

# APPLE'S CONSTRUCTION OF ITS BRAND AS CULTURAL CAPITAL IN *APPS WE CAN'T LIVE WITHOUT* COMMERCIAL

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## ABSTRACT

Commercial is an advertising strategy to promote a product or service effectively through mass media. It is also attractive because it touches the audience's emotion through its music, cinematography, and storytelling. However, commercial has hidden meaning and this meaning represents the brand as symbols which distinct itself and its users to other brands'. I analyze *Apps We Can't Live Without* (2014) commercial as the text to show Apple encodes meaning and transmit it to the society. Using film language and Bourdieu's cultural capital theory, the findings show that the symbols from the commercial bring into a conclusion that Apple as a brand is a symbolic capital, specifically cultural capital. The people who has the brand is considered to have higher position in its fields which are Apple and gadget communities.

**Key Words:** Brand, cultural capital, commercial, film language, identity, consumerism

Commercial is considered as powerful tool to persuade and has more advantage in communicating to the mass audience as the effectiveness and attractiveness are the main advantages (Ramalingam, et al, 2006, as cited in Ansari, 2011, p. 175). Behind all the successful and effective commercial, brand plays a bigger role, which is to create distinction of one brand to another while the products are closely similar (gadgets). Thus, a brand needs "a unique and powerful image for the product" (Moriarty, 1991, p. 65). The personalities if the image of the product are formed by the Apple Company and are transmitted to and accepted by the audience, the Apple community. Brand personalities are important because they work as symbols which 'embodied' in the Apple brand and they are called cultural capital.

I am interested in the way Apple constructs its brand as a cultural capital in *Apps We Can't Live Without* commercial. This study, then, is to analyze the audio-visual aspects of *Apps We Can't Live Without* commercial as a text where the purpose or message of cultural capital is hidden. Analyzing the *mise-en-scène* and narrative of the commercial will show that commercials use symbolism to create its worth as cultural capital. I write this thesis to show that our daily activities are surrounded by symbols that are hidden in material forms. As a result, no commercial is innocent, which means it has hidden intention to gain benefit from the audience. It is my concern that we cannot take for granted every single thing put in an advertisement, in this respect, is commercial.

I use the film language to show how the filmmakers form Apple as a cultural capital as a meaning in the *Apps We Can't Live Without* commercial. Film language is the syntax of a film that can be read by the audience. Syntax means 'grammar' and rule, like a grammar formed by words in a sentence, in a film which formed by a several frames to create actions and meanings. The aspects of film language I use are the narrative, *mise-en-scène*, and diachronic shot. Firstly, narrative shows how the commercial flow as a story in form of events that has meaning (Herman & Vervaeck, 2005, pp. 11). Character functions, according to Vladimir Propp (1968), are the play of characters in a story that enhance the plot of the storyline. The function of character is "an act of a character, defined from the point of view of its significance for the course of action" and it is "stable, constant element, independent and limited" for the sake of the plot (p. 21). Secondly, *mise-en-scène* and diachronic shot are part of a structure of cinema or called *code*. The code itself is a "structure of cinema" and makes that cinema understandable. Eventually, all the codes combined together "express meaning" (Monaco, 2000, p. 175). *Mise-en-scène* is a French term for the audio-visual elements that the filmmakers intentionally put in a frame of a film. The goal is to create the mood, understandable scene, storyline and plot building, atmosphere and even meaning to the film's theme (Campsall,

2002). Finally, Diachronic shot is a term for the variety of shot in film that “include distance, focus, angle, movement, and point of view” (ibid. 2000:195).

Bourdieu classifies capital into economic capital (wealth) and symbolic capital. Symbolic capital consists of linguistic capital, scientific capital, cultural capital, and so on (Grenfell, 2010, p. 103). Bourdieu also classifies cultural capital into three forms: *embodied*, *objectified*, and *institutionalized*. *Embodied* means that it is intangible and it is an ‘embodiment’ of someone’s disposition or *habitus*. Secondly, *objectified* cultural capital is a produce of one’s intelligence, skill and ability. Lastly, education is a form of capital culture which is *institutionalized*. Bourdieu thinks that education has a key role in improving and maintaining the status of a society, which means the higher the education level is, the higher society is. Because cultural capital is part of symbolic capital, I use the film language to decode the audio visual codes of specific frames. After I decode it, I interpret the meaning or what is signified inside of the codes. Then, I connect every symbol into a bigger picture to show the symbols that give identities of embodied cultural capital (*habitus*) and taste. In the final process, I sum up the thesis by putting together all the symbols to the *habitus* which, finally, create social classification in certain fields: Apple and gadget community.

## **THE APPLE’S CONSTRUCTION OF CAPITAL CULTURE OF ITS COMMUNITY IN THE APPS WE CAN’T LIVE WITHOUT COMMERCIAL**

### **Narrative**

To understand the skill of Apple as cultural capital in bringing benefits to its consumer, I use character narrative analysis. As a commercial, the plot still follows what the Propp’s narrative analysis, where three aspects in commercial to explain about the plot and how it connects to cultural capital as symbols. Firstly, the plot development, the functions of characters, and finally characterization of the four selected Apple users: the architect, ocean advocate, baseball trainer, and student with a bionic arm.

### **Plot Structure**

The plot is a sequence of events that form a story. It is not only entertain the audience, but also shows how Apple as a brand is identified to the roles or functions of each characters to the narrative of the commercial.

In the commercial, there are many people shown: many are in a few seconds, some in longer duration. These people who talk shortly, I group them into *the Commoners* or the ordinary Apple users. They represent the majority of Apple users, because their identities and names are not shown. Then, there are four people who act as the source of interviewing process, testifying the use of the applications in their lives. These four people are Daniel Libeskind, Emily Penn, C. J. Stewart, and Patrick Kane. According to Vladimir Propp’s narrative theory, I group them into *the Rulers*. These two kinds of groups, the commoners or rulers represent two kind of hierarchical position in the Apple community.

The commercial is about promoting the role of developer. Developer, is a group of people that are part of the Apple Company which construct the Apple universe. They are independent, however, they work for Apple’s economic source. However, the developer works behind the scene helping the four *Rulers* and remain unknown for the rest of the commercial. As the plot goes, Apple is intentionally not shown or depicted explicitly until in the end of the commercial. Thus, Apple logo works as a brand which functions as an emblem. This emblem is similar to Superman’s “S” logo or Batman’s bat logo. This emblem has meaningful power that signifies power, authority, and hope.

### **Functions of Characters**

Table 1. The Functions of Characters in the Narrative of the Commercial

<b>Characters</b>	<b>The Commoners’ Point of View</b>	<b>The Rulers’ Point of View</b>
Apple	Universe, brand, field, and community	
Talking heads	All the people in the Apple community	The four selected people in the Apple community
Developers	Heroes	Magical helpers
Apps	Magical effects or results	Magic wand/tool

In the commercial, Apple is the sphere, the atmosphere, the field, the community, and the universe. It is the field where people share the same belonging, although they do not know each other. I divide the users inside in this field according to the commercial into two groups: the commoners and rulers.

The commoners are all the people in the Apple community, while the rulers are the four people in the commercial. According to the ordinary users' (or commoners in table 1.) point of view, the developer is the hero in the narrative of this TV commercial. He, as the hero, helps the users, as the society, and change their lives. The real identity is insignificant but what people remember is the 'costume', the Apple brand, because what people see is what the hero has: the skill, knowledge, and possession of being an individual that brings benefits to the society.

In the point of view of the rulers, developer is the magical helper for them. A magical helper is the one who gives tool or weapon to reinforce the hero and overcome conflicts. As a magical helper, the developer, with abundance of resources, give the app as a commodity that gives benefits to the society. Therefore, Apple as a brand identifies itself cultural capital as shown as the skill of a donor who has wisdom and prudence.

The developer's application, to the commoners, only as seen as magic. While the developer functions as the magical helper goes along the way with the rulers and gives magical tool to the hero to overcome conflicts. The rulers have the access of these applications as a tool or 'magic wand' to finish their quest or achieve their goal. This magic tool used by the rulers signifies Apple brand as cultural capital to achieve possibilities, hope, and freedom.

### Characterization

There are two big aspects about characterization that I analyze in the commercial which is the clothing and the characterization of the four main subjects (Libeskind, Penn, Stewart, and Kane) in the commercial. Clothing is an aspect of symbolic elements of cultural capital in the *Apps We Can't Live Without*. This clothing I discussed is not about fashion, nevertheless clothing as cultural preference. Manners are another aspect of cultural capital. They are behavior and habits in contacting people and considered polite (Hornby, 2010, p. 904). Manners are important because they shows Apple's brand image and identity toward the society.

### Daniel Libeskind

Table 2. The Visual Codes in Libeskind's Clothing

Clothing and Props	Color
T-shirt	Black
Suit	Black
Eyeglasses	Black (bridge & temple) Dark red (frame)
Watch	Silver
Trousers	Black
Brogues shoes	Brown (dominant) Black (tip)

In the table 2, Libeskind wears conservative clothing and suit means confidence and "conveys power, ambition and achievement" (Carreon, 2011). Black is a suitable color for his social class which is higher and have the access to exclusivity identity in the professional field that shows power and authority. The characterization of Libeskind relates to a person who is being communicative. The first point of moral character is teamwork and its essence is communication, directly or indirectly. Being communicative is important, so that we can work with others and build a comfortable atmosphere (Lamont, 1992, p. 37). Therefore, by showing this manner, Apple, as a brand, identifies itself as a brand to communicative and openness.

### Emily Penn

Table 3. The Visual Codes in Penn's Clothing

Clothing and Props	Color
Rash guard	Light steel blue Aquamarine
Jacket	Cyan

Shorts	Brown
Oakley sunglasses	Black (frame) Brown (lens)
Earrings	Silver

Emily Penn is the second subject in the *Apps We Can't Live Without* commercial. She is an ocean advocate, which is the supporter of the preservation of the ocean. Indeed she represents the naturalist or the scientist field. All of her clothing denotes flexibility, unity to nature, and bravery to fight for the nature. Her clothing is match with the surrounding settings, such as the sea, the sky and the boat, that have muted colors. However, her jacket's color is cyan, brighter than its surrounding. This can be associated with being bold and different by taking an action to help the ocean while the other people being ignorant of the nature. The moral characteristic shown in the commercial is volunteerism. It is a "high status signal" and is related to "altruism and caring" (Lamont, 1992, p. 58).

### C. J. Stewart

Table 4. The visual codes in C. J. Stewart's Clothing

Clothing and Props	Colors
Hat	Blue
Polo shirt	Blue
Sport watch	Black
Bracelet	Blue
Shorts	Black
Sport shoes	Black

C. J. Stewart is a baseball coach and his carrier and life also involve only in baseball, in a young age he was a player then he continues into skill developer and baseball agent. In his clothing, he wears a polo shirt. Polo shirt is casual yet formal because it has the collar, signifies mutual respect is still attached wherever it is worn. Therefore, his clothing is strongly associated with respect and honor because of his experience and skill in coaching baseball. Then, the dominant color of his clothing and properties is blue. The dark blue color signifies "serene, credible, and devoted" (Drew, 2009, p. 92). The blue color also means "charming, dignified, lively, and pleasant" (ibid. 2009, p. 103). In addition, the black color of his shorts associated with "basic and powerful" (ibid., 2009, p. 103). Lastly, the manner shown in C. J. Stewart is competitiveness. Competitive attitude is driven by ambition and willingness to struggle to better than the others (Lamont, 1992, p. 41).

### Patrick Kane

Table 5. The Visual Codes in Patrick Kane's Clothing

Clothing and Properties	Color
Polo shirt	Blue
Eyeglasses	Black frame and brown decoration
Jeans	Brown
Shoes	Brown
Watch	Black
Bracelet	Brown
Robotic arm	Black and white (hand)

Patrick Kane wears jeans, a popular clothing that connotes "relaxation, easiness, casualness and comfort" (Hegarty, 2012). The blue color in the context of Kane, according to John Drew (2009), connotes devotion and confidence (p. 92). His confidence helped by the connotation of the color of his jeans and shoes which is brown. Brown according to Drew associated with stability, like the earth. His confidence of being different is stable and immovable. Finally, the mannerism shown in the character of Patrick Kane is honesty. His honesty shown in his statement that he is 'a big fan of being different.' He is, according to Lamont (1992), intellectually honest, because he is proud of being himself, honors his life, and has self-esteem, regardless his weakness.

## Mise-en-scène

Apple as a brand is a cultural symbol where its users relate themselves emotionally. Thus, the brand becomes their identity and lifestyle, portraying their *habitus* and taste. The portrayal is shown in the aspect of mise-en-scène which I would discuss: the lighting and sound, settings, and diachronic shots.

## Lighting and Sound



Frame 1. (left) Emily Penn's Scene

Frame 2. (right) Patrick Kane's Scene

Source: *Apps We Can't Live Without* Commercial

There are three aspects of lighting that shows openness, honesty and trust: quality, direction, source and color (Brodwell, 2012, p. 125). The quality of the lighting is soft lighting. Soft lighting gives the natural impression, not emphasizing superficial or exaggerated atmosphere. The commercial also softens the high lighting from the sun in the frame 1 to give a gentler view on Emily Penn. The dominant direction of the lighting toward the subjects is side lighting. Side lighting in frame 1 shows the exact view on Patrick Kane's face (the size of his nose for example), which creates reality and frankness. In a matter of light source, the filmmaker of this commercial uses key light on the subjects and fill light from the surrounding light sources (sun). In Frame 1, the sun works as the fill light, while in Frame 2 the window works also as the fill light of the setting. In case of color, the background illumination is not very bright. Frame 2, the filmmaker tends to soften the bright color caused by the sun, while in Frame 2, there is only illumination from the window. It shows the intention of the filmmaker that the focus is the talking subjects, that they are telling the 'truth.' Therefore, by these four aspects, Apple shows its openness to the society, asking them to join its community.

Table 6. Non-diegetic Sounds in the Commercial

Minute	Non-diegetic
00:16	Business of a city
00:53	Market
02:12	Wind

Secondly, the sound can also create meanings. The diegetic sound, sound created by the action of the subjects, constructs reality and makes the action believable. The example is in the Patrick Kane scene, where he performs the movement of the robotic fingers. The non-diegetic sounds construct the atmosphere of the setting where people are interviewed. As a part of documentary, it is the filmmaker's job to create the film believable as possible. Hence, by showing non-diegetic sound, Apple filmmakers want to give the sense of reliability, honesty, and frankness.

## Settings

Setting plays an important part in showing the *habitus* of the subjects in *Apps We Can't Live Without*. From this *habitus*, we can see the taste and how they use the cultural capital according to their taste and lifestyle. For the settings, most of the locations for the shooting of *Apps We Can't Live Without* are in cities, whether in parks, dock, warehouse and markets, which connote modernity. Secondly, the setting is inside of a building and mostly are corridors, representing flexibility and dynamics. Then, lastly is outside buildings or open world, such as a boat in the middle of a sea, a flying plane, and field, depicting freedom. The traits are the tastes that show legitimate with the use

of Apple brand as a cultural capital. However, the commercial only limited the scope only in cities, only two scenes, on the sea and in the sky, which are different and play little part. Therefore, the field in the commercial is people who live in cities with the preceding tastes and *habitus*.

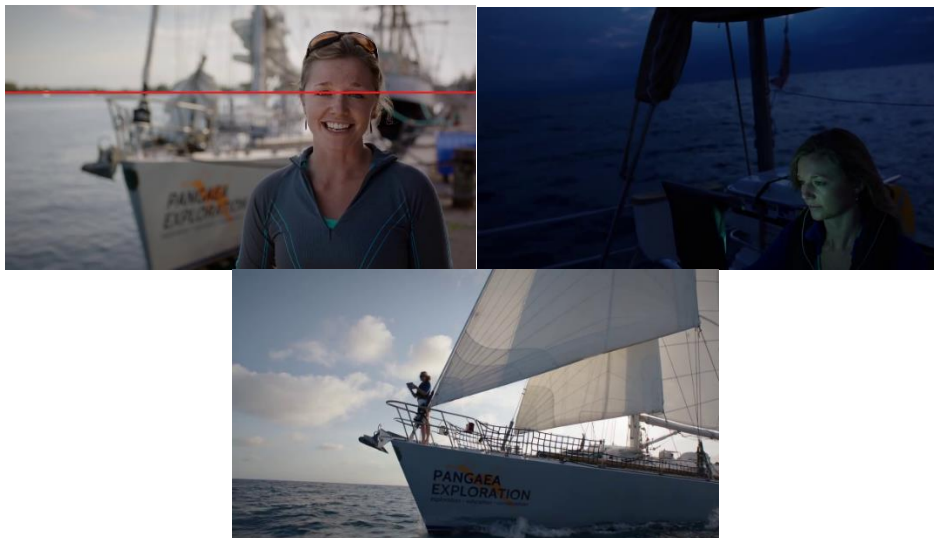
### Diachronic Shots

The interpretations, then, are the attributes and characteristics of cultural capital symbolized in the brand of Apple. These identifications of the giant brand (credibility) influence the audience to be bold (courage) to strive and compete to gain the social position higher than others (confidence) in the field of Apple community itself or smartphone consumers.



Frame 3. C. J. Stewart's Shot and Angle  
Source: *Apps We Can't Live Without Commercial*

C. J. Stewart and his young players are the subjects. In the frame 3, C.J. Stewart is the focus of attention, his proximity in the frame is larger than the young players in the middle, especially to show the action of taking the iPad mini from his pocket. The students, in the same framework, walk further ahead, showing that their trust toward their trainer. The angle used in the framework is lower than the subjects. This shows that the subjects, especially C.J. Stewart, are superior to the audience. Therefore, the frameworks connote credibility which identified to Apple brand.



Frame 4. (left) Emily Penn's Scene with the Horizon  
Frame 5. (right) Emily Penn's Scene High Angle Shot  
Frame 6. (bottom) Emily Penn's scene with Low Angle Shot  
Source: *Apps We Can't Live Without Commercial*

In the frame 4, the shot is medium shot where she is being interviewed. This shows her excitement and closeness to the audience in explaining the apps that helped her during her expedition. However, the angle is straight with the camera and the horizon, which means she is in the same level as the audience (note the red line in the frame 4). This means that she equal and has the same needs as the audience. In the frame 5, the shot is also medium shot, focusing to her face. The shot denotes her activities during the night. This connotes her hard work and desperation in pursuing the goal, cleaning the ocean. It is reasonable when the filmmakers choose high angle, which shows her

powerlessness in doing her quest. It also shows the vast ocean sea as the background which shows the possibilities to be lost or to fail. In the frame 6 where she is using iPad while standing on the vessel's bowsprit. The frame has strong meaning which shows her unity with the iPad and the apps she uses. This shows her courage and Apple helps her to achieve her goal. The long shot represent her position as the leader of the ship, where the ship is shown larger. Her leadership also seen by the angle, which is very low angle. Hence, from the three frames with the shots and angles, Apple is linked to courage and bravery.



Frame 7. (left) Patrick Kane's Scene

Frame 8. (right) Field Scene

Source: *Apps We Can't Live Without* Commercial

Lastly, the scene of Patrick Kane signifies self-reliance. Confidence is shown in the frame 7, where he says, "I am a big fan of being different." The medium shot grants the statement to be sincere, because of the distance of the camera (audience) is as near as the conversational space between two people. His position is higher than audience by using low angle shot, giving him the impression of his confidence of being different and his life is better than he has before. It also implies his dignity that he does not need pity of his own situation, because the robotic arm solves his problems. The last scene, frame 8, is shot using long shot with very low angle. These shots indicate that he does not need to cry some help, because he can do all those things on his own normally. The long shot brings the view of the sky and the vast field. He walks as if soaring to the sky, past all over his limitation and continue to pursue his dream. The very low angle also suggests his self-reliance of being someone different and not afraid to show it to the world and how Apple helps him achieve that.

## CONCLUSION

In the analysis, the symbolism in the commercial proves that Apple products (iPhone, iPad and iPad mini with the applications) are *objectified* cultural capital to show the one's social position by owning these things. The aspects of the objectified cultural capital is shown in the narrative form: plot structure and characterization. The findings in the narrative show that the Apple brand is associated to capability, resource, helpfulness, success, individuality, credibility, confidence, communicativeness, competitiveness, and volunteerism. In the *mise-en-scène* Apple associates its brand to reliability, accessibility, honesty, modernity, flexibility, freedom, trustfulness, boldness, and self-reliance. Therefore, from the cultural capital aspects, we can know how Apple as a brand identifies itself with.

The symbolisms can be divided into two parts: goal and *habitus*. Goal means the target of someone's activity, such as working or training. The *habitus* is the required attributes or characteristics to support one's effort to reach his goal. The goal consists of success, capability, resourceful, helpfulness, modernity, individuality and freedom. The aspects of *habitus* are credibility, confidence, communicativeness, competitiveness, volunteerism, reliability, accessibility, honesty, flexibility, trustfulness, boldness, and self-reliance. Therefore by showing the goal and *habitus* or disposition promoted by Apple, the brand is a symbolic capital that works as cultural capital.

In order to promote the brand as cultural capital, Apple must show how the *habitus* work with the *objectified* capitals, which are the applications and the Apple products. Therefore, Apple uses four people as the expert who has the qualification of using those cultural capitals. These people shows little bit about their each *habitus*, dispositions, such as bravery and confidence. These

dispositions are the trigger of their career or life betterment. Then, this cultural capital, taste and *habitus* only work in specific field, which is gadget community. In the gadget field, Apple wants to show how Apple as a cultural capital fit to the people with such symbolized *habitus* and tastes in the commercial.

As a conclusion, Apple's commercial does have hidden meaning. *Apps We Can't Live Without* is not only about the goodness of the company in helping people through developers and gadgets. Overall, Apple creates its own cultural capital, its definition of exclusivity and what the best is based on the cultural capital found in the commercial. It is our decision to legitimate it or not or to be the follower of the brand, where buying for the meaning, not necessity.

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