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Reflections on Brands and Culture

Every city is made by the stores and brands it has. To know the culture of a city or country is to know its stores and brands. When did our brands become part of our culture and what does it say about us? Some brands unite generations worldwide and others may only be representative to a small socio-economical group.

I had never really thought about it until I moved to Berlin three years ago. I grew up in Lima, Peru, which is considered a third world or developing country. The urban brands I knew there were not really known here and the brands everyone talked about here, I had never heard about. I had no idea what *Weekday, COS, Monki* and *& Other Stories* were; and I found out even later, that they all belong to the H&M Group. (Knowing this I didn't understand how some people disliking the H&M business policy were still wearing *Weekday* clothes.) I knew H&M from before, but the first store in Peru opened only in 2015 and Zara only a few years before in 2012, whilst their first stores opened in Germany in the 80s and 90s, that is almost a two generations difference. At first, in Peru, they were even considered more like a luxury brand. This made me also reflect on the idea of luxury regarding income level and how it only has value if you know the brand or have heard about it and also know the fact, that for some reason it is expensive. I guess no one would give a ton of money for a brand they've never heard of.

We are at a point in history, where brands seem to have more relevance than art and may even define the artists we follow. When did the brands and consumption become one of our strongest gravitational forces? From an early age we are educated to later work and produce stuff we can sell, or to render a service, that we probably don't even like, just to be able to buy our beloved brands and products. Then we educate our children to do the same and continue this (unsustainable) cycle.

The solution to every problem (we generated in the first place) is to create and produce something else that might fix it, but doesn't that bring even more problems with it?

I don't have the answers or the solutions, but isn't it still worth to reflect about it?

Is the culture we currently identify with and the one we are leaving our next generations mostly based on branding and social media?

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