'.

Hence, phenomenology survives as an appropriate resource of concepts in our studying malls, media and marketing. We consider its practices perspective as underwriting our critical considering of positivistic studies' 'thin representations of isolated concepts' (Hine, 2000: 42) – in its separating culture from consumption. Can phenomenology survive 'all imaginable isms' (Löbler, 2011: 52)?!

Regarding people as culturally (in)formed embodied subjects, this hermeneutic claims insight into the structure of corporeal consciousness. How, fundamentally, do we understand the everyday 'entities' by which we are surrounded (Mitchell, 1994)? As persons perceiving, how do we make sense of this 'life-world', as audiences or authors, active in cyberspace or amidst our more concrete surroundings? People's 'mundane performativity' (Halkier and Jensen, 2011: 103) embodies ready-to-hand activity. So if this monograph involves 'an exploration of the individual and the particular, and the individual is allowed to speak' (Hopkinson and Hogg, 2006: 163), we nonetheless seek the structure of understanding as it is conveyed through routine social practices (e.g. visiting malls).

Understanding, hermeneutic phenomenology asserts, is anticipatory or inherently inferential. Engaging with the world from cultural *horizons* is a continually checking – if marginally conscious – process: anticipation (*projection*) is adjusted to event, producing coherent experience *primordially* assumed possible. Reflection is required if this *hermeneutic circle of understanding* is defeated.

All audiences bring 'pre-positional and tacit knowledge' (Küpers, 2002: 22) to their viewing. We visit our social media and shopping malls from 'horizons' (Heidegger, 1962) of understanding. Phenomenology 'explores the aspects that shape one's understanding' (Pernecky and Jamal, 2010: 1063). We perceive temporally, prima facie (always already) anticipating appropriate practice: thus 'activities are shaped and enabled by structures of rules and meanings' (Shove *et al.*, 2012: 3). Our cultures are inscribed or written into our conduct as ready-to-hand little reflected upon competence.

> By participating in a practice, people gradually experience and internalize its structures such as its norms, rules and shared understandings, including a critical notion of success and failure learned from previous actions. As input to human agency, these structures provide the constraining and enabling bases from which people draw while acting and interacting. (Huizing and Cavanagh, 2011: 5)

In Heidegger's terms (1962), we see surroundings as instantiating types (genres) of *entities* and expect to be able to employ them with due recognition as *equipment*. In our so engaging with media narrative, the latter can function as a tool (dis)enabling multiple modes of *being-with-others*. Entering malls or media as characteristically equipped, our practices incorporate a 'processual view of genres', for the latter are 'representations of (potential) social actions' (Das *et al.*, 2014: 39, 42).

Viewing branding as a storied 'persuasive vehicle' (Hirschman, 1998: 263), for instance, we anticipate establishing a generic narrative celebrating product use: emerging from our authoring, the latter presents as instrument to further goals. Hermeneutics allows our consumer understanding – in this engaging with storied entities as equipment – a role of generating the promise of gratification.

Audiences Engaging with Narrative, Actualizing Possibility: Media Marketing Addressing Consumer Practices Everywhere

> What, quite simply, are people *doing* in relation to media across a whole range of situations and contexts? (Couldry, 2004: 119; emphasis in original)

As philosophical analysis, *Media Consumption in Malaysia* aims to provide an account both of local and global 'everydayness' (Glendinning, 1998: 50) in our engaging with persons and places through new or social media, always remembering the latter's ubiquitous use, not least immersed in the vast spaces (and times spent) at the shopping mall. Neo-Heideggerian 'practice approaches are fundamentally processual' (Nicolini, 2012: 3). Hence, what is the process of authoring (or reading) participatory media such as Facebook? How do the promotional video accessible on a social media site like YouTube present a brand's identity? Does engaging with social media emancipate *us*?

Theory is elucidated here by exploring audience narratives (Guthrie and Anderson, 2010) as consumers and citizens in Internet genres from chat room (e.g. Messenger) to political blogging in Malaysia. Contributions from focus groups are important, for genres (in)form the 'whole range of recognizable' communication (Lüders *et al.*, 2010: 948). Knowing a narrative type functions as a 'frame of reference' (949), enabling readers or writers to recognize and (in the latter case) repeat instances. Generic awareness allows anticipation of stories: perception is 'grounded in *something we grasp in advance – in a fore-conception*' (Heidegger, 1962; emphasis in original). This book's account of participatory culture is informed by hermeneutic phenomenology's view of behavioural narrative practice as articulating generic anticipation into a coherent assembly of meaning:

   (i) my extensive international experience of teaching at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels suggests that a phenomenology of genre guided mall/media authoring can be concisely presented;

  (ii) consumer study in marketing has deployed hermeneutic phenomenology (Goulding, 1999) as philosophical justification of methodology and perception of consumption as constructing meaning;

 (iii) phenomenology is increasingly used in the cognate academic discipline, qualitative psychology where interpretive phenomenology enjoys pedagogic popularity – see http://www.ipa.bbk.ac.uk/;

 (iv) social media research (e.g. in fan studies by Hills (2002) and Sandvoss (2005)) draws both explicitly and implicitly on reception theory, owing much to hermeneutic phenomenologists;

  (v) a tradition of creative media scholarship from the perspective of phenomenology exists (for instance, in writing by Paddy Scannell, Roger Silverstone, and more recently, Shaun Moores);

 (vi) interpretive phenomenology or hermeneutics represents literacy – membership of an authoring audience – metaphorically as an embodied spatio-temporal process, appropriate to online access.

Calvo considers that 'media practices in communicative capitalism are not only ephemeral and fast, but also ubiquitous and banal in most cases' (2013: 153). Practice analysis informed by phenomenology renders their very being ready-to-hand the focus of our interest in unpacking.

Visiting Shopping Mall and Social Media: 'Understanding' and 'Interpreting' as Equipped Practices

> That which was silent in the observation, as mere appearance, is brought to expression in interpretation. (Deetz, 1973: 143)

What do people do immersed in shopping malls or social media? Indeed, how do they know *what* to do? Can referring to Heidegger's account of 'being and time' help answer these questions? For he regarded human understanding as fundamentally oriented to practice (cf. Couldry, 2004).

In *Being and Time* (1962) Heidegger distinguishes between 'ready-to-hand' (not reflected on because familiar) practice to which (at most) merely passing attention is paid and a 'present-at-hand' considered activity, the focus of propositional assertion or reflection (e.g. 'I was doing x'). In respect of the first, we 'understand' (*Verstehen*) our practice, in regard to the second mode of awareness, we 'interpret' our activity. Thus, 'habitual repetition is one way actions get stabilized as practices' which are ready-to-hand, or pursued without reflection (Couldry, 2012: 53).

Walking is writing. Bodily articulated narratives such as confidently strolling through a mall show how entities (from entrances and escalators to walkways and windows) are presumed ready-to-hand for unreflective employment. From our ever moving horizons of understanding, we tacitly identify our environment as easily engaged equipment, managed effortlessly by mall visitors. As in malls, so in media, where experience meets horizon of expectation, and project is pursued without issue, generic or situationally specific narrative of our realizing presence is enabled, achieving our very 'sense of being there in the virtual environment' (Schubert, 2009: 161).

It is when issues arise – getting lost or stumbling on the moving stairs – that we then inspect, focusing on *things*, presenting them at-hand analytically for reflection and (hopefully) redress. As Nicolini remarks on phenomenology's practices perspective, 'for reflexive, investigative, theoretical knowledge to come into play, something previously usable must become unusable' (2012: 34).

'Primordially' what people do in respect of mall/media is to *understand*. Equipped practices enable 'potentiality-for-being' (at bars or blogs) to be realized, whether we engage ready-to-hand in (a narrative of) shopping malls or social media. For Heidegger, only if an everyday practice of 'fore-structured' understanding (projecting/intending and (de)positing meaning) requires reflection (or in research focus groups, indeed, or interviews) is it *interpreted*: we fore-ground or present it at-hand as (in)formed, as coming into being, anticipated but perhaps not actualized. Interpreting, of course, can revisit

understanding from a political horizon, perceive it as powerfully shaped (Castells, 2007). It 'brings into view the wider articulations of practice in systems of power' (Couldry, 2012: 44).

In regard to online genres or 'modes' (a more Heideggerian term) of practice, our digitally afforded/ equipped 'presencing' (Couldry) or presenting-at-hand interprets identity forming 'being-with-others' (Heidegger). In presencing, our virtual being is thus far from accustomed, but rather 'intensively reflected upon' or interpreted. In Couldry's own words, 'media platforms, media skills and media use form the necessary preconditions of this practice, and may be intensively reflected upon, but presencing is not primarily a practice "about" media. It is a project of the self' (2012: 50).

II

> Online chatting, 'it's like bonding. You do this with your group only, like at the Mall' (male, Malay). (quoted in Pawanteh and Rahim, 2001: 114)

Media Consumption in Malaysia is neither national summary nor survey as there are already freely available excellent instances online (Ding *et al*., 2013; Weiss, 2012). Instead, we reflect on everyday social media use not least in shopping malls. Setting mall and media visiting side by side as metaphor and mirror of each other enables behavioural analysis, here shaped by Phenomenology of Understanding or Hermeneutics – Gadamer, Heidegger, Ricoeur. Recently (2012) reincarnated as Practices Theory, their accounts of achieving intelligible everyday activity are emulated by other theorists and inform academic disciplines from anthropology and business to media and sociology.[2] Being human is primarily a continuing – if little reflected upon – process of practical understanding. A *practices* perspective on mall and media visiting presences past phenomenology.

For Heidegger, our concern with the material environment through which we relate to other persons (*being-with-others*) is fundamentally (*primordially*) practical or pre-theoretical. Thus, we understand entities as *equipment* with which we engage in *practices*, *always already* participating through informed endeavour to exercise our expectations as *basic being-in-motion* (Gadamer). We enter shopping malls or social media from a *horizon of understanding* such places to be equipped, with embodied expectation (little considered) of their enabling genres or *modes* of participating. In practices we tacitly *project* goal-directed or teleological narrative, presuming we can make sense.

> Heidegger notes that we do not usually encounter (use, talk about, deal with) 'mere things', but rather we use the things at hand to get something done. These things he calls 'equipment' (*Zeug*), in a broad enough sense to include whatever is useful: tools, materials, toys, clothing, dwellings, etc. (Dreyfus, 1991: 62)

Heidegger's favoured example of equipment is the hammer. Extending this illustration a little, rendering it contemporary, we can draw on an article by Moisio and co-authors on 'Productive Consumption in the Class-Mediated Construction of Domestic Masculinity: Do-It-Yourself (DIY) Home Improvement in Men's Identity Work' (2013). Men, we can consider, enter a shopping mall DIY outlet from a horizon of understanding it as being a source of equipment. They do so evidently embodying expectations of product enabling engaging in 'class-mediated construction' of 'home improvement' as skilled managing of 'suburban-craftsm[anship] involved in autotherapeutic labor' or of 'family handyman, thus fashioning themselves as rightful, masculine family stewards' (298).

Phenomenology prioritizes the study of our practical or 'lived relationship' (Dant, 2005: 85) with the world as a narrative of knowing: reflecting is secondary. Hermeneutically, a practice is a goal-shaped (play-like or ludic) *equipped* construction of understanding. In our human behaviour, we project an integrating *ready-to-hand* (tacit) meaning without reflection on material or virtual world. However, in crossing cultures, we may need to *present-at-hand* (or consider) our sense-making practices.[3] For 'audiences are everywhere, offline as well as online' (Jensen, 2014: 237).

> Practices range from ephemeral doings to stable long-term patterns of activity. Attention to practices often requires extensive examination of relevant equipment and material culture, but can also assign constitutive roles to vocabulary and other linguistic forms or performances. (Rouse, 2006: 499)

Phenomenology's Projecting-in-Practices 'Participation Paradigm' (Livingstone, 2013) Presenting-at-Hand in a Focus Group (i): Buying Apples as a Consumer Practice in the Mall

> Let's say, a simple one: apples. Maybe the apples look the same to the guys (laughter). No offense. But, we, we, we pick the apple that looks nicer with no flaws. […] Like this apple looks fresher. Something like this. Normally, they would say, 'it's just the same. Just grab and go'. (female Chinese student mall visitor addressing a focus group)

In hermeneutic terms, discussed here, this student *primarily* understands entities (apples!) as equipment, seeking fruit 'with no flaws': she is articulating or rendering explicit a practice which shapes her mode of being-with-others ('the guys', who 'just grab and go')! Ready-to-hand practical understanding – here presented-at-hand in a focus group – tacitly informs her selective behaviour as a narrative open to reading by observers. Her practice of choosing apples exercises her expectation, or *fore-understanding*, integrating anticipation with actuality. Should she be asked to further unpack her idea of apples with 'no

flaws', she could well engage in an abstracting or *secondary* account of such a fruit as being an object with particular qualities (or having a certain colour and shape).

She is delineating a 'taste regime' which 'propagates a shared understanding of aesthetic order that shapes the ways people use objects and deploy the meanings associated with the material' (Arsel and Bean, 2013: 900). Projecting meaning by this practice, produces a mode of participation. Acting within generic horizons of understanding fresh fruit, this student displays she is 'competent in cultural capital practices that have currency' in malls (Üstüner and Thompson, 2012: 797).

Another female Chinese participant told us in discussion: 'Basically, I expect good security from the mall'. Entering from her habituated horizon of understanding this mall – a 'basic' concern being the practice of 'good security' within this immersive mode of being-with-others – she invests corridors with meaning as a site of secure sense-making. As consumer, she projects place as activity enabled by well-equipped staff. Tacitly evident in behaviour (e.g. how she walks), expectations are integrated intelligibly with events, optimistically lacking issue: she participates in visiting.

A *practice* is skilled managing of ready-to-hand projection (embodied expectation) from a tacit horizon of understanding entities as equipment (dis)enabling being-with-others. Completing 'projects' incorporates a *hermeneutic circle of understanding* or integrating activity as intelligible. Our expectations are confirmed or changed, secured or subverted in 'multiple and often uncertain relations' (Couldry *et al.*, 2007a) when seeking consistently to engage with event. We can anticipate apples enable health, but our female Chinese mall visitor tells us, attaining success may be a skilled (to-and-fro) activity, 'picking', (dis)playing behaviourally in a hermeneutic circle, selecting the best! Her 'strategy is *immanent* in practical coping action' (Chia and Holt, 2006: 647; emphasis in original).

Presenting-at-Hand in a Focus Group (ii): Viewing Marketing Media as a Consumer Practice

As with visiting shopping malls, so with visiting social media, the practices are alike. In a focus group viewing videos clearly addressing product consumers, watching a 'middle-aged man showing his car key to his wife (it's like flaunting his new car to his wife)', one of the male Chinese contributors formed an initial anticipatory vision of probable 'car-sale' marketing on screen. After thus projecting unfolding meaning from this horizon of understanding generic content, watching the video's subsequent stories about 'people conversing through mobile phones', he found this services narrative 'really surprising'. Turning back in a hermeneutic circle of understanding, in searching for intelligibility, he retraced a path of making sense to see (realize) telecommunication marketing.

Practices Theory invokes hermeneutic theory Heidegger 'pioneered' (Dreyfus, 2005: 159). People primarily understand entities teleologically as equipment type, implicitly (perhaps explicitly) entertaining appropriate expectations. A 'practice' is seeking to achieve or actualize that anticipation. Our behavioural panorama (from apple buying to writing online) is positioned as culturally located, cued or initiated as appropriate, aimed at accomplishment. Considering activity to be 'practices' is compatible with – but distinct conceptually from – explaining our behaviour as effect of causes (e.g. linking media use and human consequences). In the Appendix, we employ the Scottish philosopher Hume's defining 'causation' as 'contiguity and succession' (not 'necessary connection') to reconcile a hermeneutics of understanding our practices with explanation of behaviour as event.

To put these points precisely, practices – 'acts and talk' – (Couldry *et al.*, 2007a) incorporate:

(i) 'primordial' understanding (*Verstehen*) or skilled managing (*Vorstehen*) (Polt, 1999) embodying
(ii) 'projected' expectations of entities 'always already' as equipment (Heidegger, 1962).

The cultural 'horizons' from which we proceed in our practices constitute the background of wide ranging yet limiting, tacit yet structuring conceptual resources ('discourse') which underwrite activity, subsequently presented-at-hand as when reflection is required in the face of difficulty.[4] For this monograph, regarding the mundane practices of visiting malls and media as analogous patterns of informed participation and persuasion promotes a valuable question: to what extent, as when we enter a mall, is immersion in media behavioural, body involving? Authors online type text.

Practices theory disputes the still dominant philosophy of subject–object dualism (discerned at the intellectual heart of empiricism and positivism) as a theory of knowledge in which behaviour is abstracted or severed from culture. Instead, we assert all descriptions presuppose a point-of-view: our attitudes are always already interpreting their object from a cultural horizon of understanding.

Practices research brings such horizons of understanding, frequently fixed in place shaped by media, into focus as discourse, presented for our foregrounded reflection: 'media discourses' are a 'resource for consumers' performing of practices' (Keller and Halkier, 2014: 36). Here, participant interpretation of their circumstances replaces pre-assertive or ready-to-hand understanding. A focus group or interviewee contributions are analyzed as 'fore-structured' (Heidegger, 1962). Assertions are viewed as 'fore-having' a pre-existing object, a 'fore-conception' or prior generic understanding of that focus, and 'fore-sight' (ibid.) or a set of assumptions (projections) regarding its future. Thus 'practices of self-narration' (Arnould and Thompson, 2005: 875) are 'pointing out' (Heidegger, 1962: 199) or referencing cultural horizons of understanding shaping activity as intelligible.

'Choosing apples' or 'watching digital videos' are skilled routines in practical understanding, achieving expectation of events in 'spaces of intelligibility' (Nicolini, 2012: 172). Here as elsewhere, 'user participation' – realizing embodied expectation of equipment – enables both 'value creation as economic revenue' and 'value creation as sense-making' (Bechmann and Lomborg, 2012: 777).

People's 'practice participants' perspectives' (Chimirri, 2013: 81) on shopping mall or social media realize their goals not in 'isolated viewers' (O'Neill *et al*., 2014: 158) but through modes of being-with-others. Should issues arise, we reflexively present-at-hand our otherwise little regarded horizon of understanding equipment (Young, 2002: 7). In so doing, consumers adopt – de facto – the practices perspective in considering the 'background expectations and categorizations which shape (language and actions)' (Couldry, 2000: 156–57), seeking to establish the (political?) rationale and reconciliation of pre-reflective familiar frameworks with reality.

'Struggles' shape the hegemonic horizons of our understanding – fights over fore-structures – (in)forming practices (Sandikci and Ger, 2010: 18). 'Marketplace myths' circulating through mall or media 'culturally frame' behaviour, requiring hermeneutic 'demythologizing practices' (Arsel and Thompson, 2011: 792). 'Participatory practices … fluctuate' (Carpentier *et al*., 2013: 292) in their capacity to enable consumers to register 'marginalization versus empowerment' (Smets, 2013: 109).

In his influential *Tourist Gaze* (2011), Urry points out that 'guides and tour reps' 'direct and frame gazes at sights' (202). Malls and meeting places may be so arranged to meet such framing, as equipment enabling embodied expectation that tourist modes of being-together can be realized. But as he fully acknowledges, recalcitrant visitors can engage with their photographic practices from an alternative horizon of understanding surroundings to that set out from the perspectives incorporated in 'professional images' or 'commercial mediascapes': thus 'place myths' may be 'violated' by skilled managing of equipment, integrating expectations and events as narrative in images displaying fresh modes of being-with-tourists (ibid.: 187). 'Gazing almost always involves significant others' (201).

For Heidegger, 'being is projected upon … significance' (*Being and Time*, 1962: 187). In summary, from a more limited perspective in this monograph, (i) consumers enter a shopping mall or social media, engaging with these spaces as places from an informing 'horizon of understanding' 'entities' therein as equipment – so enabling embodied expectations of 'being-with-others' (ibid.). A practice (ii) is skilled managing of this tacit (or ready-to-hand) expectation (projection) – consumer behaviour incorporating a hermeneutic circle of integrating expectation with event. Thus our 'doing practices in different places changes how objects are consumed' (Hui, 2012: 196).

Here, I have traced out the 'conceptual map of everyday life' (Bakardjieva, 2005: 38) which informs this book's discussion of ubiquitous media use. My hermeneutic Introduction (and Preface) – A Practices Perspective on

Consumption – I hope has offered a concise cartographic guide, easing entry to 'complexities of converging opposing methodological and epistemological traditions' (Das, 2013: 4) – the analysis of media consumers, phenomenology and positivism – following in Chapter One. We aspire to divest ourselves of a 'myopic methodological straitjacket' (Schrøder, 2013: 42).

Media Consumption in Malaysia reflects on visitors in malls and media. We aim at an initial 'anatomy' (Schau *et al.*, 2009) of how ready-to-hand understanding of everyday equipment enables us to project and integrate our practice. Should people use more complex product, the longer for us to 'embody this knowledge and to transform it into routine practices' (Ilmonen, 2004: 32).

A hermeneutics of human behaviour presents a geography of embodied concepts – where a mall may be presented as a 'home from home'. It places within cultural horizons of understanding 'activities embedded in taken-for-granted routines' (Swidler, 2005: 84): watching television is seen as a practice – anticipating, actualizing, and aligning with/becoming alienated from generic story. Pressed further, practices presented-at-hand become detached or 'decontextualized', interpreted as constituted not around equipment but 'substances with properties' (Dreyfus, 2005: 162).

We engage with ubiquitous media use from Malaysian malls to globally accessible online marketing – and video blogging reiterations and responses. For we recognize the 'pervasive spread of media contents and platforms' (Couldry and Hepp, 2013: 191) in practices. Perceived meaning in these sites of intelligibility is not a caused consequence of content or a necessary effect of external sufficient stimuli. Significance is projected, positioned materially or virtually through a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 1975) where visitors *understand* the perspectives of the visited.[5] Another title for this book could be, Consumers from Hume to Heidegger: Understanding Malaysian Practices.

III

A Hermeneutic Understanding of Narrative Embodied Engaging with Expectation and Event

> The participatory consumer is 'working-out' 'possibilities projected in understanding' (Heidegger, 1985: 221).

Are advertising and audience 'data' to be primarily conceptualized in terms belonging to the worldview of researcher or researched, of 'expert' or people enmeshed in experience? Whose story of consumption is logically fundamental, underwriting other perspectives? How is cultural variation in audience response to media branding retained in abstract(ing) analysis?

Even studies pursued quantitatively nonetheless rest on a qualitative base – as calculations concerning an inescapably interpreted world. Whose is the

final authority to make sense, accorded the status of arbitrar where audience narrative is ambiguous? What about studies of consumption across cultures involving 'non-white readings of whiteness' (Burton, 2009)? Are contradictions resolvable or is there an irresolvable opposition of 'researcher versus consumer cultures' (Gould, 2010: 181)? How are accounts of media narrative articulated or assembled by their authors anyway?

Writing from the perspective of Heidegger's phenomenology, this book addresses the final question, believing such a focus to be fundamental in deciding on communication research method. Denegri-Knott and Molesworth (2010) in their award-winning article on consumers immersing in digital worlds, contrast those expert perspectives 'where cognition and attitude precede behavior' with participant narrative or 'phenomenological accounts of consumers' lived experiences in digital virtual spaces, firmly rooted in everyday life' (126). I venture to construct an initial account through considering consumer concern or lived experience with familiar ready-to-hand participatory and promotional media. The volume presents as an intensive study of embodied perception, analytical narratives of audiences attending to branding and blogging, visiting social media or shopping mall. My story sets out seven stages or 'moments' in consumers authoring practices, an account built on a hermeneutic phenomenology of their understanding global and local (Wilson, 2004, 2009, 2011).

Initiating an Informed Practice: A Narrative of Ubiquitous Understanding

At the heart of this issue is respect for persons and their perspectives, an ethical recognizing and regard for the 'subtleties of consumers' (Szmigin, 2003: 4). In multicultural Malaysia, with its 'mixed-languages' – 'the existence of "Manglish" (Malaysian English) and "Bahasa Rojak" (Mixed Malay) in groups of words' (Ibrahim, 2012) – marketing and its responses can be particularly worth study. (For instance, advertising in the English language newspaper *The Star* read by many Chinese frequently replaces 'Happy Chinese New Year' with the Mandarin 'Gong Xi Fa Cai' (ibid.)). Some have argued for philosophically informed accounts of consumers' self-construction of identity and purpose in language, incorporating such recognition, as being 'likely to be of interest to those who take a critical marketing perspective and seek to place marketing and consumption phenomena in the wider socio-economic and cultural structures' (Catterall and Maclaran, 2002: 228).

The philosophical source of discourse analysis was structuralism, focusing on text and the latter's underlying ideology, often asserted to be a set of ideas powerfully 'positioning' or aligning readers in reactionary agenda (Potter and Wetherell, 1987). Audiences emerged conceptually as 'effects', trapped in textual structure, enveloped by their political placing in social formations.

We require rather a philosophically founded mode of connecting to consumer discourse where the latter are unequivocally recognized as practicing

their own meaning, albeit shaped by perceiving the world from an epistemological location on cultural horizons of understanding. A hermeneutics of practices reconciles such audience subtlety with being culturally (in)formed. As in ethnography, so with phenomenology, our representation should sequence and separate the 'layered meanings' that narrative discourse has for consumer and theorist alike (Goulding, 2005: 299).

Phenomenology's focus on our perceiving as being intentional, or a goal-directed process of establishing meaning, was subsequently seized upon by literary response theorists in their accounts of readers creatively making sense of texts. Ritson and Elliott's agenda-setting discussion (1999) of advertising, audiences and adolescents asserts that to address cultural subtleties in consuming, such '"reader response theory" has used ethnographic methods' (262). But as they come to acknowledge, these paths to understanding consumer perception have pursued discrete trajectories (263).

Rather than the detailed description of person and place which has been associated with an ethnographic method, reader response theorists like Iser and Jauss followed closely the conceptual route earlier established by hermeneutic phenomenologists – principally Heidegger and Gadamer. They attempted to discern the abstract structure of a complex ludic process enabling understanding wherein people engage with literary texts. Subsequently, such reception theory developed accounts of audiences interpreting the screens of mobile phone, computer and television (Wilson, 1993).

Interpretive research is not new in Malaysia. For instance, Rahman *et al.* (2012) discuss this approach, reflecting on how local Muslims consider 'Islamic news related to Islamic laws (*Fatwa*). … according to reception studies the focus is how various types of audience members make sense of specific content. In this case it is the reporting of *Fatwa* news' (9).

In short, phenomenology, with reader response theory and its media post-scripts are about the situated subtleties of consumers' 'embodied' looking not location, their culturally informed seeing not cultural site (Zaltman, 1997: 426). They share a focus on the practice of understanding.

Our discussion relates to a broader methodological (now eternal seeming) struggle occurring between positivists and phenomenology over conceptualizing social inquiry (a debate discussed in the Appendix). Considered as behavioural scientists, the first link causal assertion about observable events with universal law: but the latter dig deeply (discursively speaking) for discernible cognitive processes. Positivists pursue statistical generalizability of data (Tadajewski, 2010a: 443): the focus of hermeneutic phenomenology is rather on the structural genesis of perceptual response.

How do we understand experience? Interpretivists need a model of encultured perception as a productive practice, occurring over time. Focused on Internet responses, their enquiry could be termed establishing an e-epistemology of reading and writing online. When consumers talk (as they do here) of relating self and text near geographically as 'getting' the meaning of a YouTube narrative it is clear that appropriate metaphors of understanding are

spatio-temporal in character generated by embodied subjects (Couldry, 2010: 92). Drawing on the practice theory initiated in the philosophy of Gadamer, Heidegger, Husserl and Ricoeur, my thesis is that it is possible to outline an account of our projecting meaning on mall or media, shaped by perspectives from which we enter. Embodied, everyday 'belief is immersed in a continuous phase of becoming' (Ipsen, 2010: 171).

Audiences are producers of meaning: likewise, producers are audiences, not least in creating their own work. Authoring informed by memory, both engage in 'signifying action' (Schoening and Anderson, 1995: 93). Our focus group participants are as epistemologically skilled ('savvy') when 'reading' texts as producers 'authoring' our viewed YouTube branding/ anti-branding video.

Following Catterall and Maclaran (2006), we concur that there is 'variety, innovation and creativity in focus group research' (255). In the research reported here, many focus groups 'voice out' multiple dimensions of experience, not least embodying phenomenology's understanding of practices. They present perceptual discourse with which we engage – so displaying its 'universal hermeneutic' (Hobart, 2010: 59) processing, disclosing an underlying, power 'structured' (Ashuri, 2012), responding to surroundings in a patterning capable of accommodating cultural subtlety.

Media perception itself is seen as a cumulative process wherein, whether as absorbed readers or writers, audiences always already are anticipating a narrative from genre – remembering perspectives: they actualize coherent content as appropriate, and articulate a story. Likewise, mall visitors' expectations are shaped by horizons of understanding these vast consumer edifices.

Such an account of audiences as *ab initio* authoring meaning is said in philosophical terms to be *synthetic* a priori. That is, while the claim concerns our embodied perceptual experience it is established on the basis of presenting-at-hand our tacit ideas, reflecting on how we understand. We see the world as instantiating generic types of phenomena as a condition of its intelligibility.

In Heideggerian phenomenology, our attention is said to be 'intentional'. It is fundamentally (or a priori) awareness of entities or objects (intentional objects) which from our generically (in)formed horizon of understanding we characterize as being of a certain ready-to-hand type (e.g. a computer) – that is, available as equipment with potential for furthering our purposes or potentiality-for-being. Such practical consciousness is primary: aesthetic or scientific awareness is secondary.

Thus perceiving is *ipso facto* future-focused: we anticipate (explicitly or implicitly) that our listening, looking or further practice can articulate particular identities for generic objects to which we currently attend. With this goal in mind, we are surprised, for instance, when our expectations at the outset of a characteristic video narrative cannot eventuate in a coherent story. As one female Chinese research participant puts it below in her response to a story on YouTube, 'it doesn't gel'.

Narrative Practices of Projecting from Horizons of Understanding

Experiencing Ready-to-Hand Equipment as Generic

Consumers can be conceptually considered as embodied beings positioned on culturally defined, albeit geographically locatable horizons (Gadamer, 1975). As noted, the latter are familiar if not always sharply focused frameworks ('lenses' (Brook, 2010: 412)), generic perceptions of the ready-to-hand as available for action. In Heideggerian phenomenology's account of human beings, we primarily see around us artefacts with characteristic capacity to support potentiality-for-being.

Thus, of necessity, we view the world both similarly (socially) and differently (individually) from others (Moisander *et al.*, 2009). Global or transnational marketing must therefore address local audiences appropriately in a 'global-local logic' (Amis and Silk, 2010: 161) to reach and be made sense of within distant horizons of understanding. Otherwise, geographically separated potential consumers are likely to discern themselves to be spatio-temporally, culturally and (if perceiving marketing to limit their political power) ideologically 'distanciated' (Ricoeur, 1981a) from brands.

Located on culturally and physically identifiable horizons of perceiving media, nations may align or argue for distance – become alienated from, or 'locally resistant' (Livingstone, 2008: 51) to marketing content (e.g. non-halal meat). A 'homogenizing mass media-based culture' (Gunaratne, 2009: 65) can be resisted: a non 'Euro-American epistemological stance' may be asserted (Burton, 2009). 'Resistance research' (Izberk-Bilgin, 2010: 299) can find and formulate political distance.

Competition occurs for cultural-ethical spaces (e.g. 'true' Islam) identifiable metaphorically as horizons of understanding. These are political places from whence the world can be classified in supportive ways and perceived particulars conceptualized accordingly. Or the very idea of such a hierarchy of cultural horizons may be declared incoherent and inverted – flattened in postmodernist assertions that there are plural ways of understanding (reading or writing about) the world. Here, 'multi-vocal texts' incorporate the multiple voices of their audiences (Amis and Silk, 2010: 159).

In placing the process of perception on a horizon of understanding the world and its texts, phenomenology asserts that the practice of seeing occurs always already informed by – within – a generic framework of interpretation (a 'frame of attention' (Couldry *et al.*, 2007b)) where instance is recognized as type. Thus nothing sighted is entirely novel. A productively oriented 'interpretation has already decided for a definite way of conceiving (the phenomenon), either with finality or with reservations' asserts Heidegger (1962: 191).

Discussion of Internet access is likely to contain perception of its use articulated by analysts or audiences from their differing horizons of understanding. Such narrative accounts, that is to say, can draw upon widely

varying classificatory descriptive and/or evaluative discourses (of socially significant blame or praise (cf. Liu, 2011)) encircling the life-world of everyday usage. Familiar, if 'far off' in being fundamentally interpretive of mundane experience, these reiterated frameworks of understanding resist challenge. Twitter 'seems stupid until you try it' (Arceneaux and Weiss, 2010).

We see the world *as*. In so producing or projecting the meaning of narrative media branding on the Internet and TV screens, we comprehend viewed phenomena as instantiating types of people and products and thereby are able to anticipate behaviour and events more or less accurately. Such 'projection' (Heidegger, 1962) instantiates the goal-oriented trajectory of audiences authoring sense as they travel in thought across branding, anticipating and aiming at actualizing their narrative projection as coherent content. Here viewing is (in)formed from within horizons of understanding genre.

Expectations of generic content, of course, can alter (e.g. of books themselves, when they transmigrate as e-books (Shin, 2011) or of pornography as it is 'restructured' online (Paasonen, 2010)). Navigating between appropriate authoring for an online genre and one's ideal or imagined audience can take many directions as Marwick and boyd show in discussing Twitter (2011). Web designers signify likely generic audiences by constructing 'prototypical users' (Massanari, 2010).

The Anticipatory Play of Perception in Producing Meaning: Consumption as a Hermeneutic Circle of Understanding

Is audience absorption in media content actively pursued or passively caused, brought about by a powerful screen? These pages seek to show that the core philosophical axioms of hermeneutic phenomenology as a theory of understanding can be applied in media marketing analysis to the narrative text of audiences or consumers interpreting a screen content which is itself storytelling. These abstractions are thus 'methodologically accessible', guiding accounts of what people have to say and write (Hatch and Rubin, 2006: 41). 'Researchers using hermeneutics are interested in what happens in the space where the reader meets text or the listener meets the speaker' (Freeman, 2007: 926). Philosophical psychology of this character considers the practice of understanding – thinking through the 'dense interweaving of memory, identity and power relations' (Sandywell, 2004: 174).

Audience response to branding narrative may be said to be play-like or have a goal, that of establishing intelligibility. Pursuing a hermeneutic circle of understanding (Gadamer, 1975), readers move cognitively back and forth across stories, articulating a generically appropriate sense, aiming to relate event to narrative entirety. These 'meaningful player practices' (Behrenshausen, 2012: 872) constitute consumers as epistemologically ludic, immersive in shopping mall and social media.

Where media marketing is thereby found meaningful, audiences may (as local Malaysians say) 'relate to' actions on screen. Within the parameters of a

broader perspective or horizon of understanding, we can assert they have culturally located and identified with persons of interest.

Moreover, when we thereby assemble and establish an account of a brand marketing text, we can draw upon its content to inform and shape a renewed sense of our own identity or 'self-understanding' (Arnold and Fischer, 1994: 55). During a focus group later discussed below, male Malays cultivate a presentation of self as 'artistic', as interested in 'cinematography'. Their cultural capital is celebrated here perhaps as distancing them from more commercial interests, but certainly as enabling them to appreciate the metonymic symbolic relationship between the mediated narrative of a bank's branding and cultural sophistication. For a hermeneutic of constructing cultural identity, following Gadamer (1975), such discourse is said to represent a certain moment during the process of reading or 'voicing out' when a textual meaning is appropriated by a thoughtful audience.

Listening to participants in consumer research, the ludic universal practice of understanding represented in hermeneutic theory can be heard being enriched by contributors' particular narratives of comprehending marketing on screen in the time-taking 'hermeneutic process of assimilation and accommodation' (Thompson, 1997: 441) outlined above and further delineated here. Drawing on hermeneutics and humanities screen theory, we set out a narrative in these pages of seven *moments* (to use this hermeneutic term) or behavioural stages through which author audiences move in their manufacturing meaning. Here, the consumer's remembered past, present awareness and projected experience of understanding content are closely (or 'internally') connected. It is essential and so fundamental to this practice that, guided by an implicit knowledge of the type of text being viewed, the reader's absorption in its narrative process is simultaneously a time of her or his anticipating emerging screen events. Immersed, we infer the future, as informed speculation tested in viewing.

Amongst audiences, media users, or visitors to malls, their consciousness of the present is perpetually also recognition, providing the platform for knowledgeable projection of their probable content, established through further immersion: 'all cognition' we noted is 're-cognition' (Gadamer, 1985: 280). Hence, hermeneutics can generate for brand researchers an 'ontology of the (consumer as) interpreter in the continuous act of coming-into understanding' (Arnold and Fischer, 1994: 56), continually evaluating the accuracy of always already established expectations, defining the 'co-constitutive nature of consumers, culture and marketplaces' (Bengtsson and Eckhardt, 2010: 347). Constructing understanding is, in short, an everyday 'practice phenomenon' (Schatzki, 2005: 5). We consider consumer discourse presenting ready-to-hand tacit hermeneutic practices as generic modes of ludic screen and shopping liminal activity 'across thresholds' – wherein they project and produce embodied participatory intelligibility from apple choosing to banking, bonding and universities.

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Part I

Global Theory

A Practices Perspective on People

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1   Audiences Entering Mall and Media

Visitors Projecting Everyday Practices

> The 'person' is 'first and foremost a situated interpreter, understander, or "sense-maker" engaged in everyday coping'.
>
> (Stewart, 1992: 340)

Project: In this chapter, I set out a framework of ideas for discussing in subsequent stages of this brief book, audiences and consumers visiting shopping mall or social media – who engage everyday with these elongated material and virtual entities, stretching everywhere. These multiple entrants to spaces they construct as familiar places are to be considered primarily ('primordially') as authoring audiences *participating in practices*. I shall focus on an underlying structuring similarity discernible in their constructing coherent narratives of their experience – the process whereby they make sense of surroundings. We draw on phenomenology's practices theory to understand audience behaviour – their skilled managing of meaning in projecting, integrating, enabling modes of being-with-others, in negotiating capitalist and consumer horizons of understanding mall and media phenomena.

How do their narratives (considered on the following pages to be functional or *tool-like* in their talking and thinking about experience) support social interaction in shopping malls or online? For a person's stories, simply 'sketches' or substantially narrated, *enable* their circulating presence. And how they anticipate activity – their *projects* – can be discerned from behaviour or 'voicing out'.

The perspective adopted here emphasizes *visitor verstehen* – how do the visitors to shopping malls and social media understand 'entities' filling up their environment as 'equipment' (Heidegger, 1962)? Our approach advances practice and reception theory, resourced by phenomenology, with its concept of mall/media visitors projecting and resolving indeterminate narrative embodied in action. 'Indeterminacy' characterizes human activity whether on screen or in shopping (Schatzki, 2010).

The core and current issue for such theorizing is whether (having earlier served the study of viewing fixed screen television formats such as soap opera) it can be regarded as a fruitful horizon of understanding from which to venture forth exploring use of ubiquitous media (e.g. in malls). For from the early

1990s, phenomenology, claiming for viewers their construction of textual meaning, shaped research on consumers in marketing as well as media studies (albeit often apparent in a somewhat attenuated or reductive appropriation of this European philosophical persuasion).

On these pages, concepts initiated within Heideggerian hermeneutics support our thinking through the marketing narratives seeking to shape the accounts of those who visit, view and 'voice out' in shopping malls and social media. (In)formed by scarcely reflected upon (or 'ready-to-hand') awareness of cyberspace or the contents of more concrete corridors as equipping us, we are enabled to engage in 'being-with-others' from window shopping to website. Looking at Facebook's 'walls' or familiar branded walls in malls, visitors are resourced in voicing out to agree or seek distance. Convinced fans and critical foes of these immersive material or online *agora* produce stories: in doing so (rejoicing, reluctantly) they have gained a purchase on tools of narrative construction.

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Mall of America's website offers us: 'More Ways to Be You'. In this consumer address to audiences, media marketing of a mall offers multiple routes to attaining self-identity. Pluralism is on this individuated postmodernist agenda, scanned by visitors engaging with its online promise.

We are invited to select a self-fulfilling narrative of branded product purchase (or celebrate the pursuit of many). Aligning with its promoted achievement, we construct cafe, cinema, or clothes outlet as equipment in activity enabling us to achieve our 'potentiality-for-being' (Heidegger, 1962). So, recognizing the address as appropriate we (allegedly) attain who we are, realizing multiplicity.

A more extended (eloquent) invitation to implied audiences to achieve selfhood is conveyed by wall poetry at The Gardens (an upmarket shopping mall in the centre of Malaysia's capital city): 'Remember Who You Are Forget Who They Want You to Be': 'Catch Up with Yourself'. Online, in the suburbs of the same city, Kuala Lumpur, the Sunway Pyramid Mall constructs its mediated and multi-branded being as a capacious place for adventure in articulating and achieving immersive individuated narrative in which we embody self in the entities of shopping: 'Your Unique Shopping Adventure' ('Rediscover Shopping at an International, Award-Winning Shopping Mall'). Audience absorption can be multilayered (*on*line/*in* the mall), constructing their self-actualizing narratives of anticipated acquisition using the convenient equipment of 'downloaded' 'cool mall app(s)'. Gaining a purchase is presented as simultaneously intrinsic and instrumentally realizing ourselves: 'Don't forget to come redeem a mystery gift if you've downloaded the app' (Facebook page).

Absorbed architecturally in concrete mall and cyberspace media, our Internet use involves a primarily ('primordially' (Heidegger, 1962)) practical orientation, recognized here by the mode of address which is incorporated in these websites. Embodied authoring audiences therein, we employ everyday

awareness of such media as 'ready-to-hand' (ibid.) in producing identity off/online. 'Hello may I know what is your sunway [*sic*] free shuttle bus operation hour?' asks a Muslim male former Sunway student pictured presenting his culinary art on the Sunway Pyramid Facebook site. Ease of access to the individuating mall from an integrated hotel can be celebrated in this space: 'it was connected to a mall so shopping and eating was easy'; 'steps away from a nice shopping mall'. Linked hotel, mall and leisure park constitute an immersive 'phenomenal complex of great vision' (*Sunway Pyramid Resort Tripadvisor*), with much playful potential for authoring audience narrative.

Participants in a student focus group conducted by the author and a colleague at the outset of this book saw the Pyramid Facebook page as supporting focused consumer expectation, informing its occasionally authoring audiences about 'any events that [are] coming'. Beyond promotion, the Pyramid address can participate in life, 'sometimes … a kind reminder, like for example, the hazy weather. … They remind everyone to drink more water. This kind of thing' (female, Chinese). As digital software (equipment) enabling consumers to follow social media on-the-go, rather than 'sitting in front of a laptop' using Facebook, 'maybe Twitter is more to mobile' (female, Chinese).

In discussing malls and their mediation on participatory and promotional screens, we have drawn upon phenomenology's Heideggerian terminology. Here, then, they are conceptualized from a primordially practical point-of-view – which Heidegger argues is fundamental to communication – as constituting ready-to-hand extended entities enabling us to achieve our potentiality-for-being. Accessing such concrete or cyberspace surrounded equipment is characterized by ease (or issues) in use – as tool-like, enabling texts to be created, particularized to context (Courtois *et al.*, 2011).

Drawing on this conceptual cosmology or framework of terms as tools for theory, resources or equipment belonging to the philosophers Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, phenomenology returns us from mere abstraction. Instead, we are offered a theoretical prism wherein we can think through our everyday multiple immersions in the manipulated spaces and times of malls and media. Thus being absorbed, we realize our generic expectation of entities as enhancing equipment. Primarily, coffee characteristically stimulates awareness, supermarket shelves support our shopping selves.

Phenomenology presents us, then, as always already 'fore-understanding' (Heidegger, 1962) objects *conceptually* in terms of their characteristic usage, as 'projecting' (ibid.) a narrative of their likely generic employment. In so being aware of entities as types of phenomena (e.g. a hammer as equipment or iPad as a computer), human beings are not (merely) looking at objects as 'present-at-hand' (ibid.). Embodied in our discourse, our perspective on the world, rather, is primarily practical.

> [People] cannot get behind or exist before practical understanding: one immediately experiences being-in-the-world as the interpretation of

everyday or practical activities, including activities as mundane as using a hammer. (Feldman, 2000: 54)

Claiming to exhibit our implicit everyday idea of understanding, this philosophical resource offers us spatio-temporal metaphors or images of constructing meaning. Authoring audiences can be considered as engaging with familiar, hence ready-to-hand websites; in thus immersing online, they achieve a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer, 1975). Negotiating from known if not frequently focused upon conceptual perspectives they interpret a differing vision. In 'projecting' meaning on another's story, they pursue an integrating 'circle of understanding' (ibid.) to articulate content. Explicitly or implicitly, in their chosen discourse, they 'align' or 'distance' self from character and narrative they themselves have constructed in cognitive 'play'. Drawing upon phenomenology's visually inscribed modelling of such everyday participation in culture, theory can thereby accommodate our literacy: in turn, authoring adds material instance (e.g. from blogging) to the phenomenology of networking.

Absorbed in a 'blissful' narrative of appreciation, the authoring audience of *A Moment Like This* is clearly aligning with 'Sunway' in telling her blog readers, 'We went to Sunway Pyramid this afternoon and realized that Sunway has nicely decorated the mall with CNY (Chinese New Year) theme [*sic*], everything is in blissful red. I feel the excitement!!!' On the other hand, in the *Selangor Times* local newspaper online, a more alienated viewpoint is voiced out by a 'resistant reader' (Das: 2012): 'In just a couple more weeks the Year of the Dragon is going to roll in. For the Chinese … it is always an extra-auspicious period of the Chinese Lunar calendar. So what we can expect this Chinese New Year is an even more garish display of the colors gold and red in the shopping malls'.[1]

Reception theory, persuaded by phenomenology in its focusing on the process of reading, developed these spatio-temporal metaphors of meaning building further (e.g. in Jauss's subsequent writing on 'horizon of expectations' (1982)). As audiences voicing out, we in our turn, contribute to the theoretical framework (Goulding *et al.*, 2002: 261) research employs in studying social media, shaping its analytical discourse. Our generic perceptions thereby can inform and mould distinction.

Phenomenology as Precursor of Marketing and Media Theory: Practices of Projecting Place from Horizons of Understanding

Understanding 'is grounded in *something we grasp in advance – in a fore-conception*'. (Heidegger, 1962: 191; emphasis in original)

The authoring audience thus plays out its practice in generic modes of interpretive concern. Projecting narrative meaning varies over YouTube's participatory or promotional videos, taking a different course of realizing anticipation across Facebook and Twitter accounts. Reality shows our consumer expectations

to be both confirmed and confused, enriched and evaded by emerging text. Phenomenology with its reiteration in reception theory discloses narrative structure: it is materially enriched by audiences author(iz)ing social media as equipment in negotiating everyday life.

Chapter One signals below the guiding ideas about viewers which have shaped audience and consumer research in media studies over the past forty years (a history to which the present author has contributed four research monographs and a volume of published articles). From approximately 1965 to 2005, important philosophical sources of those ideas have been identified as structuralism, post-structuralism and phenomenology (concepts which are outlined and discussed in these pages).

Succeeding chapters will address (arguably) the core question in current audience studies: can these accounts of human agency accommodate consumers as participatory users of social media?

In phenomenology's temporal-spatial discursive picture of our media reading or writing, we are guided by generically resourced assumptions about an appropriate story direction in establishing content on screen. Audiences aim at a coherent understanding or an integrating of textual elements removing contradiction between knowledgeable expectation and perceived evidence for a narrative.

'Projecting' a story-line or 'fore-sight' is, in other words, initiated within an audience's 'fore-conceptions' or 'fore-structure' of informed understanding (Heidegger, 1962: 191–92). But content is equally finally settled by an author's, reader's or visitor's entering and engaging with screen text or shopping thoroughfare. They thereby can relate episode or element to entirety through a to-and-fro 'hermeneutic circle' (Gadamer, 1975: 167) of behavioural understanding.

The authoring audience's sense-making in shopping mall or social media is shared in a fusion of horizons, through 'dialogical understanding' (Roy and Oludaja, 2009: 262) in which we 'create and recreate shared understandings' (Dickey *et al.*, 2006: 66), shaping or structuring our horizons of expectation, (in)formed by pre-existing practices. Seeing the world from horizons of understanding equipment enables projecting generic narrative (anticipating, achieving goals). Coherence of sought after achievement with a situated horizon of understanding surroundings is an important ambition.

From Passive Attitude to Actively Aligning: A Hermeneutic Narrative of Audience Agency

Perceptual experience is essentially a process of understanding within familiar frameworks. In doing so we are a priori (always already) anticipating activity, an emerging identity, whether of person or product, 'something we grasp in advance'. We 'read' the visible culturally and temporally, establishing a 'multiplicity of meanings in events' (Leeds-Hurwitz, 1992: 133) in mall/on screen.

Consumers view events perspectively, thereby conceptualizing the subject matter on which they focus in ways which (discursively) emphasize some aspects, with yet other 'moments' hidden or marginalized. To use the hermeneutic spatial metaphor for epistemological sight, we gaze at the world (thereby subject(ed) to consciousness) from 'horizons of understanding' (Gadamer, 1975). Looking as *critique* from alternative points of view becomes possible. In short, 'access to the facts is provided by the understanding of meaning' (Habermas, 1972 quoted in Murray and Evers, 1989).

This philosophical assertion departs radically from positivism. The latter separates seeing subject from seen object apparently allowing that entity to be perceived 'neutrally' or independently of the onlooker's culture (dualism).[2] Instead, phenomenology presents people as everywhere fore-understanding – fundamentally – objects in terms of their culturally defined characteristic use, that is as unreflectively ready-to-hand. We thereby tacitly project potential generic practices with products. In this way, a discourse of *practice* with which we are able to engage with entities underwrites other more abstract talk whether aesthetic, of beautiful artefacts, or the language of technical theory. Here Heidegger 'de-centers the over-privileged' (Ablett and Dyer, 2009: 218) position of science.

Such philosophical thought reflecting on the 'ordering effect of cultural perspective' (De Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2010: 173) in practice has been appropriated in marketing and media studies to generate a conceptual purchase on screen users (e.g. people's domestication of new technology (Helle-Valle and Slettemeas, 2008)). We indeed need to 'rethink' (Das, 2010:140) early analytical frameworks initiated to study audiences of national mass media when we focus upon the situated 'complexities of consumer agency' positioned in participatory social media (Eckhardt and Mahi, 2004). The present volume engages with a phenomenology of perception to trace further the possibility of productively analyzing audience and consumer discourse as each comes to terms with similarly structured experience of screen media and shopping malls (Wilson, 2009 and 2011). In so doing, we discuss the development of a theoretical framework in understanding *understanding*.

Audience–Consumer Studies: Integrating Media-Marketing Theory

Philosophical assumptions about the 'antecedents of behaviour' inform reasoned selecting of research methodology seen to be appropriate in studying human activity (Bristor, 1985). Consumer behaviour can be regarded as (passively) caused by screen content considered by investigators to constitute sets of independently described external 'variables'. Or it may be treated conceptually as the result of these audiences (actively) identifying or aligning with a persuasive media narrative, a story they themselves have productively come to a conclusion is presented on screen. These views draw upon a spatio-temporal model of screen response as effect *or* exploration of expectation.

   Here I shall outline an account of how European media audience and marketing's consumer studies converged philosophically subsequent to rejecting the structuralist assumption in the 1970s that the subjectivity of spectators could be considered as predictable effect of powerful screen texts, thereby negating the need to ask (with attendant analyses) actual audiences about their responses. In subsequent sections, I reflect more pointedly upon this convergence on phenomenology. The thesis presented here is that our consumer discourses, whether of our being immersively concerned with media or mall, present structurally similar processes of behavioural practice in analogous worlds.

   In audience research our philosophical viewpoints and people's voices need to be integrated. We 'wrap our work in theories', yet 'too much abstraction can mean that the worlds of informants are left behind, forgotten' (Maclaran and Stevens, 2008: 346, 352). Phenomenology listens to the latter in positing a universal perceptual process – which can nonetheless accommodate discursive detail where audience consumers talk about their local lives of mall or media use (Fullerton, 1987).

   Hence, hermeneutics emphasizes that media researchers as well as those of us undertaking investigations of markets and their consumers should not presume that their '(etic) way of viewing the world corresponds to the (emic) viewpoints' held by study participants (Thompson, 1998). In marking the distance between cultural horizons as also a space for potential dissonance between screen branding and subsequent buyers, critical theory engages with marketing practice by thinking through consumers aligning with (or become alienated from) media discourse (Tadajewski, 2010b).

   Arguably, there were four stages in European audience and consumer theory drawing closer. I shall outline these in the following paragraphs but subsequently clarify and continue discussion of (C) *Hermeneutic Phenomenology* and (D) *Authoring Audiences*. They form a theoretical backdrop enabling engagement with audience response to absorbing artificial environment of media and mall:

(A) *Structuralism* – prior to 1980 in what is subsequently referred to as 1970s' Screen Theory, spectator response is often considered an effect of the causally powerful pervasive cinema screen (analogous work perhaps continues in US Effects Studies).[3] Audiences are said to be 'positioned' passively and politically by textual ideology. Seeking to activate or (even) rescue such a structurally determined spectator, radical work in this area produced modernist cinema, whose contradictions (e.g. between sound track and visual statement) required an audience striving for hermeneutically coherent understanding of a screen text, to distance themselves in analytical, even political, thought. Important concepts for subsequent media consumer studies emerge during this early period of theorizing audience activity (or its absence). Viewers positioned or aligned by screen text are said to *identify* with its prescriptive narrative, or if distancing themselves, are thereby *alienated*:

(B) *Post-Structuralism* – after 1980, the phrase 'active audience' becomes central in media studies, referring to viewers' critical capacities in responding to television; a distinction is rendered between textual addressee (or implied viewer) and the actual audience, who can, again, distance themselves:

(C) *Hermeneutic Phenomenology* – from 1990 (e.g. in Wilson (1993) and Silverstone (1999)) an important focus is on the process of audiences interpreting television, increasingly inter-culturally. Shaped by scholarly remembering of Gadamer's seminal *Truth and Method* (1975), there is evident construction of three axioms underwriting phenomenology's structured account of a consumer-text (little attended to) interaction as (i) a productive practice characterized by multiple play-like aspects (e.g. being goal-directed or immersive); (ii) audiences 'projecting' meaning on screen from cultural 'horizons' marked out by the viewer's wider knowledge or informed by generic expectation; (iii) so aiming at integrating such anticipation with actual text in a 'hermeneutic circle of understanding'. Thompson's contribution (1991, 1997) is significant during this decade, incorporating (albeit with some amendment) a hermeneutic perspective in consumer studies: other work is guided by a wider marketing reference to reader reception theory originating in phenomenology (Kates, 2006):

(D) *Authoring Audiences* – from 2010: can consumers or citizens considered as *authoring* or writing digital content (e.g. in blogging and messaging) be accommodated in hermeneutic theory? Now our 'phenomenological gaze' is on behavioural practice – crossing thresholds in focus groups we seek to recover genres of ready-to-hand hermeneutic consumer activity, tacit play-like producing meaning, whether immersed in screen media or absorbed in their visiting a shopping mall (Svensson, 2007).

'The positivistic tradition takes consumers to be passive entities responding to the push and pull of … situational stimuli' (O'Shaughnessy, 1985). External (or sufficient) causation excludes giving reasons for acting. But for those persuaded by 'postpositivist' hermeneutic phenomenology, screen responses are instead to be understood as 'mediated by meanings' produced by audiences (Thompson, 1993, 1994). Thus these paradigmatic accounts of consumer consciousness represent a fundamental 'diversity of conceptual orientations' (Churchill and Wertz, 1985) in research.

In the prevailing narrative from 'explanation fiends' (Fernbach *et al.*, 2013), marketing is 'dominated' by 'major storylines of quantification', its 'notions of measurement, explanation and prediction'. So 'who needs words like "ethnographic" and "epistemological" when you have the tangible metaphoric power of "positioning", "targeting" and "segmentation" at your discursive pedagogic disposal?' (Hackley, 2001: 68, 100). Resisting such 'atrophied maxims', dependent on 'marketing's simplistic causative scheme', hermeneutics maps out an epistemology, an account of citizen consumers viewing mall and media branding (ibid.: 153, 156) as a *practice*.

The authoring audience, for instance, can distinguish between textual addressee and those not so addressed (B) to mark out the mall's implicitly acceptable visitors from the economically to-be-excluded: 'Dear Sunway Pyramid, There is a certain pest within your premises which is really annoying, called beggars and con-men charity people who ask for donations' (Facebook).

Perceiving Potentiality for Being-with-Others: Consuming Enabled by Ready-to-Hand Entities

Hermeneutic phenomenology and its associated practices and reception research considering cultural frameworks and skills enabling audience and consumer response to screens and their selling have, then, long been ushered on to the stage of studying media and marketing as appropriate to the 'rich multi-dimensionality of consumption meaning' (Ritson *et al.*, 1996). Separately formulated, numerically processed multiple-choice questionnaires are seen to necessarily constrain awareness of respondents' varying perspectives on (or modes of understanding) their own consumption practices. Quantitive method (albeit subsequently useful) constrains capacity for registering cultural diversity.

Statistical correlations (sometimes celebrated as signifying causal connections) establishing a recurring sequence of screen and subsequent audience activity do not shed light on the latter's subjectively mediated motivation. Interpreting consumer consciousness is necessary (Firat, 1987).

To this end, the behavioural process obtaining between the (would-be) absorbing consumer environments of malls, mediated marketing and audience response is presented here as being both universally patterned and locally infused by cultural detail. Guided by ready-to-hand remembering, our behaviour is located on cultural horizons of expectation from whence (with our understanding so (in)formed) we continually anticipate and articulate consumption practice. Producing a narrative of our circumstances, we position ourselves in affirmation or distanced critical alienation. Thinking through consuming these phenomena need be neither problematic nor 'perilous' (Holbrook, 1989).

Hermeneutic theory provides a narrative account of how we make sense within seeing our surroundings as intelligible (Gadamer, 1975). Perceiving events, reading books, or responding to screens is from the outset an interpretive process, with our anticipation and articulating meaning (in)formed over time. Understanding marketing, media or mall follows a generic formula.

All seeing, then, is *seeing as*: we continually classify entities in our environment as instances of known types, implicitly or explicitly constructing their likely future. In this embodied everyday looking, we reconcile our informed anticipation with subsequent occurrence, our recognizing with reconnoitering. Articulating our expectation with experience, reading 'to and fro', tacitly integrating detail with totality, we produce an account of events in a hermeneutic circle of understanding.

Media studies argued that screen reception involves generically informed integration of narrative elements or seeing a story's *sense* (Wilson, 1993). As noted, this hermeneutic model of audience response emerged concurrently in consumer theory (Thompson 1991, 1997; Thompson, Pollio and Locander, 1994), and is now near being a 'marketing cognitive product' (Marion, 2010). An Association for Consumer Research website search yields 83 entries for 'hermeneutic'.

In this chapter, propositions on the processual practice of understanding are summarized to make explicit our position within the plural paradigms of interpretive marketing theory (Shankar and Patterson, 2001). They are pursued further as (re)formulated in audience and consumer theory to enable their precise application to the prose of participants in successive chapters of this volume. Hermeneutic analyses (both quasi-historical and quite contemporary), which are easily accessible at the website established by the Association for Consumer Research (http://acrwebsite.org/volumes/), are frequently cited to further the philosophical context informing this particular South East Asian inquiry.

Drawing on the phenomenology of perception as projecting meaning, a 'hermeneutic map' of consumer understanding as recognizing genre, enabling expectation, locates seven (simultaneous or successive) stages in our embodied engaging (cf. Ringberg and Christensen, 2003): audience (i) absorption along with (ii) anticipation of meaning as (iii) their articulation of coherent narrative; (iv) alignment or agreement with consequent content and (v) appropriation to (in)form selves; *or* (vi) consumer alienation (resistance) and thus (vii) critical analysis of mall and media.

Discursive analyses of audience response to media marketing or mall are presented below to exemplify these primary moments when consumers establish ready-to-hand meaning in phenomena. Subsequent accounts of their seeing (e.g. as aesthetic satisfaction or simply sensory) are secondary.

From a consumer perspective, our play-like immersing in the audience address of participant inviting screen media or shopping mall with our subsequent construction of a narrative account can be intrinsically pleasurable – or enjoyable by virtue of the instrumental objectives thereby achieved. The cultural (and more concrete) horizon of understanding from which this epistemological travel commences constitutes a conceptual reference point or perspective for interpreting the perceived. In immersively testing such initial assumptions about social media or shopping mall we *visit*. By doing so, the subjectively seen (concrete) is simultaneously intersubjectively (or interpersonally) regarded (conceptualized).These entities have no 'inherent meanings' (Hudson and Murray, 1986): there are no 'indubitable' culturally universal data forming a foundation for knowing (Thompson, 1990).

Interpretation is always contextually shaped. Thus the construction of meaning follows an inclusive pattern, forming both investigator's and research participant's understanding of text in a hermeneutic circle of reading 'to and fro', relating elements of a perceived subject to its entirety, assembling an

appropriate identity (Pennell, 1994). In this continual switch of focus from overview to constitutive element (the core activity in understanding), a fundamental moment is the audience's being absorbed in projecting meaning implicit in sighting a familiar (ready-to-hand) *type* of subject, thereby anticipating likely content or event. Looking at a screen, locating its local narrative content as instantiating genre, immersed and inferring its future, we play perceptually (Stern *et al.*, 2005). Actualizing or adjusting anticipated meaning when confronting contradiction between expectation and experiencing a text, the hermeneutic goal here is consistency without 'anomaly' (Costa, 1994).

In positivism, screen stimulus and consumer response are simply cause and effect (Lowe *et al.*, 2005). For interpretive theory, responses to media (and mall) constitute their audience's initial projection of meaning with which people subsequently integrate narrative detail. Such a practice of understanding 'covers all projection of meaning in a situation' (Ricoeur, 1981b: 107). So a reading route can double back on itself, with expectations of narrative revised to accommodate textual event in the hermeneutic path of achieving an audience's integrated understanding (Shankar *et al.*, 2001).

This hermeneutic circle of intelligibility (or coherently relating narrative 'part' to 'whole'), that is, involves a goal-oriented practice of informed anticipating and articulating particular content, drawing upon a wider audience horizon of understanding – their recollecting of sometimes complex shopping malls or screen media. The discourse of marketing can be read as seeking to (in)form such consumer practice in making sense. Research method establishing causality between screen content and consequence is inductive: following consumer understanding, however, involves interpreting.

Underwriting interpretive marketing and media theory is their axiomatic assumption that culture bounds but is also a basis of 'existing expectations' (Sherry, 1986a). Seeing thus classifies or is generic, allocating the instance and 'novel' to known patterns, regarding it as exemplifying types. In the process of our perceiving, we recognize and seek fulfilment of instantiated regularities.

In *Being and Time* (1962), Heidegger asks, 'Does time itself manifest itself as the horizon of Being?' Does the experience of time fundamentally structure our existence as human beings making sense of the world in which we live? Heidegger answers in the affirmative. For hermeneutics, the temporal dimension of life emerges as the fore-structure shaping our understanding. Perception is essentially informed and interpretive (rather than positivism's instant sight): hence it is inferential or filled with expectations (future-oriented) which may sooner or later coincide with actual experience. Identifying or recognizing texts generically as screen marketing narratives, we anticipate an eventual tag line or a corporate logo. 'Man [*sic*] is oriented toward the future' (Mantzavinos, 2005: 29). 'Hermeneutics begins at home': (in)formed by memory, the initial moment of our behavioural understanding is future-focused 'inferential involvement', 'involving inference' (Holbrook, 1987).

Our 'world also inseparably involves temporality, an immanent teleology in which, rooted in and retaining a determinate past, the present determines,

acts into, and opens onto an ever uncertain future' (Churchill and Wertz, 1985). Understanding is structured by its temporal aspect or moment.

Human subjectivity is 'multi-dimensional', an informed looking forward from a physically located or embodied positioning on practice (Harindranath, 2009: 53). Working with perspectively informed concepts such as the 'horizon of understanding' from which an audience–consumer views media content and projects the meaning likely to emerge from a text, hermeneutics, we noted, offers a set of spatio-temporal metaphors with which to conceptualize our communicating across cultures, and such discursive negotiating as is involved therein, as a 'fusion' of conceptual horizons. Like the latter, 'some elements of social reality are closer and some are more remote' (Bilandzic, 2006: 334).

Consumers visiting social media or shopping mall articulate or construct narrative accounts. People align or identify with other participants. But audiences can become alienated, conceptually/ culturally placing at a dissenting distance their consuming selves to exhibit otherwise effaced more critical citizens. They may then engage in a discourse of depth hermeneutics analytical of perceived illegitimate power. 'Critique rests on the moment of *distanciation*' (Ricoeur, 1981b: 110; emphasis in original). Indeed the act of consuming itself can be regarded as 'banal', displacing being a citizen with legal rights and ethical responsibilities (Clarke *et al.*, 2007: 138). In thereby speaking of audience alienation, phenomenology introduces a critical positioning (Tadajewski, 2010c: 786).

From Branded Social Media to Shopping Malls: Blended Agora of Participation, Persuasion, Play

> 'Advertise on Facebook Over 900 million people. We'll help you reach the right ones'. (Facebook) 'More ways to be you'. (Mall of America)

We are addressed in social media and shopping mall as authoring audiences and so invited to assemble knowledge and ourselves – to manufacture a corporate and convincing or singular storied self from a multiplicity of narrative 'ways'. Mall and media 'equipment' (branded generic products or services from offline Coffee Bean to cyber-spacing Twitter) are represented as tools enabling our individuated civic 'being-with-others' in communities – great, good places of assembling consumer clans or tribes. So 'welcome to Twitter. Find out what's happening, right now, with the people and organizations you care about'. Thus fore-structured (fore-shortened?) in understanding, the *implied* addressees of these would-be persuasive (marketing) narratives produce (or project) their accounts of immersion, but *actual* audiences can seek alienated distance from discourse purporting to enable.

Shopping malls and social media (SM/SM) are branded spaces and times, used as 'great, good places' (Oldenburg, 1999), 'second homes' where people

come together, converging in public play and conversation, embracing multiple genres of products. Oldenburg's denoting such 'third places' for discourse beyond domesticity and work does not wholly acknowledge the political economy of their shaping as public space and time for private profit or 'brandscapes' (Sherry, 1986a).[4]

Nonetheless, thereby absorbed, we tacitly assume that these extended entities will perform 'to type' (or conform to known genre), so enabling our being-with-others. Our discourse is supportively framed by such scarcely regarded horizons of understanding. We act in SM/SM with an implicit (or habituated, not considered) assumption that familiar equipment in these much visited life-worlds is characteristically ready-to-hand for our use. Coffee, we trust, will stimulate 'voicing out'! We sign into a chat room online with little reflection on how it has come to enable our being-with-others.

Consuming enables cultural positioning. Immersed in SM/SM we assign identity to person or product, presuming conformity to type in their subsequent narratives of achieving potentiality-for-being. SM/SM are invariably brandscapes (or materially and virtually branded landscapes), sites where corporate *persona* and products are 'performed': they are thus consolidated or contested by an authoring audience in their behavioural practices of consuming, alignment, alienation. 'Practices are thus always necessarily open to contestation' (Nicolini, 2012: 6).

Shopping malls like screen media have taken a postmodernist turn. Marketing engages with multiple categories or types of shopper. Promotional communication increasingly uses social media to address consumers. To whom does such mall marketing speak? Who is watching the screen? In our study of a major shopping mall (Chapter Six), the research group commenced with a conceptual hypothesis – that our focus group research participants visit therein from a horizon of understanding their frequently visited mall as 'great good place' – and tested this fore-understanding in discussion.[5]

Such hypothetico-deductive reasoning is holistic in speculating on the perspective with which our consumers primarily engage with their mall. How do they then interpret diversity in its products and structure their being and time in this place? Does the focus group corroborate this deduction?

Drawing on Heidegger's phenomenology and the political theory of Oldenburg, this research concluded our consumers implicitly perceive a mall as instrumentally immersive – or that it securely supports their ludic absorption and local assembly as well as being a location for acquisition. Our frequent travellers to a mall above all enjoyed its space and time as 'belonging' in a 'second home'.

So what tacit (pre-reflective) assumptions about malls are embedded in narrative enunciated by people who visit them? We find a core concept of a mall's 'entities' as 'equipment' (dis)enabling modes of 'being-with-others' (Heidegger), a focus of visitor perspectives on consumption as social.

For Heidegger, *thematic* disclosures denote generic practice, types of activity. The mall fore-understood as a 'great, good place' is implicitly – and hence

in focus groups, explicitly – anticipated to be appropriate as a place for spatio-temporally positioned play, gathering, conversation. A focus group discussion brings to awareness participants' unreflective practices – where entities are treated as ready-to-hand. Shopping mall and social media visits become presented-at-hand: their implicit, psychologically sedimented or tacit use is seen explicitly as a practice enabling being-with-others. Or in Michelle's (2007) words, 'transparent' access is reviewed as 'mediated' construction (203).

Visitors to screen media or shopping malls anticipate their active absorption.[6] Immersed, they articulate behaviourally more or less completed 'narrative sketches' of their reception and response; evincing consensus or criticism, agreement or alienation, they accede/align, or distance themselves. In Hills's words, they appropriate content 'towards (private, personal) use-value' or resist (2002: 35).

In generic consumer stories (their present-at-hand reflecting) in focus groups, these authoring audiences of shopping malls or social media voice out previously pre-reflective (or ready-to-hand) elliptical expectations of equipment enabling habituated being-with-others in consuming off/online. We noted earlier a female Chinese student told us: 'Basically, I expect good security from the mall'.

'Practice is therefore "prior" to representation' (Nicolini, 2012: 35). From the perspective of a Heideggerian phenomenology, such *post eventum* discussing unpacks habituated, sedimented, tacit, or taken-for-granted assumptions (our 'natural attitude') concerning 'entities' as 'equipping'. Self-monitoring stories of understanding as a social *practice* structured by 'moments' of becoming/being absorbed in SM/SM, display how authors of goal-directed (would-be holistic) accounts *act*.

In practical – often tacit – understanding of shopping mall or social media sites, visitors:

1. *enter* from an (in)formed tacit horizon of understanding malls or media, thus engaging them with
2. *embodied* or ready-to-hand (not reflected upon) simultaneous
3. *expectations* or projections of equipment enabled being-with-others (achieved in a skilled hermeneutic circle of understanding) ('[I] accompany friends … we go together' (male, Chinese)).
   Regarding thereby articulated stories in shopping mall or social media, consumers
4. *identify with the narrative* (in a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer)) thus
5. *incorporating content* (as furthering their 'potentiality-for-being' (Heidegger)) (in 'belonging', it 'feels like the [*sic*] second home' (female, Chinese))
   or
6. *initiate distancing of perspective* ('alienation' (Ricoeur)) asserted as

7. *independent insight or indifference* ('just killing hours in a mall' (*Sunway Pyramid Tripadvisor*)).

Here, ready-to-hand understanding can turn (in)to critical interpretation presented-at-hand.

Differing genres of sense-making (from political to purchasing) are enabled by mall or media. Our being engaged in such narrative is akin to being 'at play', or future-focused and goal-directed in immersive intentionality (absorbed awareness). The concept of immersive 'play' may be widely used to metaphorically model much of our experience. Not only is it applicable in tourist studies, for instance, but as Silverstone has argued (1999), reference to the multiple dimensions of the ludic (play-like) can serve to interpret our watching television (Wilson, 2004). Media authoring online is held here to be likewise (if distinctively) play-like – a mode of ludic literacy in being-with-others.

Whether in games or generating meaning, embodied activity absorbs player and producer in actualizing anticipation, a goal-directed accomplishing of content informed by their interpreting the organizing roles and rules of the genres in which they consider themselves to be immersed (Hills, 2002: 156). Analyzing media literacy, the ludic rather than interactivity (Buckingham and Scanlon, 2003: 113) is the underwriting idea. Play, like participating, can focus intrinsically on establishing a success story while being stretched in the more instrumental direction of pursuing an extrinsic goal. Screen media or shopping mall may be enjoyable while also entities enabling potentiality-for-being.

Constructing meaning, authoring audiences are interactive on participatory and promotional websites where social media recruit their consenting and contesting contributors. As in shopping mall marketing, we are involved in the brand building process (Christodoulides, 2009: 141).

> Consumers are free to produce the shared meanings and social relations that the branded good will help create in their life. … The idea on the part of brand management is that what consumers produce by means of the brand will contribute to strengthening the position that the brand occupies in their life-world. Indeed, it is often argued that attainment of the superior dimensions of brand equity is contingent on this interactive element. (Arvidsson, 2005: 245, 248)

On screen media and in shopping malls, as sites of consumers' constructive immersion, brand narratives function as marketing's truncated 'tools' (Banet-Weiser and Lapsansky, 2008; Heidegger, 1962). Content therein is engaged with productively by their 'produser' (Bruns, 2008) audiences, and filled out as storied accounts of equipment enabling our subsequent constructing of identity.

Brand marketing narratives 'provide a context in which consumers enjoy and enact a *kind of agency*' (Banet-Weiser and Lapsansky, 2008: 1254; emphasis in original). Citizen consumers may be persuaded by these promotional stories,

thereby aligning or identifying with their presentations of individuated success. But audiences can also protest, perhaps voicing out, with critical attention displayed behaviourally in alienated self-distancing from the 'space of the brand' (ibid.). Yet it may be, 'marketing adjusts … so that consumer citizenship is incorporated and attached' (ibid.: 1264).

Conclusion: Understanding-in-Practice(s) 'Composing' Meaning in Mall and Media

> Perception 'must be understood as a process of integration in which the text of the external world is not so much copied as composed' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 9).

The goal of this first chapter has been to map out a horizon of understanding (or construct a conceptual framework) drawing upon Heideggerian hermeneutics which will enable an account of diverse topics in social media (not least re-presenting the wide-ranging thoughts of Henry Jenkins!) Such phenomenology is not (as frequently presented from marketing to medical studies) merely the construction of *themes* as a mode of organizing research participant discourse. Instead, it focuses on *time*, on representing how use of entities or equipment (e.g. narratives) as *tools* enables being-with-others. *Media Consumption in Malaysia* presents audience behavioural practice entering and engaging with mall and media stories as an authoring process from 'projection' (Heidegger, 1962) to (dis)identification.[7] We do so implicitly (if not explicitly), assuming an intelligible world.

Phenomenology provides practice theory with an account of us being 'storied' creatures whose fore-structured projections in understanding serve generally as generic ready-to-hand instruments to make sense of experience. Diverse data enriches structured accounts of projecting narrative.

'Heidegger reasoned that human existence is characterized by practical understanding', his readers are assured by Feldman (2000: 54). We visit shopping malls and social media with ready-to-hand or unreflective understanding. People engage therein everyday with often far from explicit – or elliptical – expectations that equipment will easily enable them as visitors – in the absence of much self-monitoring or setting out an account of action – to establish a goal (or equilibrium). Everywhere 'humans are always operating within an horizon of projection and concerns (*Besorgen*); that is, they are absorbed and caught up with things to do and achieve' (Nicolini, 2012: 36).

'More Ways to Be You'! Marketing the mall or social media 'educates' these ready-to-hand expectations with its narrative sketches as easy reference points in our embodied practical engaging: 'Catch Up with Yourself'. Only when there are issues – and in a focus group or interviews – do we assemble a filled out account of activities, or present them at-hand, often to others, as a considered narrative of our understanding and its performance in practical negotiation of our circumstances.

Phenomenology is here arguing for a certain circulation of meaning in shopping mall and social media. Authoring audiences – the immersed visitors (us) frequenting concrete corridors or cyberspace (or both) – engage in embodied perceiving of surroundings from a horizon of generic expectation. We project and (de)posit meaning in a hermeneutic circle of establishing sense in what we see, 'composing' entities which can equip – enable our potentiality for being-with-others.[8]

2 Participatory Practices in Promotional Places

Consumers from Heidegger to Henry Jenkins

With Michael Tiong Hock Bing

> The more I push down on the concept of participation, the more I return to the issue 'participation in what?'
>
> (Henry Jenkins in discussion with
> Nico Carpentier, 2013: 272)

Project: We continue the discussion of malls and media as equipment enabling authoring audiences – their vocal visitors – to activate narrative meaning as people engaged in 'produsage'. An activity is a 'practice' when it is considered as projecting, producing, and participating in a play-like construction of meaning – and hence studied hermeneutically. Global digital marketing promotes participation in shopping mall or social media, supporting consumer clans as they make interpretive investment of meaning and money. In recollecting genres (of mall or media), participants are equipped to project (intend) or plan practices. Through the branded places (place-branding) of shopping mall or social media, involvement for profit is promoted. A political economy of messaging and response can here shape research on proffered (and preferred) modes of being-with-others in such 'great-good-places' – sold as familiar, ready-to-hand, requiring little attention, of transparent merit. These promotional places are in our study presented-at-hand in participants' focused narrative reflection on visiting.

Lived through experience can be illuminated as equipment engaging practice. May a mall or media visitor be said to 'consciously and purposefully guide consumption activities, and narratives perhaps, to suit his or her preferred identity?' (Borgerson, 2005: 441)

——

Underwriting the diversity of audience and consumer research are the distinct philosophical positions of phenomenology and positivism. Representing this basic and binary opposition between conceptions of human knowledge *accurately* is clearly essential to enquiry. In distinguishing itself fundamentally from positivism's presentation of perceiving as passive data-gathering, hermeneutic phenomenology asserts that people have a primarily purposive orientation to their circumstances. The discourse wherein we refer to reality

denotes how objects are characteristically *used* (a 'chair' seats us, a 'table' is an entity upon which we eat) rather than our reception of sensory qualities.

In Chapter One we considered shopping mall and social media visitors as embodied entrants from horizons of pre-understanding these equipped environments as generic, enabling consumers to anticipate and articulate recognizable, hence intelligible accounts. They engage with familiar places.

YouTube, resourced by 'corporate interests and community participants' (Burgess and Green, 2009: 5), enables studies of consumers engaged in the culturally shaped, skilled (if tacit) practice of understanding media. Absorbed/anticipating, projecting meaning from horizons of understanding where narratives are seen as familiar, users pursue a hermeneutic circle of securing coherence, and where successful, these audiences (de)posit sense for the story on screen.

Focus group discussion of (motor)bike branding on YouTube (conducted by the co-author of this chapter) illustrates the ready-to-hand practice of viewing video, presented-at-hand in research. Rendering explicit the previously little reflected upon, people spoke of ability to engage contents.[1] We can see below consumers projecting understanding of phenomena – media branding equipment – aiming at integrating a narrative denoting events enabling modes of being-with-others: audiences negotiate, aligning with – or distancing themselves from – the latter's cultural connotations.

The branding content 'grabs my attention' (male, Chinese); 'for me, it depends on when the advertisement is advertised' (male, Chinese); it is 'catchy' (male, Bidayuh), with 'no need to think hard to understand the message (female, Malay). Even enigmatic equipment (or its indeterminacy) 'arouses my curiosity' (female, Chinese). However, pursuing a hermeneutic circle of understanding in producing coherent narrative is not entirely successful here. 'The theme of playing football with motorbikes is not good and hard to be related together' (male, Chinese, 67). While the bike branding is engaging ('it grabs my attention'), 'parts' are not intelligible; thus 'I wonder what is the meaning of the word at the last part of the advertisement' (male, Indian). 'It's messy' (female, Chinese). Aligned, 'I will identify with the creativity of the advertisement but not with the Indian guy' (female, Chinese). Alienated from another, 'the advertisement doesn't consider the culture of the target audience. I think this is not Malaysian culture … girls wearing bikini' (male, Chinese).

Consumers' Play-like Productive Projection of Narrative in Malls and Media: Participatory Practices in Promotional Places – Viewing Branding Videos on YouTube

Engaging with equipment – instances of a motorcycle branding mini-genre – our consumers:

1. *enter these narratives* from a tacit cultural horizon of understanding content as generic instance

   (i) 'Just a normal advertisement' (male, Chinese);
  (ii) 'Just like a normal advertisement' (male, Malay);
 (iii) 'Not surprising … It is about motorcycle brand' (female, Chinese), recognizing (anticipating and articulating) a practice of profitable aesthetics.

(Yet:

   (i) a narrative 'is too dark' (female, Indian);
  (ii) 'not clear … (it) can't catch my attention' (female, Chinese), both asserting failure to enter or engage with the narrative;
 (iii) 'too many technical changes … moving too fast … the video is not clear enough', I 'don't know what it is trying to portray' (male, Chinese), presenting his difficulty of engaging with a fast moving video.)
         From these consumers' horizons of understanding this branding as generic are (in)formed

2. *embodied or ready-to-hand* (not reflected upon) expectations;
    (Yet a female, Chinese participant is instead 'feeling [a] headache while watching a [video] … because it keeps spinning here and there … the way they shoot the video': subsequently she says of another narrative, 'most importantly, the video is not making me head ache with a very fast scene'.)

3. *expectations or projections* are of narrative – motorbike enabled modes of being-with-others

   (i) A narrative 'meets my expectation' (female, Chinese);
  (ii) 'It met my expectation … brought out clear message' (male, Indian); both signalling recognition of familiar practice;
 (iii) 'It met my expectations. That video is clear … fits the theme … is fast enough … a symbol of motorcycles … fast, cool, agile and stylish' (female, Chinese).

(Yet:

   (i) a narrative is 'out of my (horizon of) expectation' (male, Chinese), indicating distance from generic expectation;
  (ii) a narrative 'says almost nothing about the motorcycle itself' (male, Chinese), noting difficulty in reconciling content he establishes with expectation;
 (iii) 'Actually I don't know whether they advertised the motorcycle or advertised the beach' (female, Chinese), expectation subverted by extraneous content.)

   Consumers integrate recognized narratives in a hermeneutic circle of understanding 'easily', but reflect on or present-at-hand 'stories' for consideration where issues of intelligibility arise.

(i) 'I understand the message of the video easily' (male, Chinese);

(ii) 'It is surprising … really amazing … this is the only video that is really different from others … creative enough … at the end of the advertisement, the male fetched his friend on the skateboard instead of the lady' (male, Indian), integrating the unexpected;

(iii) 'the advertisement mostly use(s) the element of curiosity' (male, Indian), engaging the consumer in resolving enigma through the hermeneutic circle of understanding.

(Yet:

(i) 'I will say that it is about skateboard and motorbike but I cannot put the story together' (male, Chinese), reflecting on his inability to integrate a narrative;

(ii) 'at first … we will think that … all people are attracted by the guy … but at last is all about the motorcycle' (male, Chinese), revisiting initial understanding;

(iii) 'I can't relate anything … the word … the theme "freedom" … with the motorcycle' (female, Chinese), failing to integrate a generic narrative.)

Regarding branding they articulated in a hermeneutic circle of understanding, consumers:

4. *identify with the narrative* (in a 'fusion of horizons' (Gadamer)) thus

(i) 'they are energetic like me' (male, Malay), claiming alignment or identification with characters;

(ii) 'I identify as I desire to ride a bike in a relax(ed) mode' (male, Chinese);

(iii) 'I identify with the video because it was close to my heart … so relaxing … with different scenarios … and it showed the clips of youngsters enjoying life' (female, Indian), asserting immersive identification, her empathy with individuals as 'relaxing'.

5. *incorporating content* (as furthering their 'potentiality-for-being' (Heidegger))

(i) 'I think I will identify with the video because I think it is cool … something that can be done' (female, Chinese), establishing her potential use of a motorbike;

(ii) 'I'm a football or futsal player and when I watch this video, it tells me that [a] motorbike can also be used to play football' (male, Bidayuh), furthering potential action;

(iii) 'Identify … then I relate (the video) with my own personal experience in using the motorcycle' (male, Kenyah), exploring narrative implications for his later experience;

or

6. *initiate distancing of perspective* ('alienation' (Ricoeur)) with

    (i) I do 'not identify, stylish and cool is not the thing that I want … for my age' (female, Chinese, 28), a precise denial of alignment, claiming distanced alienation or dis-identification;

  (ii) 'I think that motorcycle can be only used by urban people … but not for rural people' (male, Kenyah), asserting cultural distance from appropriate equipment for travel;

(iii) 'Bikes and balls should not be together (as conjoined in the branding) … it is a bad theme in my humble opinion' (male, Chinese, 65).

7. *independent insight or indifference*

    (i) 'The video didn't grab my attention … because of the age group, targeted at the younger generation and also not clear, one scene to another is too fast' (male, Chinese, 29), establishing a distance between implied and his generation of actual consumers;

  (ii) 'Nice but nothing special at all … just like other advertisement … not creative enough' (male, Chinese), underlining his independent creative assessment of the elements;

(iii) 'I was expecting a group of teenagers with their motorcycle doing teenager's stuff … met my expectation … did not surprise me … too common' (male, Bidayuh).

Perceiving from cultural perspectives enabling the new to be recognized as embodying the well traversed, some contributors, then, regard this articulation of events as but further formation of familiar formulae. Being aware of generic practice in blogging or branding informs or shapes these consumers' immersive engaging with promotional narrative production and its address to audiences. Stories on social media such as YouTube may indeed be anticipated as enigmatic, so encouraging an audience to engage with a narrative to generate intelligible accounts. In recognizing the prescriptive status of a branding story, consumers anticipate making evaluative responses.

Authoring Audiences Activating Meaning: Engaging Malls and Media Equipment in 'Produsage'

> 'Contemporary media are dispersed into everyday life and culture rather than being isolated to specific screens at specific times' (Hills, 2007: 34).

In this chapter, we explore the parallel practice of understanding incorporated in activity at shopping mall and social media, and consider consumers not least as fans (albeit in some instances, more reluctant than rejoicing in returning to concrete corridors or a celebratory cyberspace). From Facebook

'walls' to finding their way around familiar territory in the mall, in sending messages or shopping, audiences author narrative, stories enabling sense to be secured in surroundings. How do we respond to marketing and media cultures promoting our participation in such places?

Promoted participatory shopping mall and social media function as 'signs and symbols that fans encounter', 'from which they create meaning in the process of reading' (Sandvoss, 2007: 22). Fan 'entities' (Heidegger) or 'objects' (Sandvoss) are multi-generic (thus malls contain multiple types of outlet), enabling audience–consumers to construct converging narratives in their visiting.

Within the horizons of understanding life mapped out by hermeneutics (established in the first chapter), everyday entities from the laptop keyboards enabling social media access to a long corridor in a shopping mall are encountered first and fore-most (a priori) as 'ready-to-hand'.[2] We use them *en passant* to further our ambition without our much monitoring or reflection on activity. The 'touch typist' attends to figures on screen rather than her or his fingers on the keyboard. Here, understanding is 'knowing how' rather than 'knowing that': 'understanding like this is an *ability to do something*, rather than a cognitive grasp of a theme' (Blattner, 2006: 18; emphasis in original).

Everyday entities function as background to our 'foregrounded' ambition. Nonetheless, through using them, we attain our purpose or realize our potentiality-for-being. Only if mistakes occur (failing to find our way, faulty typing) do we reflect or focus on these means-to-an-end, and in doing so regard such equipment as 'present-at-hand', inspecting its difficulties and dimensions. Interpretive awareness now replaces primordial, practical understanding: 'before we are detached, contemplative and theoretical we are involved, concerned and practical' (Stenner, 1998: 61).

In summary of Heideggerian hermeneutics' modelling ubiquitous experience – as consuming authoring audiences we always already understand (or 'fore-understand') familiar or ready-to-hand objects in terms of their characteristic usage – so enabling us to be future-focused people projecting potential *generic* practices. In being aware of entities as types of phenomena, we glance rather than gaze (Verhoeff, 2012). Among fans and others less celebratory of the familiar their perspective is goal-oriented. How do mall and media equipment meet or measure up to our generic expectations allowing their authoring audience visitors to generate narrative meaning?

Enabled by always already being aware – our ready-to-hand awareness – of appropriate mall and media activity, we can draw on this generic background 'practical knowledge' (Atkinson *et al.*, 2003: 32) in our making purchases or sense of a promotional video. Our focus is on securing these results rather than the rules of engaging, on product rather than upon the process of its acquiring or achieving (at least until we fail in reaching our goals, when we analytically attend to procedures).

Throughout these activities our understanding (e.g. of 'being in a second home') is embodied, shaping and shaped by practices. It is 'discursive and corporal [*sic*] at once' (Turner, 1994: 3). As we noted, a respondent remarked in

our current research on media marketing audiences, 'Twitter is more to mobile' (female, Chinese). Or as Hjorth says of social media: 'offline cultural practices and presence' 'inform how online communities perform and interrelate' (2011: 132). Engaging in modes of successive offline/online 'immersion, engagement, distraction and attentiveness' (ibid.: 129), as in switching to Twitter is enabled by carrying with us ready-to-hand awareness of appropriate practice. Yet for visitors recreationally escaping to immerse in mall or social media, the latter's functioning to enable such consumers to enjoy their 'playful, ludic nature' 'involves transporting [them] into a state where [they] are governed by rules other than [their] regular working days' (Mayra, 2008: 49).

Audiences exercise their purposive literacy online, shown in visual (video) or written posting. Authorship is shaped in the play of perceiving over text by a writer's tacit 'pre-understanding' – instantiating stories *ab initio* as types – they anticipate and articulate content from genre recollecting or revising perspectives. Authors present their views from a 'horizon of expectation' (Jauss, 1982; cf. Sandvoss, 2011). They participate as they see appropriate in blogging, chat, or video production.

Exemplifying social media research on this authorial 'produsage' (www.produsage.org), Cogo and Brignol (2011) consider processes of interaction online: they set out in their open access article to establish a 'repositioning of the interactional in reception studies concerning the Internet' (1–2). Emphasizing therein the convergent participatory culture of cyberspace, exhibited in the process of reading/writing social media, they pursue 'the more concrete possibility of approximation between the logics of production and those of recognition or reception' (10). Audience is viewed as author.

Producing narrative online or walking through the mall, we draw on cultural surroundings. In either case, convergent multimedia (e.g. on YouTube or a store's video marketing) enables visitors – from fans to families – to immersively articulate stories from encompassing sights and sounds. Both actual and assumed audiences move connectively around, drawing upon knowledge of participatory and promotional genres to respond, to anticipate and to actualize their accounts (Jenkins, 2006: 3).

'In the world of media convergence, every important story gets told, every brand gets sold, every consumer gets courted across multiple media platforms' (www.henryjenkins.org/2006/06/welcome_to_convergence_culture.html   and Jenkins, 2006: 3). Consumers construct stories – fulfilling multiple modes of concurrent address and would-be alignment. Our ever shifting generic awareness (e.g. of blogs) supports people's engaging with a 'platform' and resulting expectation of narrative events. Through a hermeneutic circle of construction, we articulate anticipation with text. Home pages incorporate hybrid genres enabling readers' – and writers' – multiple anticipation.

Responding to the promotional-participatory authoring of TripAdvisor, Twitter or YouTube, we 'interact with each other according to a new set of rules which none of us fully understands' (www.henryjenkins.org/2006/06/welcome_to_convergence_culture.html). So interacting – enveloped by the

space and time of media or mall – constitutes a 'play of collective meaning-making' (ibid.) in this 'meanings model' (Jenkins, 2006b: 212) of establishing 'collective intelligence' (ibid.: 134). Yet 'Web 2.0 companies have sought to capture and commodify' participation (Jenkins and Carpentier, 2013: 266).

(Re)collecting genre in a 'projection of memories' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 13), nonetheless, audiences negotiate mall and media, establishing accounts in a fusion of interpretive horizons. Such 'sociability' may be assisted by their using 'location-aware mobile media' (e.g. to 'replace the clock as a medium for coordinating meetings in space' (Sutko and Silva, 2010: 809)). Window shopping and web surfing, consumers can engage with corporate and community culture. Yet, visitor apathy, the absent moment in a phenomenology of perception, may end immersed involvement at any time.

Fans of shopping malls or social media are frequent visitors, some 'casual', others 'loyal' in their choice (Booth, 2010: 19) of focus. Informed by their generic awareness of shops or sites, they anticipate recognizing resources and easy alignment – or alienation from – preferred responses.

Yet fan experience, claims Booth (2010), when considered empirically, may prompt 'a change in media studies itself' (12). Does it, for instance, support a thesis of easily achieved goal-directed ludic literacy or participatory articulation of a story's outcome? Looking at forming meaning online, do we see fan texts with their endlessly deferred endings (Hills, 2002: 134) subverting our audience chat about ascertainable narrative conclusions in 'mutually reinforcing spheres of anticipation and speculation' (ibid.: 176)? Clearly the temporal dimension of being a fan differs with gaining Internet access: thus capacity for immediate online response to transmitted program episodes fundamentally shapes the experience. Their ready-to-hand authorial instant interactivity 'differs dramatically from other electronic media in the ability to influence the presentation of content and feedback quickly to sources' (Walther *et al*., 2005: 640). Studies of fandom's focus shed light on social media authoring.

More politically, noting both rejoicing in and resistance to consumption as characterizing their much expressed identities, Hills considers 'fan experience as inherently contradictory: fans are both commodity-completists and they express anti-commercial beliefs or "ideologies"' (2002: 44). Albeit elsewhere alienated, fans appropriate text supporting their ability to identify, with a 'familiarity and security (arising) out of a reading of the object of fandom in which the fan's horizon of expectations is met and blanks are self-reflectively filled by the fan' (Sandvoss, 2005: 159; cf. Iser 1978). Clearly, for fans of shopping malls or social media, 'contradictory' responses are a recognized reality.

Media Marketing – Promoting Productive Participation: Consumer Clans as Communities of Generic Understanding

Malls and media are corridors of power, shaping promotion and audience participation as places of productive consuming. We have noted how malls display media, with mediated malls negotiated in converging Facebook

account, Twitter narrative and YouTube video. So enabled by these multiple cultures of promoted participation, people respond with their patterned narratives of perception. Implicit in audience authoring of added meaning to concrete mall or cyberspace media is an (always, already) fore-structured shared generic understanding as consumer clan (or interpretive community) of these entities, as a condition of making sense to others present. Here, we construct identities, making simultaneous sense of surroundings and ourselves. Elliott and Wattanasuwan argue it is essential to explore the 'implications for marketers of this perspective of the creative consumer searching for identity through consumption' (1998: 2).

In discussing the phenomenon of perceiving, we have observed how Heidegger's work is in fundamental opposition to positivism's subject–object dualism (cf. Proops, 1971). Proops asserts, for instance, that irrespective of our culturally shaped fore-conceptions or our inescapable location on a horizon of cultural understanding, we all perceive (anticipate and attend to) the same 'sense-data', immediately given or 'standing there'. Heidegger writes, ironically: if 'one likes to appeal to what "stands there", then one finds that what "stands there" in the first instance is nothing other than the obvious undiscussed assumption of the person who does the interpreting' (1962: 192/150).

Assisted rather by phenomenology's audience theory, we can turn instead to illustratively consider what 'stands there' in media marketing's reception by an Asian multicultural nation such as Malaysia. Watching one local YouTube video deploying popular culture to brand products, casual consumers initially hear only elements (or words) of a generically recognizable Tamil song. But if thus fore-structured in their *present* understanding, they also (explicitly, implicitly) *project* (expect) to see an Indian singer whose subsequent verse they can constitute. We are future-oriented beings.

Heidegger points out relevantly that in our always anticipating, '*Dasein* is constantly "more" than it factually is' (ibid.: 185/145). Identifying song genres incorporates ready-to-hand expectation, an easily available noting of their likely mode of materializing or realizing being fit for purpose.

We can thereafter derive *interpretive* assertions placing these songs *as* narratives enabling or complementing our probable ability to articulate content to completion – and in so doing furthering both the artefact's and our own identity. Perhaps in recognizing how a song patriotically brands their landscape, Malaysians align agreeably as consumers with its national circulation.

Media, more widely, can be regarded as ready-to-hand for our use in further fore-structured cultural activity. They are genres themselves of practice, mapped from horizons of understanding. Fans, alongside other audiences, engage in their modes of appropriating the fitted out for purpose, putting content in place through a hermeneutic circle of integrating parts with narrative whole.

In remarks relevant both to focus groups and studies structured by questionnaire, we have noted Heidegger warns us that 'our first, last, and constant task is never to allow our fore-having, fore-sight, and fore-conception to be

presented to us by fancies and popular conceptions' (ibid.: 195/153). 'When an assertion is made, some fore-conception is always implied' (ibid.: 199/157). We must look at our 'horizons of intelligibility' (Large, 2008: 57) – how we make sense of audiences.

Marketing and media studies have in recent years asked whether concepts (such as 'audience' or 'user') developed as appropriate to discussing cinema or television continue to be reliable in presently regarding social network media as a core topic for continuing debate. Livingstone, for instance, in this extended exchange of views about meaning and method, makes the case that 'in a context of media diversification, convergence and complexity, the notion of the "audience" only poorly describes people's engagement with today's media and communication environment' (2007a, 2008). In the first volume of the *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, indeed, she earlier advanced the argument that media and cultural audience research had arrived 'at the crossroads' (Livingstone, 1998).

Subsequent discussion as to whether a new vocabulary is necessary for an interactive media and marketing era has considered whether employing existing terminological tools will retain useful insights (both popular and professional) as well as advance scholarly understanding. Two years after the earlier critique of 'audience', Livingstone and Das (2009) conclude that 'in a mediated world shaped by texts, technologies and cultures, processes of interpretation still continue to cluster by *genre*, this providing a way of analyzing patterns of stability or commonality and also openness and diversity across media forms and readings' (emphasis in original). Issues, of course, still remain about the 'flexibility' (Amidon, 2008) of this term to study texts which are refashioned (remediated) across platforms of access, from being objects of cinematic celebration to being marketed as books.

Nonetheless, 'genre' is a plausible core concept in analyzing audience response, not least to media marketing. Denoting forms of consumer fore-understanding intrinsically related to activity, using the term integrates a hermeneutic base with communication and marketing theory. Practice is underwritten by philosophy. 'Genre' is a temporal term. Consumer perceptions classifying program or corporate authoring online (as in Facebook) underwrite the reaction considered appropriate, their contributions as authoring audiences articulating and sometimes appropriating narrative content.

In (at least the present) empirical practice, research participants are not found inevitably to neatly perceive media marketing as exemplifying definitive would-be persuasive generic types such as automobile or telecommunications branding. Instead, they can puzzle eloquently and openly as to appropriate accommodation of narrative. We may denote such a phenomenon as perceiving *generic indeterminacy*, or being uncertain as to a defining hermeneutic home for a particular marketing text. Even classifying a narrative as marketing can be in doubt (e.g. promotional blogging on YouTube).

Reference to generic fore-conceptions marks 'patterns of stability' in classifying marketing. Yet the latter may not easily be achieved. Characterized by

indeterminacy to which contributors can draw attention, online authorship itself may be ambivalent: does this video on the social media site YouTube exemplify passable participatory blogging or poor institutional promotion (branding)?

Moreover, while responding to a media genre is ludic (Silverstone, 1999: 59–60) – as both distracting and goal directed in seeking to accomplish a meaningful narrative artefact – it is *leaky*. In later studies here, that is, their assessing one text as more or less (im)perfectly embodying a genre leads participants to evaluation of later video as instantiating the perceived *desiderata* of that same genre. Nonetheless, despite these complications in the field, 'genre' remains a core conceptual tool.

Recollecting Genre, Anticipating Activity: Perception as Projection Organizing Practice

When assessing studies of media use, Barker argued that 'patterns and processes' (2006: 124) of audience response are an important focus: an emphasis on 'film form that takes into account the mental processes of audiences' is 'commendable' (ibid.: 134). In the first moment of our attending to cinematic or cyberspace screen we *ipso facto* 'build expectations', 'guiding selections' providing the 'resources for conceiving self and the world' (ibid.: 124). However, the audience is not always thus active: it can become absorbed in content, a 'deliberate letting go in the face of desired experiences, which require(s) passivity' (ibid.: 125). In this narrative of consuming media as part inference, part immersion, as perceptual play displaying multiple aspects of audience deliberating and distraction, there is 'no way of separating out the cognitive and the emotional responses' (ibid.: 126). Martin Barker here pre-figures a phenomenology of (media) perception resourced from Martin Heidegger.

Practices and reception theory, or their parenting in hermeneutic phenomenology, we are maintaining, offer a set of concepts appropriate to analyzing consumers as authors of meaning in malls or media. Behaviour is to be presented as a cumulative process wherein whether as today's absorbed readers, writers or visitors, audiences always already are anticipating narrative from type – of mall/media. Entering (epistemologically) from horizons of generic expectation (or remembering and understanding), they actualize coherent content as appropriate, and articulate a story. Narratives are so constructed as aesthetic artefacts with 'preferred readings': authoring audiences align/identify with content or perceive it to be alien/distant. Thus, fans, for instance, relocate between alignment and alienation, their identification and irritation, 'moving fluidly' between experiencing 'proximity and distance' from their subject (Jenkins, 1992: 65), from celebratory to critical analysis.

Such an account of audiences as *ab initio* authoring meaning, we have pointed out, is said in philosophical terms to be *synthetic* a priori. While the claim concerns our embodied experience it is established on the basis of analyzing our talk about ideas – here, our account of conscious *attention*. From

phenomenology's perspective, 'attention' is intentional: it is always awareness *of* an object (the *intentional object*) which we characterize as being of a certain type (or genre). Thus behaviour is *ipso facto* future-focused: tacitly or explicitly we anticipate that its subsequent employment will articulate a particular identity for the 'entity' on which we project meaning. With this narrative goal in mind, we are surprised when our expectation does not eventuate in establishing a coherent 'visit'.

Hermeneutic phenomenology's capacity to provide images of our embodied media consumer response in its spatio-temporal terms offers a set of conceptual tools suited to unpacking materially located social network use of cyberspace narrative (e.g. as audience 'aligning', 'anticipation', a 'circle of understanding', 'distancing', 'fore-structured', a 'fusion' of familiar albeit not frequently regarded conceptual perspectives ('horizons'), 'immersion' and 'projection' of meaning). Both the 'metaphor of mapping' (Gordon, 2007: 885) and 'the metaphor of space' are 'particularly applicable in visual online environments' (Baym, 2010: 76). Given this reflective modelling, much cultural detail, online 'semiotic richness' (Livingstone, 2007b: 19), can be accommodated in media marketing theory.

In phenomenology's model of understanding as projecting meaning, audiences more or less consciously measure assumptions of visit outcome against content 'read' as being present in mall/media: accounts exhibiting different degrees of completion emerge as a function of this practice. Anticipated understanding made actual resolves contradiction between informed expectation and eventuality in a synthesis of interpretation. 'Projecting' content we noted earlier, is initially shaped by consumers' 'fore-structured' (Heidegger, 1985: 221) generic understanding, but it is equally over time resolved in visitor practice, an entering and engaging with screen or shopping. Consumers so relate element or episode to entirety through a 'hermeneutic circle' (Gadamer, 1975: 167) of acting.

An authoring audience's sense-making, from offline presence in malls to online participatory media, can be pursued across a 'fusion of horizons' (ibid.), negotiated by contributors from diverse generic perspectives. When the present author announced at the outset of a *Messenger* conference, that 'I'd like to run this like an online focus group', he doubtless had a different perception of that discursive procedure from the Chinese male respondent who then asked: 'den wat is the topic?' Nonetheless they could proceed along the shared horizon of understanding that there was a 'topic' in a projected 'intersubjective space' (Nocera, 2006) spatio-temporally mirrored in the chat room.

Consumers exercise a ludic (or play-like) literacy online, whether in visual (video) or written contribution. Internet authorship is shaped in the play of our participatory perception over text by our pre-understanding, our *ab initio* identifying content from an ineliminable, genre recollecting, perspective. Authors so aim at actualizing anticipated meaning from such a horizon of expectation, with sense for a story produced by their capacity for interpreting the novel in terms of the known. Their perceiving-producing delivers meaning as video or voice narrative articulated over space-time, from Flickr to Twitter,

establishing a virtual content (dis)playing and replaying participatory selves. Content may indeed be resourced, socially mediated, from a corporate shaped platform.

Within a hermeneutic account of visiting, the categorizing of mall or media (e.g. as 'life-style') to which composed content is perceived by audience–consumers to belong, then, is central. Genre mediates between our immersive engagement with location and expectation of narrative, 'offering interpretative, recognizable and flexible frames of reference' (Lüders *et al.*, 2010: 947).

Promoting Participation for Profit: The Political Economy of Consumer Clans[3]

Mapped out from conceptual horizons delineated by a neo-Heideggerian research method whose theoretical trajectory transcends disciplinary distinctions between both media and marketing studies, perception is a practice-oriented process of viewers 'seeing as' or 'composition'. Not only media studies (Wilson, 1993) but later marketing studies drew on hermeneutic phenomenology en route to understanding audiences and consumers in subsequent research. Thus, Arnold and Fischer (1994), along with Thompson, Pollio and Locander (1994), signalled their significant relying upon such a philosophical resource for core concepts within interpretive marketing consumption theory.[4]

Thompson's 'Interpreting Consumers: A Hermeneutical Framework for Deriving Marketing Insights from the Texts of Consumers' Consumption Stories' (1997) further secured a hermeneutic position within consumer studies. Drawing on such a philosophically buttressed psychology, 'key patterns of meaning' (438) in the 'narrative structuring of cognition and understanding' (Thompson, 1997) can be discerned embedded in focus group participant reactions to screen advertisements.

In this 'hermeneutic/narratological model of understanding' (Thompson, 1997: 440), then, as reading proceeds 'perceptual information is assimilated to preexisting schematic knowledge' (441). Consumers 'pre-understand' or presume being able to construct and confirm a series of consecutive connections between cause and effect on screen to constitute an advertisement. Audiences articulate parts to form a full narrative: thus a 'desire for completeness and closure is a prominent consumer motivation' (444). Reading thereby exercises two functions, a 'chronological function' or 'narrative movement' and a 'holism-creating function' or 'narrative framing' (Thompson, 1997: 443). Seeing a story as meaningful precedes identification with its prescription – or alienation from its advertising.

Phenomenology's story of perceiving as a generically (in)formed and cumulative process can, that is, be heard in marketing theory where accounts of 'consumer agency' (Arvidsson, 2011: 269) as projecting meaning function to underwrite discussions of consumer responses to screen media or even

shopping mall.[5] Here, marketing narratives are would-be persuasive definitions of space, time and events. These stories are 'mapped' (Escalas, 2006: 99) from an audience's horizons of understanding ('existing cognitions' (Foxall *et al.*, 1998: 53) or 'schema' (Solomon *et al.*, 1999: 36)) as instantiating types. Such accounts on screen – often elliptical – can be further articulated or fleshed out by consumers with 'knowledge already stored in memory' (Dibb *et al.*, 2006: 172) as narrative landscapes (e.g. higher education marketing accounts of university campuses undertaking to securely encircle their students with support). Viewers of these promissory media notes align, appropriating narrative to define themselves or grow alienated, analytically critical of their content.

> Using (media) marketing, vendors relate meanings of desire to products to instigate consumption. When consumers acknowledge these meanings and start to interweave them with their own, the process of appropriation has commenced. (Courtois, *et al.*, 2011: 403)

In discussing media use and marketing's developing terminology, I have sought to set this subject's earlier excursion in hermeneutically guided research within a more precise philosophical context, shaping a discursive psychology wherein our consumer *practice* attends to composing text. Audience acts are defined by spatial, temporal and processual aspects or moments. Media users are essentially epistemologically future or goal-oriented in subjective attention: always already engaged in/by their recognizing content, consumers aim at projecting generically shaped meaning from their perceptual horizons. They thus articulate and appropriate or realize alienation from reading/writing.

Audience reactions exemplify the core position of genre in people's horizons of expectation when they watch and make evaluative sense of narrative on screen. Featuring diverse moments of attention, consumer perceptions of text constitute ludic literacy, goal directed, informed and shaped, participatory authoring in their signifying play across the texts of marketing's media statement. For phenomenology, in short, people are looking in perception at a present – enabling potential practice.

Conclusion: Resources Become Us – Enabling Projecting Modes of Being-with-Others in Branded 'Great, Good Places'

Objects are identified fundamentally as enabling (or disabling) means to conscious ends. Their meaning is constituted by such characteristic potential use (fulfilling of intention) which we project when referring to them in discourse. 'Smart phones' are tools enabling our going online.

Screen access involves a primordial or primarily practical orientation. Authoring audiences employ participatory (social) media as ready-to-hand equipment, cultivating identity or potentiality-for-being. Malls, likewise, enable narrative of being-with-others in 'great, good places'. As Booth observes in *Digital Fandom* (2010), consumers are assisted by their narrative 'tools' (40)

to create communal meaning, 'to become alive with community' (39) online – or in shopping malls. Through equipment we establish modes of being-with-others: the 'defining quality of being-in-the-world, its central concept, is *relatedness*' (Palmer *et al.*, 2010: 102; emphasis in original).

One could ask the neo-Popperian (Popper, 1963) question of what might potentially count against – or falsify – phenomenology's claims. For instance, regarding our activating the narratives of social media: what events, were they to occur, would show these arguments to be erroneous? Counter-factually, empirical research (through focus groups, interviews or its discursive dis- coveries online) could reveal the audience's fundamentally *contemplative* interpreting of cyberspace, severed from use. Participant judgement would prioritize seeing sense-data (e.g. colours) or talk about aesthetic beauty. Here, a weight of factual evidence would emerge, finally falsifying phenomenology. But, as Gibson remarked in his *Ecological Approach to Visual Perception* (1979), 'what [a picture] records, registers, or consolidates is information, not sense-data' (280).

Opposing positivism's cultivation of allegedly culturally neutral perceptual facts (empiricist 'sense-data'), phenomenology is practice-oriented. Authoring audiences regard online texts as tools: embodied consumer understanding is inextricably temporal, genre-informed anticipating of activity. So we purchase practices, equipment enabling modes of being-with-others, or in more mar- keting terms, 'tangible output (goods) in the process of service provision' (Vargo and Lusch, 2004: 2).

Hermeneutics' neo-Heideggerian conceptual positioning of our consumers as always already believing their familiar shopping mall or social media to be generically ready-to-hand places people firmly within the shared cultural resources of their life-world or everyday living. Here, 'mind and action are contingent on specific cultural forms' (Potter, 1996). In so locating our being *persons*, phenomenology enables practices theory's analyses of knowledgeable audiences authoring.

Our primordial engaging with participatory promotional mall and social media is, in short – an immersive generically (in)formed projecting of narra- tive (intending of meaning): our considering their entities as equipment is shaped by our practical concern, pursuing potentiality-for-being. Of course, the latter is a contested concept: 'potential' is open to diversity of interpreta- tion. It should be 'clearly situated in the cultural and historical context of (its) production' (Larkin *et al.*, 2011: 322).

Addendum: Phenomenology's Focusing on Familiar Practices: Hermeneutically Understanding Ubiquitous Consuming

In the familiar life-world of our experience, we have seen, Heidegger asserts we understand phenomena, the content of experience, *fundamentally* as 'ready- to-hand' (e.g. as a type of hammer ready to be used in generically appropriate mode teleologically to unreflectively achieve our goal). Hence, 'that which is

ready-to-hand is discovered as such in its service*ability*, its us*ability*, and its detriment*ality*' (Heidegger, 1962: 184/144; emphasis in original). Using this term, he rejects mind–body dualism – Descartes' earlier separation of mind and materiality which implicitly raised the (pseudo-)issue of their connection. We gain purchase on the ready-to-hand in goal-directed practice (Lai *et al.*, 2008). Only subsequently do we think abstractly or theoretically about seeing a world of shapes and sizes.

Heidegger draws a fundamental distinction between 'understanding' (which he considers in practical terms) and 'interpretation' where expressed in propositions. So to 'understand' a familiar entity is being able to manage it, drawing on a tacit ready-to-hand knowledge. Thus understanding,

> does not stand out from the background. And this is the very mode in which it is the essential foundation for everyday circumspective interpretation. In every case this interpretation is grounded in *something we have in advance* – in a *fore-having*. (1962: 191/150; emphasis in original)

In his commentary on Heidegger's *Being and Time*, Blattner puts this 'primordial' or fundamental point concisely: propositional 'representation is derivative of our engaged abilities' (2006: 94).

Drawing upon phenomenology's modelling of participatory culture, theory can accommodate our literacy: thus the latter 'dialectically' adds material detail (e.g. from blogging) to the philosophy of networking. Does the hermeneutic circle of audience understanding (making sense of text from its disparate elements) take a different shape across Facebook and Twitter? Phenomenology here interprets and is in turn illuminated by consumers author(iz)ing social media in negotiating lives.

Heidegger, then, presents people as always already understanding (or 'fore-understanding') the world as related to purpose, in a 'pre-predicative seeing of the ready-to-hand' (1962: 189/149).

> If we look at Things just 'theoretically', we can get along without understanding readiness-to-hand. But when we deal with them by using them and manipulating them, this activity is not a blind one; it has its own kind of sight, by which our manipulation is guided and from which it acquires its specific Thingly character. (ibid.: 98/69)

Phenomena are experienced as ready-to-hand to achieve my 'towards-which' (ibid.: 90/70), for fulfilling my 'own potentiality-for-being'. They are understood as available for action, capable of furthering my embodied engaging as a person (*Dasein*) with my aims. Heidegger emphasizes: '*Understanding is the existential Being of Dasein's own potentiality-for-Being*' (ibid.: 184/144; emphasis in original).

In our fore-structuring understanding of the world, it is ready-to-hand (ibid.:192/151). Seeing familiar types of phenomena instantiated around us, being knowledgeable about their characteristic behaviour, we project their

potential generic use as in the broadest sense, tools. We 'always press (them) forward into possibilities', 'because the understanding has in itself the existential structure which we call "*projection*"' (ibid.: 184–85/145; emphasis in original). Heidegger reiterates this synthetic a priori or empirically essential 'character of understanding as projection' (ibid.: 186/145).

Using the ready-to-hand involves pre-propositional understanding (or an embodied elliptical awareness not structured by statement) which is open nonetheless to its being subsequently fully articulated through *propositional* interpretation. Importantly, Heidegger does not sharply separate 'primordial' human 'understanding' from 'interpreting'. In regard to the first of these phenomena, 'from the fact that words are absent, it may not be concluded that interpretation is absent' (ibid.: 200/157). Thus 'any mere pre-predicative seeing of the ready-to-hand is, in itself, something which already understands and interprets. … we never perceive equipment that is ready-to-hand without already understanding and interpreting it' (ibid.:189/149). Ready-to-hand understanding may be said to be dispositional: where challenged, it can be 'laid out' as propositional interpretive account.

> In interpreting, we do not, so to speak, throw a 'signification' over some naked thing which is present-at-hand, we do not stick a value on it; but when something within-the-world is encountered as such, the thing in question already has an involvement which is disclosed in our understanding of the world, and this involvement is something which gets laid out by the interpretation. (ibid.: 190–91/150)

'All interpretation is grounded on understanding': hence our 'assertion' must be considered a 'derivative form' (ibid.: 195/153–54). Under such evolving circumstances, the ready-to-hand tool becomes that 'about which' (ibid.: 200/158) we form propositions (or posit predicated knowledge) in statements. 'Anything interpreted, as something interpreted, has the "as"-structure as its own' (ibid.: 192/151). Heidegger lays the 'fore-structure of understanding' and 'as-structure of interpretation' side-by-side as implicitly involving the future-oriented 'phenomenon of projection' (ibid.: 192/151).

Setting understanding's' initial 'circumspection' (ibid.: 98/69) out propositionally, then, we are said to engage with the 'as-structure' of interpreting tools. For we begin to speak of the world *as* – it is the 'as which' (Heidegger, 1962) to be appropriated in projecting our 'potentiality-for-being'.

Interpretation is thus 'the working-out of possibilities projected in understanding' (ibid.:188/148): in our doing so, 'the "as-which" can be made to stand out explicitly. The "as" makes up the structure of the explicitness of something that is understood. It constitutes the interpretation' (ibid.: 189/149).

Interpreting unpacks a fore-understanding of phenomena. 'In every case, interpretation is grounded in *something we see in advance – in a fore-sight. … something we grasp in advance – in a fore-conception*' (ibid.: 191/150; emphasis in original).

3 Video Blogging and Branding on YouTube

Interpreting Ready-to-Hand Understanding

> For YouTube, participatory culture is not a gimmick or a sideshow; it is absolutely core business.
>
> (Burgess and Green, 2009: 6)

Project: While I was writing this monograph, a Malaysian general election took place. YouTube became a central resource for accessing political leaders' speeches at *ceramah* (or public meetings). Its social media status is assured, issuing forth a diversity absent in mainstream media (Lim, 2013).

Presenting consumer accounts of their cognitive practices wherein meaning is constructed and reconstructed, this chapter considers multi-ethnic responses to YouTube as a globally circulating exemplar of popular social media where its authoring audiences post participatory video blogging alongside promotional corporate branding. Blogging is seen to be supportive as well as subversive.

In corporate narratives, 'brandscapes', places of product use, are packaged and promoted on screen.[1] Immersion in often eloquently branded YouTube landscapes enables their visiting viewers' practice of *verstehen* (understanding), her or his celebratory and critical construction of marketing narrative: stories about banks and bikes, families, telecommunication and universities. Projecting and positing meaning in social media site and shopping mall is similar in sensory-cognitive shape.

Drawing upon contributions 'voiced out' offline (focus groups) and online (e.g. upon Yahoo! Messenger) by Chinese, Indian, Indigenes as well as Malay, multicultural audiences are seen here to 'speak' alike, actualizing – or analytically reflecting upon – their accepted frameworks of authorship. Narrative succeeds or fails in its engaging and enabling a consumer's expectations, generating and resolving enigma, allowing audiences to articulate a meaningful account, align or become alienated.

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Hermeneutics holds that our everyday 'understanding has an ontological status' (Arnold and Fischer, 1994: 55): that is, our being in the world is fundamentally interpretive. Thus we experience screen media and shopping mall as instantiating known phenomena, enabling our absorbed selves to simultaneously exercise narrative creativity. To reiterate the argument advanced in

this monograph: phenomenology's claim challenges the positivist paradigm wherein all see the same ('sense-data').

Consumers, in short, produce their authorly narratives in shopping mall or social media as a practice enabled by ready-to-hand equipment engaged within a horizon of familiar understanding – through projection in behaviour incorporating a hermeneutic circle of establishing intelligibility. Our visiting – 'voiced out' or otherwise – expects and exercises making sense or intended meaning.

A narrative enables audiences to not only generate meaning but potentiality-for-being – that is, accounts of identity, often as being-with-others (or perhaps of dis-enabling equipment). As with stories everywhere, social media or shopping visits not infrequently end on a point of achievement, an equilibrium resolving a disequilibrium or absence denoted in the account. Since these narratives articulate consumer understanding of familiar entities, they are often produced in this context with little consideration of this meaning generating activity, or are *ready-to-hand*. Only subsequent to mistakes (or in focus groups) do they become consciously *presented-at-hand*.

In ready-to-hand *understanding* of media narrative, audiences authoring meaning focus on product rather than process. So achieving a story's potentiality-for-being, their concern, is practical. Analysis (e.g. of a disparity between expectation and eventual content) is elliptical or minimal. In a later focus group or interview, however, their monitoring of earlier authorial activity is presented-at-hand or *interpreted* as reflection in accounts relating informed anticipation to articulation of story.

The Practice of Focus Groups: Reflecting on Ready-to-Hand Understanding

Consumers engage with branded space, time, and products therein, articulating in behaviour (from talking to walking) their understanding of digital marketing or downtown malls. What media (in)formed or materially shaped mode of audience address is appropriate to everyday participants?

Are these visitors' responses reasonably rendered by positivists – separating evaluation from fact – as affirming or negative *attitudes* to media promoted product or people? Using this conceptual formula, they assert, beliefs and branding can be conjoined as variable effect and causal event. Here rather than speaking of 'attitudes' to facts we nominate the practice of evaluative understanding.

Authoring audiences, we are arguing, construct mall and media narratives while visiting in the ready-to-hand, minimally monitored behavioural practice of understanding. Discussion unpacks that process, reflecting upon people's core activity of assembling accounts, intending or projecting meaning from their horizons of understanding entities as sources of generic narrative: sighting a supermarket can suggest many subsequent stories. Explicitly – or implicit in consumer behaviour – audiences anticipate making sense of events

in shopping or on screen. Thus, past, present and future 'understanding is conceived of as our very mode of being in the world' (Freeman, 2007: 927).

Drawing upon consumer responses to YouTube video blogging and branding (not least where the generic distinction is uncertain), this chapter reviews present-at-hand projection and positioning meaning in focus groups. In a hermeneutic circle of understanding their accounts, author-audiences achieve a coherent co-ordination of anticipation and actualizing event on screen. Their discourse of reflecting upon unsuccessful syntheses is also discussed. Marketing narratives are considered to be prescriptive: we examine consumer alignment or alienation from blogging and branding evaluation.

Telecommunication Global Branding and Local Blogging: Presenting Generic Practices in Consumer Understanding

To illustrate in analytic detail applying hermeneutic phenomenology (or this philosophical analysis of understanding) to consumer accounts of their perceptual practices with screen media, we consider how this framework guided two student research projects at University Malaysia Sarawak. In the focused narratives which resulted, South East Asian citizens of differing class and gender, as well as ethnicity, 'story themselves' (Newholm and Hopkinson, 2009: 457). Enunciating behaviour, they speak of their perceptual immersion in converging worlds of media marketing.

> It is the researcher's task, then, to understand the various interpretive strategies people use (e.g. drawing upon their knowledge of the media marketing genre) and to show the extent and ideological foundation of these strategies (such as their positioning of self at a class or ethnic distance from branding) within our society. (Ringberg, 1999)

To discuss a discursive psychology of ready-to-hand understanding in our research practice, then, we turn to the UNIMAS projects which considered responses to a telecommunications branding video. The corporate authors of these narratives are Maxis (a national provider) and Digi (being the local presence of transnational Telenor). Project authors agreed to this deployment of their findings and to using their first names (Boey, Doris) in referring to their writing on (anonymous) responses.

Analyzing research contributor narrative below yields perceptual practices of understanding structured by realizing or rejecting informed projection of story lines. Consumers' own generically shaped articulation of meaning is found to be shared, with their accounts underwriting alignment or alienating of self from narrative agent when these audiences engage with YouTube media marketing. Supporting identification, mediating point-of-view sequences enable looking between a subject on screen (e.g. 'smiling in joy') and implied spectator to converge. Exploring here empathetic 'deeper meanings' (Grant, 2005: 609), we find that audience understanding is represented as

embodied in a practice signalled as significantly sensory, even sensuous (e.g. 'the video gives me a warm feeling').

Consuming YouTube Media I

Boey's media dissertation on the Malaysian national telecommunications provider Maxis considers twelve responses to the marketing video *Maxis Friends and Family* (YouTube: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=cgK2-k2zUy4). Six are discussed by her in detail. This Chinese student summarizes the three stories which in sequence (as a series of tales each teleologically driving towards its own happy conclusion in handphone use) constitute the marketing narrative:

> The video showed the importance of connection between families which [exemplified] the theme of 'Because family is everything'. The husband shared the happiness of having a new car with his wife through SMS, which was the theme of 'Because you can't wait to share'. The father who needed to work at night but still kept his promise, which was telling [a] bedtime story to his son through the video call … was the theme of 'Because you want to keep your promise'. The daughter in the city contacted her mother in the village through voice call, although they were far apart [exemplified] the theme of 'Because distance should get you closer'.

The four statements of narrative theme underwriting their associated video sequence take the form of answers ('Because family is everything', etc.) assuming a meaning constructing audience of potential purchasers constituted by familial role-occupying, moral albeit materialistic, questioning consumers. People watching this video are further positioned by a series of point-of-view shots, by a narrative camera which aligns audience members with happy husband and faithful father. The emotional 'warmth' claimed by some viewers to be their experience in engaging with the stories on screen suggests a high level of involvement enabled by transparent or unnoticed video editing.

Boey's telco consumers are Chinese (4), Indian (4) and Malay (4): they work in private (5) and public sectors (3) and include four students. Located in Kuala Lumpur, Penang as well as Kota Samarahan (the UNIMAS campus), they are equally divided in terms of gender: approximately half were below the age of 30 and half above. Most participants completed secondary school education. After they had seen the video, the focus group interaction was loosely structured by questions about their involvement and identification with its content as well as the relationship between expectation and events they see. Subsequent discussion occurred around (dis)satisfaction with Maxis service.

Considering this audience discourse from a disciplinary perspective recognizing the multiple moments of behavioural activity in the practice of understanding is productive. For we are enabled to interpret people's particular perceptual processes in their responding to the video on YouTube. Such

abstract analysis is, in turn, enriched by participants voicing out, presenting-at-hand *their* narrative. As noted, responses are in terms not simply cognitive but corporeal (e.g. 'warm feeling'), signifying perhaps consumers in the process of establishing not only their understanding of screen stories but a relationship to this provider of digital contacts as metaphorical brand personality (Avis *et al.*, 2012).

Audience Anticipatory Absorption in Narrative

Celebrating enthusiastic engaging and her aligning with this media marketing's persuasive narrative, a female Chinese respondent announced: 'The video gives me a warm feeling and makes me appreciate the people around me'. Likewise, a Malay male consumer concluded on a specifically familial note: 'It gave me a feeling of warm, family caring and love'. But for a more dispassionate male Malay contributor, the video was ordinary, a set of stories merely substantiating his projection of likely marketing content: 'The video meets my expectation but nothing is surprising (to) me because it (is) just introducing the family plans'. Expectation satisfied and emotion can be separate.

Absorption in content is informed or shaped by anticipation of storied developments. We view from a knowledgeable (often genre-informed) horizon of expectation, which may be limited by the information with which we are provided at the outset or which we subsequently reshape in the light of unfolding events on screen. A female Indian participant experiences the first:

> Normally the handphone telecommunication service video will have many logos or icons such as the Yellow Man in Digi video, but I can't find any Maxis logo or icon during the video except the last part so at first I can't expect that it is a Maxis video.

On the other hand, engaging with narrative of a 'middle-aged man showing his car key to his wife (it's like flaunting his new car to his wife)', a male Chinese contributor, we noted earlier, projected probable 'car-sale' marketing on screen. So the video's subsequent stories about 'people conversing through mobile phones' he found 'really surprising'. Producing an integrated narrative in a hermeneutic circle of understanding he refreshed his initial 'reading' of automobile advertising.

Genres can be described or identified by referring to their iconic signifiers (e.g. US Western films characteristically feature gun-toting cowboys). A male Indian participant, noting this media narrative's meaning-bearing icons (prolific phones), accurately allocated its constituent tales to their generic marketing type: they substantiated his semantic projection of likely story lines.

> Well, there are many handphones in the video so I had already expected that it is a video about handphone telecommunications service. It does meet my expectation.

Articulation and Alignment: Cultural Proximity of Content to Consumers

Unlike some focus group participants viewing the Digi telecommunications branding video which we consider below, respondents in these Maxis interviews were able to articulate its media marketing as a narrative or series of stories without difficulty. A male Malay succinctly summarizes his understanding: 'I can understand what the video wanted to express, it's about family'. 'For what I can recall, I remembered the chef who was smiling in joy when he was having (a) video call with his son; mother and daughter conversing through mobile phones' (male, Chinese).

   Digi is a transnational provider of telecommunications owned by the Norwegian company Telenor, while Maxis is Malaysian. Consequently, it was not surprising that Boey's local viewers found the latter's familial focus in marketing to be culturally close. Characterized by verisimilitude to the extended life-world with which a female Indian daily engaged, 'it look(s) like what we see and what we do every day'. Her identification with event on screen is shared both across genders and by interviewees belonging to other Malaysian ethnic groups. 'The video manages to reflect the real life relationships among families' (male, Chinese). 'I also always contact my family' (male, Malay). Two female Malays can concur. 'I also always call my mum who stays at the hometown to share my daily experiences with her'. 'I think the video is "culturally close" especially the daughter call(s) her mother and father communicate(s) with his son, it (is) just the same with what I did'.

Aligned Appropriation and Alienated Analysis

The Maxis video celebrated the Malaysian family in its diverse locations of domesticity, dutiful work, and dispersed in *kampung* (countryside) and city: 'family is everything'. Easily aligning himself (identifying) with Maxis prescriptive narrative, appropriating its 'message' to guide and enhance his life, a male Indian concludes: 'this video tells me the importance of family. So, we must appreciate our family and always keep contact with them no matter where we are'.

   A male Chinese interviewee emphasizes this media marketing's successful connecting of family and phoning. For had he not been already a Maxis subscriber, it 'would convince me to sign up for (the) mobile package due to its successful emphasis of (the) importance of (the) relationship among families'. But being absorbed in another telecommunication company's family and friends connections can distance interviewees from acceding to Maxis narratives, appropriating branding.

   So a male Malay Digi telco user who 'can also contact my family through Digi services' 'refuse(s) to change because I (am too) lazy to tell all my family and friends'. Likewise, a male Indian Celcom (national Malaysian telco) user notes the similarity of Maxis services on offer and he concludes: 'all my family and friends (know) my number', 'I'm (too) lazy to change (to) a

new number'. Encouraging consumers to remember their relationships with family and friends is clearly of ambiguous value in marketing the purchase of telecommunications packages.

Nonetheless, another male Indian marks an ethnic distance from content. Alienated, he departs from his counterpart's positioning the media marketing narrative as one characterized by cultural proximity: 'I don't think the video is "culturally close" as all the characters are Malay'.

Consuming YouTube Media II

Doris's dissertation (a second Chinese project) on the global Norwegian telecommunications company Telenor operating internationally in Malaysia as Digi extensively considers responses of three student focus groups (each with four persons) to video presenting campus marketing to youth: 'We were ONE with our Customers'. *Digi Campus* is an elliptical narrative showing the selling of mobile phone connections to students (www.youtube.com/watch?v=JjUhLcQQDQY&NR=1). However, its authorship and hence generic status is ambiguous. Is this visual text a promotional branding narrative originating from the company's marketing services or is it simply a personal blogging video about a promotional event assembled by energetic, but individual entrepreneur(s)? Hence, fore-structured anticipating and articulating of meaning become an issue in discussion.

> I don't understand what the message the video wants to convey (is) *lah*, because it just show(s) some road show and they also just show some service counter and how they sell the … *Digi Campus* to campus students. (female, Chinese)

In Doris's consumer study, the majority of her University Malaysia Sarawak respondents are Chinese (8): the others are Malay (3) and there is one Indian contributor. Participants include more females (7) than males. All of her research respondents are in their mid- to late twenties.

After people had seen the video, as in the Maxis research, discussion took place around the topic of viewer absorption in content and anticipation of events on screen, together with whether generic expectations eventuated. These focus groups also considered whether members aligned or identified with the *Digi Campus* view of life or were alienated and wished to distance themselves. Such topics seemed easily debated, prompting eloquent discursive responses among participants.

Recognizing Generic Membership: Issues in Generating Audience Immersion and Identification

While for one female Chinese viewer the video was clearly immensely immersive ('I think I immerse with the video because I feel like I want to

dance'), a male Chinese participant saw it as 'quite boring and I cannot understand it'. The issue of how to classify and hence comprehend this elliptical narrative became central. How could it be 'framed' as a familiar type of story? What was an appropriate horizon of generic understanding from which to view this screened selling?

For some participants, *Digi Campus* could not be easily accommodated in the genre of marketing narrative: it did not conform to the anticipated advertising curve of cultivating potential consumers. A female Chinese student spoke of her uncertainty about identifying its type: 'just now, the ad[vertisement] you show [was] more like a slide show than commercial ad[vertising]'. In a similar vein, for a male Malay, 'that is more like … like slide shows'. In drawing authorially upon music as well as 'elements from the pictures, in term[s] of the information', narrative 'mix[es] the idea' (male, Indian) of campus telecommunications company promotion as a video compilation.

Digi Campus 'clearly shows' on screen who are the 'target customers' (male Indian). But when considered as characteristic marketing, the 'element' of persuasion was noted as being absent from this narrative. For it 'lack[s]' the 'element of the commercial advertisement. It didn't state the benefits' (male, Chinese). The 'video is just showing the activities that they are doing. […] but not trying to persuade people to buy' (female, Chinese). Nonetheless, 'although it's not a commercial advertisement' it was possible for her to identify or align with events as culturally close, as 'just like our university life' (female, Chinese): it 'shows our culture', '*Digi* is like […] close to the people'. This video on campus telecommunication promotion, 'sells around with cultures' (male, Indian).

Global Bank Branding and Local Blogging: Engaging with Consumer Expectations

In the second part of this chapter using YouTube as a focus for our hermeneutics of social media visitor *verstehen*, communications and media graduates respond themselves to online video. From the first, it must be pointed out, these contributors were never students of the present author.

Branding research, when guided by practices theory, operates with a focus on consumer skill and cultural knowledge. Heidegger's phenomenology, we have seen, holds that we understand everyday 'entities' as 'equipment', from which we anticipate characteristic (or generic) behaviour in their use, enabling our 'potentiality-for-being'. This practical orientation to circumstances is a priori, a first and foremost conceptual underwriting of secondary accounts (e.g. scientific, 'sense-data' description or theory). Such a narrative of seeing is thus held to display our core or fundamental categorizing of experience. In this way, expectation of product potential can be said to be always already informing our lives – a worldview which should surely be at the heart of marketing's theory and practice.

Yet in much branding theory (such as Thompson, 1991, 1997) – concerned with a symbolic construction of objects as entities purporting to enhance human life – its epistemological grounding in phenomenology makes no reference to the latter's emphasizing that our 'primordial' (Heidegger) or primary view of the material world is as *equipment* enabling potentiality for being-with-others.

To retrieve the wider relevance of Heidegger's phenomenology of storied understanding (or hermeneutics) as 'projection' and practice for qualitative research, we shall now discuss a project on Malaysian audience–consumer reception of local and transnational narrative bank branding (video on You-Tube) as 'equipment'. How is the latter seen as engaging persuasively (or otherwise) with audience generic expectation? How does aesthetic strategy enable consumer attention to content?

In this epistemology (or theory of knowledge), the 'multiple frames of reference consumers use to make sense' of media marketing are not 'wide-ranging' 'ideals', 'views' or even 'aesthetic standards' (Hirschman and Thompson, 1997: 43). Rather, consumers engage with texts enabled by fundamentally generic horizons of understanding, or 'knowledge' about 'genres' (ibid.). From this vantage point (fore-understanding video texts as familiar entities), audiences recognize branding or blogging, for instance, as likely in characteristic ways to support their practice of comprehension. Such genres can be read as edited equipment structured to enable assumed audience understanding.

Perception in Audience Practices: Projecting Narrative as Equipping

Absorbed audiences, we claim, here employing Heidegger's phenomenology empirically, articulate branding and blogging narrative. Consumers subsequently align with – or see themselves as alienated (distant) from – these genres' prescriptive discourse and so model behaviour accordingly (Morgan *et al.*, 2009: 136). Necessarily, this conceptual inquiry considers relatively few respondents.

Essentially informed, our being producers of meaning is shaped by the cultural horizons of understanding from which we commence in recognizing types of phenomena, constructing 'cultural patterns of engagement with the various media at (our) disposal' (Block, 2013: 275). We engage in immersed 'interiorization' of narrative we so produce, drawing upon memory to determine content heard and seen on screen (Groening, 2010). This epistemological focusing is here unpacked.

Audiences anticipate: in phenomenology's terms, they project and (de)posit meaning on a screen. Advertising narrative, in turn, recruits this practice of reception, responding appropriately to assumed audiences. The present research which recapitulates seven stages in consumer engaging with media branding registers a negotiation, emphasizing an audience's interactive immersion

on screen which is simultaneously their informed inferring or expectation of culturally suited content.

Phenomenology's practices theory (in brief summary here) presents/ presences consumers articulating consistency: they aim at narrative meaning, that is, via a 'to-and-fro' hermeneutic circle of integrating their understanding. Instead of viewers passively 'positioned' by a powerful screen, phenomenology asserts their actively aligning with narrative agents. 'Consumers use this symbolic language of signs to carefully communicate who they are' (Schembri *et al.*, 2010: 625–26). Finally, informing more critical marketing theory, Ricoeur's hermeneutics (1981a) sees producer audiences as discovering critical distance, consumers engaged in alienated aesthetic analysis of advertising.

From the analytical perspective of phenomenology's media marketing reception theory, consumers (who from time to time become a critical citizenry) construct or interpret advertising narratives drawing on their wider cultural awareness. Consenting audiences enter often branded space and time. Their tacit practices of consumer cognitive response whether reading or writing marketing meaning (e.g. in anti-branding social media), then, can be analytically unpacked and discussed as seven 'moments' (a phenomenological term), aspects, or stages of perceiving text.

Importantly, these moments in audience interpretative awareness need not be consecutive. For instance, absorbed anticipating of meaning is a simultaneous conjoining of textual immersion and informed inferring of likely content. Likewise, media branding which culturally 'connects' (a word often appearing in focus groups) to intended consumers enables the latter's easy immersive recognizing of familiarity and hence engaging in establishing expectations of events on screen.

Audiences, in understanding, co-construct content on screen: consumers are (in)formed and infer from pre-existing cultural capital the likely narratives of (bank) branding which they continue to completion. The activity of visiting a social media site is initiated by an anticipatory absorption.

Setting out from a horizon of understanding, audiences engage in practice-constituting actions:

(i) *absorption or immersion* – perceptually productive awareness is nonetheless characterized by a 'moment' of passivity, an aspect of audience practice noted in comments such as: the video 'grabs my attention' (male, Chinese), or is 'catchy' (male, Bidayuh); immersion initiates understanding;

(ii) *anticipation or inference* – initiating insight into content from their horizon of understanding, informed immersing consumers implicitly infer its probable development as generic instance (perceiving is culturally formed and future-oriented: there are no independent 'sense-data');

(iii) *articulation or integration* – completing projections in a hermeneutic circle of understanding, audiences sustain the core 'pre-structure of understanding as temporal, as an event' (Gadamer and Grondin,

2006: 89): theory focuses upon their securing coherence or resolving contradiction;

(iv) *alignment or identification* – enabled by perceived cultural proximity, consumers align with a branding scenario's narrative agents or personae embodying persuasion (cf. Hung *et al.*, 2007): here phenomenology can refer to screen support for identification (e.g. point-of-view camera sequences);

(v) *appropriation or inflection* – consumers appropriate (Gadamer, 1975) product branding to inform conceptions of their identity: inflecting marketing narrative towards our own story takes an opposite direction to identification with screen personae: appropriation is conscious and culturally shaped;

(vi) *alienation or disidentification* – displaying an alternative response to alignment, in signalling indifference or irritation, audience–consumers can distance themselves from perceived content, interpreting this reaction as 'active' alienation mobilizes phenomenology's reading of this concept;

(vii) finally, active alienation is customarily demonstrated by participatory consumer *analysis* (or their pursuit of *critical insight*) focused on media form (e.g. editing) as well as content, a moment of reflection separating self from screen we consider as 'depth hermeneutics' (Ricoeur, 1981b).

In audience readings, media marketing of product use (branding on screen) is articulated and appropriated – or found to be alienating – from a cultural framing (or a horizon) of its interpretation familiar to consumers. Thus 'development of identity' is an 'interpretive task, whereby the self is constructed … by the complementary processes of distanciation and appropriation' (Bradbury and Miller, 2010: 688). A Western brand narrative marketing telecommunications was found 'a bit offensive, it breaks the (Chinese) tradition', asserted a respondent in this author's earlier research.

The meaning of media consumption is negotiated, actively formed from the horizon of its generic understanding rather than passively resulting from events on screen. In short, its consumers are not caused to concur with marketing's powerful prescribed purchasing. *Pace* structuralism!

Instead, industry branding marshals narrative indeterminacy. Consumers may be 'invited to complete the product (meaning) themselves' (Arvidsson, 2006: 29) in terms of their prior access to already known and familiar frameworks of available interpretation (such as genre). Branding's textual enigmas imply authoring audiences are active in achieving a coherent narrative on screen. Likewise, indeterminacy of meaning enables consumers who project narrative from their varying horizons of understanding to construct multiple polysemic interpretations (Puntoni *et al.*, 2010).

Practices theory's researchers 'take seriously the discursive level' (Sitz, 2008: 178). Far from structuralism's causal determinism of response, they cite participant reasons for value-laden beliefs, with the latter featuring cultural

construction of 'entities'. 'People do not construct neutral versions of attitudinal objects (e.g. a store) and then evaluate them. They assemble versions of the object which display evaluations. Factual and evaluative features are inextricably linked' (ibid.: 186).

Identification can involve a consumer closely aligning with narrative agents in constructing meaning on screen. On the other hand, audience alienation signifies taking up a distanced position from perceptions of marketing's preferred sense. In doing so, as in the contributions which follow, consumers may signal assumptions about generically appropriate presentations of branding content.

Deliberately 'breaching (audience) expectations' – or undermining unreflective projection of narrative content and hence established practices of meaning construction – can lead to a consumer engaging in distanced reflecting on aesthetic practice (Eckhardt and Bengtsson, 2010: 36). The anti-bank video blogging we discuss below prompts particularly considered presented-at-hand comments. Audiences may refer to or reach ('articulate') their cultural horizons of understanding everyday life: 'breaching [consumer] expectations' is suggested as a research technique resulting in participants being able to 'articulate underlying meaning systems' (ibid.: 36), 'motivating them to try understanding and articulating why the incongruous images and behavior are taking place' – 'they often can elaborate on patterns of behavior they would otherwise take for granted, and thus this method provides a way to capture people's underlying meaning systems that otherwise would not be articulated' (ibid.: 39).

In hermeneutical marketing research, then, analysis of audience practices accounts for the process whereby through their embodied 'deeds of consumption' (Pace, 2008: 213), consumers manifest understanding and appropriation of (or alienation from) equipment, its promotional stories on screen. A focus group respondent below, for instance, indicates difficulty in appropriating online banking as an aspect of his lifestyle: here, he evokes distance, countering the bank's 'connecting'. The bank branding itself, on the other hand, strives to connect with (assumed) audience concerns, presenting as ready-to-hand ('we have strived to fulfill your needs' (BSN)) in cultivating customer potentiality-for-being: 'follow what your heart tells you' (HSBC). Alignment uttered is emphatic.

Branding and Blogging about Ready-to-Hand Banks: Consumer Reflections on Generic Generation of Meaning

A short but systematically analytical story of three banks, blogging, branding and consumer research at the University of Science Malaysia will function for us as further exemplar of practices theory's perspective on media equipped audience understanding. Over a weekend, two focus groups (with four participants in each) of postgraduate volunteer participants were facilitated by a

Chinese Malaysian academic at the Pusat Pengajian Kommunikasi (Centre for Communication Studies).

Respondents viewed (several times) and discussed three bank branding videos (of which one could be more correctly categorized as belonging to anti-branding blogging), supported by the local group convener. As university graduates employed in communication industries, their authoring of meaning mirrored the amateur/professionally authoritative production of video they were shown. I reiterate that none of these participants were ever taught by the present writer nor were they cognizant of practices theory.

Our embodied looking at these videos varied in its locating: using university spaces for the two focus groups to meet, participants in the first occupied rows of seats, and in the second, sat in a circle. The focus group discussion shared the interactive dynamic of the Malaysian nation's multi-ethnic population. In a politically nuanced epistemological contribution on YouTube video editing, for instance, responding to one Chinese female contributor dismissing a narrative as 'too dramatic', a Malay Bumiputra constructs himself in a self-empowering discourse (Tsai, 2011) as appreciating such 'artistic style' in screen branding. Here, in polysemic perspectives, participant commercial and cultural discourses compete to refuse or allocate high aesthetic status to a YouTube video text.

The brief cinematic video texts were chosen not only for public availability on YouTube but in the case of the vividly anti-branding bank narrative, as celebrating on that Internet platform a certain 'egalitarian facilitation of expression' (Gillespie, 2010: 352). Exemplifying the Malaysian genre of corporate social responsibility video, where much marketing is mixed with constructions of multicultural nationhood, they are characterized by an aesthetically significant narrative texture (e.g. with point-of-view camera sequences) deserving consideration in the terms of screen theory.

Two of the video authoring Asian banks (Bank Simpanan Nasional (National Savings Bank) and Public Bank) are Malaysian, the third is international with a local Malaysian presence (HSBC Bank Malaysia). Audience address is in English, except for the HSBC branding narrative whose characters speak in Cantonese with English subtitles. BSN was established to encourage savings. Set up in 1974, it took over the functions of the Post Office Savings Bank and identifies itself as a community bank that reaches out to those in small towns and rural areas. Public Bank is Malaysia's third largest bank and has a reputation for prudent management. In 2010, the bank won an award for the best domestic bank as well as best managed company in Malaysia. HSBC Bank Malaysia is a locally incorporated foreign bank, a wholly owned subsidiary of the HSBC Group. In 2010 HSBC Bank Malaysia won the award for the best foreign bank in Malaysia.

These three distinct branding videos were considered likely to support vigorous discussion. As noted, contributors had not encountered the practices theory presented in this book. Female and male, Chinese, Indian or Malay, they were invited to participate by the local facilitator on the basis that

varying perspectives could emerge from gendered ethnic difference. Indeed, such a 'purposive sampling' should provide a range of responses putting to empirical test phenomenology's synthetic a priori claim that there is a culturally invariable immanent core practice occurring where audiences author meaning. As is widespread in Malaysia, all are articulate in English with Chinese and Indian contributors likely to be trilingual (e.g. a participant commented on HSBC's use of Cantonese).

Discussion was flexibly organized around a few questions in English by the Chinese focus group convener after a video was shown several times. 'When you watch this video, how do you feel?' 'Do you feel you can *relate* to the video?' (emphasis in original). These prompts to promote discussion did not presuppose the anticipatory fore-understanding postulated in phenomenology. Nonetheless, consumer responses (below) constructed blogging and branding narrative along with their featured banks as generic equipment (dis)enabling potentiality-for-being. So, 'everywhere [BSN] can help you in many ways' (female, Chinese). 'I don't feel safe using it' (female, Malay).

Each focus group lasted 30 to 40 minutes. Recordings were then listened to repeatedly without transcription (Hammersley, 2010) prior to analysis. Drawing upon hermeneutics, as argued above, enabled participant responses to be considered within a framework of understanding which can be widely applied across all audience constructions of screen content, allowing a 'voicing out' of narrative which is silent in quantitative research to be heard. Likewise, employing interpretive concepts (such as 'appropriation' and 'alienation') permits a consumer-citizen absorption in – and analytical self-positioning or assertion of resistance to – branding narrative to be placed on record.

BSN: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Luy9RaitM3o

Summary: Bank Simpanan Nasional TVC Corporate branding is featured on screen, focusing on generations and communities of users, 'In the hearts of our children, life's a dream, waiting to be fulfilled. In the hearts of our business community, lies the need for reliability. In the hearts of our elderly, lies a hope for better facilities. In the hearts of those who are far away, lies the need for easy access. Since the beginning, we have strived to fulfil your needs. … No matter where you are or what you do, at BSN, you're at the heart of all we do. BSN: Your Community Bank'.

HSBC: www.youtube.com/watch?v=pVnHHieR-DM&nr=1

Summary: this 'HSBC Commercial: A Malaysian Advertisement' emphasizes the bank's hermeneutic capacity to understand customers, illustrated in a brief but resolved narrative of father–daughter conflict over the latter's vocation, not to become doctor but artist: 'No matter what happens, just follow what your heart tells you. … By understanding what is important to us, we understand our customers better. Invest with HSBC. HSBC The world's local

bank'. As in other global marketing, HSBC may be addressing the 'worst excesses of EurAmerico-centrism' (Morley, 2007: 135). Or it is 'shaping' 'one culture to suit the ends of another' – cultural imperialism (Sherry, 1987: 185).

Public Bank: www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJLz1fEgxj4

Summary: video images accompany and illustrate (or subvert) the Malaysian Public Bank corporate song narrative – A Dream Was Born: '1966 The year of history, a dream was born, a story told, today the reality. … United we work together, this is our philosophy. Corporate mission of Public Bank, our social responsibility, to serve this nation with our hearts, this country that we dearly love'. Here, image sequences of opposition politicians, scantily dressed women, and visuals undermining text (e.g. a picture of a sleeping politician bearing the tag line, 'Malaysian Boleh!' (Malaysia can do it!)) conflict with customary conservative bank branding. Far from an integrated compilation, its 'leaky boundaries' (O'Donohoe, 1997: 246) do little to promote corporate stability. More of a 'mashup' or 'everyday bricolage' (Simonsen, 2013: 47), this narrative can thus be more accurately classified as belonging to the genre of anti-branding video blogging or social comment (Antony and Thomas, 2010), hence appropriately hosted by a purportedly 'egalitarian' YouTube participatory website.

   We now explore audience practices in responding to these instances of blogging/branding genres.

Advertising's 'Enriched Perception of Economic Actors': Analyzing Audience Perceptions of Enabling Equipment[2]

'Identification' is a hermeneutic concept: it can be defined by referring to Ricoeur's concept of separation in space and time underwriting cultural distance. As in the case of Bank Simpanan branding, marketing seeking consumer identification moves towards overcoming such distance from audience horizons of understanding and, where successful, aligning intended consumers to appropriate a brand for use within their life-worlds. In phenomenology's framing, the viewer's reinserting a perceived distance between authorial and audience cultural horizons of understanding is not determined by the screen's positioning the latter, but is an audience's critical achievement.

   HSBC may present itself as the world's ready-to-hand bank. But the research here suggests a failure in connection, as regards both our local audiences producing coherent (or connected) brand narrative meaning and (more fundamentally) branding establishing cultural proximity to consumers. In the second group (see below), participants distinguished themselves by asserting that what the bank presented as people's 'needs' was for them only what they might have 'wanted'. Both Chinese and Malay responses to HSBC branding evoke cultural distance, albeit that a male Malay perceives himself as more aesthetically aware and has therefore tolerance for complex cinematic

narrative. Without perceived cultural closeness ('connection', even 'touching') enabling their understanding, audiences are not able to articulate and align with prescriptive narrative on the marketing screen.

Because it is clearly 'at odds' with the genre of which the two preceding narratives here are defining instances (despite the issues raised in discussion), the Malaysian Public Bank branding is deemed by our consumers to have an uncertain source. In their consensus on this judgment, they mark out a set (or 'horizon') of community assumptions about corporate branding and its function.

We see the world from culturally accomplished horizons of understanding, finding familiar patterns, recognizing regularities, instances of already known phenomena. Hence, both audience and researcher's understanding of screen text is generically informed. Here, Heidegger anticipated current scholarship emphasizing the analytical capacity of 'genre' in reflecting on new media.

Focus Group (1): graduate Chinese female, Malay females (2) (industry information officers), Malay male (college lecturer);
Focus Group (2): graduate Chinese females (2) (editorial assistant and marketing employee), Indian female (publication officer) and Malay male (college lecturer and student).

Moment (1): ludic absorption or 'engagement' with BSN equipment in narrative space and time

The BSN branding attempts discursively to absorb audiences 'everywhere, we can help you in many ways' (female, Chinese). Immersively addressing its intended consumers, foregrounding or prioritizing a concern with children (a focus of 'human interest in our lives'), using terms like '"us", "we" and "you" […] they seek for our engagement in the video […] to be *in*, together with the bank' (male, Malay; emphasis in original). The video's absorbing space is equally the bank's.

Akin to branding globally, BSN offers its support to potential consumers. This local Malay respondent (signalling that he 'looks at the phrases, sentences that they use') notes that its mode of address compounds (implied) audience alignment with absorption: 'they seek for our engagement […] together with the bank', calling for consumer identification through speech rather than camera.

Through its spoken voiceover as well as text-effacing (illusionist or transparent) editing of shots together as a 'window on the world', this corporate narrative seeks a consumer immersion 'in' its presented space and present time, and thus to position its potential investors with 'us' on a shared horizon, a perspective of ethical 'human interest' in events. As viewers of this narrative, our contributor claims, we 'follow the video because we want to know what's the end' (teleologically).

But for a young female Malay in his group, its customer address to business groups, families and older people, does not 'touch' her generation of

students, 'teens like us': it focuses more 'on family', the 'older generation'. She may have been briefly absorbed in attending to content, but the latter does not establish a horizon of understanding the world which she can share, a point of view or person with which she can 'connect'. Instead, in her alienated 'personal' self-distancing reading, where geographical space emerges as temporal separation, rather than being 'progressive' as BSN branding claims, she asserts in a discursive moment of outspoken criticism that 'they are one step behind […] I don't feel safe using it' (female, Malay). Buyer scepticism meets proposed support.

In the second focus group, a Chinese female contributor again perceives BSN bank branding to be aligning with (implied) consumers in its mode of address. Emphasizing its sharing a horizon of understanding life ('stressing on the human side') with the (assumed) audience despite speaking to consumers across spatial distance or living in the different locations of countryside and city, the local Malaysian Bank Simpanan's branding video is cultivating the 'human touch': 'they are trying to connect with emotions of the users': this is 'how the bank tries to connect with you regardless if you're staying in one far corner of Malaysia or in the city' (female, Chinese).

Such 'connection' with consumers (rather than their supposed causal targeting with screen stimuli) opens the semantic route for the text's intended audiences to actively become absorbed with interpreting content and align themselves with this persuasive narrative. Spatial separation is here suppressed by branding's construction of consensual awareness. A shared focus by text and implied addressee on the 'human side' (or cultural propinquity) assists in audience absorption – enabling recognition and narrative expectations to be established – as well as aligning in early agreement.

BSN advertising is seen here as seeking to build a 'brand community' (Muniz and O'Guinn, 2001) of secure support. The bank is 'telling the public audience that they're everywhere, in terms of whenever you need it […] you can stay connected with them easily', responds one female Chinese. The branding narrative asserts that 'dealing with them you will be secure': the bank claims to meet educational as well as other needs and that it is 'very reachable to the community' (female, Indian).

A female Chinese participant locates her response to Asian financial services marketing of 'trust' more widely: 'You can actually put trust on *us*' (emphasis in original). 'The banks here are pretty safe, we don't see the banks going bankrupt […] [they are] quite stable' (female, Chinese).

The corporate authors emphasize a branding community, trying to 'show this bank BSN is close to the community': and 'we get the message there because it's very simple' (male Malay who is 'interested in [the] cinematographic part'). But this participant is sceptical, distancing himself from the bank's claim to be present in consumers' virtual vicinity – to offer them equipment establishing a reliable online connection to Internet banking. 'Is it OK or not?' We 'keep asking, is it right, is it right?' (male, Malay). If sustained, such consumer pessimism can emerge as the citizen's political alienation.

Images of Internet banking signal the bank's wish to be seen as 'progressive' (Chinese female). The convener asks the group – rhetorically in conclusion – 'you have a different image?'

Moment (2): projecting generic meaning for disabling equipment – 'hey, this is not right!'

Audiences view narrative from a horizon of understanding, producing their perceptions of probable content by placing it within a genre or swiftly recognizing it as instantiating a familiar type. HSBC's account of father–daughter conflict emerged in group discussion as difficult to place.

Viewing from an appropriate horizon of understanding enabling the story to be substantiated along the lines of its generic identification was a problem. Expressing uncertainty as to the textual type she was watching, and hence what content could be anticipated, a Malay female contributor indicated that 'if I watch it without knowing it is a bank advertisement' she would not be aware of its aesthetic identity until the final tag line: 'so I don't really *get* the picture' (her emphasis): 'maybe if I watch it all over again, two or three times' narrative content could be confidently and coherently anticipated, articulated and placed in a storyline. For this confused consumer, drawing attention to problems encountered in her getting the picture (asserting a thought-provoking parallel between perceptual processing and assembling a meaning for artwork), there is (ironically) an issue about interpreting the bank's narrative claim for its corporate identity: 'we understand our customers'.

In the second group, articulation of audience doubts about the authenticity of the Malaysian Public Bank branding video allowed their implicit, tacit or unspoken generic assumptions (as relied upon in ready-to-hand practices of understanding) to surface. Scepticism about this video's source here took the shape of comment on contributors' early expectations being challenged and suspicion sustained. Immersed audiences focusing on the video emerged in subsequent discussion as textual inspectors, engaging in alienated analysis, denying its status as 'branding' or taking it apart as items in a 'bad job'. A reflective response to the narrative operations of YouTube anti-branding was in play.

Thus, 'it doesn't look like something that [is] a corporate ad[vertisement] or corporate song. It looks like someone created [it] on their own to mock Public Bank', a female Indian responded. Pictures of political figures challenging the status quo are not easily associated with a conservative corporate establishment. Shots of a 'sexy girl' produce a 'bad image' (female, Indian) wholly at odds with the smooth operation of generic bank branding as characteristic narrative reassurance.

> Who are these people, I mean the politicians, or the models or the porn stars [they are trying to link with the corporate song] 'A Dream was Born'?! (female, Chinese) It may be adapted from an original Public Bank

advertisement, for example. You know the texts are all 'right'. […] 'loyalty', so on and so forth. But they try to mock Public Bank in the sense that they use the exact word or text as in the original version and now they're using different visual[s] and we can see that 'hey, this is not right!' This is not what Public Bank would have used in their advertisement. (female, Chinese)

Moment (3): articulating narrative – 'to relate it to the bank I don't think any connection'

Consumers exercising a hermeneutic circle of understanding text are clearly challenged in attempting a play-like integration of elements in the HSBC branding narrative. Seeking to shape a sense for what they see on screen fails to make connections: 'I can't really *get* the message […] for me, for my understanding' (female, Chinese; emphasis in original, signifying a short-coming in the active process of her articulating meaning in which she engages across cultural distance). A male Malay emphasizes culture and commerce as discrete discourses, with distinct generic practices: 'the use of drama is very attractive […] *but* to relate it to the bank I don't think any connection'.

In the second focus group, the HSBC branding video again subverted our audience's attempts to articulate their coherent meaning connecting the institution's commercial function with its screen message of specifically addressed caring – that its financial services can be accessed as equipment by customers to underwrite a self-fulfilling lifestyle. The scenario on screen attempts an 'emotional touch', 'trying to play with our emotional understanding' (female, Indian). But in making sense of such narrative 'play', the consumer's own play-like, to-and-fro engagement in a goal directed circle of understanding (the time-taking cognitive practice of her or his integrating the story content) was interrupted. It was challenged by perceptions of a disjunction between the corporate presence and male caring *persona* in the text's (would-be) persuasive recounting of banking's sensitive support.

Distancing herself from the HSBC branding narrative as 'too dramatic', a Chinese female participant emphasized her difficulty in relating an account of empathy to a bank comprehending consumers. She tells us, 'it's too dramatic, and I could not relate this dramatic side to a bank because it's so dramatic'. Thus, 'the message they're trying to convey is hard to relate back to the father and the daughter's conversation. We just can't relate it to HSBC. Very difficult'. 'I'd like to stress […] it is not easy to *relate* the advertisement to the *bank* image *per se*' (emphasis in original).

The narrative's generic status again proved troubling: is it advertising or branding? For 'it's pretty difficult to interpret the message in this advertise-ment' because of its generic ambivalence: it is 'more towards like a product' advertisement rather than 'corporate' branding, but 'we don't know what is this kind of ad[vertisement]'. Here the product or 'service' (a loan?) offered is

'not clear', this last female Chinese contributor also observes in continued criticism of promoted equipment.

Moreover, the narrative's audience is uncertain: who is the implied consumer, an enigmatic 'extended self' (Belk, 1988: 2013), directed to 'follow what your heart tells you'? 'Focusing' on people with a 'high profile lifestyle' (female, Indian), the HSBC bank does 'not actually try to fulfil the *need* but try [*sic*] to fulfil what [these] people *want*' (male, Malay; emphasis in original). For some, of course, 'wants' will be 'needs': 'it depends on who interprets it' (female, Chinese). As for the others, they may see its focus as self-indulgent: 'in terms of reaching the audience, I think this ad[vertisement] doesn't really reach all the audience, maybe a certain group of people' (female, Indian). Perhaps this 'local' HSBC branding is too culturally specific in speaking to consumers?

Moments (4–7): from 'artistic' appropriation of equipment to alienated analysis of a 'bad job'

Complexity in comprehension can be an occasion nonetheless for our celebrating insight. Despite his difficulty in arriving at an interpretation of the HSBC branding, in agreement with the bank's (perceived) aesthetic strategy of alignment, a male Malay concluded, its purpose is to 'shift our perception towards HSBC […] we have to think deeply [in response to this] artistic style of giving information'. He appropriates his textual reading to define both his 'being' and that of the text on screen as 'artistic' in a hermeneutic discourse stressing the necessity of thinking 'deeply'.

On the other hand, in an alienated response producing much group laughter, a female Malay participant reflected, 'for me, the reality of investing in HSBC is as complex as how to understand the image', to 'capture' meaning. Her self-distancing is from a text far from transparent in meaning.

Alienated analyses are shared in consumer constructions of narrative meaning for the Public Bank video. In an initially open minded response, the 'artistic' male Malay did note that it features 'patriotic songs', it's perhaps a 'new strategy for the bank to get the attraction of the youngsters'. But he goes on to assert in alienated consideration of constituent elements that the video is 'not properly constructed'. He distances himself evaluatively: 'it's not appropriate for us to watch to get the real understanding about the bank': the video's a 'cynical way of trying to put Public Bank down'.

Is this video anti-branding, then, a blog attempting to align audiences in corporate criticism rather than celebration? Is it attempting to 'spoil' (female, Malay) the bank's own image, to distance consumers? She concludes: 'when I watch this video, I don't connect myself with the Public Bank'.

With its 'Are you ready? Let's go!', the Public Bank's address to Malaysian audiences was seen in the second group as 'childish' (female, Indian). This bank's (anti)branding video is a 'bad job [aesthetically] […] the forms and all that' (female, Chinese). If genuinely authored or produced by a corporate

source, such media marketing would undermine bank branding's cultivation of customer perceptions that, 'we're safe, we're reliable […] It doesn't gel' (female, Chinese).

These contributors disconnect, distancing textual parts ('forms and all that') and ('childish') content from consumer self. Here is alienated analysis, a long moment of understanding in a 'depth hermeneutics' (Ricoeur), resisting the 'cultural weight of consumption' (Kozinets *et al*., 2010: 225).

Conclusion: Placing a Phenomenology of Audience–Consumers in Practices Research

> Ultimately, the methodology a researcher chooses represents a world view. (Cross *et al*., 1996: 106)

Communication studies frequently represents audiences as always having already arrived at conclusions about media content. Phenomenology's consumer research, on the other hand, as with reader reception theory, emphasizes the practice of personal judgment, our structured achievement as authoring audiences of understanding (e.g. branding) and concurrent evaluation. Analytical of focus group or interviewee discourse, hermeneutics establishes its interpretive aspects or moments, modelling them spatio-temporally as projections of meaning within the horizons of understanding. Phenomenology's narrative is of participatory consumers articulating generic meaning of artefacts.

We can see here, discussing instances of research, that a discursive hermeneutics of visual consumption – how people represent themselves as (media) consumers through behaviour – is to be analytically anchored to a preceding Heideggerian philosophy rather than remaining in the shadow of structuralism. At best the latter offers no narrative of perceiving as a process, at worst it claimed audiences as passively positioned consumers of textual ideology. Structuralism is an account of text.

Phenomenology offers a basis on which to 'extrapolate' beyond ethnography (O'Donohoe, 1997: 249). The chapter has drawn on the former to discuss the culturally inflected but nonetheless invariant structure of our perceiving as intentional, as a play-like practice. For audiences/authors aim at producing meaning in that which they sight as ready-to-hand, already assembled for self-oriented consumption: they do so perspectively, from culturally positioned, physically located and politically circumscribed horizons of understanding text (verbal or video, words or as watched on screen). This model of consumer response enables cultural detail to be non-reductively accumulated and equally analyzed in research – epistemologically defended as comprehensively comprehended.

The cognitive processes in play during the formation of personal and program identity in a consumer's continuing construction of narrative constitute the plasticity of projection, an always future-oriented 'throwing' of meaning

on screen. We have argued that anticipating and articulating content are 'experiential constants' – little considered, unless problematic – while an advertisement's tag line attempts to define the moment of appropriation (Schroeder, 2005: 150). The latter draws on our aligning with narrative and its personae to shape our consuming identity.

Media and marketing text in consumption is content continually viewed from a spatially and temporally situated as well as habituated horizon of understanding. Audience practices occur within a familiar 'cultural framework guiding the (reading) subjects' activities' (Fetveit, 2001: 174, 186). In a brief episode of global bank branding research, we have considered consumer attitudes evoked in the 'small stories' (Caru and Cova, 2008: 169) of focus groups. Set alongside these in later research can be blogs and micro-blogs of authoring audiences, the 'big stories' of 'virtual diaries' (ibid.: 170).

Audience perception is then essentially time-taking, mediated by an informed anticipating of screen narrative and their formation of its content – assembling accounts rather than an immediate, caused or passive reaction to screen stimuli. Participatory audiences may be asked – implicitly – to overcome antinomies of advertising (paradoxes of product promotion) by inserting contradiction resolving content, and thereby clearly seen to actualize narrative themselves. Articulating branded meaning is cognitively play-like, involving consumers in paradoxical moments of escape from the material world to flexibly, immersively attend to text, far from dutiful work (Cova and Dalli, 2009).

In short, this philosophical phenomenology of practice has explored ideational horizons of interpreting media users, offering a perspective informed by concepts in hermeneutic theory and reader reception accounts of consumer understanding as cognitive play. Audiences as authors not only align with and appropriate but engage in alienated analysis below the surface of globally local branding. Immersing themselves in the latter's space and time or growing irritated, they celebrate close proximity or discover distance between self and a screen's horizons of worldly understanding.

Part II

A Practices Perspective on Malaysian Consumers

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4 Consumers Constructing Marketing Meaning

Generic Practices in Participatory Online Media

The 'notion of horizon points to a basis of experience outside experience'.

(Kuhn, 1940: 108)

Project: Consumers go online both in 'real life' and as research participants, thus engaging with the Internet from embodied horizons of generic expectation which are inextricably interconnected. This chapter seeks further a theoretically sustained narrative providing insight into authoring audiences in cyberspace. In developing a wider account initiated by the practices perspective, we consider as exemplar Malaysian responses in 'chat rooms' to university branding and blogging on YouTube, embodied cognitive processes.[1]

A reflective analysis of student ready-to-hand 'taken-for-granted and often tacit ways' (Hine, 2000: 5) in which they anticipate narrative to unroll within their horizons of anticipation allows us to pay 'detailed attention to the understandings which users have of what the Internet is for': 'online activity can be seen to enact and make available understandings of the technology' (ibid.: 8, 12).

Heideggerian hermeneutics (providing us with practices theory), we have seen, argues that we a priori (always already) fore-understand entities as generic ready-to-hand equipment which can (dis)enable potentiality for being-with-others to be realized. Perception is necessarily embodied, wherein we primordially (primarily) project practice-oriented narratives of our being in the world.

In habitual practices, participant pre-understanding (or fore-conception) of entities generates implicit (from time to time explicit) anticipating of the latter's characteristic (or a generic) activity. Responding thus routinely to branding videos, our consumer expectation is of narrative instruments engaging us in – enabling our arriving at – would-be persuasive accounts of being-with-others (here in a university brandscape or setting). As Shove and Pantzar assert of walking, 'practices involve the active integration of materials, meanings and (managing) forms of competence' (2005: 45).

Authoring Audiences Online: From University Blogging to Branding

> Every seeing is a *seeing as*. To have an experience at all is to have interpreted, that is, to have already understood. (Nuyen, 1994: 435; emphasis in original)

Research on our audience discourse has bemoaned an absence of conceptual models depicting media access, specifically focused on immersive consumption in cyberspace (e.g. Benwell, 2005; Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010). We briefly remind ourselves below of scholarship on fans' responses to digital media narrative, studies integrated by phenomenology's reception theory.

Exploring reception study's furthering philosophically as Internet practices research, we here take as an extended focus, audiences authoring responses to global university institutional branding and individual blogging on YouTube. With Holloway and Todres (2003) in mind, we shall employ a practices approach, pursued from its very a priori anchoring or 'philosophical under-pinnings to the specificity of the subtle nuances that it may adopt in its methodological procedures' (346).

In their related discussion of international student experience, Thuraisingam and Singh (2010) draw upon Heideggerian phenomenology's emphasis on *Being and Time* (1962) to study the 'gap between expectations and experiences' (99, 109). Likewise, focusing on time imbricated events in consumption, we consider the core structure of audiences *writing* in cyberspace as a hermeneutics of authoring text to accompany reception theory's model of *understanding* as a patterned practice.

Consumers participate online to construct narratives with others of the 'real thing' (Gunkel, 2010: 130). Our *authoring* Internet content as well as *reading* in response to blogging or branding, is (in)formed by implementing discursive types: productions of meaning are curated in detail from a horizon of generic understanding (a 'position of enunciation' (ibid.: 139)). Narratives online need appropriately to address recipient capacity for recognition, enabling in turn anticipating content.

Discourses of writing as well as reading assert consumer alignment or alienation, cultural consensus or contestation online (Kahn and Kellner, 2008). These are value-laden positions which could be considered in 'media civics' (Hundley and Shyles, 2010: 431) and vigorously defended as horizons of understanding everyday life in 'boundary maintenance' (Bardhi *et al.*, 2010: 154). There are implied recipients of such generic messages (e.g. in blogs) as equally there is implicit authoring.

Here, we present-at-hand for reflection a shared (if also culturally dispersed) literary practice of reading and writing about university education on the Internet. Phenomenology, we have argued, fore-grounds universal phenomena – aspects or moments of perception – a pattern in the apparently diverse discourses of authoring audiences. We are, that is, enabled by our recognition of stories on screen as generic or embodying familiar formats, to anticipate or project (Heidegger, 1985) textual meaning, initiating a hermeneutic

circle (Gadamer, 1975) or dialectic of overcoming indeterminacy. Reading or writing 'to-and-fro', integrating elements, we fill out a generically appropriate narrative establishing content from our horizons of knowledgeable under-standing (ibid.). We are enabled to so accomplish this practice – giving little or no thought to the process (or it is simply ready-to-hand) – where branding or blogging straightforwardly exemplifies its narrative type of instrumental insight.

The present chapter seeks to demonstrate our model of authoring audiences accessing media through instance exemplifying theory. We discuss phenomenology's perception of writing practices using Web 2.0 media (here, Meebo and Messenger) conferencing to investigate consumer reception of higher education institutional branding and individuals blogging on video in Malaysia. Such a range of viewer responses might well have been 'voiced out' or articulated in focus groups (Wilson, 2009, 2011, 2012). Here, they are authored, perhaps more publicly, in online text.

Media branding of universities cannot now be 'blown up' or dismissed as mere deception. In this project, a wider focus on philosophically generated research method and audience perception is adopted. Public branding stories on screen as well as an inevitably reputation constructing personal blogging on video need to be analyzed from the integrated perspectives of a conceptually oriented marketing and media study. An aesthetics of visual representation emerges here from narratives shaped by advertising's profit pursuing construction of space and time in branded landscape and the personal perspectives of blogging marking up the 'highs and lows' of student life in education.

Likewise, audiences for these narratives author accounts of their meaning online not only as embodied percipients or subjects (Matthews, 2006: 52) but as earnest potential purchasers. Drawing on a phenomenological narrative of perception as successive moments of sensory awareness, these constructions (or 'compositions') of video blogging/branding can be seen here to constitute a ludic literacy, a goal directed, rule-shaped, interactive authoring through attention absorbed online.

Research participants composed multiple texts – albeit exhibiting widespread alienation from a YouTube video itself constituted through an authorial understanding of media branding and blogging practices. Advancing practices theory, hermeneutics of human behaviour explicates writing online.

The Practice of Consumer Understanding in Chat Rooms: Perceptions of University Blogosphere and Brandscape

How are universities seen in cyberspace? The phenomenology of perception can provide a metaphorical model enabling our insight into audience practices when viewing would-be persuasive narratives of higher education branded landscapes – or their brandscapes – online. The idea of *genre* works here in accounts of participatory media as well as it did with traditional screen narrative.

The practices model serves as a culturally transcending framework to which reference can be made if addressing 'challenges' to 'traditional' (Carpentier, 2011) audience theory in coming to terms with media reception as a *process*. The present ad hoc 'online communities' (Kozinets, 2002) responses to accounts of universities online constitute practices of (largely alienated) projection.

Reading and writing in participatory (if indeterminate) culture, we interact. (Re)collecting genre in such a storied 'projection of memories' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 13), we post online in a fusion of interpretive horizons, often vastly spatially and temporally mediated across distance.

Sandvoss (2005), we saw in Chapter Two, writes on convergence culture from the perspective of reception theory informed by phenomenology. Fans fill out their otherwise indeterminate Internet icons supporting their ability to identify with the ease of recognition (159). Likewise literary theory theorizes textual indeterminacies as 'blanks' (Iser 1978). Fan blogging enables authoring audiences to chat about narrative conclusions drawing upon generic speculation (Hills, 2002: 176).

Hermeneutics (with its re-embodiment as practices theory) presents us as always already understanding or fore-understanding objects in terms of their generic *usability*. Consumers project potential characteristic practices with branding (especially familiar 'retro branding'; Brown *et al.*, 2003), blogging or product. In so being aware of material or virtual entities as types of phenomena, we are not looking at objects contemplatively as present-at-hand. Our perspective rather is practical (Gorner, 2007). In thus regarding entities as ready-to-hand, without reflection (pre-verbally), we are already engaging with them as productive resources in actualizing our potentiality-for-being.

Audiences anticipate (explicitly or tacitly) content from the first moment of their informed absorbed attention. In arguing that this structuring moment characterizes perception, Heideggerian phenomenology is making a *synthetic* assertion concerning experience. Yet, as noted earlier, the claim is established a priori by examining philosophically our everyday idea of 'perception'.

In respect of education, reception of its virtual branding and blogging is worth attention for in her closely argued essay, Hearn shows how 'university promotion, marketing, and branding' are now 'firmly entrenched processes' 'around the globe' (2010: 195). As cyberspace discourse, screen branding builds campuses for the constructive scrutiny of audiences as would-be consumers intent on future narratives of self-enrichment. Media marketing initiates virtually a '*means of production*' wherein audiences compose meaning (Arvidsson, 2011: 273; emphasis in original). Rather than dismiss the presence of these campuses on screen as mere advertising artefacts characterized by an inevitable descent into deception, we reflect on embodied perception of place by students building their scholarly and sensory significance. In doing so we discern substantial audience alienation.

This discussion of university virtual brandscaping and video blogging analyzes responses. The practice of audience perception as a generic construction of narrative meaning is considered through reflecting on consecutive stages

exemplified in two local student discussions as they occur, documented on Meebo and Messenger Conference. Here they write about three YouTube videos, selected by virtue of their diversity in representing city and regional, public and private universities. In the first, a South East Asian higher education site proudly brands its civic authoring organization as a 'leader in research'. The second and third accounts of universities claim to be members of the genre of 'tours', shaped in student video blogging emphasizing an institution's external appearance. Responding to these (would-be) ready-to-hand generic narratives, research participants use them to construct an account not only of content, but of assumptions about probable aim as equipment. As students of business, they bring a fore-understanding of market branding, if not also blogging.

Mediated University Brandscape/Blogosphere

(i) 'Discover the University of Malaya'. University Malaya, located in the heart of Malaysia's capital city, Kuala Lumpur, regards itself as the nation's foremost university, an accolade advertised and perhaps advanced with a prominent website inscription: 'The Leader in Research and Innovation'. The preferred reading of this institutionally authored narrative of ready-to-hand research is clearly to be seen as possessing cutting edge quality, subverting with certainty any lingering Orientalist 'myth of the lazy native' (Graf, 2010: 836): http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSZ5yDHIRXs. This University Malaya YouTube presentation was viewed by all our research participants.[2]

(ii) 'Beautiful UNIMAS'. University Malaysia Sarawak is a rural public university in East Malaysia, located approximately 20 kilometres from the state capital Kuching, and lays claim to scenic beauty as well as initiating scholarship: this student authored video diary (Brown *et al.*, 2010) or a day tour of the east/old campus celebrates the first. As a response to a vividly ready-to-hand landscape, this blog exemplifies the multi-media 'conversational productivity of consumers' (Spurgeon, 2008: 2) or digital 'co-branding': www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zDAQ ZYClQA&NR=1Watch. This UNIMAS YouTube presentation was viewed only by UNIMAS online conference participants.

(iii) 'UTAR Campus Tour 2007': Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman is a privately funded university in West Malaysia, established by the Malaysian Chinese Association (a political party operating within the national ruling coalition). UTAR has several campuses in Kuala Lumpur, with its main site in more northerly Perak. The video focuses on the Sungai Long campus, located in a largely Chinese suburban area to the south of Kuala Lumpur, a campus represented in its immediacy as being ready-to-hand on arrival: like the UNIMAS narrative, it is a student rather than institutionally authored production on academic life: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XIFKIL1D9M. This UTAR YouTube presentation was viewed only by UTAR online conference participants.

The first YouTube university narrative was selected for this project on authoring audiences both by virtue of University Malaya's claim to national pre-eminence and because the video clearly belongs to the branding genre. Choosing the UNIMAS student video as the second subject for our discussion enabled exploration of participant responses to a visual compilation whose relationship to narrative genres is seen here as indeterminate: its uncertain classification supported audiences in reflexive consideration of the audiovisual form of storytelling itself, with its customary practices. Likewise, engaging with the UTAR undergraduate authored production enabled our participants to explore their conception of social media addressed to student consumers of higher education.

Writing within Cultural and Virtual Horizons of Chat Rooms: Engaging Narrative Equipment (Dis)Enabling Being-with-Others

Advantages of using Meebo and Messenger Conference social media sites include not only obtaining an immediate accurate transcript of contributor responses but also allowing video to be played 'in' the conference room online. The 'pace' (or time between discursive contributions when sometimes participant 'silence' reigned) is automatically recorded in the transcript and can later be considered. Virtual discussion may offer a 'more inclusive form of conferencing' (Broadfoot *et al.*, 2010: 801). Promotionally, YouTube signals 'enhanced' possibilities of publicity (Malin, 2011).

These YouTube social media manifestations of some accumulated places and times in higher education are discussed at length in this pilot project exploring the practice and principles of online focus groups where authoring audiences write in virtual surroundings rather than talk across a room (although on this occasion, the latter occasionally surfaced). Our discursively diverse constructive consumers here demonstrate their Internet literacy, 'a multidimensional construct that encompasses the abilities to access, analyze, evaluate and create online content' (Livingstone and Helsper, 2010: 311). Accessing YouTube, they create on Messenger Conference, projecting media narrative.

Each short cyberspace 'conference' was an ad hoc community of respondents to blogging/branding, of passing participants exhibiting 'multimodal connectedness' (Schroeder, 2010: 79) to social media. The first focus group was held one October Saturday morning, on personal computers 'embedded' (James and Busher, 2009: 36) in an extensive administrative area within the Faculty of Economics and Business located at University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS). The relative physical proximity of participants allowed issues (such as enabling them to go online to join the conference, which in the event proved troublesome) to be resolved in 'real' space and time. When the student Internet exchange eventually commenced, the facilitator (this author) sat separately, withdrawing to contribute/question/read and write from a comparatively unproblematic office personal computer.

There were four Business School student first semester, first year participants, who had just volunteered to participate in response to an invitation posted on the class website (in the event one might refer to this as 'serendipitous sampling'). Contributors can be denoted here by ethnicity and gender: one Chinese female, two Chinese male, and one Kelabit indigenous male student.

Ethnicity is of considerably significance in shaping Malaysian higher education, where the higher echelons of public universities are predominantly Malay, as in the case of the institution hosting our first focus group. Private universities tend to be operated either by the Chinese (as with our second online conference) or transnationally, offering overseas higher education courses (e.g. UK). Hence the Chinese in our first group and the Malay in our second (below) could be considered to have a prima facie culturally distanced relationship with their university education provider.

Participants in both groups were adequately conversant with the English language (since it is the medium in which their classes are conducted), although occasionally words used by convenors had to be briefly explained (e.g. 'immersive' meaning video 'grabbed your attention'). Discussion in the first group was loosely structured by asking questions about narrative content and development such as: 'The video calls itself, "Discover the University of Malaya". Was it what you expected?'

Research participants were able to openly resist implicit construction of their experience in such terms. Sometimes they responded outside the conceptual frameworks (or fore-understanding) buried in the questions. For instance, 'no message has (been) delivered', a Chinese female student commented on one video. Contributors were aware of some basic communication theory. At the end of the session, each was given a small sum of money to cover costs attending a distant campus on a Saturday morning when they would otherwise be preoccupied with activities in diverse locations.

The second online group was convened in a large student computer laboratory at Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman (UTAR). Continuing issues with student participants being able to join the Messenger 'conferencing' resulted in moving the discussion online to Meebo (www.meebo.com). Occupying most of a Friday morning in early March, after two hours of our seeking and eventually establishing virtual connections between contributors, eight participants took part: two Chinese females, two Indian females, and four males, Eurasian, Indian, Korean Chinese and Malay. With one exception (an accounting undergraduate), all were first year students of International Business, volunteer participants from different ethnic groups, who had invited friends: as with the earlier conference, each person was provided with a small cash payment to cover inevitably late lunches.

The online conference was convened by a female Chinese Malaysian not in employment of the university who asked similar questions as had structured the earlier focus group, supplemented by a reflexive question on the ease or difficulty of understanding the video narratives. As above, constructions of

participant experience implicit in these questions were from time to time resisted.

Audiences Authoring Modes of Being-with-Others: Structuring Moments Online in Producing Meaning

Dismissing a correspondence theory of truth, Merleau-Ponty reminds us that our perceiving 'composes' rather than 'copies' an account of the world (1962: 9). Drawing upon phenomenology, as we observed, we can assert that when identifying a perceived subject (entity), one is committing oneself (on pain of contradiction) to certain expectations. Conceptually, the future is immanent in present judgement, whether or not as an explicit proposition. We are sense-making creatures who need necessarily to secure coherent experience and hence reconcile expectation with eventuality. Engaging with narrative equipment, we are caught up in composing intelligible accounts (Corradi, 1991). That goal presumes a priori that we can attain or synthesize an appropriately ordered story.

> The work of Husserl, Schutz, and other phenomenologists emphasizes that we inhabit a life-world which is experienced as orderly *in the sense of being intelligible*: any problems in understanding particular events or actions are framed in terms of, indeed are only problems *in the light of*, our general sense of orderliness. Moreover, these authors see this orderliness as something that is a product of the constitutive activity of human beings. (Hammersley, 2003: 754; emphasis in original)

As is evident in the blogging/branding we consider below, narrative is by nature a focused or selective mediator of experience. With the same transcendental necessity that characterizes our commitment to overwhelmingly secure coherence, people cannot but align or distance in alienation from a narrative vision, a 'preferred reading' of life. Sustained apathy is another mode of alienation. In this way, our embodied and perspectival practice of understanding is always already present. We consider below these congealed moments of absorbed anticipation, alignment and alienation.

(i) Entering and Engaging with Ready-to-Hand Narrative Enabling Potentiality-for-Being

> I did [become] immersed by it [the UNIMAS video]. The scenery is so beautiful, no matter it's morning, noon, evening or night. I feel [it would be] very relaxing if I could study in this University. From the video, I could feel the air is so fresh, it could reduce my stress on study. (male, Chinese, University Malaysia Sarawak)

Commencing an account of participatory audience contributions with this student discourse, we illustrate (to use phenomenology's term) the first

'moment' or aspect of anticipatory absorption in a process of embodied perception (or corporeally recognizing cognition) initiating an extended practice. This male Chinese textual composition emerges as reflectively appropriating the campus video (and indeed to align/identify with the celebratory praise of its assumed student co-author).

Not only did this member of the conference consider himself to be thus 'letting go' (Barker, 2006) in his immersive sensory experiencing of the 'air [as] so fresh', but (counterfactually) in so doing he imagined himself as a potential UNIMAS student recognizing a probable reduction in 'my stress on study'. Like a digital game player, he becomes a 'resident' temporarily absorbed by/in his composition of campus life (Corneliussen and Rettberg, 2008: 2): here he articulates or assembles a narrative of 'morning, noon, evening or night' which he could appropriate in self-defining 'study in this university' (to repeat, subjunctively, since he is already in Business Studies). Such a response evokes a '*lived-out*, not a *thought-out* experience' (Belova, 2006: 97; emphasis in original). In his projecting meaning from a horizon of easy expectation encouraged by the video's title ('Beautiful UNIMAS'), he posits a routine: 'the air is so fresh' enabling ready-to-hand ('relaxing') study.

For the three other participants, however, their constructive perceptions of the UNIMAS video are much less immersive. Characteristically, recognition of content enables audiences to absorb themselves intensively in story construction: our memories underwrite media articulation.

But for one student recognizing actually inhibits immersed attention: 'I see this scenary [*sic*] everyday, so the "wow-factor" has faded away, I guess' (male, Kelabit). (Later, responding to the University of Malaya branding, he writes, 'this video manage[s] to grab my attention'). Another acknowledges himself to be also less absorbed in a text which omits any account of 'what UNIMAS students do daily and their leisure, that is the element that attracts the attention of students' (male, Chinese): here, absence of campus support for being-with-others subverts continuing 'attention'.

Uncertainty undermines a Chinese female student's submersing: 'it was not immersive. […] We don't know what is the purpose of this video [as a set of photos without titles]. No message has [been] delivered'.[3] She cannot become knowledgeably absorbed projecting and producing meaning in a generically indeterminate narrative, a story without identity, which supports no expectations.

While focused absorption may be the first moment in textual composition, alignment with assumed author(s) or narrative agent(s) certainly need not follow. Watching the UTAR Campus Tour 2007 YouTube video, a Eurasian male UTAR participant's initial immersion switched to his irritation, absorption to alienation: 'initially [immersed] yes … [it] looked fun, and inviting … but after a few minutes I found it ridiculous that they're touring floor by floor … '[4] Absorbed audiences can anticipate events from well (in)formed horizons of expectation, but these events may be absent. A Korean Chinese male acknowledged in constituting sense for the same video, 'it did capture my attention but, however, it does, at the same time … induce some

feelings to which something was lacking out there'. Other conference contributors distanced themselves in more explicit criticism: 'It's only about the facilities': 'it didn't show the courses offered in this campus' (females, Chinese).

While culturally familiar (or close) content sustains the audience's textual recognition and hence their absorbed anticipation of events to follow on screen, excessive familiarity (e.g. through repetition or unchanging mode of address) can be 'draggy'. The UTAR video was 'boring to be honest' (male, Indian student). The Eurasian male student viewed the University Malaya YouTube video likewise as a 'little too long, draggy': 'it wasn't dynamic … it failed to capture and retain my attention beyond the 2nd minute … the narration was monotonous … very mundane': 'I found the clip too long … it doesn't exactly grabs [*sic*] and keeps [*sic*] your attention'. Yet, perhaps hailing from a less assertively critical cultural tradition, his male Korean Chinese peer did not so distance himself: the YouTube video 'entrails [*sic*] some sort of assortment and intrigues me'.

(ii) Projection of Meaning in Producing Text (Seen from a Horizon of Generic Understanding)

Author (at UNIMAS): 'ok, I'd like to run this like an online focus group'.
Chinese male: 'yes, we are ready'.
Chinese male: 'den wat is the topic?'

Generic knowledge is not always sharply specified. Positioned on less than clear cultural horizons of understanding, research participants may compose text from ill-defined perspectives, with a blurred view of its identity. But in identifying the discussion as an 'online focus group', the present author seeks to establish its ready-to-hand genre among the contributors, and in so doing, to generate agreed anticipation or projected perceptions of appropriate 'voicing out'. Immediately, a shared fore-understanding of the discourse in progress is (implicitly) recognized. As a conceptual horizon, it is signalled as seen by a conference participant. Chinese male: 'den wat is the topic?'

In this response, I am viewed as implied facilitator of talk and topic with consequent power to structure the ensuing discourse (James and Busher, 2009: 28–29). That our Messenger Conference forms a *focus group* is 'put into play' – the phrase marking out the horizon of understanding shaping our interaction, a perspective embodied in people's perceptions of that which it is (or is not) fitting to say and to whom it should be said. Authoring audiences contribute and construct meaning, here sending and responding to text within this shared conception of reading and writing (that is their composing text in the Messenger Conference) as the discussion of YouTube videos continues online. With knowledge of this discussion genre (a 'focus group') ready-to-hand 'the researcher and the researched move between a background of shared meaning and a finite foreground of experience within it' (Joy *et al.*, 2006: 346). Subsequently, horizons of understanding have to be extended.

Author (at UNIMAS): 'so, first, did you find the video immersive?'
Author: 'did it involve you when watching it?'
Author: 'over to you!'
Chinese male: 'erm'.
Chinese male: 'wat is meant by "immersive"?'   […]
Author: 'immersive' = 'involving' = 'grabbing your attention'.

Interpretation (as we noted above) is underwritten by a fusion of horizons (Gadamer, 1975) of understanding, a mediating meeting of conceptually engaged minds enabling comprehension. At this point the author's theoretically generated fore-understanding of video viewing (as 'immersive') is put into play accompanied by a proffered synonym 'involving', in support of communication.

Interpretive Horizons of Expectation: Social Media Seen as Institutionally Authored Branding

Our *present* understanding is already immersed in concepts shaping *future* expectation: whereof we 'voice out', thereof we anticipate viewing. Seeing the University Malaya narrative at UNIMAS, the conference participants readily recognized the genre to which they were being asked to respond as institutional brandscaping: so 'the video content shows a university trying to advertise itself to the public' (male, Kelabit); 'this video's main purpose is to promote UM', so it is 'a normal university branding video' (with a 'bit patriotic spirit') (male, Chinese).

But other than the Kelabit male ('The video was what I expected from ["renowned"] UM') in construing textual content, research participants were critical of this narrative's failing to measure up to what they regarded as appropriate generic expectations. Thus 'it only covers on the academic side of UM' (male, Chinese) without featuring (co-curriculum) student life on campus.

Audience contributions can reveal their authorial discursive emphasis on particular aspects of a *shared* (or social) horizon of understanding academia and its public promotion. Looking from an identified position of expecting 'co-curriculum' content from the academic genre of university branding, with anticipation more widely shaped by conceptual consensus ('like [the Chinese male contributor] has mentioned just now'), a Chinese female participant at UNIMAS acknowledges her unrealized expectation: that is, 'I expected more from this video […] they should have showed the students' productions, so it can impress us even more'. This text is lacking, generically incomplete.

Student participants in the later UTAR conference also found their generic expectations of university branding not entirely realized by the University Malaya YouTube video. Suggesting they shared a horizon of understanding the typical university as a 'facility' engaged in varied activities with multiple aspects, contributors 'expected' 'more description' (female, Indian) in an

'overview' rather than this reductive view of a 'research centre for science and technology' (female, Chinese).

Nonetheless, the Korean Chinese male (again) claimed to constitute in this 'sorta fast' video a presentation in which actuality met anticipation: 'no doubt it hit the "eye" on my expectancy', 'it did unveil UM pretty succinctly'. His response extended the spatio-temporal metaphors which can be mobilized to provide an account of perception as embodied, of text being exactly as expected.

Interpretive Horizons of Expectation: Social Media Seen as Individually Authored Blogging

As the Chinese female participant noted above, the UNIMAS video was seen as of uncertain generic identity, raising issues about appropriate audience expectations. But when considered as a university branding narrative, it did disappoint: 'if that is a branding video for UNIMAS, I expect more than that […] I would prefer a video with the lifestyle of university student' (male, Chinese), potentially enabling aligning/identifying with lives whose biographical narratives were on screen.

Chinese male: 'yes, it is definitely an issue! We want to know more about the people in UNIMAS instead of sky and buildings'.
Chinese female: 'yes, it is an issue. It seems like nobody is interested studying in UNIMAS, just all buildings'.

On the other hand, if 'Beautiful UNIMAS' images are construed as photographic essay or non-narrative blog – which the Kelabit male contributor apparently identified as its type – then the video met expectations appropriate to such a visual genre: 'it shows the beauty of UNIMAS from dawn to dusk'. Anticipation is actualized without issue in this enthusiastic composing of 'beauty'.

The 'UTAR Campus Tour 2007' YouTube narrative was like the UNIMAS video classified by conference contributors as being of indeterminate generic status. 'It didn't feel like a campus tour, more like a homemade/student project for a documentary' (male, Eurasian). Constructed as a 'tour' within its title, the video mostly failed to meet its viewers' consequent expectations.

The Eurasian student looked at this brandscape from a horizon of anticipation already well shaped by watching the University Malaya branding narrative: hence here, he sees *difference*. 'I was expecting something similar to the UM video … narration, short videos, still pictures in the video, and some general information about the facilities in UTAR. […] I didn't anticipate such a video'. Regarded as 'tour', the video was rejected: 'not enough to be titled as UTAR Tour' (male, Malay): 'I only see the ground,1st and 4th floor' (female, Indian): 'only one campus' (male, Indian). But, once more, the Korean Chinese contributor indicated, as with the University Malaya narrative,

content met his concept of 'touring': the 'tour around the entire campus – yes, did see that coming'.

(iii) Achieving the Anticipated, Articulating Text: Generically 'Complete' Narrative of 'Equipments'

Embodied perceiving is spatio-temporally located. From the first moment of regarding a ready-to-hand text, always already informed readers or writers confer its generic identity (*see it as*), thereby anticipating a future 'unfolding'. We noted that – equipped – they (explicitly or implicitly) project probable content and in a hermeneutic circle of understanding aim at rendering its narrative actual. Audiences thus articulate elements (images, text, words), constituting an integrated whole, unreflectively achieving sense in/of an appropriately 'complete' or generically well-shaped story.

As a Chinese female UNIMAS student remarks of the University Malaya video (despite its omitting co-curriculum student activity), 'I think this video is […] quite a complete one, as in [it] they introduced all faculty and the courses in each of the faculty'. Considered as a prescriptive (if limited) narrative in which University Malaya presents itself as a research university investing in truth, the meaning posited and produced in the video by this member of the authoring audience in the Yahoo! conference is seen as appropriate to such an exemplar of the academic branding genre.

For the Kelabit UNIMAS student, integrating University Malaya content was immersing: 'it grab[bed] my attention through its various achievements in many different fields': constituting the strands of the story as a unity engrossed him in 'discovery'. And 'I don't deny that the coverage of the academic is perfect and fruitful' acknowledged a Chinese male in discussion. On the other hand, the UNIMAS narrative was less open to being coherently completed: 'I think the video makes sense if it includes more photos such as students having competitions' (female, Chinese).

Viewed during the later UTAR conference, detailed items ('facts') in the University Malaya branding narrative were integrated as a coherent and relatively clear account of the university. As perceived by the participants, the production concerned the 'formation of UM, its accomplishments, what it offers … the student statistical data, the facilities and equipments it has' (male, Eurasian).

Composing University Malaya text to 'relate' 'not quite organized' but 'pretty clear' 'facts' in a hermeneutic circle of coherent understanding, integrating items within a wider projection of meaning to form an appropriate narrative, 'wasn't difficult' for two audience members. Indeed, it was perhaps rather too easy, lacking the need to resolve enigma which could 'grab one's attention'. The Korean Chinese male, facing the 'fast' narrative, found 'some parts are fairly hard to discern' but concluded less than critically, if diffusely, that, 'overall the idea was conveyed quite clearly'.

Eurasian male: 'it wasn't difficult, [I] was able to relate the facts … but it wasn't obvious either … '

Indian female: 'it was pretty clear but was not quite organized'.

Eurasian male: I 'agree with (the Indian female), it wasn't organized in a fashion that'd grab one's attention'.

Korean Chinese male: it 'had some sort of predicaments in the speed of video, but overall the idea was conveyed quite clearly'.

Generic distinctions were referenced in audience authoring accounts of the UTAR narrative content, apparently defining their collective or shared horizon of understanding in the UTAR Meebo conference. Here, that is, an individual's blogging appears to be constructed (or 'read') as a 'failed' institutional branding, perhaps because these participants are business students.

The UTAR Tour was 'very different' from University Malaya branding: 'I believe they failed to create any brand association or awareness' (male, Eurasian). UTAR 'are simply showing what are the facilities in UTAR, the staff and the students in it', writes an Indian female, 'not at all' like University Malaya narrative brandscaping on screen (female and male, Indian).

Exhibiting awareness of how video text 'technique' can support a 'readership' in rendering or composing a coherent story appropriate to its generic identification as 'tour', the Eurasian male conference participant remarked that the YouTube presentation 'shows the facilities in the UTAR campus by following a selected few students … the students acted as "point-of-transition" between each floor'. The hermeneutic circle of understanding is here mirrored or practised on screen, albeit that for a dissenting Indian male, the video is 'not very well organized'.

But in a Malay participant's constitutive reading of content the UTAR text 'makes sense and is not hard to understand' (male), albeit that for the Indian male, 'showing a guy going to toilet', 'is it that important?', 'refilling his water bottle … come on'. Despite defining itself as 'tour', the focus of the video's narrative interest is not always shared nor clear: 'in the UM video I was aware it was about UM … but in UTAR video, I'm not sure what the focus was on' (male, Eurasian).

The male Korean Chinese preferred to constitute both YouTube presentations he viewed as media marketing, albeit that 'if it were to be compared, branding can be discerned more clearly in the previous vid[eo] – UM as compared to UTAR – which was merely a tour'. The second 'lucidly reveal [*sic*] the environment from both inside and outside of UTAR, aside from that, nothing else can be determined'. Physically focused in its travel, it supported little idea of the subjective life of students or teachers inside buildings: it 'wasn't really difficult to understand, but didn't make sense either – as in [*sic*] it only showed the inner and outer part of the building'.

Despite the latter's uncertain status as branding, this Korean Chinese contributor concluded with subdued criticism: 'personally, I would say that both videos are trying to channel exposure into the mindset of students in the

midst of searching their preferred university to be enrolled in'. The Malay male concluded, 'UTAR use different approach to do their branding compare to UM'.

Confidently (if a little mysteriously) asserting the UTAR video to be a 'paradox', the male Eurasian student shares the Korean Chinese participant's perspective in identifying coherent content ('it makes sense') while distancing from its narrative ('it also makes no sense'). Here, there may be a perceived antinomy between composing text which claims to be 'touring' and its blogger author's neglect of subjective experience in focusing on 'only' the 'inner and outer part of the building'.

> a paradox … it makes sense because I'm a student here and can relate to it … but because I'm a student here, it doesn't make any sense at all 'cause I know everything on the video is a facade', 'an impossibility that is possible? … two things which shouldn't exist at once, but they do … like […] the video makes sense but it also makes no sense.

(iv) Audience Immersive Identification (or Absorbing Alignment) with 'Digestable' Content

Perceiving cultural proximity to 'digestable' content underpins identification for readers and writers of narrative. For a respondent: 'as a Malaysian, I identify myself to this (University Malaya) video, the video content is digestable and video friendly' (male, Kelabit). UNIMAS contributors, as we shall see, otherwise distanced themselves from an absence of generically appropriate content.

Alignment with University Malaya arose among UTAR online conference participants more because they identified with friends attending the institution than because of media persuasion. The Eurasian male student had 'friends and family who did law or medicine in UM'. The Malay male contributor indicated he had, 'no feeling of alienated [*sic*]'. 'I'm fine with the video' (male, Indian).

Identification *with* branding's prescriptive narrative presupposes that the latter makes sense, that it emerged successfully from viewers composing (via the hermeneutic circle of understanding), and hence identifying a coherent content. Thus, as an Indian female UTAR contributor conceded of University Malaya, 'some parts like the breakthroughs of the university was [*sic*] quite identifiable'.

Where there is a substantial cultural distance between video and viewer interpretive horizons of understanding experience, our sense-making may be excluded: 'the scientific part of it do induce the perception as if I was from another territory […] hardly any cultural identities deciphered from there' (male, Korean Chinese). Discovery of distance may function as the basis of further alienation.

Immersive identification with the UTAR YouTube narrative was subverted by the 'absence of any script' (a point of potential alignment with a person), its being focused on 'neutral' 'sterile' 'structures of the building' rather than a narrative of potentially shareable student biography:

> I 'generally was able to identify with it ... however, the absence of any script made it feel cold ... '; 'I'm indifferent on whether it shares my interest ... somehow I'm not sure whether the video has a positive or negative relation with me ... it feels ... neutral ... sterile' (male, Eurasian):
>
> 'On the first glimpse to it, yes, but that perception slowly faded and waned over time as the contents focused too much on the physical context – i.e: facilities and structures of the building'; 'Nothing much to comment in particular ... it's just that the video on the tour itself doesn't seemingly intrigue me' (male, Korean Chinese), excluding alignment with narrative agents on screen, persons also – explicitly, implicitly – sense-making.

For the Malay male (tactfully?) there was 'no feeling of [being] distant and it relates to me as a student as the video is made by the UTAR students'. I 'agree with [the Malay student]' (male, Indian). 'Of course I identified it [*sic*] as I am part of the campus as well' (female, Indian). Yet, in retrieving their ethnicity, the Indian asked, it's 'sensitive a bit', 'where are the Malay and Indians?'

(v) Audience Appropriation of a 'Storied' World on Screen to Construct Potentiality-for-Being

As we have noted, only a Chinese male felt sufficiently absorbed to share (or align with) one composition of academic space and time on screen and then appropriate this 'beautiful' 'scenery' or enrol himself in the UNIMAS life-world: 'I feel [it would be] very relaxing if I could study in this University'. Yet, ironically, there is no human being seen on campus with whom he could identify.

(vi) Reader–Writer Distancing of Self from Social Media Prescriptive Narrative

Far from identifying, authors and consumers of texts can distance themselves from content. 'Critique rests on the moment of distanciation' (Ricoeur, 1981b: 110). A narrative position may look alien, 'developed' or fully fledged research appearing as a remote occupation to business students. Aware that the account of University Malaya's scholarship and his own student focus on 'business' prioritize distant perspectives on everyday living, a Chinese male tells the UNIMAS conference of his critical alienation from the narrative's overemphasis ('too much') on academia:

I feel that this video is too much in the academic side of UM … I feel alienated with the video, my reason still the same with just now, it is more on the research and developed side of UM: as we are all business students, so to some extent, we are alienated.

(vii) Critique: Authoring Audience Alienated Analysis of Generic Branding/Blogging

Alienated from these video participatory and promotional perceptions of higher education, UNIMAS contributors engage in analysis from a horizon of informed understanding where they refer to the distance between their long entertained expectations of a narrative claiming to represent a university and the limited events pre-occupying these social media perspectives on academia. A Chinese male student is 'not really absorbed', and dismisses University Malaya's institutionally sourced marketing as merely being 'half [as] expected': while replete with research activities it is empty of undergraduates. The video author's perception of appropriate generic textual practice falls short of representing the diverse activity of higher education: with students absent, it is 'shallow'.

Branded (en-titled) in blogging as 'beautiful', displaying 'awesome scenery' (male, Kelabit), the UNIMAS narrative could indeed be an experiential focus for audience alignment (with implied author) and thus appropriation (perhaps as an identity shaping therapeutic text). The title establishes a horizon of audience expectations, setting out from which the (implied) interpretive consumer is supported in composing an extra-ordinary and easily adopted personal campus videoblog vision.

But if this vision is read generically as branding which seeks to represent a varied university campus, 'I would feel alienated as [the video] only shows us the scenery [the buildings and sky]', a respondent tells us (male, Chinese). Undergraduates are unseen. A female Chinese is asked, 'so maybe you feel it's leaving something important out?': 'Yes. If it is not based on the title'.

Yet University Malaya's video did equally little to convince UTAR consumers to celebrate (identify with) its campus story. Asserting a critical discourse characteristic of alienated audiences, they distanced themselves both aesthetically from its 'monotonous' narration and as students from an excluding vision – occupying instead other horizons of understanding experience.

As aesthetic practice, the University Malaya video provided little support in underwriting an audience engaged in exercising the playfully absorbing practice of composing a text, in displaying an immersive ludic literacy of online perception. So for the Eurasian male: 'it wasn't dynamic … it failed to capture and retain my attention beyond the 2nd minute … the narration was monotonous … very mundane'. The process of composing a coherent text which could subsequently form a focus for consumer identification was hindered by excessive indeterminacy of content (Iser, 1978). Thus, 'some parts

were unclear – the multicultural portion and the faculties portion (could only conclude that there are varieties of faculties but uncertain about all of 'em)' (male, Korean Chinese).

As in the conference at UNIMAS, these contributors expressed a critical distance from this narrative as superficial: thus 'there should be deeper information on the university' (female, Indian). 'Delve deeper into other aspects, that may capture more audience' (male, Korean Chinese). Both these audience contributions extend the spatio-temporal metaphors for understanding (in depth), thus enabling them to note the 'lack of information about co-curricular activities and this shows that the university is emphasized on academic achievements only' (male, Malay).

Between the implied consumers of University Malaya's relentless focus on research (with an assumed audience it is difficult to describe) and Chinese women actually present in these two online conferences there is a considerable epistemological gap. This higher education brandscape is not for business students: 'it emphasized too much on the science field. Nothing about the business field'.

Is this UTAR student audience persuaded to purchase this avowedly ready-to-hand product?

Eurasian male: 'if just based on the video, I don't think so … '
Indian female: 'not really because of the video'.
Malay male: 'definitely no, if merely based on this video'.
Malay male: '[it] is not really convincing enough for student[s] to apply'.

Participating within Horizons of Understanding: Perceptions in Practice of Social Media Narrative

We can reflect upon the conference transcript of these 12 students' audience activity as online authors, thinking through their 'consumer co-creation' (Banks and Potts, 2010) from the conceptual horizon defined by a hermeneutic phenomenology of receiving and writing visual (or any other) text. Considered from this perspective, consumer literacy is a goal-oriented practice, an always already (in)formed, immersive, activity of co-creating meaning. Thus their contribution as student authors draws upon a knowledge (or it is shaped by awareness) of generic (e.g. branding) video practice, enabling them to place YouTube hosted productions within aesthetic categories.

As participatory producers of meaning 'in conference', these 12 students are evidently engaging in a ludic composition of multiple texts online. Absorbing/being absorbed by events (i), they attend to YouTube narrative, anticipating/'projecting' (Heidegger, 1985) the latter's content from a generically (in)formed 'horizon of understanding' (Gadamer, 1975): they thus read/write knowledgeably, enabling them to identify/reject stories as instantiating ready-to-hand types (ii).

Perception is not only literally but also metaphorically 'embodied' (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). Producing a meaning for these visual narratives, like skilled players who weave 'to-and-fro' in accomplishing a practiced goal, our authorial audiences aim at articulating coherent stories (iii): they relate perceived part or elements to their view of the narrative whole through a 'hermeneutic circle of understanding' (Gadamer, 1975). In doing so, students may align/identify with narrative agents or (assumed) authors likewise seeking to making sense of surroundings (iv): audiences can appropriate (v) their composed text in referential accounts of 'self'. However our own conferencing participatory consumers largely assert their (vi) 'alienated/distanced' (Ricoeur, 1981a) analytical dissent (vii), separating themselves in criticism from accounts of accomplishments on screen.

This Meebo-Messenger conferencing pilot project exhibits 'collaboration over individuated authorship' (Lankshear and Knobel, 2007: 21). It is characterized by interactive writing (in)formed by a participant-researcher consensus on (a) understanding and (b) projecting an account of what is to be 'voiced out' and achieved, narratives about watching YouTube university videos.

In this undertaking, university media branding content (albeit with UNIMAS/UTAR videos less certain members of the genre) is read and written about within the epistemic framework (or the structuring horizon) of informed audience expectation. If narrative fails to conform to participants' familiar generic 'frames of reference' (James and Busher, 2009: 6), it is likely that (as a participant put it), 'we don't know what is the purpose of this video. No message has (been) delivered'.

Consumers consent to what is on screen, or they are assertively critical. Brand appropriating selves as Pooley argues (2010: 71) can be engaged in a public promotion of their own self-identity, celebrating a 'self-image congruency' (Hollenbeck and Zinkhan, 2010: 325). Alienated criticism need not be constituted by audience outright accusations of branding deception (*pace*, Corner, 2010: 54) but rather by comment (spoken, written) that its narrative lacks a perspective on experience.

Branding, as one research participant put, is 'digestable' – or distancing. Here, then, 12 students digest or distance their self online, exercising their ludic literacy in mediated modes of 'digital virtual consumption' (Denegri-Knott and Molesworth, 2010: 109). They thus produce and position with respect to their wider lives or potentiality-for-being, in these Meebo-Messenger responses to YouTube. Drawing on hermeneutic phenomenology from Gadamer and Heidegger to Ricoeur's later account of alienated distancing, we considered their discourse articulated in audience perspectives.

In this phenomenology of framed audience interpreting of screen events, that is, participants are heard/seen to respond from horizons of generic understanding. Our consumers draw upon their knowledge or abstract awareness of media branding (professionally, institutionally authored video) and media blogging (personally, individually authored video) to make sense of particular YouTube perceptions, and relate eventual appearance of visual content more or less coherently to expectation.

Perception presumes order. Having so articulated a narrative for blogging or branding text, audiences can be anticipated to align (identify with its characters and content) or (as they do above) assert their critical analytical distance (alienated or irritated by event they have seen on screen).

Conclusion: Generically Generating Narrative/Theorizing Types of Text

> In hermeneutic emphasis on the 'mutuality between text and reader', 'interpretation is far from unconstrained, being afforded by both generic (medium and genre-based) and specific (programme-based) conventions of the text'. (Livingstone, 2007a)

Media marketing and its audiences of consumers have increasingly moved on from a top-down televisual experience to inhabiting the interactive Internet's participatory culture. How can this change of focus be thought about theoretically? This chapter positioned its point of view with conceptual conservationists in arguing that core concepts in media marketing theory continue to have currency when the consumer commences writing online. Audiences author meaning, often taking a storied shape in the micro-bios or video-voices of Facebook or YouTube. Pursuing this narrative goal, they generate content in accordance with their perceptions of generic adequacy. Likewise, consumer practices absorbed in participatory culture are (in)formed *generically*.

In this chapter we examined uncertain moments in this normative model – where the generic status of a YouTube narrative is itself indeterminate. Is this participatory or promotional discourse? Does this video compilation constitute even a narrative – a causally related conjunction of events? Presenting responses to these relatively new dilemmas revisited a Heideggerian emphasis on genre.

5 Consuming Sites: Malaysians Visiting Social Media
Ready-to-Hand Repertoires Presented as Practices

> In a recent televised advertisement for CNN.com, it was pointed out that 'the average computer has 101 keys'. It goes on: 'We say, you only need three – CNN'.
>
> (Cover, 2006: 145)

Project: We wrote ten years ago of Malaysians engaging with the Internet, that, 'e-journalism has been much celebrated in Malaysia, particularly by those who craved alternative perspectives and adventurous encounters with ideas in their news consumption. Traditional mainstream media seem to drive them to the mouse'. So 'Internet surfers become empowered recipients of "very fast", "first hand news", "proud" to conjoin their playful interactive immersion online with intention to inform offline (female, Chinese college lecturer)' (Wilson *et al.*, 2003: 527, 526). We continue to consider ready-to-hand rapid understanding of Internet media, albeit now ubiquitous, even in shopping malls. Full discussion of Malaysian mainstream and new media is online (Ding *et al.*, 2013: Weiss, 2012).

'Understanding' is 'basic being-in-motion' (Gadamer, 2006: 39), always already projecting an understanding of our circumstances, talking, viewing or walking – actually or tacitly anticipating. Our routine construction of meaning in behaviour – strolling in shopping – requires little reflection, as skilled management of narrative development in a hermeneutic circle of integrating our conduct with circumstances. Only in the face of concern with error or celebration do we attend to – present to ourselves – our action. We likewise engage online in implicitly recognizing our environment as (dis)enabling equipment with potential. Marketing a media portal (or tourist place) promotes its ready-to-hand visiting. 'Turkey is right here' (Yahoo! advertising). 'Yahoo! makes it easy to enjoy what matters most in your world'.

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Practices incorporate projects in understanding – a minimally monitored managing the meaning of entities as 'equipment' (Heidegger, 1962) or affordance (such as Facebook) through:

(i) projection – whether in shopping mall or social media, visitors enter from horizons of recognizing instances that exemplify known types – absorbed with tacit anticipation (e.g. of their media audience);

  (ii) production – integrating thereby informed expectation with event, visitors follow a hermeneutic circle of embodied ludic 'to-and-fro' narrative building (e.g. purchasing in the shopping mall);

  (iii) participating – enabling modes of 'being-with-others' (Heidegger, 1962), as aligned agreement, alienated analysis or self-engrossed apathy (implicit routes to establishing visitor social identity).

People project, produce, participate from shared and separating horizons of genre (e.g. rule) (in)formed cultural understanding. 'Practices of everyday public life (in mall or media) are filled with nuance and complexity that call for strategic management' (Baym and boyd, 2012: 320–21).

Hermeneutics refocuses our attention on remembering as underwriting practices. On the one hand, memory enables ready-to-hand bodily understanding of everyday entities as equipment.

> 'Understanding' is no longer meant as one process of human thinking among others, a behavior that could be developed through discipline into a scientific procedure; rather, it means something that constitutes the basic being-in-motion (*Bewegtheit*, movedness) of the existing human being (*Dasein*). (Gadamer, 2006: 39)

On the other, remembering (in)forms our presented-at-hand interpreting which emerges when such easy familiarity is challenged. In understanding, remembering is embodied, an at most elliptical or *passing awareness*. But where we interpret issues confronting us in customary practice, recollecting becomes charged with content in *propositional assertion*. Here 'interpretation is the explicit form of comprehension' (Jauss and Margulies, 1980: 96). We reflect in this chapter on Internet interactivity.

Using genres or types of social media can be familiar or reflectively scrutinized, displaying processes of 'routinization and reflexivity' (Halkier *et al.*, 2011: 7).[1] The arrival of digital databases may signal the 'end of forgetting', but our remembering takes shape in varying modes (Bossewitch and Sinnreich, 2013). We can find it difficult to present-at-hand our implicit 'knowing how to get around' (Moores, 2012: 95) online, a buried memory instantiating 'our fundamental ability … to get around in the world' (Polt, 1999: 65). 'Dwelling-in-motion' (Urry, 2007: 11) – our steps in using laptops, large malls or leviathan social media – may resist reflective analysis. Ready-to-hand routine in responding to easily enabling equipment (e.g. to cues for entering 'discussions in online political communities'; Velasquez, 2012: 1300) can be recalcitrant in being recalled from memory.

Yet as Barassi and Trere (2012) argue, research 'should carefully consider the way in which users understand, appropriate and experience the technological developments of the Web' (1280) embedded into practice. Actual 'media practice' can be distant from theory of Internet use (ibid.). Would-be authoring audiences need to be aware of aesthetic practices (such as the point-of-view

sequence) enabling recipients of their messages to engage in easy apprehension and alignment: a variation can prompt alienated analytical interpretation of narrative as departing from the norm.

> In order to facilitate reading, navigation and usage of different platforms and digital artifacts, in general, designers need to acquire 'genre awareness' (i.e., users' common sense knowledge of specific genres) and to make this explicit through textual cues and affordances. … On the other hand, possibilities and cues are not necessarily used in 'preferred' ways, and oppositional usage becomes more and more frequent. (Das *et al.*, 2014: 32)

We consider below social media audience authoring, from TripAdvisor visitor *verstehen* to Malaysian weblogs as familiar practice (ready-to-hand managing of meaning in our writing) and its interpretive presencing or reflection. 'Familiarity is a key factor in the case of the Internet use' (Das and Pavlíckova, 2013: 7). Understanding (reading or writing online) is 'self-projecting by the self of its possibilities' (Gadamer: 2006: 39). 'How does [such] embodied experience play a part in identity forming' (Seaman, 2005: 12) on participatory-persuasive media? Here, interaction between sources and site of subsequent meaning is seen as 'generation of content' (Richards, 2006).

Skilled Ludic Practices as Ready-to-Hand: From Generic Ease to Encountering Glitches

Who gets to supply the metaphors and models for information processing online? 'Facebook might be making us compliant and docile' (Mejias, 2010: 604). Becoming ritualized in usage, social media may restrict our capacity for rendering these sites present-at-hand in political criticism. Our theorizing of audience involvement must allow spaces for distancing or 'disidentifying' (ibid.: 606). Ready-to-hand 'technological normalization through widespread use' signals success in enabling an everyday – enfolding – engaging with equipment (Lehman-Wilzig and Cohen-Avigdor, 2004: 710). Yet unpacking the tools of 'in-the-moment communications' is required (Elmer, 2013). Indeed for Cover (2006), author–text–audience interaction is a 'tactical war' for 'control over the text' (141).

Tourist sights/sites are often constructed for easy consumption by visitors, or ready-to-hand. They thus offer a metaphorical image of our familiar shopping malls and social media, equipped as sights/sites enabling construction and reception of narratives, complicit or contesting engagement. Indeed the 'practices and meanings of tourism multiply and move into other aspects of mobility and social life' (Larsen et. al., 2007: 245). Urry and Larsen (2011) point out, as tourism 'per se declines in specificity … people are much of the time "tourists"' in 'contemporary experience' (97). We 'tour' mall and media, easily when experienced as ready-to-hand, but reflectively when challenged.

Tourism confirms one's sense of identity as well as presenting the need to interpret surroundings. It 'represents not just an escape from home but also a search for home(s)' (Larsen et. al., 2007: 249). Phenomenology's narrative of perception is exemplified in the tourist's educated expectations of travel. There, ready-to-hand understanding may be countered, presented-at-hand for inspection.

Visitor *verstehen*, whether as habitual traveller in mall, media or more materially, in short, is a ready-to-hand practice (often marketed as made easy). As productive process, it is presented-at-hand by phenomenology, an account further accomplished in Iser's literary theory of reception.

(a) Hermeneutic phenomenology's narrative of perceptual practice

Phenomenology aims to 'yield taxonomically relevant descriptions of the universal invariant features and categories of human experience' (Jopling, 1996: 169). Hermeneutic phenomenology thus foregrounds perceptual experience as a structured process. Our seeing is essentially engaged or focused, absorbed in our interactive projecting (Gadamer, 1975: 224) and (de)positing of meaning in a moving, play-like understanding of surroundings. Thus the perceptual process is 'taken up' with explicitly or implicitly ascertaining that projections of meaning are accurate. Heidegger's account in *Being and Time* (1962) of our understanding as activity (188–95) leads him to assert a narrative of propositional 'interpretation' as the 'working-out of possibilities projected in understanding' (189). When uncertain in establishing generic identity, we reflectively shape a coherent interpretation.

In perceiving, we come to an understanding of the subject on which we bestow our attention. From the first moment of looking, we tacitly regard that which we see *as* instantiating a known type of phenomenon. Heidegger (as noted earlier) writes: 'anything interpreted, as something interpreted, has the "as"-structure as its own' (189). The entirely novel could not be understood. Our subsequent moments of articulating the meaning of observations constitute exploring possible accounts of their intelligibility. 'In the projecting of the understanding, entities are disclosed in their possibility' (192).

Prior to our understanding or (be)'fore-having' (191) the perceptually identified as the subject of our attention, we can be described as being in a pre-predicative or even pre-narrative phase. But as soon as we engage in behaviour towards entities (with their focus) we are de facto establishing an account or discourse of their identity. We thus implicitly conceptualize phenomena from our varying horizons of cultural understanding, so regarding our sighted subject *differently*. Subsequent action – our behaviour – expressly or tacitly checks these beginnings, as projections pursued in practices.

Like play, perception is continually future orientated, moving from expectation to eventuality, shaped in its understanding by a 'definite' goal or intention – 'with a view to' establishing meaning. Seeing has thereby a temporal 'fore-structure' (192): it is never instantaneous, but rather a process of reconciling

immediate anticipation with actual instance, or a hypothetical with established identity. Projection ('fore-sight') of narratives outlining our perceptual experience is fleshed out through our measuring 'fore-conceptions' against content (191). Anticipation is directed towards actualization. 'This fore-sight "takes the first cut" out of what has been taken into our fore-having, and it does so with a view to a definite way in which this can be interpreted' (ibid.) – to establishing an identity for projections. Should problems arise in this tacit practice, we unpack the ready-to-hand for reflection.

(b) Hermeneutic phenomenology, reception theory and authoring practice

Following the lead of hermeneutic phenomenology (Gadamer, Heidegger), literary reception theory echoed the refrain of perception as play (or that looking is ludic) as a model of the reading process. We shall see that accounts of the authoring audience can also draw upon phenomenology to posit that in their cyber-shaping, web users are equally at play: positioned on informed horizons of understanding enabling their recognition of particular text as instantiating genre, they write meaning into place. TripAdvisors interpret uncertainties of staying in distant hotels: as authors online, they so articulate an appropriate generic narrative of more or less comfortable 'equipment' with which their assumed audiences can easily engage and acquiesce. 'Appropriation', Ricoeur writes, in language relevant at this conjuncture, involves our 'understanding through distance, at a distance' (1975: 29).

Iser brings a phenomenology of our reading as authors to fruition. He argues that in book use we become co-creators of content along with the writer(s): thereby to be considered fully authoring audiences, we supplement stories, adding events and environment which are only implied (e.g. the murky details of a murder). Literary hints prompt hermeneutic activity establishing narrative. A text presents imperfectly at the point of consumption: people thus engage in the process of 'consistency building' (Iser, 1978: 16) or providing it with coherent meaning through adding determinate content. As Albrechtslund argues on 'understanding narrative practices in an online community' (2010: 116), drawing upon Ricoeur's hermeneutics, the 'meaning of a story is completed by the reader'.

On social media such as YouTube, a video blogging narrative can be regarded by its authoring audiences as 'textually incomplete', prompting their engaging in a hermeneutic circle of adding and elaborating events to completion. 'Since this media environment is based on the active involvement of users, incompleteness draws in and hooks the users into further dialogue' (Shifman, 2012: 198).

We fill out elliptical narratives, projecting and positioning our chain of presumed connecting events between cause and distant effect. A reader produces a rounded narrative from a repertoire or knowledge of textual convention (e.g. her or his awareness that shadows crossing a face can signal turmoil

within the person). Media texts characterized by indeterminacy of information provision or 'blanks' (Iser, 1974: 113), depend on their users to provide closure. Audiences (quasi-authors) can ensure that stories are completed in ways appropriate to the latter's generic status. Always reading or writing *types* of narrative, we draw on our accumulated knowledge to project/provide content.

Active within reading's perceptual 'field of play' we establish a 'work' from an indeterminate text (Iser, 1974: 274–75). We 'bring into play our own faculty for establishing connections – for filling in the gaps left by the text itself' (ibid.: 280). 'What is missing … stimulates the reader into filling the blanks with projections' (Iser, 1978: 168). That is to say, 'whenever the reader bridges a gap, communication begins. … Blanks indicate that the different segments and patterns of the text are to be connected even though the text itself does not say so' (Iser, 2006: 64, 65).

Iser's phenomenology of reading as a temporal process focuses on *under-standing* generated by our perception of text as narrative type and subsequently pursued to the point of establishing a specific story. Where we are confronted by events not anticipated (or 'negations'; Iser, 1978: 131), we *interpret* – revising our projection of content to attain a consistent story – an ambition thwarted only by a book's contradictions. There is a 'retrospective effect on what has already been read' (Iser, 1974: 278). This process of 'continual modification' (ibid.: 281) extends to narrating our own lives.

Iser argues thus that a 'reader's mind' plays upon the 'raw material of the text' (i.e. 'sentences, statements, information') producing narrative 'connec-tions' (ibid.: 279). In the play of remembering and projecting generically appropriate content on 'blanks' (ibid.: 113), 'consistency building' (Iser, 1978: 16) with interpreted 'negation' (ibid.: 131), we assemble stories, integrating future with past.

Our perceptual processing of 'anticipation and retrospection' does not 'develop in a smooth flow': rather it can be considered to involve a 'sort of kaleidoscope of perspectives, pre-intentions, recollections' (Iser, 1974: 279). Where 'flow is interrupted' by an unexpected event we have particular opportunities to interpretively synthesize stories. 'While expectations may be continually modified' and 'images continually expanded' the authorial 'reader will still strive, even if unconsciously, to fit everything together in a consistent pattern' (ibid.: 283). Narrating thus in a mode much reminding us of Heidegger (above), Iser's phenomenology of reading equally illuminates our practices of writing:

> for authoring audiences located on cultural horizons of understanding from which stories are recognised as instantiating familiar genres, a 'text provokes certain expectations which in turn we project onto the text in such a way that we reduce the polysemantic possibilities to a single interpretation in keeping with the expectations aroused, thus extracting an individual, configurative meaning'. (1974: 285)

Writing in Social Media/Walking in Shopping Malls: Engaging with Marketed Expectations in Elliptical Narratives

> Places are chosen to be gazed upon because there is an anticipation, especially through day-dreaming and fantasy, of intense pleasures, either on a different scale or involving different senses from those customarily encountered. Such anticipation is constructed and sustained through a variety of non-tourist practices, such as film, newspapers, TV, magazines, records and videos which construct that gaze. Such practices provide the signs in terms of which the holiday experiences are understood, so that what is then seen is interpreted in terms of these pre-given categories. (Urry, 1995: 132)

Like holiday signs, marketing social media sets out elliptical narratives, forming a would-be persuasive promise of their *ready-to-hand* support, 'help' enabling our establishing equilibria – our *eudaemonia* (or happiness). 'Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life', we implied users are assured. Engaging easily with this equipment, consumers can 'educate' their expectations (or fore-conceptions), drawing upon supportive sketches to form an understanding of its embodied employment which is not *presented-at-hand* (interpreted) unless unlikely issues arise (or as reflection in a focus group). Not only narrative completion but 'navigational skills' (Merikivi *et al.*, 2013: 1169) should be swiftly ready-to-hand, perhaps assisted by 'historical continuities' between using Facebook and scrapbooks (Good, 2013). Yet shifting strategies of 'revealing and concealing information' among Facebook friends (Vitak and Ellison, 2012: 244) are likely to require reflection rather than support ready-to-hand reading on social media sites (Nicolini, 2011). Evaluating friends' online Facebook behaviour is 'analytic labor' (Karakayali and Kilic, 2013: 175) during which 'users analyze their environment' (ibid.: 176), exemplifying reflexive 'network consciousness' (ibid.: 177).

'Plan the perfect trip' (TripAdvisor). 'Welcome to Twitter. Find out what's happening, right now, with the people and organizations you care about'. In both these promotions, we (as implied visitors) are hailed through being offered equipment transparently enabling 'right now' our being-with-others, without reflection on 'complex literacies' (Elmer, 2013). Even niche networking sites (excluding many) become familiar to members, and are used unreflectively (Prabhu, 2011). Employing these sites, we are led to anticipate that social media's would-be persuasive marketing narratives, is characterized by – in Heidegger's earlier terms – 'inconspicuousness and obviousness which belong … to the readiness-to-hand of the equipment with which one is daily concerned' (1962: 158).

Marketing discourse establishes for implied consumers horizons of understanding or product reception in which the latter is perceived as in some regard familiar, and hence easy (if exciting) to use, with product branding 'proclaiming its radical newness whilst at the same time positioning the

technology within existing uses and discursive formations' (Bennett, 2008: 165). Thus, rather than requiring an interpretive text, the equipment will be mundane in use (or 'everyday-ing'; ibid.: 169). Transparently functioning tools mark out our 'interface time', rather than reflection (Elmer, 2013), since digital machines should constitute 'common and trusted home appliances' (Kelly, 2009: 32).

As an easy instance, presentation of Apple's iPhone as the 'Jesus Phone' employed a 'highly recognizable and easily decodable icon in American culture', for a 'familiar metaphysical metaphor surrounding the technology … as a public relations and marketing strategy'. Here, the technology appears immediately if mysteriously supportive in a 'mystical message of technology endowed by divinity and brought to life at just one touch' (Campbell and La Pastina, 2010: 1197, 1201).

Marketing narratives (themselves often elliptical in reference as in 'Plan the perfect trip') educate in appropriate discourse their (assumed if not actual) addressees, establishing expectations of unproblematic (if not 'perfect') equipment needing no tiresome reflection in its enabling goals. Indeed, like Facebook, social media will 'help', establishing a happy equilibrium of 'being-with-others' (Heidegger) or fulfil the teleology of sharing with the 'people in your life', despite all the 'complexity of social relationships and interactions fostered' therein (Tomasello *et al.*, 2010: 534). The repertory of relationships – both offline and online – will be eased, rendered ready-to-hand.

This would-be culturally appropriate and hence persuasive discourse of 'convenience', of ready-to-hand equipment enabling goals without reflection is at the core of marketing even in the absence of consumers' accustomed product use. Thus 'convenience should form the integral part of any marketing campaign promoting online news adoption for both users, non-users or non-frequent users' (Chan and Leung, 2005: 377). Addressing such cultural resonance is termed by Faiola *et al.* (2010), 'extending knowledge domains' for interaction design theory, 'designing for user-centricity' (698).

However, marketing may delineate cultural horizons of product understanding which are inadequate or inappropriate to the concerned consumer: social media may not 'accurately' address an actual authoring audience. Gay marketing may thus 'reduce gays and lesbians to a singular axis of identity, disregarding the ways in which sexuality intersects with "race", ethnicity, class, gender and religion' (Campbell, 2005: 678). Where advertising's horizons of understanding the world *are* recognized as inclusive by its audiences, is 'in discerning relevant hails from the noise of mass media advertisements, consumers effectively sort themselves as economic subjects' (ibid.: 669).

Marketing's media narratives ('More Ways to Be You'), then, are quintessentially cultural; ellipses (or 'blanks'; Iser, 1974: 113) enable their audiences to establish expectations of recognizing ready-to-hand entities. The 'prominence of "window-on-the-world" discourses' in branding digital media equipment 'relate television's digitalization to the initial inception of television into everyday life' (Bennett, 2008: 161). In delineating cultural horizons of consumer anticipation, the authors of elliptical narratives are active: consumer

'lifestyle and values' do not 'impact' (causally determine) marketing (Chan and Leung, 2005: 361). Marketing chooses and circulates values, albeit that it promotes audience 'ease' despite an environment of 'many problems with ICTs' (Stewart, 2007: 556). Nor, of course, is marketing the sole source of information in locating social media within our horizons of understanding. As Stewart shows, 'through casual conversations, or enthusiastic demonstrations, local experts let members of their social network know about ICT innovations and uses' (ibid.: 559).

Social media presuppose a 'real world'. Digital debate connects to material life. Rather than being 'well-defined places one "goes to" on the net' as a virtual world, these participatory media are 'tools one uses to maintain a network' furthering action offline (Gochenour, 2006: 34). Resisting the dualism which would separate (simple?) cyber tools from (complex) corporeal consumption (our e-debates from eating), Brophy (2010) reminds us social media are not a 'space where one leaves the body behind' (935). Enabling 'interpretational capability' or our capacity for employment of these tools is memory, exercised as ready-to-hand or reflectively, if addressing issues (Sicart, 2009: 86).

Shared fore-understanding of familiar entities – our memory of their characteristic practice – enables extended communities of expectation (projecting potential narrative) in regarding a specific instance: we can therein produce accounts (equipped with 'blanks') appropriate to their being more fully articulated by assumed and aligned audience. Communal fore-conceptions of 'using mobile phones in close relationships', for example, carry narrative projections of intimate perpetual contact supportive in filling out absences in someone's storytelling (Hall and Baym, 2011). Twitter updates need be neither narrated (nor attended to) in detail within a community aware of the regularities in its well fore-understood practice: their ready-to-hand knowledge completes familiar references.

Actualizing 'repertoires of media use' (Taneja *et al.*, 2012) in responding to participatory-prescriptive media, draws upon our (in)formed ready-to-hand ability to engage with (*understanding* of) social networking sites embodied as 'Internet skill' (Litt, 2013). The authoring audience is here unreflective. Far from *interpreting* its activity, it is elliptically aware (at most) of putting into play or unpacking fore-understanding of social media as equipment enabling users to establish meaning and exercise evaluation. Yet our meaning is an 'accomplishment' (Buttle, 1998: 70) emerging from projecting and (de)positing text, a 'resource' (De Lopes, 2012: 112) produced which we *then* polish.

In short, a Heideggerian thesis of social media technology and software as ready-to-hand claims here that 'for us, living in the technological age, the world is *already framed* as a resource available for us, to be made, to be shaped for our ongoing possibilities to express our particular projects' (Introna, 2011a; emphasis added). How do our social media websites 'enframe' – enabling without reflection – our achieving particular projects in being-with-others or 'me-marketing (the act of carefully presenting oneself in accordance to how

one wants to be seen by others)' (Caers *et al.*, 2013: 988)? How do they assist authoring audiences to appropriate

> the *world of the text* that both the categories of writing and of work introduce. What I may make my own – in other words, appropriate – is the pro-position of a world, i.e., the mode of being-in-the-world displayed by the text. (Ricoeur, 1975: 30; emphasis in original)

Malaysian Citizen-Consumers Engaging with Social Media Portals: Turning to New Tools-A Hermeneutics of Habituating Virtual Projects

> Equipment is something *in-order-to*. (Stenner, 1998: 70; emphasis in original)

Narrative as a recognizable discursive tool enables achievement of goals. Within the familiar telling of a story we need not reflect upon the process of our project, on *how* we are anticipating and actualize meaning. Our communities of expectation exercise practised ready-to-hand repertoires of understanding from well-formed horizons of anticipating narrative. In this way, 'all comprehension presupposes an experience of a world divided into (familiar) horizons' (Jauss and Margulies, 1980: 110). Or as Ricoeur earlier argues (1975), as authoring audiences engaging with 'linguistic signs as available tools', we share 'belonging to a cultural tradition which precedes us, encompasses us, and supports us, but which we can never grasp from without, place in front of us, and judge' (15–16).

Increasingly, digital media displace traditional fonts of knowledge for Malaysian audiences, shaping instrumental horizons of understanding experience and anticipating action accordingly. So in civil society (Postill, 2014), 'participative media is destabilizing the established power structures of government' (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013: 5) materialized through owning mainstream mass media.

In Kelantan politics (2008), for instance, which is a state distant from the nation's capital, the 'media preferred by voters in the three parliamentary constituencies' were 'social media (91%) – such as Face Book [*sic*], Twitter and news portal … The least preferred medium [*sic*] are the mainstream newspapers (15.4%), television (24%) and radio (53%)' (Salam and Sualman, 2012: 11). Zainodin *et al.* (2012) argue, 'the prevalence of [the] Internet to facilitate political knowledge searches among young voters, has impelled political candidates to jump into the social networking bandwagon' (4). Social network sites extend political participation for existing activists (Gustafson, 2012: 1120). In the 2013 General Election, alleged denial of access or service to news portals such as *Malaysiakini* (below) – rather than their being ready-to-hand – rendered everyday reading being presented as a political issue for reflection by voters across the nation.

Malaysian social media research among its college youth claims that, 'students find it more convenient to interact on social networking sites than other form of communication' (Chellvan and Abdullah, 2012: 5). For instance, a Chinese female student remarks, corroborating this study, that such participatory e-equipment is a 'useful tool for casual, fast and effective communication with friends', enhancing 'the way [youth] think and communicate, making everything shorter and faster'.

Indeed, at the peak of Malaysia's higher education, the very Vice-Chancellor of Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) equipped only with his iPad

> channels messages onto emails to relevant departments' heads, directors or deans of faculties. 'There is no difficulty in managing [Facebook]. It can be managed everywhere even in Penang, Sabah and India' … This immediacy contributed to the success of the [Facebook page] … Students are happy with their close relationship with the [Vice-Chancellor] as they are media savvy. It has become a way of life. (Aziz *et al*., 2012: 17, 19)

Familiarity and frequency here support easy, unproblematic 'transparent' engaging with content.

Investigating users' tacit anticipating and actualizing of ready-to-hand access is appropriate. Indeed it could be regarded as an extension of Uses and Gratifications theory which frames much Malaysian media research (cf. Idid *et al*., 2012). Using this longstanding methodology, for instance, claim Manaf *et al*. (2012), we 'will be able to understand what motivates Muslim youth viewers to watch religious reality television shows and how the content impacts (any) changes in their life' (7).

In the Heideggerian version, our *use* shapes the very horizon of our *understanding* social or traditional media – the fore-conception of projecting and positing their meaning (anticipating and actualizing activity) – as a set of tools enabling gratification in modes of being-with-others. Clearly, a range of agenda or goals (not least ideological (Fuchs and Dyer-Witheford, 2012: 788) as well as religious) constitute success for different groups with their varying narratives of tool access (e.g. in political blogging; Foong, 2012). Hence, 'green advertising' (Fauzi and Yuen, 2011) cultivates its environmental end, the former's being equipped by would-be persuasive stories of product use.

The 'main body' of a social media site is the 'representation of the user' (Wok *et al*., 2012: 7). While familiarity with the site software supports ready access in authoring, for some Malaysian academics (e.g. at the International Islamic University) this repetitive engagement can be excessive: 'youth in Malaysia is highly addicted to social media sites' (ibid.: 31; cf. Abdullah *et al*., 2012).

More positively, familiarity with the Internet may enhance parental guidance. In research on families by Bujang *et al*. in 2012, 'most respondents had IT knowledge and skills where they used that to practise proper parental monitoring and guidance'. Acknowledging their children's frequent engaging

in mobile phone and social media access, 'parents have to promote family communication in creative ways … in which family cohesion can be maintained' (Zulkifly and Abdullah, 2012).

Participatory communication online has been suggested as enabling being-with-others on a 'platform for youth to express their true self [*sic*]' (Wok *et al.*, 2012: 31). Audiences who engage in authoring a social media 'managing presence' project an 'instantaneously lasting' text (Aziz *et al.*, 2012: 2, 3). Increasingly preferring them to legally curbed mainstream resources as route for media communication, many adult 'Malaysians regard blogs as the avenue for voicing and exchanging opinions' (Lean *et al.*, 2011: 191). While being an online news portal, *Malaysiakini* enlists readers' attention to multiple political authors online. These 'bloggers are not only limited to adult political specialists or amateur journalists' (Bidin and Mustaffa, 2012). More widely, 'weblogs (blogs)' are a 'kind of online diary which has now replaced personal home pages as the web's basic vehicle for personal expression' (Harrison and Barthel, 2009: 159). Blogs function clearly as enabling tools.

Malaysian Social Media Reception and Reflection on News Portals: From *Malaysiakini* and *Malaysian Insider* to *New Straits Times Online*

Equipped by weblog software, Malaysians are enabled to 'voice out' in its generic modes of being online. The prominent Democratic Action Party politician Lim Kit Siang counsels readers on 'patriotic' presenting-at-hand for reflection their 'failed' economic national potential: 'Malaysians as [a] patriotic duty must ask why Malaysia failed to live up to our potential to be a leading global nation in all fields of human endeavor 56 years after *Merdeka* (Independence)' (10.2.13).

Visitors to news portals (like *Malaysiakini*) and social media (such as global Facebook) are similarly media-equipped, hence narrative-enabled if appropriately knowledgeable of practice. With 'knowing how' to use software ready-to-hand, they can easily engage being-with-others reflectively, as consumers authoring views with consummate authority online. Portals contain accounts of events (without reflecting on their narrative genesis) appropriate to assumed audiences – or present-at-hand their stories for analysis, perceived to be of public interest for consideration.

The independent news portal *Malaysiakini* provided a brief economic report, ready-to-hand for informed readers as media-equipped authoring audiences (9.2.13): 'The country's exports fell 5.8 percent year on year, with shipments to the United States falling the most, followed by China'. A Facebook respondent reflects ironically on this economic shaping of 'our country':

> This is a worrying point, the export is [*sic*] dwindling, the country's deficit is at 600 billion, there is an illicit outflow of 200 billion per year and the government is handling out money like nobodies [*sic*] business. Our

country is not a gold mine, if it is, at the rate the money is spent we should [be] at the point of economic meltdown!

On Facebook, a news portal itself can reflectively present at-hand. A claim about celebrating Chinese New Year being-with-others is offered as a horizon of interpreting cultural practices:

Many Chinese New Year practices of yore are either dead or dying. Do you agree?

How many among those of you celebrating wear the *cheongsam*, *samfoo* or *changshan* on the first day? Do you wear red? Eat auspicious dishes? Sweep the floor?

Do you wish others with a resounding GONG XI FA CAI, or does HCNY suffice? (*New Straits Times* Facebook 9.2.13)

Malaysians are equipped not only with news portals unaligned with the ruling government coalition but with 'news magazines' – notably *Aliran Monthly* ('Malaysia's leading independent English-language news magazine'). Here, for instance, a narrative of national education functions as the focus for readers to reflect on criteria for admitting students to university. 'Why are foreign students able to study in institutions of higher learning in Malaysia, when locals … who do not have a credit in *Bahasa* [Malay] find themselves unable to register as on-campus students?' (9.2.13)

Reflection on blogging, news portal or social media narrative – rather than its articulating for assumed authoring audiences to assemble in unproblematic ready-to-hand practices – almost always is concerned with analyzing political-social issues, not with the (mal)functioning of online software. Although the Secretary-General of the Malaysian Democratic Action Party, Lim Guan Eng writes on Twitter that 'nil 3G/wifi internet access in Titi' (regional site of a newly established Information, Communications and Culture complex) he considers to be 'shameful, disgusting' (14.2.13).

Returning to the prominent Democratic Action Party politician Lim Kit Siang, his daily blog presented substantial reflection on the nature of 'democracy' in Malaysia following swift detention and deportation of an Australian Member of Parliament seeking entry to the country in anticipation of the 13th Malaysian General Election being announced by the Malaysian Prime Minister:

The Malaysian Bar is astounded at the absurdity of the Malaysian authorities in detaining Australian Senator Nick Xenophon upon his arrival on Malaysian soil this morning. He is currently in custody, having been reportedly refused entry into the country, and will be deported. Such shameful action on the part of the authorities shows the sizeable gulf between the aspirational statements of the Prime Minister that Malaysia is a modern democracy, and the irrational actions of the

people around him. (Press Release by Lim Chee Wee, President, Malaysian Bar, 16 February 2013)

Xenophon reflected: 'I was quite gobsmacked when I was taken away early on' (*Herald Sun*). His ready-to-hand, tacit expectation of easy entry is confronted, challenged and curtailed on arrival.

Conclusion: Authoring Audience Understanding-in-Practices – Entering Participatory-Persuasive Mall/Media Portals

> If interaction design practitioners only concentrate on human metrics, thereby failing to grapple with the more qualitative nature of observation, they will miss the more implicit and subtle forms of user behaviour. (Faiola *et al.*, 2010: 693)

There are no 'given' or raw data (*pace* positivism): 'looking is a learned ability' (Urry and Larsen, 2011: 1). Instead, we primordially understand the world of entities through projecting (and realizing) its possibility as equipment. Tourist visitors to social media engage narrative through a multiple 'intermingling of presence and absence' (Urry, 1995: 16). The ready-to-hand reality of easy use is enabled through memory, users drawing implicitly on the past as 'everyday memories of the Internet' (Alan, 2012: 260). Their experience is 'only accessible through an interplay between the partially interpreted' and the practical (Wilson, 1980: 291). As a constant in conducting life, from social media to shopping mall, we anticipate articulating intelligible accounts – that we predominantly achieve practical coherent narratives of the world through which we pass every day.

A hermeneutics of practices presents our behavioural projection and (de)positing of meaning for which memory and recognizing are required, rather than 'mental models' (Van Dijk, 2011) of a situation. Such study is not underwritten by 'formulating lay or expert intuitions about reading and understanding' (ibid.: 612). Rather, as Heidegger argued, it explicates the practice of understanding, denying 'a separation between knower and known' that obviates 'diverse cultural ways of knowing, speaking, and narrating' (Srinivasan, 2012: 204) informing practices of embodied perceiving. In our discussing consumption we find – enabling our social media and shopping mall behaviour – multiple cultural resources shaping 'user-generated content' (Walther and Jang, 2012: 4) in visitor projects. Both our mall and media visiting are modes of 'mass self-communication' (Castells, 2010: xxx). Generic equipment supports our integrating narratives, establishing a 'branded self' (Hearn, 2008), albeit ironically 'repurposed for profit' by Facebook (Hinton and Hjorth, 2013: 75), in colonizing 'culture by commercial interests' (Dwyer, 2011: 86) in cyberspace.

6   Visitors Engaging in Mall Practices
Minimally Monitored Managing Meaning

With Choy Tuck Yun and Tan Teck Hong

> We spent our time in this [Sunway] mall while we were staying in the Pyramid Hotel. Since you have the theme park, the resort and the mall, why getting out for 4 days? This place had it all.
>
> > (25–34 year woman, Saudi Arabia, writing on TripAdvisor)

> The task of interpretive investigations is to understand observed human behaviour more completely by explicating the world of implied possibilities and commitments which are expressed by the behaviour.
>
> > (Deetz, 1973: 156)

Project: Shopping malls like screen media have taken a postmodernist turn. Marketing engages with multiple categories of shopper. Promotional communication increasingly uses social media to address consumers. To whom does such mall marketing speak? Who is watching the screen?

Using interpretive marketing theory earlier shown to be informed by hermeneutics, in this chapter we resist the inductivist imperative to use questionnaire-based research (apparently without presupposition) to establish a list of shopper types. Instead we commence here with a *hypothesis* of understanding-in-practices: consumers enter our vast mall from a shared, tacit habituated horizon of understanding it to be equipped as a 'great good place' (Oldenburg, 1999), enabling ready-to-hand, embodied expectations. Integrating anticipation with actuality – skilled managing – generates modes of being-with-others. We test this hypothesis – focused on consumer fore-understanding (projection of meaning) – in a focus group, hearing contributions which confirm our starting point. So pursuing this route to establishing findings from such research, we follow Popper's logic of scientific method (1959): a hypothesis derived by informed 'creative intuition' (ibid.) is tested against interview data.

Our hypothetico-deductive reasoning is holistic in speculating on the perspective with which our consumers primarily engage with their mall. How do they therefore then interpret the diversity of products and structure their time in its space? Does the focus group corroborate this deduction?

Drawing upon Heidegger's phenomenology and Oldenburg's political theory, the chapter suggests consumers implicitly perceive a mall to be instrumentally

immersive – or that it securely supports their ludic absorption and local assembly as well as being a location for acquisition. Our frequent travellers to a mall above all enjoyed its space and time as 'belonging' in a 'second home'.

So what tacit (pre-reflective) assumptions about malls are embedded in narrative enunciated by people who visit them? We find a core concept of a mall's 'entities' as 'equipment' (dis)enabling modes of 'being-with-others' (Heidegger), a focus of visitor perspectives on consumption as social.

—————

At their inception, shopping malls provided a wide assortment of full-price merchandise. In Malaysia, they offered such goods to undifferentiated mall visitors in a mass market. Over the years malls expanded to include service outlets and entertainment providers. It has been only recently that mall owners or management differentiated between their properties, structuring ambience to address specific types of visitor ('You!') by offering services such as staffed information booths, stroller and wheelchair rental, gift certificates for sale, senior citizen and frequent shopper programmes as well as engaging with local communities. As argued by Tan and Waheed (2011), generic services of this kind speak to consumers' wants and needs, adding value to the mall experience (Gummerus, 2013).

Moving from marketing with a mass audience to addressing multiple more specific markets is a profound change in managing communication (such as branding) which has been characterized as pluralist or postmodernist. Attracting a large volume of mall consumers on a continuing basis – as with changes which occurred in screen media – now consists of successfully adding groups aiming to recognize and refine their own identity. Immersive consumption for some visitors may consist of refreshing novelty, the unexpected ('adventure'): others enjoy familiar experience, a 'second home'.

Malls, now, have gone beyond their initial role as an economic entity to become important meeting places for social and recreational activity (Bloch *et al.*, 1986; 1994). Their transition is from market to a modern mirroring of the ancient Greek *agora*, occupied by citizen-consumers (Wilson, 2011). Consumers view their malls as places not only for shopping but also for other activities, such as entertainment, gathering with their friends and browsing with little intention of buying. Visitors purposely come to immerse in sights and sounds: high levels of pleasure and arousal are a key part of their shopping experience. Recognizing this requirement, mall interiors have mutated from their merely addressing consumer needs to become architecturally rich: sophisticated design offers their visitors climatic comfort and freedom from the city's surrounding insecurity and traffic. 'Indulge and pamper your senses as you've never done before in the wholly transformed Sunway Pyramid!'[1]

As a mall's success clearly rests on consumers' patronage, management needs strategies to enhance numbers, thereby increasing retail productivity. Recently, mall operators have begun to use social media marketing to distinguish their facility from competitors, and so develop a promotional campaign establishing for their intended market a clear identity in shoppers' minds. The

mall image constructed online is based on assumptions about the consumers whom they are addressing

Marketing research has thus placed an emphasis on putting its mall consumers in categories, on segmenting its visitors as instrumental shoppers (engaged in purchasing) and those instead (or additionally) focused on more intrinsic aspects of consumer experience (immersive pleasure). In selling the mall through social media both broad categories can be addressed as potential visitors. While Facebook is an appropriate online location for product marketing, YouTube's video narrative format offers opportunities to both corporate entities and consumer enthusiasts to record accounts of 'going to the mall'. So, for instance, Malaysia's Sunway Pyramid Mall is vividly branded on social media at YouTube as an 'adventure' for shoppers. 'Adventure. Everybody loves it!' (www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQeijVVbdI4).

A screen narrative of mall visiting as adventure is clearly appropriate or fittingly addressed to an audience of consumers in Arnold and Reynolds (2003) category of shopping for stimulation. But our brief research on shopping motivation where pleasure intrinsic to the mall is sought has noted other groups concerned with support for affiliation (Westbrook and Black, 1995) or bonding (Arnold and Reynolds, 2003). Here consuming focuses on confirming, not challenging experience.

As we have discussed in earlier chapters, Heidegger distinguishes between *ready-to-hand* or familiar engaging with an environment or equipment accompanied by minimal attention to activity, and practices which are simultaneously monitored or closely considered as *present-at-hand*. We suggest that the shopping mall – postmodern and plural – can be experienced in either mode. Its media marketing as 'adventure' emphasizes the (implied) consumer will need to focus her or his attention on (not too) unexpected events. But malls can also be marketed as celebrating memory. 'Remember Who You Are, Forget Who They Want You to Be': 'Catch Up with Yourself'. Whether challenging or confirming, mall visits evoke a self-monitoring narrative – extended or minimal. Mid-Valley mall is 'quite complicated'. Choosing fruit? 'It's just the same. Just grab and go'. But whether explicitly or implicitly, thoughtfully or tacitly, we produce our meaning for the mall in stories: we actualize our always already formed *fore-conceptions* in burgeoning behaviour.

In this chapter, we excavate through intensive focus group discussion with youthful visitors to a mall their moments and narratives not (as might be anticipated) of 'adventure' but instead of an identity confirming immersive 'belonging': so ready-to-hand, this place 'feels like a second home'. Their stories suggest malls may also be imperfectly aesthetic, with sound-scape or striving crowds prompting consumers' focused attention as places rendered present-at-hand in a critical reflection. Nonetheless, we suggest that the idea of a mall emerging in these accounts is that it can be enjoyed ready-to-hand, with a sense of 'belonging': '[I'm] very familiar with the mall' (female, Chinese). A future discussion of media marketing could consider its representing thus in YouTube narrative.

Generic Practices of Shopping Mall and Social Media Immersion: Is Being in a Mall a Mode of 'Being-with-Others' in a 'Great Good Place'?

The mall as architectural entity is continually renovated. Nonetheless, is it understood by its consumers to empower visitors as a 'great good place' (Oldenburg, 1999), where their narratives of play, conversation and communal experience are supported in a familiar, ready-to-hand home away from home? Such a 'third place' 'offers relief from the stressful demands of work and home life and provides the feeling of inclusiveness and belonging associated with participating in a group's social activities' (Soukup, 2006: 423). Extending and presenting-at-hand visitor minimal self-monitoring, this question is addressed drawing on phenomenology's sense-making theory (Hopkinson, 2001). Our focus is on consumer behaviour, actual and assumed, at Sunway Pyramid. Mall practices we suggested in the Preface offer a generic place ballet, 'routines rooted in space, which becomes an important place of interpersonal and communal exchanges, actions, and meanings' (Seamon, 2006).

Oldenburg's (1999) phrase, we noted in the first chapter, does not acknowledge the political economy of constructing public space and time for private profit or 'brandscapes'. Nonetheless, our research participants preferred malls which could be (as in the title of his book) negotiated as their 'hangouts at the heart of a community' (ibid.). Mobilizing phenomenology's practices-oriented core support for interpretive marketing as emphasizing consumer *activity* can further define their horizon of understanding malls as a perspective from which undertakings within their concrete surroundings receive emphasis. In our thinking through these focused accounts, we discern their tacit perception ('fore-understanding') of a mall as possessing 'potential-for-being' (Heidegger, 1962) able to support its visitors in anticipating and accomplishing narratives of behavioural 'belonging' in which it 'feels like a second home' (female, Chinese). We hear 'shared emotion', always cognitive and here written into behaviour recreating consumers' 'communal link' (Cova, 1997: 299), celebrated in these stories.

Research Method (i) Understanding the Media Marketed Mall: Constructing Expectations, Equipment and Consumer Practices

Writing within a framework of interpretive marketing theory informed by phenomenology, as noted, we resist the inductivist imperative to use questionnaire-based research, generalizing from answers to establish a list of shopper types. Rather, we reverse the procedure by commencing with a hermeneutic hypothesis – that our shoppers implicitly understand their mall as a 'great good place' – and test this practices-shaping preconception against contributions in a mall visitors' focus group.

We consider what tacit assumptions about the mall can be discerned in narratives enunciated by people who enjoy it: here we find the core concept of

this mall's products as a diverse range of equipment enabling modes of being-with-others (in)forms visitor perspectives on consuming goods.

'Qualitative research provides an in-depth, if necessarily subjective, understanding of the consumer' (Calder, 1977: 353). Despite positivism's claim for god-like objectivity (somehow seeing the world simultaneously from all – or no – perspectives), research is necessarily undertaken from a point-of-view. Explicitly taking this philosophical point on board, interpretive marketing theory and research, undergirded by a Heideggerian hermeneutics, seek to enunciate the narrative perspective of research participants as the conceptual starting point (albeit interpreted by the researcher): it also argues that our human perspective (whether participant or researcher) on narratives is instrumental. Accounts of our activities function fundamentally to allow us to make sense out of our experience. Understanding is temporal. So constructing a story commits us (explicitly or implicitly) to 'project' our anticipation of its outcome ('I am shopping' implies 'I expect to make purchases'). Narratives are thereby discursive equipment guiding or enabling our potential-for-being or possibilities.

In his philosophical exploration, as we saw, Heidegger considers that we primordially view things (or entities) from the perspective of practice. Names for entities first and foremost connote their characteristic (generic) cultural functioning rather than abstract qualities which may be a focus of more scientific interest: a 'chair' supports the seated human being (albeit possessing a particular colour, shape and weight). Narratives are thus to be considered a mode of linguistic practice. Stories function to culturally shape or (in)form our experience of the world. Categorizing our narratives as being of differing genres, we regard (explicitly/implicitly) these tales as types of tools. Monitoring and directing our mall activity, resolving gaps between anticipation and achievement in a circle of 'consistency-building' (Larsen *et al.*, 2004: 3), we construct a story in/of enabling potentiality. 'Each narrative provides insight into the way that consumers make sense of events in their lives' (Stern *et al.*, 1998: 209). Our understanding is interpretive in perceiving entities as enabling consumption. For phenomenology, malls and narratives therein are modes of enabling visitors' being-with-others. We pay a price (exchange value) for products enabling such potentiality-for-being (their use value).

Research Method (ii) Focus Groups as Extensive Presenting of Practices at Hand

A focus group of self-selected volunteering third year business students, lasting about one hour, was convened by a male Chinese Malaysian academic (a co-author of this chapter) to reflect on their otherwise ready-to-hand mall practices. A male Caucasian colleague (myself) lurked in the background. Neither teaches these undergraduates. We met during the morning at a small discussion room in a university building, linked to our shopping mall by a spectacular 'canopy walkway'.

These five Chinese (three female, two male) participants all contributed, with occasional prompting by the convener: 'What do you expect from the [Sunway Pyramid] mall?' Respondents considered the moderator's questions (listed below) at length, then briefly talked about the mall as presented on social media (principally Facebook and Twitter) and a YouTube Pyramid Mall video. Discussion – occasionally blurred – was digitally recorded for subsequent consideration.

As is evident from the open questions below, the convener sought narratives and evaluation of the mall as a place and time enabling these participants' activity as visitors. The chapter offers a detailed exploration of consumer narratives articulated by the focus group five – as similar young persons alike in age (around twenty), identical in ethnicity (Chinese) to many Pyramid Mall-goers. In considering the 'spoken and the unspoken' (Thompson *et al.*, 1994), we seek to set out the tacit but powerful group assumptions about the mall as a place enabling their self-fulfilling *practices*.

Questions Facilitating Our Discussion

'Tell us about the times when you are in the mall'.
'Do you have a visit that you particularly like, particularly memorable?'
'What would you comment … that you like about [the mall]? And what would you criticize about the mall?'
'Anything concerning the *way* I've been asking questions?' (convener; emphasis in original)

Participant Fore-Understanding of Focus Group Contributions

Our research participants' reflexive understanding of their mall evaluation was as a personal perspective, 'my opinion'. This view is confirmed as appropriate to focus groups by the convener: 'that's why we invited you'. As argued above, the narratives advanced by these contributors can be understood as 'tools', equipment enabling their vocal construction of experience: thus 'dialogue and interpersonal communication are crucial tools, as well as *loci* of knowledge' (Corradi, 1991: 105).

Research Results (i) Addressing the Mall Audience in Social Media

Our focus group participants were given an opportunity to respond to representations of the mall in the participatory-promotional narratives of Facebook and Twitter. Supporting their focused expectation, 'updating' with 'extra information' (female, Chinese) for consumers, a Pyramid social media Facebook page informs its occasionally authoring audience of 'any events that [are] coming'. Beyond promotion, this Pyramid address can be participatory or community oriented: 'Sometimes […] a kind reminder, like for example, the hazy weather. […] They remind everyone to drink more water.

This kind of thing' (female, Chinese). In presencing her authorial audience understanding this response acknowledges a '(co-)authorial presence behind the text' (Das and Pavlíckova, 2013: 2). 'They' are located on this respondent's horizon of understanding, as a resource, enabling narrative.

Mobile construction of Facebook meaning is limited. 'Do you go into Sunway Facebook […]?' 'Just "Like" the page!' (male, Chinese) (laughter). As software tools enabling consumers to follow social media on-the-go, distinct from 'sitting in front of a laptop' using Facebook, 'maybe Twitter is more to mobile' (female, Chinese). Interaction is embodied in different modes of access.

In the YouTube prescriptive narrative of Pyramid Mall, its construction is as hyper-mediated heaven of audience 'adventure'. The account therein seeks to shape the consumer's assumption or 'fore-understanding' of appropriate activity, promoting audience alignment (or perhaps alienation).

'Adventure. Everybody loves it!' The presenter's opening direct address to camera and consumer engaged her assumed audience in distraction (extraction from the everyday) – a discourse which celebrated opportunities in the mall as opposed to the mundane. If aligned with these prescriptive narratives on screen, the consumer's expectation of adventurous being would heighten. He or she would consider the mall as potentially an unaccustomed, hence vividly present-at-hand, adventure.

However, our audience of focus group participants articulates not alignment with adventure but apathy. 'Does [the video] *match* your experience in the mall?' (convener; emphasis in original)

A monosyllabic response follows: 'Yes' (female, Chinese); 'Like what she said' (female, Chinese) (laughter). Is this YouTube mall promotional video a successful guide to a shopping 'adventure'? 'After viewing the video, are there things that you like to do in the mall?' (convener). No response. Signalled by their silence, a disjunction appeared between these visitors and the marketing video.

Research Results (ii) Fore-Understanding the Mall as 'Second Home' or 'Third Place'

As genre/type of experiential consuming (distinct from other modes of material acquisition), visiting a mall is anticipated to provide secure experience. 'Basically, I expect good security from the mall' (female, Chinese). Such fore-understanding (in)forms her horizon of expectations, shaping more specific anticipation, '[I] expect them to provide things that we need' (equipment actualizing potential-for-being). Her anticipation can be disappointed: 'certain brands, some malls do not have'.

Malls themselves are identified as generic: the Gardens has 'higher end shops' (female, Chinese). The Empire Mall, on the other hand, offers customers 'more food and beverage' (female, Chinese).

Our participants have counterfactual expectations of the mall, those not yet actually met. The focus group convener explores potentiality: 'Is there anything that would […] make you *like* to come [to the mall] […] "I wish there was something like this"?' (emphasis in original) To which a student responds: expecting 'events', 'exhibitions', an 'education fair', 'PC expo' (female, Chinese).

Implicit within our focus group's narratives of this mall is their tacit conception or use of its public space as secure 'second home' (female, Chinese) or in Oldenburg's (1999) terms a 'third' or 'great' 'good place'. The Sunway Pyramid Mall does not occupy the 'low profile' (ibid.: 36) of such places: indeed we have just considered its architecturally celebratory media marketing on YouTube. As Soukup also points out, Oldenburg's conception is not without issues. 'Are these traditional third places to which Oldenburg refers truly without status and accessible to everyone?' (2006: 430). Our respondents, nonetheless, understood the mall's civic space as 'second home' or 'great good place'.

Characteristics of a 'Great Good Place' (Oldenburg, 1999)

'The eternal sameness of (this) third place' so constituted by 'gathering places of informal public life' 'overshadows the variations in its outward appearance' (Oldenburg, 1999: 20). It offers 'escape or time out from life's duties and drudgeries' (21), a 'shelter against the raindrops of life's tedium' (ibid.). The 'great good place' functions as a 'neutral ground' 'in which all feel at home and comfortable' (22), as a 'public gathering area' and 'leveler' (23). It is an 'inclusive place' which is 'accessible to the general public and does not set formal criteria of membership and exclusion' (24). 'Third places, however, serve to *expand* possibilities' (24; emphasis in original). 'The temper and tenor of the third place is upbeat; it is cheerful' (25). 'The transformations in passing from the world of mundane care to the magic of the third place is often visibly manifest in the individual' (26). In the great good place 'conversation is the main activity' (26) – as for those who 'meet up' in the mall.

> Whatever interrupts conversation's lively flow is ruinous to a third place … [And] most common among these [interruptions] is the noise that passes for music [here] … In America, particularly, many public establishments reverberate with music played so loudly that enjoyable conversation is impossible … a *game* that mixes well with many other games (30; emphasis in original).

'Access to (these public spaces) must be *easy* if they are to survive and serve, and the ease with which one may visit a third place is a matter of both time and location' (32; emphasis in original). 'As important as timing, and closely related to it, is the location of third places. Where informal gathering places are far removed from one's residence, their appeal fades, for two reasons. Getting there is inconvenient, and one is not likely to know the

patrons' (33) or 'regulars' (ibid.). 'It is the regulars … who feel at home in a place and set the tone of conviviality' (34). In the great good place, the 'mood is playful' (37). Citing Huizinga (1949), Oldenburg notes 'play occurs in a place apart' (38). Indeed, a third place is a 'home away from home' (38) a 'comfortable home' (39). Homes are 'places where individuals are regenerated or restored' (41), allowing people the 'active expression of personality' (ibid.). 'Finally there is *warmth*' (ibid.; emphasis in original). 'It radiates from the combination of cheerfulness and companionship, and it enhances the sense of being alive'.

Narratives of Experiencing the Mall: A 'Great Good Place' as 'Home Away from Home'

From practices theory's perspective, if the mall is implicitly or tacitly 'fore-understood' by visitors as being a communal 'third place' (albeit with differing genres or types; e.g. 'up-market'), 'regulars' will expect to experience the great good place to be their ready-to-hand 'home away from home'. Moreover, they anticipate 'playful' absorbing activity and conversation within its walls. As a participant noted above, being convinced of 'good security' is fundamental to such a perception. On the other hand, some experiences (e.g. crowds) conflict with expectations, prompting alienation.

Our consuming enables cultural identity. Immersed in shopping malls we assign character to person or product (Wilson, 2009, 2011: Belk, 1988: Walker and Olson, 1991), from 'boys don't like shopping' (male, Chinese) to an (alleged) female preference for an 'apple that looks nicer with no flaws' (female, Chinese). Stories of purchasing entities in a great good place are supportive. They allow us to align or distance ourselves as willing or recalcitrant inhabitants: these accounts involve us in anticipating and articulating narratives of achieving potential-for-being. Malls are brandscapes (or materially and virtually branded landscapes), behavioural sites wherein corporate and individual *persona* are 'performed' and presented: they are consolidated or contested by authoring audiences filling out (not forms) but narratives of consumption, close alignment and distancing alienation.

Community, Comfort, Conversation: 'Belonging' in the 'Familiar' 'Second Home'

In social theory, there are a 'plethora of meanings, definitions and issues associated with the community concept' (Bekin *et al.*, 2007: 3). The chapter achieves a substantial narrowing of focus in discussing 'community' experientially. This much theorized term denotes our youthful participants' sense of 'belonging', of identifying self with surroundings, which can nonetheless give way to their critical distancing: 'some malls, they really play annoying songs sometimes' (female, Chinese).

Mall Consumption as Behavioural Narrative: Confirming 'Belonging' (Being in a 'Second Home')

Frequent absorption in the 'convenient' mall brings these visitors feelings of air conditioned familiarity, a sense of 'belonging […] very familiar with the mall […] feels like the [*sic*] second home'. The service staff are 'quite friendly and nice' and 'they provide useful information' (female, Chinese). A well-chosen aesthetic adds support to consumers' relaxed recognition: thus, unlike the primary white colours of a classroom (work), in a mall's space for consuming, 'warm colours […] feel comfortable' (female, Chinese). Sound is significant in supporting a sense of belonging. 'I think basically malls should play those songs, like instrumental, that suits everyone' (female, Chinese).

Background music influences shopper store evaluation (Mehrabian and Russell, 1974, 1975; Russell and Mehrabian, 1978; Gorn, 1982; MacInnis and Park, 1991). So different studies showed music shaping responses towards a cafeteria (North and Hargreaves, 1998), clothes store (Dube and Morin, 2001) and subsequently, banking hall and bar (North, Hargreaves and McKendrick, 2000).[2]

Aligned Consumer Practices: Mall Visiting as Celebrating Community 'Together'

Like involvement in social media, immersion in the shopping mall is said here to be a shared participatory experience: 'Sometimes, [I] accompany friends […] we go together' (male, Chinese). Generation can be a gathering point of recognition: 'I usually see people among our age' (female, Chinese). 'When we are going for food, [the guys] will definitely join [us]' (female, Chinese). Thus, lack of a food court means the absence of a place and perhaps time for talking – while the careful choosing of garments (or even apples, it seems) can distance males from female conversation.

Audience Alienation in Self-Distancing: 'Annoying' 'Songs', 'Shape' and Shopping

In the enclosed 'atmospherics' of the mall, visitor absorption may be attenuated, immersion turn to an 'irritating customer experience' (Beverland *et al.*, 2006: 982). Here, capitalism's calling on (interpellating) the crowds can instead alienate. Compelled to hear music, these consumers may just experience an aesthetic '(mis)fit' (ibid.). As a female Chinese participant complained, 'some malls, they really play annoying songs sometimes'. Alienated self-distancing can be gendered: 'Boys don't like shopping' (male, Chinese) (group laughter). So the mall 'should provide a place for the guys to go' while the girls turn to shopping (female, Chinese). 'I think it's a matter for the guys to do their own activities, and the girls to do their own activities' (female, Chinese). 'The dads, they don't have the patience […] "Have you done, yet?!"' (female, Chinese) Purchasing is gender shaped.

Arrival, attempting to absorb oneself in crowded spatio-temporal zones, attire, may alienate: '[Parking] is one of the issues […] especially when you're with a family. I think our parents don't have the patience' (female, Chinese). Intent on shopping, navigating the mall's 'shape' can be 'quite annoying sometimes' (female, Chinese). Postmodernist space with its multiple architectural angles may disorientate: Mid-Valley mall is 'quite complicated' (male, Chinese). 'Some people walk in a slow pace. Then it's like the whole mall is congested' (female, Chinese). Space is socially inflected.

Crowds are customarily 'an unpleasant experience in shopping situations' (Michon *et al.*, 2005: 577). Thus 'too many customers' 'annoys me': 'the moment you walk in. Wow! So many inside [?] I don't feel like shopping anymore!' (female, Chinese). Other visitors' 'attire' (e.g. 'goth(ic)') can cause 'offense', with some 'not really acceptable in Malaysia' (female, Chinese).

Modes of Playful Engaging in the Mall

(a) Understanding Mall Practices as Play-like (or Ludic)

'I think basically everyone visits the mall with a purpose, *lah*' (female, Chinese). Immersion is a goal-oriented experience (whether the 'purpose' is intrinsic or extrinsic to the mall). Goals can be purely defined by absorbed participant play: 'Just because we want to relax' (female, Chinese).

(b) Multiple Ludic Immersing – in Mall Media (Cinema)

Acknowledging absorption in cinema within the immersive mall, male Chinese participants assert, 'usually we go for movie[s] and dining', 'extra time only, we go shop around': equally, 'one of the reasons I usually come [here] is because there's always a movie screening' (female, Chinese).

(c) Narratives of Surface Play: Superficially Engaging with 'Equipment'

If mall windows are analogous to media screens (likewise supporting a consumer absorption in content) a male Chinese may be described as scarcely immersed therein: 'I just window shop'. Or this consumer can seek immersion in a 'reading [newspapers, magazines] area for guys'.

(d) A Narrative of 'Not Challenging' Play: The Lagoon 'Rides' as Merely Ready-to-Hand

Linked to the Mall is Lagoon Leisure Park, offering an added possibility of play-like (literal) absorption. But the experience does not challenge the ready-to-hand. 'Excitement in the Lagoon is quite … not challenging. (laughter) No doubt it's the best Asia … [indecipherable]'. 'Maybe it's my personal thoughts […] the ride[s], they don't give me excitement feeling' (females, Chinese).

The Mall as Gendered Great Good Place

Consumer Narratives, Gendered Differences: Structuring Space and Time in the Malls

Play and purchasing in the mall is clearly structured by gendered difference: our participants conformed to patterns located by researchers elsewhere (for instance, a male 'desire to complete the (shopping) task in a short time frame' (Teller and Thomson, 2012: 965) exhibiting impatience).

(a) Media in the Mall and 'Calculating' Time: Gendered Immersion in Cinematic Narrative

'We check the show time before [arrival]' (male, Chinese). 'Basically, everyone that goes for movies, they will calculate their time […] guys don't like to loiter around the mall, if, they don't shop. […] Maybe the girls would go earlier, while the boys would come later' (female, Chinese).

(b) 'Just Grab and Go' – Apples and Clothes: Entities (Dis)Enabling Being-with-Others

> Let's say, a simple one: apples. Maybe the apples look the same to the guys [laughter]. No offense. But, we, we, we pick the apple that looks nicer with no flaws. … Like this apple looks fresher. Something like this. Normally, they would say, 'it's just the same. Just grab and go'. (female, Chinese)

This social practice of choosing apples is being tacitly approached from differing horizons of understanding as 'grabbing'/'picking'. Here, 'materials, meanings and competences' (Shove *et al.*, 2012: 15) are woven together in 'guys' behaviour at odds with a female view of appropriation.

Our research participant is negotiating 'varieties of meaning' (Hand and Shove, 2007: 80), presenting-at-hand or reflecting on her pre-conscious projecting of practice-oriented understanding which here shaped her behaviour as 'competent' (ibid.) routine choice in a familiar 'second home'. Were this *post-eventum* commentary to be absent, her ready-to-hand understanding nonetheless could be said to be 'written into' this practice of selection, thus open to 'reading' by observers. She maintains a feminine distinction – which can be heard and addressed by marketing practitioners.

Presencing the ready-to-hand is gendered: 'They should provide a place for the guys to wait for the girls get things done' (female, Chinese). 'Let's say, if we go shop for clothes, I don't think the guys would like to wait'. 'We don't mind, but when they are starting to be annoying, like, "Are you done?"' then […] It's a turn-off' (female, Chinese). These engendered shopping stories are thus nuanced, registering compelling moments of immersive consuming crossed by male distraction.

Reflecting on Mall Practices: Projecting a 'Great Good Place'

In hermeneutical terminology, embedded in our research participants' practices was their anticipatory or projected understanding (fore-understanding) of their familiar mall as a 'great good place'. This public space equipped and empowered their being as a ready-to-hand environment for immersive consumption in play, conversation and communal experience of home away from home. Gratification[3] in visiting the mall as an 'adventure', displacing tedium, is absent from this account.

Presented-at-hand for examination in the focus group were their narratives of being at home (i) filling out diurnal more or less elliptical self-monitoring accounts of engaging with the ready-to-hand, realizing generic expectations of equipment enabling being-with-others and (ii) reflectively registering disappointment with entities (e.g. the Lagoon) as objects failing to actualize anticipation.

The intensive small group interviewing of similar youthful visitors thus advanced a thesis of the mall as an aspirational *agora*: they expected a community, exercised in parade, participation and purchase. These gendered stories of absorption (and occasional alienation) in its multi-level spaces conveyed their orientation to a familiar recognized generic place whose daily visitors consume.

Such a 'third place' is to be regarded as a 'warm and welcoming home away from home for the participating members … "comfort" and "warmth" are culturally-situated concepts' (Soukup, 2006: 435) close to domesticity. Yet the mall's messaging that there are 'fifteen minutes to exit from parking' can truncate a welcome: families concerned about traffic may exit early or not arrive.

Our argument draws on discursive evidence from a single focus group. Nonetheless, in an area characterized by the presence of three universities and several colleges, we regard our student contributors as 'voicing out' views characteristic of many visiting this massive immersive mall. To critics who dissent, we would cite Popper's scientific call (1963) to come *falsify* our hypothesis.[4]

In Heidegger's terms, these students' consumer practices constitute a skilled managing of 'ready-to-hand projection' (embodied expectation) from their tacit 'horizon of understanding' the mall as equipped to enable a ludic 'being-with-others' or 'belonging' in a 'second home' (female, Chinese). This presupposition is visibly incorporated in their behaviour, now evident in discussion.

A 'Great Good Place' Revisited: Subsequent Scholarship on the Shopping Mall

In a subsequent scholarly undertaking, co-researchers for this volume conducted a pilot project where six volunteering visitors (of diverse ethnicity, gender and generation) to the mall commented in focus group and individual

interview on photographs of their experiences. These images were 'natural', taken with mobile phone cameras for people's personal reasons prior to any invitation to participate in consumer research. Visitors were asked to indicate how the pictures selected signalled themes and narratives of experience in this massive immersive space:

'Why did you take this photograph?'
'What memories do you have when you look at this photograph?'
'What feelings do you have when you look at this photograph?'
'Do you feel like doing something after viewing this photograph?'

Group discussion presented horizons of expectation (such as projected 'bonding', enabled by the mall) from which consumers enter. Individual interview generated people's producing detailed narrative in commenting on photograph content, inevitably as a mode of being-with-others: 'we are not seeing each other for some time or few months … so when we meet, that time you know, it was like, like' 'letting out everything' (female Malay). Here equilibrium is restored.

Discussion disclosed tacit thematic understanding of the mall, here played out in consumer narratives. Visitors enjoy meeting ('bonding'), regeneration ('healthy living'), aspiration, aesthetic and culinary consumption, peace and empowerment from aquatic and historical mall displays.

Presenting the Ready-to-Hand in Reflective Narrative: Visiting the Globally Local Shopping Mall and Social Media

Curiously, these small groups of vocal respondents remained silent on postmodern modes of presence in the mall (other than providing a vivid account of gendered differences in purchasing). The ethnic multiplicity of Malaysian society – clearly evident in the Pyramid's parading population – receives no mention. Further discussion with non-Malaysian audiences (e.g. from the Middle East) may elicit alternative narratives of 'malling'. However, managing a shopping mall's potential should not neglect younger frequent visitors finding it ready-to-hand, guiding parents around its *loci*.

Tourists both reflectively experience novel surroundings as present-at-hand adventure and exercise 'educated', embodied expectations of easily engaging with ready-to-hand entities. If visitors touring malls practise a 'tourist gaze', they can be taken to anticipate enjoying 'an experience which contrasts with everyday experience' or activities 'which separate them off from everyday and routine experiences' (Urry, 1995: 132). 'Adventure. Everybody loves it!' However, Urry writes (2007) along with Larsen that, 'tourism represents not just an escape from home, but also a search for home(s)'.

At TripAdvisor's extensive website, visitors present reflective narrative of the Pyramid as adventure ('Amazing' (35–49 year man, Doha, Qatar) and 'Awesome!!!!' (from Kuala Lumpur)). 'This mall is amazing as it has everything

under one roof' (from Kuala Lumpur). 'What can you say, the size, variety is to [*sic*] much' (35–49 year man, Perth, Australia). The mall is enigmatic: 'Nothing special […] there are very strange shops which don't appear to fit within any particular catergory [*sic*]' (18–24 year woman, Melbourne, Australia). Here, there is evident reflecting.

The Mall is also experienced as home from home, albeit uneventful: 'I am always hanging out there during my hol[iday]s' (Chinese). 'For a mall rat like me back home, Sunway Pyramid is quite a good choice for just killing hours in a mall, for shopping or something else' (18–24 year man, Quezon City, Philippines). TripAdvisor articulates both reflective and ready experience.

Conclusion: Categorizing Motivations in Consuming as Modes of Being-with-Others

As noted earlier in this chapter, numerous retail studies have sought to establish categories of mall shoppers. In recent research, typologies classify the motivation in visiting. Reasons for our consuming are complex and diverse. Some visitors seek to maximize the time spent shopping, but others immersed regard their consuming differently. Motives can be grouped into three categories, product-oriented, experiential and a combination of product-related and experiential ambitions.

Arnold and Reynolds (2003) focus on experiential motivation. The goals sought by visitors in their immersive mall practices of consumption are said to be: adventure shopping (stimulation); social shopping ('bonding' with others); a species of gratification shopping (tension reduction); idea shopping (learning about new trends); role shopping (or enjoyment from purchasing for others) and value shopping (bargains). In short, they find adventure or reassuring ready-to-hand familiarity.

Conclusion

Phenomenology's Practices Theory: New Hermeneutics/Old Heidegger?

> We pursue the possibility that the critical repertoire of ideas and insights developed to rethink the mass television audience in the 1980s and 1990s – a repertoire that challenged the often presumed passivity and mindlessness of (this audience) – is only now coming into its own, only now finding sufficient scope, in the multimodal, converged digital environment, to reveal its full analytic power and potential.
>
> (Livingstone and Das, 2013: 105)

Consumers make their diurnal way through personally or professionally brandscaped space-time in shopping malls and social media. What practices involve these sometimes striving visitors? Potential purchasers immerse in both marketing's would-be convincing text and a mall's walled and crowded thoroughfares. Behaviourally, they manifest – visually, verbally – narrative of engaging with equipment. In studying practices, we reflect on corporeally manifested horizons of understanding.

Is the time-taking process of these audiences' value-laden perceptions reasonably rendered as their arriving without fore-thought at affirming or negative attitudes to product or people? If not, can a research narrative recruiting their fore-conceptions be established? After ourselves becoming 'immersed' (Lai *et al.*, 2007: 565) in listening to the consumers who participated in these materially focused perceptual processes, we arrived at a phenomenological psychology of their practices.

Hearing groups of media audiences as research participants, we were enabled to elaborate a structured analysis of their seeing as embodied perception underwritten by accounts of their saying (speech). Supporting this proposed re-conceptualizing of consumers' culturally detailed response is phenomenology's narrative of positioned perception as *intentional*, as goal-directed process. In our understanding (*Verstehen*) we aim at – and assume – a world of practices produced as intelligible.

Signalling an always already understanding of entities *as* – people project ready-to-hand or tacit meaning from their often materially manifested horizon of generic expectation, integrated with consummate probability in a circle of understanding. Should issues arise or in focus groups, these narratives of

equipment enabled modes of being-with-others are presented-at-hand for reflection.

Ready-to-hand practices can be interpreted as (i) initiated on a horizon of *generic* expectation from which (ii) we project (intend) meaning (iii) negotiated in a hermeneutic circle producing accounts.

Within this proposed horizon of interpretation (a more appropriate spatio-temporal concept for interpreting consumer reaction across distance), audience response is represented not passively/reductively as attitude change but as actively aligning with – or becoming alienated from – accounts of product consequences or people's concerns. Consumers themselves produce the latter narratives. We reflected here on immersing in media marketing and (sometimes) mall where mediated meaning making is at odds with positivists' accounts of immediate response to the stimulus of 'fact'.

> For them the facts were the facts, and how they were valued and used were [*sic*] located in a different domain, a domain that ought to be clearly separated from the objective world of facts. (Introna, 2011b: 230)

Within marketing's horizons of understanding, product (mall or media) use is ready-to-hand or ludic – as easy equipment enabling a play-like performance where consuming can smoothly succeed.

Philosophical thought is established in communication theory as a source for ideas shaped to generate a model of media consumers or their visual literacy. We resisted positivism's presumption of instant audience responses (invariably considered to be altered attitudes, effects resulting from advertising administered 'visual stimuli, as if pushing levers' (Scott, 1994: 271)). Instead, we here presented consumer perception as structured process, perspectival gazing/glancing. Understanding is ubiquitous in visitors' embodied projection (their behavioural generating) of meaning in media and mall: yet understanding-in-practices is routine or 'naturalized out of everyday awareness' (Couldry and McCarthy, 2004: 5). Hence, an audience *looking* is a site of implicit or immanent intentionality, rarely expressed: if an issue arises, a narrative of attempted understanding can emerge. Presented-at-hand as sought-after meaning, a previously perhaps momentary awareness is extended.

Returning to the philosophical core of hermeneutic phenomenology (instantly definable as 'understanding "understanding"'), we developed a processual account of our behaviour as formed spatio-temporally – from our glancing at screen media to walking in shopping malls. A consumer's looking (or consuming look) is *intentional*: embodied perception is purposive, aiming at meaning. With the goal of generating sense in surroundings, we are absorbed by anticipating, attempting to arrive at a coherent account. Interviews foreground this implicit intentionality in understanding.

Immersed in blogging or branded media, consumers interpret: they infer, iterate and identify narrative accounts of their circumstances. Audiences, we

have seen, project narrative meaning from their well (in)formed 'horizon of expectations': in so doing, they seek to instantiate generic holistic readings of their circumstances (Jauss, 1982). Thus, multi-ethnic responses to persons on YouTube marketing media as well as by purchasers in 'You!' affirming malls (in these chapters) are held to be parallel cases of audience sense-making. The latter's interactive authorship enables a fusion of cultural horizons: familiar framing (cf. Buckingham, 2013: 57) or generic general knowledge (e.g. of branding itself) guides perceptual practice, (in)forming visitor anticipation and articulation of narrative meaning he or she produces from already aesthetically constructed malls and media.

Here we can locate an appropriately spatio-temporal metaphor of audiences aligning (or identifying) with on-screen content or other shoppers' concerns. Considered consumer alienation would replace the concept of negative attitude. Underwriting such a suggested shift in this thinking about audiences is practices theory's account of positioned behavioural perceiving as intentional, as a teleological interpretive process rather than positivism's instant sight. Illustrating this narrative of differing paradigms, we considered a diversity of immersing in screen marketing or shopping mall.

Audience consumers speak from their horizons of understanding, even in our diagnosing the incomprehensible, always already perceptually oriented between being (in)formed by the past and anticipating futures. When aligned in our looking, sharing perspectives, we see similarly.

The hermeneutic phenomenology of embodied perception (or perception from a place and hence perspectival) emphasizes located *seeing* as an informed sequential process of anticipating and actualizing meaning. This storied account of looking underwrote reader reception theory.

Hermeneutics suggests anew how audiences of consumers visit their screen media and wider shopping malls. Here, we have sought to integrate our processual narrative of perception with both focus group and 'field' data, and so illuminate philosophical theory, employing the latter equally to interpret diverse cultural responses to media and mall as embodying a unifying subjective structure.

Consumers do not respond (passively?) in a quantifiable scale of instant negative or positive attitudes to a shared world of neutral sense-date, whether on pervasive screen or shopping precinct. Instead, they articulate a meaningful narrative and accordingly align or become alienated. Like the Western respondents in 'Creating Citizen-Consumers', our consumer citizens in the East, 'reason about different sorts of identifications', with a local Malaysian sense of their 'inclusion/exclusion' sometimes operating through a 'nationalist or racialized register' (Clarke *et al.*, 2007: 142, 141).

Drawing upon its fundamental assumption of perception as the perspectival projection and narrative positioning of understanding, phenomenology's practices studies further emic accounts of how digitally intervening persons place themselves beyond the corridors of the metaphorical glocal material mall, in private/public 'virtual geographies' (Papacharissi, 2009) on the worldwide web.

Active readers also write online. Cued by the formats of fairly new (social) media they continually network architecturally appropriate identities, tracing out daily their hermeneutic circle of coherent 'friending', presenting personality to the active audience of multiple media (Lewis and West, 2009: 1213). Discursive responses *to* the screen may be written *on* screens, so collectively or individually authored, as activities guided by generic anticipation, articulating our storying selves. Participatory consumers of screen inscribed discourse will be much considered by future focused researchers.

The Practice of Consuming @ Mall and Media: Habitually Self-Effacing (Ready-to-Hand) – Hermeneutically Self-Monitoring (Presented-at-Hand)

In Heideggerian phenomenology understanding is 'always already' a process or practice – often 'ready-to-hand' and hence not reflected upon, but nonetheless accessible to be 'presented-at-hand' as universal theme in focus group/ interview. Heidegger's account of understanding can be read in terms of a three-fold narrative. We enter our shopping mall or social media in a skilled (yet 'ready-to-hand' or not self-monitored) managing of meaning: (i) 'projecting' from tacit (common if contestable) 'horizons of understanding' phenomena generically as 'equipment'; (ii) integrating our projection or embodied expectation with events (the 'hermeneutic circle of understanding'); thereby (iii) (dis)enabling modes of 'being-with-others' (or participation). Groups thus share horizons of understanding – albeit 'distanciated' (Ricoeur) voices can engage in different if not critical response.

In following through the implications of Heideggerian hermeneutics for audience–consumer engaging with shopping malls and social media, I have argued that these are parallel experiences for a number of reasons, not least that it helps me to remember that ready-to-hand practical, projecting understanding is embodied. I well remember the experience of watching film and television after a few sessions at Glasgow's Strathclyde University night classes (where I migrated from a philosophy to media lecturer). Noting shots from the subjective point-of-view of characters (for instance) – and how they sutured or involved the audience – my viewings departed from habitual (or ready-to-hand) and became more than intermittently mediated or non-transparent, a conscious presenting to myself of editing practice. I've attempted to discuss lapses in ready-to-hand viewing as self-monitoring.

A 'new media studies student' can be heard (and equally seen) 'taking great delight' in their 'demonstrated technical savvy', moving from habitual or ready-to-hand pre-conscious assembly of meaning to presenting-at-hand or reflecting within their 'aesthetic critique'. They may then 'shut it off, go back in and just enjoy' (the film) or return to transparent viewing until, again, 'something happens and jars you'.[1] Heidegger might comment here that a narrative tool is fractured, drawing attention to its use, prompting this equipment to be presented-at-hand.

In self-monitoring – which may be momentary or more prolonged – we move from ready-to-hand viewing/walking around a mall to presenting-at-hand our activity. Such monitoring is likely not to be developed reflectively, as we return to focus on the content of our viewing or visiting.

Heidegger's category of 'presented-at-hand' interpretation, moreover, can take as its subject matter primarily equipment and secondarily entities (objects with qualities). Thinking (for instance) about the function of my seen point-of-view shots, I am considering them in non-transparent mode, as aesthetic equipment – but I can also describe them as having a certain duration (to be measured in seconds, rather than subjectively). In my Malaysian university role as teacher of media marketing, I am habitually presenting-at-hand, reflecting on consumption of branding narrative.

It was suggested by a Sarawak business studies colleague that within a mainstream media culture where journalists self-censor, Malaysian students have developed a facility to switch easily to presenting content reflectively at-hand. Perhaps that's why they are then eloquent in 'voicing out'!

Appendix

The Language Games of Embodied Consumption: Engaging with Equipment in Media Marketing Theory

With Sia Bee Chuan

Project: Phenomenology and positivism, as philosophical 'language games' (Wittgenstein), are to be employed in representing the relationship between consumers and media marketing. Set against a positivist's account of seeing as 'direct' perception, phenomenology (in its Heideggerian version) argues for practices mediated by culture. We engage with 'entities' from the first and fundamentally, *as* instantiating types of 'equipment' or consumables, (dis) enabling 'potentiality-for-being'.

While a more or less specifically specified 'causal' story of connections between screen and media consumption is pursued by positivism, phenomenology's language game invokes our agency: consumers are able to present (at-hand) reasons for behaviour based on understanding. The Scottish philosopher Hume's analysis of 'causation' can allow compatibility between the latter *interpretivist* account and a thesis of 'causal connection' where the phrase refers only to a 'succession' (Hume) of events established *inductively* (by generalizing) as occurring repeatedly, such as our tacit reasoning and acting. Interpretive inductivism simply involves a summary of consumer activity in evaluating: it rests upon an account of 'causation' which reconciles the concept with behaviour as interpretive practice. Nonetheless, 'causal connection' may denote for positivists a sequence of events[1] where the first is somehow sufficient for (or necessitates) a second: rational justification of action is excluded.

Finally, phenomenology's thesis of 'seeing *as*' – our perception as culturally embedded – can additionally elicit a researcher's viewing consumer narratives as incommensurable. These accounts, that is, are considered incomparable as practices of understanding drawing upon differing 'forms of life' (Wittgenstein, 1991). The narratives are entered upon – or (in)formed – from cultural horizons excluding sharing a view of the phenomenon. Illustrating incommensurability we discuss consumer perceptions manifested in their stories of Chinese New Year reunion dinners.

————

To be fully acquainted, therefore, with the idea of power or necessary connexion, let us examine its impression; and in order to find the impression

with greater certainty, let us search for it in all the sources, from which it may possibly be derived.

When we look about us towards external objects, and consider the operation of causes, we are never able, in a single instance, to discover any power or necessary connexion; any quality, which binds the effect to the cause, and renders the one an infallible consequence of the other. We only find, that the one does actually, in fact, follow the other. The impulse of one billiard-ball is attended with motion in the second. This is the whole that appears to the outward senses. The mind feels no sentiment or inward impression from this succession of objects: consequently, there is not, in any single, particular instance of cause and effect, any thing which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connexion. (Hume, 1777: Section VII, *Of the Idea of Necessary Connexion*)

In media and marketing communication research there are varying conceptions of the screen audience – 'models of what a human being is' (Barker, 2013: 72) – which require to be reconciled if consumer agency and the viewer's rich generation of meaning are to be acknowledged. To such an end, the Appendix explores phenomenology's interpretive theory, reflecting on compatibility with inductive accounts of audiences in positivistically inclined communications research.

We consider how interpretive theory can deliver insight into consumers constructing sense on screen – or more widely, people producing meaningful narrative. Following the conceptual route long established by Heidegger's phenomenology (1962), employing his terms, the Appendix argues for consumers' incorporating practices – that they engage with *entities* as familiar *equipment* in the *expectation* that they will *enable potentiality-for-being*. In turn, elliptical marketing narratives on screen seek to (in)form the generically shaped expectations of their assumed audience–consumers.

In positivist media marketing studies there are to be found inductivist accounts of responses in which the relationship between advertising and audience is (respectively) that of cause and effect. Remembering the philosophical writings of David Hume (1777), we distinguish between two senses of 'causation'. For the term can connote the occurrence of 'contiguity and succession' or 'necessary connection' (Hume) between events: the former has limited consistency with interpretive marketing theory. The latter (about whose occurrence Hume was expressing considerable scepticism) is not.

We wonder why a 'cause' as 'necessitating' or 'sufficient' condition of an effect is asserted when, as Hume argues, 'there is not, in any single, particular instance of cause and effect, any thing which can suggest the idea of power or necessary connexion'. For instance, in discussing political participation in Singapore and Taiwan, Zhang claims, 'two communication variables (i.e. political news use and political discussion) shape political participation with different strengths' (2012: 487). Likewise, Lee states categorically that 'existing research has shown that the news media generally have stronger effects on cognitions,

relatively weaker effects on attitudes, and weakest effects on behavior' (2013: 341). In both authors the metaphorical image of variables 'shaping' human activity 'with different strengths' or 'effects' suggests a relationship between power and passivity.

From a practices perspective, instead, people metaphorically occupy their cultural location on a horizon of understanding which shapes – enables or (in)forms – projections. Reflecting upon conceptual claims about causation and consciousness is essential in mapping out media theory.

Phenomenology and positivism offer incommensurable epistemologies or paradigms (Hunt, 1991) of our knowing. Their opposition as mental frameworks and methodologies shaping research practice is underdetermined or irresolvable by reference to facts of which they give systematically differing accounts. Pointing to perceiving as activity structured by culturally encrusted expectation, as articulating meaning in (its) place, phenomenology shows how incommensurability emerges.

A Conceptual Framework for Consumer Research: Interpretive Inductivism, Reconciling Culture and Causality

> It is hardly surprising that most consumer research is predominantly positivistic in nature – we suggest that it is 'easier' to do. (Shankar and Goulding, 2001: 8)

Much debate in the philosophy of communication studies has occurred between those who would explain a person's behaviour by referring to its being *caused* by preceding events and scholars who wish to understand human activity in terms of people's rationality or *reasons* for so behaving. Some have argued that these are incommensurable accounts (Hudson and Ozanne, 1988): that is, no reasoned decision can be made between their fundamentally distinct narratives of human nature. As language games in philosophical psychology, their perceptions of personality cannot be integrated.

Nonetheless, our claim here is twofold. First, that by returning to Hume's earlier insightful analyses of 'causation', we can show these accounts can be operated conjointly in creative tension. Second, such ad hoc pluralism is usefully mobilized as a methodology of *interpretive inductivism*.

We shall refer to these two groups of theorists as *inductivists* and *interpretivists* respectively. These differing conceptual camps can be discerned across disciplines: as we noted earlier they are often referred to as positivists (or as advocating 'positivist naturalism' (Ekstrom, 1992: 108)) and as phenomenologists. Writing on research methodology in marketing, Thompson alludes to positivism as 'foundationalism' (1991: 63) invoking perhaps an associated empiricism that there are culturally independent 'sense-data' constituting our experience upon which all knowledge is founded or that 'there is one true description of the world waiting to be discovered' (Thompson *et al.*, 1989: 135).

Inductivism and interpretivism differ on the connection between conduct and its context: they place human behaviour within alternative frameworks emphasizing its regularity and rationality respectively. For causalists concerned with *inductive* argument or generalization, a statistically measured high correlation between screen and subsequent social occurrence can be good evidence (or even *synonymous* with the claim) that one is the cause of the other. *Interpretivists*, on the other hand, seek contextual understanding of actions in terms of a consumer's perception of them as justified (where in media or marketing studies the reason can involve her or his identifying with narrative agents on screen). *Abduction* or abstract analyzing of consumer perception can display a structured process: hence for Thompson *et al.*, 'existential-phenomenological interviews focus on identifying recurring experiential patterns' (1989: 137) of activity in respondent narrative accounts.

The methodology we prioritize after tracing these models of media and marketing research within communication and consumer studies below is that of interpretive inductivism. Adequately theorizing our audience response to branding narrative represents their perception as a goal-directed process of culturally informed anticipation and achieving coherent meaning. Our walking in malls or writing on media involves initiating understanding-in-practices: we engage with elliptical stories, projecting (tacitly/vocally) accounts as (self-monitoring) narrative enabling potentiality-for-being.

Only when a media or marketing study has arrived at an account of consumer activity which is itself interpretative is it appropriate to engage in quantifying or inductive assessing of the latter's occurrence. How widely is a research subject's narrative of events shared and by whom agreed? Here, accounting for the genesis of meaning precedes counting the frequency of responses.

In marketing studies, statistical procedures, of course, are essential: our concern at this point focuses on the question, 'what is their conceptual or philosophical basis? Marketing must address its audiences 'by "speaking the language" of the consumer' (De Burgh-Woodman and Brace-Govan, 2008: 91), yet inductive generalizing can silence the cultural nuances of particular interpretations.

Hermeneutics engages with meaning construction by media recipients or consumers through locating the latter at a particular point on a cultural horizon of understanding from which he or she articulates a distinct account of prescriptive textual narrative. Thus occupying a conceptual horizon 'fore-structures' (Heidegger, 1962) our interpretive understanding: we share cultural positions with – or assume a distance from – a wider audience of consumers (Langsdorf, 2007).

In research conducted by one Appendix author here, a Chinese audience is heard to express alienation in different if related ways from a telecommunication company's marketing images of a Chinese New Year reunion dinner traditionally considered as celebrating the family: for those eating are revealed by the camera to be phoning friends *elsewhere*. In discerning locally

defined contexts of consumption (Askegaard and Linnet, 2011) one may place an 'emphasis on rich and varied forms of data collection' (Goulding, 2003: 152). For the former are understood from an often ideologically inflected cultural horizon from whence we see and shape our narratives as consumers.

'Qualitative research offers an insight into questions that address the way people think about a certain subject and why they think that' (De Ruyter and Scholl, 1998: 8): the researcher can 'ask for reasons and arguments that lie behind the facts' (ibid.: 12). Theoretical 'constructs are closely aligned to their real-life context': thus 'results become meaningful in relation to the respondent's everyday reality' (ibid.: 13). Here, 'in addition the reliability of qualitative research can be grounded in an accurate description of the steps that have been taken in the collection and analysis of data, so that other researchers wishing to follow in their colleagues' footsteps can trace back the original research design' (ibid.: 13). The investigative process (both conceptual and practical) relating world views of researcher to those whom he or she researches must be recognized and placed on record.

Consumers' practices can be read (Brown, 2005): equally, social media consumption may be scrutinized as reading screen text. Practices and reader reception theory, and more fundamentally its philosophical genesis in hermeneutic phenomenology, offer a set of concepts (discussed in earlier chapters) appropriate to analyzing consumer responses to malls, marketing and media.

We can return to philosophical beginnings in the work of Husserl, Heidegger, Gadamer and Ricoeur to provide an account of cognitive moments in consumer processing and eventual purchase on the meanings of participatory-persuasive places. Approaching consumption from the perspective of phenomenology resolves the positivistic 'problem of detachment from complex reality' (El-Amir and Burt, 2010: 189) by underwriting participant accounts subsequently embraced by inductivists.

Researchers in 'marketing have the luxury of choosing from a multitude of methodological approaches' (Rod: 2009, 21) but they need to be philosophically reconciled. For 'ultimately, the methodology a researcher (in business communication) chooses represents a world view' (Cross *et al.*, 1996: 106). In the following, we argue that inductive enumeration or quantifying marketing and consumer responses rests on accounts of human activity which are inescapably culturally located.

Interpretivism

Consumer, media and marketing research represents a particular interface between audience and political economy perspectives on communications. How do visitors respond to their branded landscapes in malls which are shaped and filled for profit? 'Phenomenological interviewing' is a phrase provided with specific meaning on these pages. While relatively open in the direction they take, these conversations are loosely structured by participants addressing broad questions – few in number – prompted by the philosophy of

perception underwriting practices and reader theory. Such qualitative inquiry shows how, situated upon and informed by cultural horizons of understanding, audiences project narrative meaning. Here, branding videos offer a 'contextual scenario' (Eckhardt and Bengtsson, 2010: 39) of product practices for discussing consumer reading of media marketing.

Interpretivists assume that an audience of consumer citizens (actively) construct (narrative) sense for that which they see. Research investigates this process of producing meaning as it occurs over time through responses to the mall/media: their visitors read 'to-and-fro' across text, playing cognitively to reach the goal of comprehension. An audience's focused articulating of sense, their following a hermeneutic circle of understanding in assembling elements of a narrative, can be so extended as to evoke in some of our participants' minds the 'temporality of tarrying' (Ross, 2006).

Interpretivism invokes phenomenology. In the familiar world of our everyday experience, Heidegger asserts, we understand its material content, first and fundamentally, from the perspective of potential practice, as 'ready-to-hand'. We have noted that he categorically rejects positivism's concept of experience as the gaze of a subject upon an object, a direct looking which is immediate, or not (in)formed by the culturally shaped activity of interpretation. Instead, Heidegger regards our perceiving to be temporal, a process in which we consider 'entities' as 'equipment' or 'tools' (with his favoured example being a hammer). Hence, 'that which is ready-to-hand is discovered as such in its service*ability*, its us*ability*, and its detrimenta*lity*' (1962: 184; emphasis in original). Extrapolating this account of viewing to frequent visiting, one can conclude that sighting off/online narratives of branding involves a practical orientation in which consumers expect to assemble prescriptive stories as 'ready-to-hand' tools in cultivating or enabling an identity, a 'potentiality-for-being' (ibid.).

People, then, draw on their cultural background to generate understanding of circumstances. Content always already in some way familiar is further construed in viewing. 'All cognition is first what it is only as re-cognition' (Gadamer, 1985: 280). Interpretivists focusing on this moment can be referred to as *culturalists*. Here hermeneutic abstractions such as 'horizon of expectations' can be rendered 'culture-specific' (Koppl and Whitman, 2004: 297) or integrated with insights expressed by audiences during focus groups and interviews. Viewing is informed anticipation of narrative.

Consumer interpreted narratives branding person or product incorporate reasons for aligning or identifying to which their audiences refer in appropriating or indicating alienation from would-be persuasive proposals. Kentucky Fried Chicken is marketed on Kuala Lumpur city trains not as fast food instrumentally organized to speed us through life but as offering us the intrinsic enjoyment of 'breakfast food far too good to rush'. Do travellers immersively identify with – ingesting – this story?

Interpretivists align with theorists who take consumer culture seriously on board ship. As in Schembri and Sandberg's earlier (2002) work on the

'interpretive approach' to consumption, they define mall, marketing and media reception practices in terms of experience negotiated from within an audience's diverse horizons of understanding, as contributing to the latter's culturally shaped sensibility. They 'aspire towards putting consumer experience back into consumer research' (195).

In similar mode, Beckett and Nayak (2008) subsequently acknowledge branding's 'attempt to subjectivize the consumer through the construction of forms of identity with which consumers are encouraged to identify' (300). Marketing narratives thus bear prescriptive stories of equipment – of enhanced existence, scenarios supporting self-immersion by audiences inferring, interpreting and identifying with persons on screen as 'active participants in production and consumption' (305).

Consumers consent to share media advertising's horizons of understanding from which a product-enhanced life is elliptically sighted and enabled. They thereby appropriate a narrative's preferred perspectives through 'intricate' interpretive processes (Ringberg and Reihlen, 2008: 173).

Audience attitudes are pragmatically interpretive of content, culturally informed horizons of understanding from which we view the world. Consistent with this outlook on media consuming, Ringberg and Reihlen complain that scales 'used to measure attitudinal dispositions of informants do not reveal whether informants in fact make similar sense of stimuli': 'little regard is given to the presence of divergent interpretive processes among consumers. Instead, such (positivist) research assumes that marketing communication is readily "downloaded" and consumer reaction is based on their attitudinal variance (likings or dislikings)' (2008: 175, 176). Instead, they argue, 'attitudinal' 'reaction' brings audience interpretation to bear on screen or sender 'stimuli':

> interpretation and subsequent intersubjectivity (between sender and receiver) is an accomplishment that involves the receiver's interpretive strategies, which emerge in interaction between internalized socio-cultural patterning and cognitive (self-reflexive, creative) processes. (ibid.: 177)

Issues in interpretation lead to forming new horizons.

Media use is always 'interpretive cognition' (Feldman, 2001: 129). Developing as well as downloading stories from advertising, of course, can be to imbibe the power of corporations over consumers (and subscribe to their ideology). But with the inventive resistance so characteristic of culture jamming, responding to branding is enabled to be equally creative of a certain independence from capitalism. Cognitive play may be plural, even to the point of protest: 'divergent interpretive processes' (Ringberg and Reihlen, 2008: 176) are heard to occur where consumer audiences view from varying horizons of understanding. A nation's 'subaltern population' (Varman and Belk, 2008: 228) can detach itself from the media discourse of a colonial

power, thus rescuing itself from global cultural recruitment in local discourses celebrating consumer citizenship.

Pursuing a progressive phenomenologically oriented path to interpreting their own research participant behaviour, Lawlor and Prothero (2008) argue for a reader reception approach to exploring a child's 'understanding of television advertising'. Their audience and consumer research

> requires the researcher to put to one side the stimulus-organism-response (SOR) approach which arguably has informed many of the extant studies on children and advertising. The latter have tended to ask 'what does advertising do to children?' … This research takes a different approach by asking 'how do children read advertising?' (1207)

Here, interpretive reading replaces causally induced (necessary) responses from passive percipients – about which we have more to say below:

> [During their research] children presented themselves as active and goal-directed audiences for advertising. This contrasts [*sic*] an image of children as passive, sponge-like viewers, which tends to prevail in the debate over advertising regulation in countries such as Ireland and the UK. (1219)

Interpretivists, then, seek to accommodate within a philosophical perspective on methods, processual accounts of both their own and research participant achievement of understanding as a narrative of reasons for acting and believing in response to material. A 'phenomenologically-based hermeneutical approach provides a description of the interpretive process', write Borgerson and Schroeder (2002: 573) – which we have specified here, following Heidegger, as 'us*ability*' focused. Audience response then involves their playing cognitively, immersively, perhaps appropriating the sense they have established rather than consumers being pushed by (pre-established) content into purchasing. Conceptualizing is foregrounded rather than causation, where meaning and the moment of its occasioning are 'mutually constitutive' (Dissanayake, 2009: 460).

Inductivism

> When the social sciences attempt to emulate the natural sciences they cannot help but fail. (Pickering, 2002: 391)

According to Lowery and DeFleur in their paper on method, media studies must construct a 'dynamic discipline' of 'generalizations, causal explanations, and theoretical predictions' (1995: xi–xiii) analytical of human behaviour both on and off screen. From this causalist perspective (or what is termed a 'deductive-nomological' model of research method), generalized evidence underwriting an investigator's claim about being able to predict an event is

sufficient for its explanation. Such an assertion about causality – if synonymous with claims about high levels of correlated data arrived at by generalizing – we denote as *inductivist*: 'causation' is 'contiguity and succession' (Hume).

The account of human activity underwriting its measurement which we here shall refer to as 'inductivist' has often been associated with positivism's dual but *different* requirement (allegedly to conform with the hard physical sciences) that our behaviour be rendered intelligible or contextually explained as an effect of causes and that both are to be considered directly observable events. Thus psychology is forced into the procrustean bed of behaviourism: so the study of mind is stretched to investigating behaviour 'necessarily connected' (Hume) with sufficient external stimuli.

Hard positivism can be concisely stated as the obverse of Heideggerian phenomenology. In the first doctrine, rather than human beings engaging constructively with equipment (e.g. a screen), the argument is instead that equipment engages in constraint or determines its audience response.

Establishing a positivist paradigm for research on visible screen and subsequent violence in society Bandura argues, for instance, that he is providing accounts of media 'determinants' operating in a 'causal structure of factors' (2002: 139) involving their audience. Characteristically causalist in his technical terminology, he claims to present his findings within an elaborate 'agentic conceptual framework' involving 'triadic reciprocal causation' (2002: 121) between program and person.

Media cultivation can be a candidate for this causalist category of constraining audiences. Television's 'images cultivate the dominant tendencies of our culture's beliefs, ideologies and world views': here the '"size" of a (program's) "effect" is far less critical than the direction of its steady contribution' (Gerbner *et al.*, 1980: 14). Twenty-five years later, Bilandzic and Busselle write:

> The core message of a genre can be derived from analyses of a genre's norms, values, and morals. From a cultivation standpoint, regular viewing of films from a particular genre should result in exposure to the same core messages – albeit imbedded in different stories – and, ultimately, to acceptance of those messages. (2008: 510)

While the concept of media 'cultivation' suggests externally resourced constant conjunction which may be difficult to resist (a 'steady contribution'), Bilandzic earlier argued that a 'cultivation process' includes 'processing experience' (2006: 333), surely implying here the ability of audiences to 'process' in alternative directions. Bilandzic and Busselle do acknowledge 'despite four decades of cultivation research demonstrating a reliable, albeit small, cultivation relationship, questions remain about the mechanisms that link exposure to perception' (2008: 508).

Within the hard positivist framework of accounting for our human behaviour, the latter's occurring is not seen as distinct from entirely material events

elsewhere: all are effects *simpliciter*. Exemplifying this 'image of audiences as passive individuals', 'television violence [is] the cause and the individual child's behaviour [is] the effect' (Butsch, 2008: 127). Distinguishing themselves as post-positivist, critical realists argue for an unseen chain of occurrence linking mental intention, motivation and action. But the sciences equally refer to invisible (atomic) processes. Interpretivists, on the other hand, consider it methodologically appropriate to regard our consumer activity as, in principle, *justifiable*, to seek reasons from their research subjects for its perception and taking place. Through research appropriate to this persuasion, the latter is 'voiced out' during focus groups.

Seeing advertising images of a juicy pizza (stimulus) may indeed lead customers to salivate (a physiological response) just as heating a gas can bring about its expansion. But being persuaded by those images and their accompanying rhetoric to purchase is a cognitive process whose narrative when made explicit involves audiences giving reasons. Here, stating exogenous or external causes as sufficient for (or necessitating) one's consumption is conceptually inappropriate, signalling rather compulsion (even addiction). Discourse articulating choice is replaced by a conception of consumer constraint. Can there be an account of 'causality' awarding it compatibility with interpretive theory?

'Causation' as 'Contiguity and Succession' or 'Necessary Connection' (Hume)

Is causalism incompatible with interpretivism? Does explaining our consumer response as caused exclude understanding it as occurring for reasons? In answering questions such as these, it is important to distinguish between two differing accounts of what is conveyed when using the word 'cause'.[2] For we may consider that the term denotes an inductively established frequent 'contiguity and succession' of events, a claim based on generalizing from particular cases. Or our concept may be of 'causation' as a 'necessary connection' between occurrences, where the first taking place is sufficient for the second to follow. Such a claim may be made, for instance, to deflect responsibility for a regrettable event from oneself to another source (e.g. inclement weather as causing accidents).

Here an account excludes an interpretive reason-giving narrative referring to human agency. Hume appears to have been presenting such an idea of necessity (or sufficiency) when he wrote *critically*:

> Shall we rest contented with these two relations of contiguity and succession, as affording a complete idea of causation? By no means … there is a necessary connection to be taken into consideration. (1740: 56)

According to an *inductivist* conception of causation, however, assertions about cause and effect sequences signal only the regular conjunction of events, to the point of its being a default or normal sequence. No statement is

being made that one is sufficient for (or necessarily brings about) another. Effect follows cause *simpliciter*. Such an inductively established claim (i.e. one arrived at by generalizing from a set of 'contiguous and succeeding' instances) that events are cause and effect may be statistically asserted. In this sense of 'causation', claiming there to be such causal connection between screen content and consumer response is compatible with asserting interpretive insight that those reactions are (generally) occurring for the same (justifying) reasons. The interpretivist and inductivist language games are clearly different but on this account of 'causality' are compatible.

Methodologists indeed have argued that a 'mapping of relevant theoretical variables in the qualitative analysis to theories greatly facilitates causal model building' (Prince *et al.*, 2009: 148). Reason-giving and causal assertion can thus sit side by side as *distinct* narratives of action – except where referring to causally necessitating events (often as screen 'stimuli') excludes rationality.

As exemplified in the work of Bandura (2002) and other scholars, the concept of 'necessary connection' can be found in scarcely disguised forms throughout media and marketing discourse, referring to exogenous causal events (pre-eminently on advertising screens or as branding) being sufficient to bring about (or determining) an effect such as audience attitude change, then measured by a questionnaire. Underlying 'mechanisms' may also be sought (by those referred to as 'critical realists') to account for this necessary sequence. Here, the interpretive accounts by consumer agents stating how they (actively) arrived at reasons for their attitudes (aligning themselves along with or against advertising) are conceptually jettisoned as epiphenomenal or simply absent. Where research treats 'consumers as interpretive agents' (Grant and O'Donohoe, n.d: 2), cultures can be 'rendered quantified' (Jafari, 2009: 352), but the implications for causal judgements must be considered.

Nonetheless, one here has further reservations. For Caru and Cova (2008) write of the 'increasingly complex and unpredictable experiences the consumption of today's products and services affords consumers' (166). Our interpretivism is committed to culturally varied consumer responses prima facie at odds with the succession of similar effects invoked by inductivism. How frequently in practice do the repeated reasons implied by the constant conjunctions of causality occur even within the mind of a single consumer? Does denoting recurring reasons not exclude from research a local cultural connotation, references to specific situations which are of use in branding? Terms used in quantitative analysis must refer to the life-world of signs or connect to 'qualitatively orienting concepts' (Prince *et al.*, 2009: 149) apparent in accounts from participants.

Distinguishing Form(ulation)s of Life: The Inductivist and Interpretivist Language Games

Heating a gas brings about its expansion: but the first event may not be said to warrant the occurrence of the second. Likewise, where mental events (and

sometimes physical actions) are also asserted to be connected causally, with the first sufficient for the second, this is distinct from their being represented as reason-giving and conclusion in a process of justification. In short, citing these causal events is a different language game from ethical or other reason-giving. Whether or not they are compatible or commensurable (as discussed in other sections), factual narratives focused on what is happening are logically distinct from persons engaging in evaluative judgement.

Yet Ajzen (1988) asserts analytically in an account much cited by marketing that 'theory of reasoned action posits a causal sequence of events in which actions with respect to an object follow directly from behavioral intentions': he proceeds to claim that 'intentions are evaluatively consistent with the attitude towards the object, and this attitude derives reasonably from salient beliefs about the object' (33). The practices of positing causal sequences and providing reasons for some person's acting appear here – erroneously – as if belonging to a continuous and integrated language game. A practices perspective would also wish here to challenge the apparent claim concerning 'behavioral intention' (ibid.) being a constant and conscious accompaniment of human activity.

Researchers working within an interpretivist paradigm of representing consumers as acting for reasons related to media content, regard viewers as first immersing or 'transporting' themselves within diegetic space and time on screen. 'Narrative transportation requires that consumers process stories – the acts of receiving and interpreting' (Van Laer *et al.*, 2014: 799). Choosing to so become absorbed in – or engaged with – media marketing, audiences align with its narrative agents, citing the latter's activity as justifying extra-textual behaviour in subsequent 'experience-centred narrative research' (Squire, 2008: 42). Alternatively, consumers distance themselves in alienated assessment. Reasoned interpretation of a text – however tacit a practice – may fail to be morally or politically positioned by audiences. But noting this failure is a distinct language game (or conceptual form of life) from claiming a (caused) textual effect – passive absorption of 'messages'.

But in work we have noted above, Bilandzic and Busselle (2008) couple their own thesis of consumer transportation with a causalist narrative of media audience effects wherein the 'constant presence of stories with similar messages may be absorbed (passively?) by audiences and alter their understanding of social reality' (509). Likewise, writing of the (surely reason-giving) relationship between a multiple 'exposure to advertising, word-of-mouth or direct mail/sales activities' and the consumer's judgement, Winchester *et al.* (2008) nonetheless conjointly consider the former to be each a 'possible cause [*sic*] of the difference between negative and positive beliefs' (567).

Engaged in a similar conceptual ambivalence over connecting media screen and consumers, Grant *et al.* write of the 'strong influence of branding on both attitude and intention' (2008: 275). 'An adolescent's intent to smoke will be positively affected by their image of the brand' (ibid.: 279). Is this an externally originating causal succession of events or one involving reason-giving?

Suggesting a reason-giving process relates brand to buying, these authors assert that the

> formation of specific attitudes towards a brand is a necessary communication effect to facilitate brand purchase. This assumes a process of cognitive belief formation in respect to certain attributes or benefits that a brand may offer and then a consequent evaluative judgement on those beliefs. (ibid.: 278)

But evoking external causality, they then declare that adolescents' 'intent to smoke is directly affected by the symbolic image cues of the brands they are exposed to' and subsequently assert that additionally, the branding images 'sometimes on a subconscious level … then influence smoking intentions' in a 'more direct form of persuasion' (279). Here, the language games of reason-giving and citing (necessary?) effects are conjoined, effacing conceptual difference in presenting research.

A year later, in an article on the 'Power [*sic*] of Narratives' (2009), Morgan *et al*. discuss the 'effect' of television storylines on viewer 'attitudes, knowledge and behaviors' (135) involving organ donation. Employing the language game of media causality, they here consider a 'significant main effect' (142) for programs and write of the 'effects of TV program [*sic*] on knowing how to become an (organ) donor' (145). Later, they refer to the 'effect of emotional involvement (in programs)' on audience behaviour (148) and suggest 'future research could compare effects of narrative on health behavior through different media' (147). In summary, their research is said to compare the 'effects of different stories on viewers' (149). Yet the article abstract and structured summary of conclusions tells us in discourse belonging to a mode of research which signals interpretivism that viewers are 'more likely to decide (for reasons?) to donate organs' if a drama featuring such a topic 'explicitly encouraged donation, portrayed characters revealing how they had become donors and discussed the merits of donating' (135). The 'media may persuade some people' (137) indeed!

Separating language games of induction and interpretation (causal or conceptual assertion), Martin (2012) studied 'effects of accidental interpersonal touch on consumer evaluations': 'men and women who have been touched by another consumer when examining products report more negative brand evaluations, negative product beliefs, less willingness to pay, and spend less time in-store than their control (no-touch) counterparts' (174). In a 'better understanding' of contiguous and successive (but not necessary) effects here, he seeks interpretively 'plausible' consumer 'cognitive appraisals' which 'involve categorizing an event regarding its significance for well-being' (180).

'Many media-effects theories recognize that the processes that occur while using media are the causal links between media use and media effects' (Valkenburg and Peter, 2013: 224). To claim that there is a 'causal link' between recurring events A and B compatible with interpretivism implies

there is no 'necessary connection' in B occurring. Where 'B' is human behaviour, deciding that one does otherwise is not excluded by this generalization. Nonetheless, some may assert to the contrary that A is sufficient for B to occur (or necessitates B), seeking thereby to evade their responsibility.

'Causal links' construed as being defeasible constant conjunctions – such as 'adolescents' use of social media can enhance their intimate self-disclosure to friends' (ibid.: 224) – are compatible with a practices perspective asserting that mall or media audiences (i) project meaningful stories from (ii) horizons of understanding and (iii) behaviourally articulate their meaning. However, in securing such consistency, appropriate conceptual relationships must be declared between nomological statements of cause or effect and audience narrated norm-related activity for reasons.

Inductive and interpretive or practices research narratives can be reconciled but – following Hume (1777) and Wittgenstein (1991) – exclude any 'necessary connection' or causes necessitating effects and as distinct 'language games' are not to be confused/tangled together. As Bargh (2002) concludes his considering 'non-conscious' causes which may be presented as 'uncontrollable' or as necessitating behaviour, a 'basic and important research question' is how 'powerful and typical non-conscious influences are in daily life': 'consumer research is the study of choices and behaviors that really matter to the individual' (284). Causes and reasons are different logical entities.

Practices theory places an emphasis on *interpreting* the fundamental forms (or 'horizons') of understanding (in)forming consumer behaviour, perspectives which implicitly (sometimes explicitly) involve projection (anticipating). It is neither 'logical empiricist', reality-detached 'perspectivist', but compatible with 'scientific realism' (Pavitt, 1999) in seeking *inductive* causal sequences.

Incommensurable Practices of Embodied Play: Understanding Chinese New Year Reunion Dinners

Stories generated about the same phenomenon can issue from conceptually alternative forms or ways of life. In looking at practices (dinner to dying), we locate – or place – ourselves on cultural horizons of perspectival perceiving, sharing or separating ourselves, evaluating moments in a world. Events are lived through different language games, considered as caused or constituted rationally. Our consumer responses to media branded meaning are presented as effects or justified persuasion.

In phenomenology's temporal-spatial model of understanding (particularly appropriate to interpreting cross-cultural reading of diverse practices), audience assumptions of narrative meaning are measured against their being in the world: judgement of truth or falsity emerges as a function of this process. Accurate interpretation is first shaped by the visitor's fore-structure of understanding, but equally essentially settled by their entering and engaging with mundane circumstances through the dialectical hermeneutic circle of reading. The activity of understanding resolves contradiction between expectation and

eventuality in a synthesis of interpretation. Meaning is thereby formed in a perceptual practice, everywhere future-oriented but 'culture-relative' (Kim, 2009: 412) to place.

The production of differing perspectives on experience resulting in narrative accounts which can be considered as incommensurable is exemplified in the following brief evocation of Chinese New Year reunion dinner memories and anticipation conveyed to this chapter's co-author. Both occasion and its perception by participants are seen here to be profoundly ludic or play-like in their 'intentionality', their sustained absorbed and purposeful gathered focus on a special space and time. Immersive engagement with tools for a certain theatre of experience, the equipment of a Chinese New Year reunion dinner, enables celebrants to realize their potentiality-for-being free from work.

Denoting an embodied cognitive process focused on a shared world yet often following a trajectory shaped by a cultural location on separate horizons of understanding experience, behaviour can generate incommensurability. (In)formed by/from different perspectives, people's achievement of telling a story may thereby constitute systematically varying perceptions – narrative displays of events between which no choice can be made on the basis of appealing to neutral evidence or facts.

(a) The Chinese New Year Reunion Dinner as Ludic Occasion

Accounts of the annual Chinese New Year reunion dinner present it as being endowed with multiple play-like or ludic moments. Preceded often by prayers signalling an imminent interruption of the secular, marking departure from the diurnal, the occasion of the dinner is reached like the specially immersive space and time of a major game with participants crossing over boundaries – a liminal period of shifting attitude and activity defining ludic awareness. People talk enthusiastically about the merriment of drinking and eating, the 'fun of doing and preparing'. Yet the event is also characterized by striving (akin to sport) – participants seek to ward off negativity with prayer.

As in a team game, Chinese New Year dining signifies a time of gathering persons, thoughts, extended family: all are seated together expressing togetherness, celebrating social solidarity, the good wishes and strengthening of bonds among many, 'closed [*sic*] knittedness' (female). An ending of work, it is also a goal-directed occasion. The dinner is a time that many look forward to eagerly to put down all the hard work of the year, to return from a laborious space to celebrate with family, ensuring the receipt of abundance and good fortune for the future ahead.

Like a momentous game, the reunion dinner signifies a distraction/extraction from the mundane by the sacred in place and time, by a meal that is no ordinary repast. As during a sporting occasion, traditional ritual and rules are localized, with the past included in the present. Thus this reunion dinner has also remained unchanged over the years with its familiar signature dishes.

The occasion is literally for its Chinese participants, a time of games and play, with the 'fun of doing and preparing the reunion together' (female); there will always be games to play, 'we just want to have fun' (male). Fun takes many forms, multiple moments of ludic immersion in extracted/extracting time/space: a woman comments, 'everybody is staring into their laptops surfing the net'.

(b) Perceptions of Chinese New Year Reunion Dinner Practices

Perception processes cognitive perspective, articulating our assumptions with actual events. With its narrative of our perceiving as ludic or immersively play-like in projecting meaning from culturally shaped horizons of expecting events, phenomenology points to the epistemological origin of incommensurable accounts representing everyday life *differently*. 'Written' into our life-worlds of familiar experience, fundamental beliefs shape our forms of life, from food to funerals.

So how is the Chinese reunion dinner *seen*? Establishing that his expectations are informed by emphasizing a familial horizon ('family members especially'), a male retiree projects anticipated narrative. The dinner is the subject of immersive focus, with 'most important', 'significant' aspects: eating 'we come together', and mutually identifying, 'we can share all the things among ourselves':

> you know, once in a year we have our dinner together, and just to usher in the new year the next day. But the most important, the significant part of it, is because you see after a year's [*sic*] of hard work that we come together, and we have dinner and then we can share all the things among ourselves, family members especially.

Within these accounts, reference is made to incommensurable narratives of events, cutting across the Chinese reunion dinner by referring to perceptions and practices anchored in religious forms of life. While all dine, participants construct events from differing horizons of understanding. Gathered together during a profoundly ludic occasion of distraction from everyday life, Buddhists, Muslims, and Taoists anticipate/project and actualize/perform food preparation and consumption where *acceptable* culinary practice is systematically identified from distinct perspectives. While phenomenology offers us a narrative of how such incommensurable perceptions are nonetheless formed by the same interpretive process, positivism is silent over this major phenomenon of radical factual ambivalence, of seeing the world first and foremost in fundamentally distinct ways.

> My brother-in-law is a Muslim. Therefore they cook a separate, they use a separate wok to cook for him. No pork … and everything that they cook for him is *halal*. So my sister will sit on a separate table which is still

together [with the family] and we will have the reunion dinner together but they will have the Muslim food. (male)

From the perspective of Heidegger's phenomenology and its genesis of practice theory, this narrative can be analyzed temporally (as instantiating the structure of 'being and time'). The author has 'entered' the practice of Chinese New Year reunion dining from a horizon of understanding its entities as 'equipment' with which 'they' will engage (as noted, the core Heideggerian category of understanding experience). Two woks will be used, one to produce *halal* Muslim food, the other with *haram* or forbidden content (pork). These culinary tools are present here as culturally distinct artefacts, essentially belonging to different forms of life. The story continues, integrating elements of the practice – embodied expectation and events – 'still together', enabling (again in Heidegger's terms) a mode of being-with-others – the Chinese New Year reunion dinner.

Conclusion: Phenomenology and Positivism as Enabling Conceptual Equipment

The epistemologies of positivism and phenomenology both claim the status of core theory, shaping marketing and media research practice, with each functioning as a fundamental account of an immanent structure characterizing the communication process. In this short essay, positivism (as asserting causal necessity) was argued to be incompatible with our considering human beings as rational agents in establishing meaning and hence the phenomena of incommensurability. On the other hand, the language games of inductivism and interpretivism exercise a limited compatibility.

Audiences construct a particular understanding of their cultural circumstances in a shared, structured practice of interpretation which is logically prior to further theorizing, a substratum of activity to which reference can be made in legitimating (correcting or convincing us of) universal conclusions. Phenomenology's concept of perceiving as fore-structured thereby revokes positivism.

Notes

Preface

1 I argue in Wilson (2012) that marketing theory's appropriation of hermeneutic phenomenology (as exemplified by Craig Thompson's contribution) is silent on this philosophy's account of human understanding as always already considering entities to be equipment or gear (*Zeug*). In marketing's 'Heidegger-lite' reading of hermeneutic theory, consumers interpret their circumstances *simpliciter*. Where marketing theory has appropriated a (Heidegger-heavy) view of human understanding being more instrumental is in recently adopting practices theory. As Andreas Reckwitz remarked (2002), 'one could point out the philosophical background of practice theory, above all Ludwig Wittgenstein's late works … and Martin Heidegger's early philosophy … and their radical attempts to reverse common philosophical and everyday vocabularies – and in fact, we find everything that is original in practice theory already in the work of these authors' (250).

2 Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis focuses on interview narrative *themes*. Smith (2004) claims to have been 'highlighting the inductive emphasis in IPA' (43). However, IPA's method is more akin to abstracting general (governing?) ideas from particular participant accounts. Inductive reasoning takes the shape, 'some a are b, therefore all a are b' ('some heated gases expand, therefore all heated gases expand'). What Smith describes in his (2004) article is moving from 'an individualistic frame of reference' to his having then 'theorized the material … in terms of a "relational self"'. Reshaping his horizon of understanding 'material' is hardly inductive.

3 Heidegger's warning anticipates Bourdieu's comment in the latter's later *Outline of a Theory of Practice* that anthropology needed to question the 'presuppositions inherent in the position of an outside observer, who, in his [*sic*] preoccupation with *interpreting* practices, is inclined to introduce into the object the principles of his relation to the object' (1977: 2; emphasis in original). In that text, Bourdieu's reference to 'generative schemes' of the 'habitus' enabling 'representations produced ad hoc from the same schemes' (ibid.: 98) could be taken as rescheduling Heideggerian reflection (1962) on projections of meaning from embodied horizons of generic understanding.

4 Hermeneutic philosophy claims the ubiquity of understanding, defining our being human, as a ready-to-hand (or minimally monitored) play-like practice, projecting and producing participatory meaning. Or in other words, Lancaster University colleague Ruth Topol suggested, understanding is a generic practice, instantiated in particular practices (from using a hammer to visiting malls). As Moran writes of the project of universal analysis in *Being and Time*: it 'aims to be both an a priori transcendental phenomenological description of the essential structure of human

existence, *Dasein* and … the temporal, cultural, and the dispersed nature of human historicality' (2000: 222).

Introduction

1 Wittgenstein's famed phrase 'forms of life' (1991) has received a range of interpretations, ably discussed by Hunter (1968). While for Heidegger our understanding is a ready-to-hand equipped 'primordial' practice of 'projecting' meaning (1962), thereby exercising intelligibility, Wittgenstein could be said to regard understanding as fundamentally 'form(ing) of life' (1991). 'What has to be accepted, the given, is – so one could say – forms of life' (ibid.: 226), understanding-in-practice(s).

2 Regarding consumers in shopping malls and social media from the practices perspective appears, for instance, not too distant from 'communicative constructivism' (Knoblauch, 2013), 'recognizing the role of "objectivations" in social action', allowing the researcher to 'consider body, practice and things' (ibid.: 298). (Knoblauch strives for difference on erroneous grounds that hermeneutic theory considers practices as 'subconscious' (ibid.: 303): rather, they are informed by tacit understanding.)

More positively, I have been much assisted in regarding the practice of understanding as *embodied* by the online debate between Professors Nick Couldry and Shaun Moores (located at www.media-anthropology.net/file/moores_eseminar.pdf). The latter author cites the anthropology of Ingold (2000) as a substantial resource. In ethnography, Pink and Mackley also assert, 'people "know" how their lives are inextricable from media but their ways of knowing are often embodied and sensory rather than always linguistic' (2013: 682). Consumer Culture Theory has turned to the practices perspective on behaviour. In an edited collection of Oxford conference papers celebrating the former, Belk *et al*. (2012) note it 'contained quite a significant amount of work based on practice theory' with 'CCT researchers' 'enlarging their conceptual and methodological toolbox' (xiii). A *Marketing Theory* editorial (Askegaard and Scott, 2013) notes 'two sessions devoted to epistemological perspectives – past, present and future – at the CCT Conference held at Oxford' (139). Practices and epistemological perspectives are a continuum.

Practices theory can be used to trace a complex process of articulating social occasions from the perspective of social ideals. For instance, Nguyen and Belk (2013) write on 'specific practices of achieving harmony' (531). Asian wedding 'goal-directed' practices ('pursuits'; 518) involve consumer behaviour as skilled ('dynamic') managing of equipment (such as the groom's 'decorated lacquer boxes or trays covered by red cloth') from its tacit horizon of understanding as enabling a mode of being-with-others – harmonization (as 'a core value of Chinese culture or a set of abstract principles'). Similarly, the 'meanings of the product's uses, for example, wearing the gown in front of an altar, changing it at the bride's house, or changing it at the groom's house, were created and modified by the group. These actions show their willingness to collaborate' (529).

'Harmonization happens', constituting genres of being-with-others (or 'the benefits resulting from harmonization that keep people involved in the process of creating it'; 518). In this context it is 'pursued' in a hermeneutic circle of integrating expectation with event, or with people reconciling anticipation and 'conditions under which harmonization is either promoted or defeated' (ibid.).

The practices paradigm in its reception theory manifestation has a substantial history in the Malaysian study of early social media and soap opera (continuous serial). For instance, Pawanteh and Rahim (2001) write about how 'on-line chatting' 'enacts the moral framework in which that relationship occurs' (114): the practice is shaped by a horizon of understanding being-with-others.

More recently, in television audience research, Hamzah and Syed discuss the 'exercise' of their 'cultural resources' by Malay women to 'frame competencies for

negotiating the depiction of modernity in soap operas while retaining their values and expectations' (2013: 148). Such skilled managing 'to make meanings' from cultural resources is evident in their ready-to-hand or 'second nature' 'watching competencies': 'there is no precise or set framework demanding application, more an inbred sense of what is the right and fitting response in the circumstances' of watching 'foreign soaps' (Syed and Runnel, 2013), integrating expectation with event, enabling modes of being-with-others. Soap opera equips these women 'placing primacy on the Malay cultural order' (ibid.).

3 I thank Bingjuan Xiong for this formulation of presenting culture *at-hand* for reflection.

4 Phenomenology's practices theory incorporates cultural 'horizons of under-standing' at its core. This concept has been reinstated in consumer studies as 'framing'. For example, frames are 'mental structures that allow human beings to understand reality – and sometimes to create what we take to be reality' (Lakoff, 2006: 25; cited in Humphreys and Latour, 2013).

5 Positivism's Twin Pillars are Effects Studies and Empiricism (problematized in Notes 3 and 2 of Chapter One). Astonishingly, abandoning one's 'perspective' is asserted as a condition of aligning with characters. 'Central to the process of identification is the adoption of a character's thoughts, goals, emotions, and beha-viors, and such vicarious experience requires the reader or viewer to leave his or her physical, social, and psychological reality behind in favor of the world of the nar-rative and its inhabitants' (Green *et al.*, 2004: 318). 'In essence, to identify with a character means seeing the character's perspective as one's own, to share his or her existence' (ibid.: 319).

1   Audiences Entering Mall and Media

1 Some audiences never arrive to align with a mall's prescriptive narratives or dis-tance themselves from its branding: 'Trying to get a parking spot in Sunway Pyr-amid and it feels like a never-ending marathon' (would-be immersing visitor to Sunway Pyramid/Twitter). Distinctly different, another visitor is absorbed in ironic identification as 'a mall rat like me' (*Sunway Pyramid Tripadvisor*).

2 One inflection of positivist philosophy is empiricism, that our experience is funda-mentally of a world of 'sense-data' from which we somehow build belief in material objects. Cultural immersion (or fore-understanding) has no consequences for per-ception. Such epistemological 'dualism' (as a view of knowledge) is the dominant persuasion in marketing and indeed much media study, evident in unreflective use of questionnaires which presume a pre-existing (implicit/sedimented/taken-for-granted) consensus on being able to describe experience independently of wider cultural reference.

3 US Effects Studies seem increasingly hard to delineate: this may indicate that their defending is being abandoned in the face of concerned attack by 'active audiences' of European theorists. As is argued in the Appendix to this monograph, *interpretive* (or culturally foregrounding) accounts of audiences are compatible with – but conceptually or logically distinct from – *inductive* (or causally focused) narratives of audience behaviour as effect. But in their 'Six-Stage Model of Media Effects Theory Clusters' (175), Neuman and Guggenheim (2011) group 'media hegemony/public sphere (Gramsci, 1933; Habermas, [1962] 1989)' theories along with 'social construction of reality (Berger and Luckman, 1966)' theories as 'Societal and Media Theories 1933–78' which they assert involve 'long-term accumulation of effects'. 'Effects' now appear to include counter-hegemonic critique! 'Interpretive Effects Theories 1972–87' is surely an oxymoron nominating a 'theory cluster'? In

this six stage story, 'Active Audience Theories 1944–86' omits mention of David Morley's work.

Valkenburg and Peter's more recent (2013) paper on a 'Differential Susceptibility to Media Effects Model' also sits awkwardly on the conceptual fence between inductive/interpretive studies. 'We refer to media effects as the deliberative and non-deliberative short- and long-term within-person changes in cognitions, emotions, attitudes, beliefs, physiology, and behavior that result from media use. … Media use, if not indicated otherwise, is defined broadly as the intended or incidental use of media types (e.g., TV, computer games), content (e.g., entertainment, advertising), and technologies (e.g. social media)' (222). Does not 'deliberation' involve interpreting?

4 The term 'brandscape' was first used by John Sherry in his paper 'Cereal Monogamy: Brand Loyalty as a Secular Ritual in Consumer Culture' (1986b) at the 1986 annual conference of the Association for Consumer Research held in Toronto, Canada (according to the online dictionary *Word Spy*).

5 The thesis that the Sunway Pyramid Mall is visited and viewed from a horizon of understanding from which it is regarded as a 'great good place', or 'second home' is discussed in Chapter Six.

6 'Absorption' or 'immersion' in shopping mall and social media is also referred to by writers as 'transportation'. 'One key element of an enjoyable media experience is that it takes individuals away from their mundane reality and into a story world. We call the process of becoming fully engaged in a story "transportation into a narrative world"' (Green *et al.*, 2004: 312). Attending to or engaging with media from informed horizons of understanding, we anticipate generic narrative which we can articulate and extend through our deeper engagement or immersive 'transportation'. Absorption ('transportation') enables alignment ('identification'). 'Transportation draws upon, and perhaps helps develop, individuals' natural tendency toward empathy and perspective-taking' (ibid.: 317): it 'may be a prerequisite for identification with fictional characters' (ibid.: 318).

7 Biggerstaff and Thompson (2008) argue in health research that phenomenology studies meaning constructed through language rather than (as in discourse analysis) the role of language.

8 Drawing on Ricoeur, our always already projecting meaning from a horizon of understanding is discussed by Bell (2011) as our 'proto-understanding' from the informed 'pre-view' of a text.

2 Participatory Practices in Promotional Places

1 Research on consumer reception of these YouTube motorbike branding videos was carried out at University Malaysia Sarawak, with four groups of volunteer graduate student participants – twenty four consumers. Two groups met on campus, the others were convened online. The videos used are of the four top selling motorcycle brands in Malaysia (Yamaha, Honda, Suzuki and Modenas). The questions asked by the moderator (co-author of the present chapter) were as follows:

(i) Did the video grab your attention? Why?

(ii) What did you expect when you first watch the video? Did it meet your expectation? Were you surprised? Why?

(iii) What was happening in the video? Explain or illustrate the video based on your understanding.

(iv) Did you identify or rather put a distance between yourself and the video? In other words, did you agree or disagree with the video? Why?

(v) Did you want to make the advertised motorcycle part of your identity and lifestyle (e.g. become a motorcycle buyer)?

(vi) If not, express your opinion and criticism of the advertised screen content.

Consumer experience presented in the discussion was analyzed within phenomenology's practices theoretical framework, that is, as embodied projection from a tacit horizon of understanding narrative to be generic equipment, with content integrated through a hermeneutic circle of understanding, and the result a topic of considered audience alignment and appropriation, alienation or apathy.

2 Heidegger's phenomenology with its notion of a familiar environment as ready-to-hand points to our experience of entities as ready for use without much attention or reflection. He denies that such experience is therefore pre-conceptual or free from being culturally shaped. This thesis is re-iterated in recent debates on appropriate methods to study audience conceptions of self-identity.

Among media consumers establishing identity, story 'making is connecting' their anticipating with actuality, expectation with event – *or* they 'mess around with materials' (Gauntlett, 2011). How is research on authoring audiences pursued – listening to their literacy enacted or to them 'present' such 'manifest and tangible' products of embodied attention, 'an image or physical object' (ibid.)? The latter could be read as learning of ready-to-hand awareness in 'messing around with materials'. Heidegger does not separate such 'primordial' human 'understanding' from 'interpreting'. Pre-reflective experience is culturally (in)formed ('fore-understood'). As he clearly argues: 'from the fact that words are absent, it may not be concluded that interpretation is absent' (1962: 200).

Gauntlett asserts that rather than using focus groups or interviews in research on audiences, his 'visual and creative methods' are 'useful' 'because identity is an abstract concept filled with things (passions, experiences, memories, sensations, influences, repulsions and attractions) which may need to be mediated – given form – and expressed in ways that social scientists may not have traditionally accepted' (2008: 255). Gauntlett's research (with participants 'creatively' assembling Lego bricks) appears a claim to gain access to their 'fore-understood' ready-to-hand awareness. However, Buckingham is critical of this undertaking. He argues, instead, that Gauntlett's non-discursive route (avoiding focus group studies) to accessing audience presentations of self-identity, 'appears to take us back to a form of empiricism, in which research is assumed to be able to access the "voices" or even the "inner lives" of participants in a direct and unmediated way' (2009: 647).

3 A political economy of consumer clans can draw on the analytical perspective of Heideggerian phenomenology to discern the construction of space and time for profit enabling familiar or ready-to-hand experience of constituent entities. Couldry (2012) makes a parallel connection when he writes: 'A media phenomenology not grounded in political economy is blind, but a political economy of media that ignores the phenomenology of media use is radically incomplete' (30).

4 An earlier reference to 'existential-phenomenology' as a research method in marketing studies is to be found in Thompson *et al.* (1989). Here, Heidegger receives a single honorific mention (135) as an author of existential-phenomenology, which studies 'the totality of human-being-in-the-world'.

5 Phenomenology's story of perceiving is present in psychology. Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) revisits Interpretive Marketing's emphasis on consumer perspectives, regarding the latter as *thematic* understanding (Smith, 2004) or a 'gem' enabling general insight, more or less apparent to research participants (Smith, 2011a; 2011b). Brocki and Wearden (2006) also provide a survey of this qualitative approach to psychology whose narrative is justified as Heideggerian. As noted, while IPA focuses on individual modes of being (often a depleted state of health), there appears to be little analysis of time passing, the 'participant's trying to make sense of what is happening to them' (Smith, 2011b: 10) as a process of projecting and realizing narrative meaning. Research is based on interviews, rather than also analyzing accounts implicit in embodied activity. Yet 'any conclusions

one draws about a research participant are possible only because they are primarily and always to be found amidst a world of already meaningful objects' (Larkin *et al.*, 2006: 10). Behaviour incorporates narrative projection and can be 'read' accordingly like text. The way ahead for IPA may be through incorporating Heidegger's (1962) account of 'fore-understanding' – with research participants considered as always already projecting meaning from a 'horizon of understanding' (in)formed or shaped as a 'fuller, more rounded synthesis incorporating personal experience and a more explicit social context' (Smith, 2011c: 56) such as marketing or media. Here, the pre-conscious and subsequently reflected-upon projection of meaning can function as a universal 'pattern/theme' (Braun and Clarke, 2006: 5) identified from the defining perspective of phenomenology. Focusing on this theme offers a horizon of understanding 'data' open to being occupied by researcher *and* participant rather than an 'insider's perspective' (Larkin *et al.*, 2006).

3 Video Blogging and Branding on YouTube

1 Chapter Three discusses graduate and undergraduate thesis reception research at University Malaysia Sarawak (UNIMAS) on responses to YouTube participatory-promotional video narrative before considering a research project on the same topic at University Science Malaysia (USM).
2 The quotation in this title is taken from Lehtonen and Pantzar (2002) on bank promotion.

4 Consumers Constructing Marketing Meaning

1 'Cognitive processes of reception' is a phrase used by Sclafani in her *Discourse and Society* (2008) article on the origins of public opinion. There, the phrase denotes mental activity differing from the processes – both local and universal – considered by phenomenology's reception theory. Nonetheless, I appropriate the phrase as applicable in the present context, for as Atkinson *et al.* (2001) observe in their extensive *Handbook of Ethnography* 'it is often unhelpful to overemphasize theoretical differences and to police the symbolic boundaries between them too obsessively'.
2 Subsequent to the submission of this monograph for production the University of Malaya YouTube video was 'taken down'.
3 […] Material omitted by the research's authors from the online text present in the chat rooms.
4 Punctuation (a series of dots) is inserted by our participants (authoring audiences of the videos).

5 Consuming Sites: Malaysians Visiting Social Media

1 The arrival of digital media in Malaysia, of course, confronted routine, ready-to-hand practices of news production, circulation and consumption of hard copy. Readers engaged with new equipment, the 'cultural technology of clicking in the hypertext era' (Wilson, 2007: 87). The institution of news construction is shaped by the Printing Presses and Publications Act (1984), to which the circulation of information and point of view in cyberspace represented a considerable challenge. Hallin and Mancini write in *Comparing Media Systems* (2004: 8) that 'one cannot understand the news media without understanding … the pattern of relations between economic and political interests'. And this is indubitably the case with the Malaysian press and production of political understanding. This relationship is discussed by Susan Leong in her (2013) *New Media and the Nation in Malaysia* (Oxford and New York: Routledge).

6 Visitors Engaging in Mall Practices

1 'SUNWAY PYRAMID. Your Unique Shopping Adventure. … After 15 fabulous years since it first opened its doors in 1997, Sunway Pyramid, Malaysia's first themed shopping and entertainment mall has undergone a magnificent transformation to herald a new shopping kingdom that boasts 4 million square feet of retail extravaganza' (Sunway Pyramid Mall website). The Egyptian themed Pyramid Mall is listed by *Wikipedia* along with Berjaya Times Square and 1 Utama (all of which are in Kuala Lumpur) as being three of the world's 13 largest malls.

2 In a study by North *et al.* (2000) of 331 bank customers in the East Midlands, UK, during periods when classical music, easy listening music or no music were played, the customers perceived in turn a banking hall as possessing different levels of being 'dynamic/upbeat', 'dignified', 'assertive/aggressive', or 'inspirational'. In a further study of 328 customers over a period of nine days in a city centre bar also in the East Midlands, UK, North, *et al.* (2000) found that when background music of different musical styles and varying sound-pressure levels were played, the customers perceived the bar as correspondingly 'dynamic/upbeat', 'cerebral', or 'aggressive/downmarket'. North and Hargreaves (1998) conducted a study of 300 students in a cafeteria likewise located in the East Midlands, UK, where they found that students perceived the cafeteria as upbeat and assertive/aggressive when pop music was played; as upmarket and dignified/elegant when classical music was played; as 'dignified/elegant, but not particularly upmarket' when easy-listening music was played; and as 'least assertive/aggressive' when no music was played. Clearly, music can support distinct 'readings' of surroundings. Dube and Morin (2001) subsequently found also that background music influenced store evaluation. As servicescape aesthetics, music can support varieties of immersive consuming (Chebat *et al.*, 2001).

3 Uses and Gratifications Media Theory (with a marketing theory correlative emphasizing hedonic motivation) has proved popular, albeit subjected to critical scrutiny (e.g. over its lack of attention to social structure). It can be easily modified to accommodate an interpretive aspect, perhaps emerging as Media User Understanding and Gratifications Theory. Via this integrative route, one can arrive at the Pyramid Mall as challenging (prompting reflection) or confirming (ready-to-hand), a place: (i) understood by its users or visitors as 'adventure' or 'home from home', thereby (ii) generating the narrative variations in 'gratification' we heard about in the focus group.

4 Malaysian malls, we have seen, are marketed in a 'mediated sense of place' (Tsatsou, 2009: 11) as immersive experience. One of the authors' student projects centred on consumers shopping and strolling through a suburban Sarawak mall in the state's capital city of Kuching. Perceptions denote an expected 'embodied experience' (Lai *et al.*, 2008: 381): they are 'body-dependent' in anticipating malls to be 'clean environments' (Joy and Sherry, 2003: 278). The body is constructed as locus of consuming's habituated expectation in ready-to-hand surroundings.

Immersion in our social media can be focused on a story's content (of intrinsic interest) or more instrumental (finding an extrinsic use for information gleaned from within the narrative). A similar distinction is made by a female Malay visiting the Kuching mall: 'When I go to The Spring [mall], I just want to relax actually, not for shopping, only for window shopping'. Involvement in ready-to-hand shopping as in stories may be intensely absorbing, passively gripping: 'I was like crazy, you know the price is very low and there were a lot of people buying' (female, Bidayuh).

A Structured Similarity: Engaging with Shopping Malls and Social Media
People's immersive perceiving while in a mall, this student shows, is structurally analogous to their being (while clearly corporeally absent) constructively absorbed

in screen media. Both these mall and media modes of dallying or deliberately searching activity (of seeking intrinsic meaning or securing instrumental goals) are shaped by expectation: both enable people to form narratives (of perception or purchase). Immersion can be accompanied by identifying (with characters or crowd) yet may also prompt alienation (a critical distancing from persons in media or people in malls).

As in the Chapter Three student projects, there were twelve research participants, here interviewed individually about 'malling': ten were female and all were under twenty years old. Chinese and Malay were equally represented (three), with four Bidayuh and two Iban contributors. Following the earlier format, discussion took place around the topic of visitor absorption in malls and informed anticipation of their content, together with whether expectations were rewarded. Participants also considered their concern with other persons in the mall. Did they align and iden- tify or were they alienated, wishing to distance themselves from these diurnal strollers and shoppers?

Absorption and Anticipation in 'Malling' Activity
We see malls, like media, from a horizon of generically informed expectation. A Bidayuh expressed her perspective on a shopping place: 'I expected that I can buy many thing[s] because I think mall[s] have all [sorts] of stuff [including] groceries, clothes, books, stationeries, movies, and more'. An Iban told of her (habituated but disappointed) anticipation of plurality: 'I expected many people and many product[s] [to] sell there because it is a shopping mall […] and maybe have discount there. The mall didn't meet my expectation'. A Chinese contributor mentioned her own secondary expectations of mall shopping, that it would feature a 'clean environment, the parking available and all that'. Anticipation – always already present – either eventuates or is not realized.

Alignment and Alienation in Shopping Experience
Walking through a mall, as in watching marketing, we align or identify with people seen in shopping or on screen. Mall identification is complex and varied: our pur- posive perspective can be shared with differing groups of people (or the cases of alienation (below) quite separate). A female Bidayuh visualizes her shopping sub- jectivity aligned with other consumers as goal-directed: 'I think I can see that they have the same mind with me, to get what they want and need'. 'All of them are the same' (female, Malay). Likewise, 'most people go there with one intention', with a material purpose, thus creating a shared or 'similar thing between me and the shoppers' (female, Chinese).

Immersing herself in local recognition, another Bidayuh does 'identify with the people, meet people of the same college'. Collective identification or cultural soli- darity with shoppers was wider for a Malay female: I am 'in the same culture, I am part of them'. People also identify with goods, appropriating them in purchase as they 'fit' the self: thus the 'branded product I choose is because [of] the attributes that fit me' (female, Chinese). Stylish product output can celebrate an outlook.

Is there alienation, subjective distance, between 'mallers'? As was disclosed in the discourse of alignment, distanciation is likewise complex, operating with a varied focus. So shoppers can feel separate, excluded, if they conspicuously cannot consume: 'People look at me different[ly] when I look like [I] can't afford to buy something' (female, Bidayuh). Some bring a sense of distance upon themselves, defining separate subjective goals from the stream of other shoppers in the mall: 'I have my own purposes to go there' (female, Chinese). Individualism thus subverts identification.

Being alienated can be a shopper's perception of class or ethnic distance from others, an (uneasy) acknowledging that there is an underlying gap in their relative power to make a purchase:

> Yes, I feel alienated because sometimes people in the mall, you know the mall is big and of course many people from [a] high class and [using] high branded product will come to the mall and it makes me feel alienated. (female, Iban)
>
> Sometimes I feel alienated because when I saw the Chinese people, they look weird when they buy high branded product, maybe it is their style. (female, Iban)

A distressing sense of distance from others can be overcome, it appears, through a talking cure, traveling with friends or simply by denying the presence of others in one's surroundings:

> I didn't feel alienated because I talked. I talked to them. I asked question[s] about their stuff that they [are] selling. For example, if I look for a shampoo, I will ask around so that I will not feel isolated or alienated in that way. (female, Bidayuh)
>
> I (do) not feel alienated because when I go shop[ping], I always go with my friends. (female, Chinese)
>
> I don't feel alienated because when I buy things, I will ignore people around me. (female, Bidayuh)
>
> I don't think I will feel alienated because just think like yourself, don't think like others. (female, Chinese)

Celebrating his perceiving a crowded consensus amidst the concrete, enabling him to define cultural solidarity as national unity, a Malay male teenager can be allowed to conclude: 'I didn't feel alienated because all the culture is just the same, no difference at all. One Malaysia, right?' His reflecting on ready-to-hand mall practices enabling material culture could be regarded as a moment of celebratory *Lichtung* (enlightening).

Conclusion

1 A research participant comment contained in an email communication from Carolyn Michelle.

Appendix

1 Hunt, for example, writes (2011) that 'positivist research' 'adopts determinism and the machine metaphor' (487). Here, 'causation' is *not* understood as merely 'contiguity and succession'.

2 A third hermeneutic (or a Heideggerian) reading of Hume involves an idea of 'causality' in which our generic assertions about cause-effect sequences denote shared subjective *anticipating* that one event will necessarily follow another or that the first will be sufficient for the second to occur (but this need not turn out to be the case). Such claims record our narratival projections (informed or shaped by past experience) on to the world: we so regard the latter from a presumptive horizon of expecting that events succeed each other but people may surprise us through acting differently. Hume wrote: 'power and necessity … are … qualities of perceptions, not of objects … felt by the soul and not perceived externally in bodies' (1740: 168); 'nothing is more usual than to apply to external bodies every internal sensation which they occasion' (1777: 147).

Such a hermeneutic account of intersubjective expectation implicit in employing the term 'cause' allows it to be illustratively deployed within interpretive theory: indeed this analysis of the causal concept is an instance of Heideggerian thought about how we make sense of the world more widely. Understanding is thus temporal, expectation or future oriented – 'fore-sighted'.

Websites

Websites last visited on 3 March 2014, with the exception of Meebo (acquired by Google) and Yamaha YouTube Video.

('The YouTube account associated with this video has been terminated due to multiple third-party notifications of copyright infringement'.)

Aliran: www.aliran.com

A Moment Like This: www.yvonnesam.com/2012/01/chinese-new-year-deco-sunway-pyramid.html

Association for Consumer Research: www.acrwebsite.org

Bank Simpanan Nasional: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Luy9RaitM3o

Beautiful UNIMAS:www.youtube.com/watch?v=7zDAQZYClQA&nr=1Watch

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Meebo: www.meebo.com

New Straits Times Facebook: www.facebook.com/nstonline

Produsage website: www.produsage.org

Public Bank: www.youtube.com/watch?v=XJLz1fEgxj4

Pyramid Twitter search: www://twitter.com/

Selangor Times 'End of the World?': www.selangortimes.com/index.php?section=views&author_id=15&permalink=20120113125200-end-of-the-world

Sunway Pyramid Mall: www.sunway.com.my/pyramid/

Sunway Pyramid Mall Facebook: www.facebook.com/sunwaypyramid

Sunway Pyramid Mall Tripadvisor: www.tripadvisor.com.my/Attraction_Re
     view-g298313-d2547995-Reviews-Sunway_Pyramid_Shopping_Mall-Petal
     ing_Jaya_Petaling_District_Selangor.html

Sunway Pyramid Resort Tripadvisor: www.tripadvisor.com.my/Hotel_Re
     view-g298313-d506308-Reviews-Pyramid_Tower_Hotel_at_Sunway_Resort_
     Hotel_Spa-Petaling_Jaya_Petaling_District_Selangor.html

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Sunway Sunway Pyramid Mall Facebook: www.facebook.com/sunway
     pyramid

Sunway Pyramid website: www.sunway.com.my/pyramid/index.asp

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University Malaya: www.youtube.com/watch?v=hSZ5yDHIRXs

Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XIFKIL1D9M

UTAR Campus Tour 2007: www.youtube.com/watch?v=-XIFKIL1D9M

Wikipedia Mall Entry: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shopping_mall

YouTube Honda video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=vzD3pSefLps (Preview)

YouTube Modenas video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=DgETd6N-lLA

YouTube Sunway Pyramid video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=HQeijVVbdI4

YouTube Suzuki video: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Al6WboCfXqg (Preview)

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