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for students on USW courses.**

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How might **design** connect a  
new audience to the importance  
of **Mythology**?



# INTRODUCTION



Mythology is the study of the fundamentals of society through existent mediums of belief and tradition. Conceptualising mythologies has been an integral method to developing the fundamental pillars that support societies. These pillars of myths have been used to help people understand the human self, such as contextualising many primitive questions towards the origins of mankind and recognising humanitarian values such as right and wrong, cause and consequences. Truth and interpretation are as important as the meanings behind myths; "The study of myth is thus of central importance in the study of both individual societies and human culture as a whole" (Buxton, 1999).

Mythology has provided a platform towards the structure and development of many iterations of human civilizations. This report seeks to identify how apparent is the practice of Myth and Mythology now and how important do we recognise its use in 21st century societies.

Additionally, mythology has resulted in several deviations from its origins and importance in tradition, perception and historical study. Myth can be challenging to recognise, which is argued by Barthes 1957 and Bignell 2016 by the theories of contemporary myths in present media and how people live and understand them. It can lead to the use of the term certain groups of cult-like beliefs have made, which is not relative to the core meaning of mythology "...an example would be the Marxist eschatological myth of the withering away of the state" (Buxton, 1999).

Due to its broad nature, it is difficult to pin where Mythology's decline had begun. Over time, the features of cultural advancement led to profound changes in belief and what people thought was important, contributed to a lack of focus in Mythology today. An example of this is evident in Greek religion and its shifting perception towards general sciences and integration. "...a new trust in cosmic laws and an increasingly abstract notion of God." (Bolte, 1999) collectively referred to as secularization and demythologization.

This change of beliefs, logic, and sciences gradually set aside myth as a pillar of understanding. Despite how modern myths continue to exist even when they are referred to differently like the nature of superstitions remaining as acknowledged forms of modern mythology. "...the lone traveller is likely to be threatened not by a werewolf but by a phantom hitchhiker" (Bolte, 1999)



# AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

## AIM 1

To understand how an individual might draw from their knowledge of myth and myth lessons as a coping mechanism for perspective within a 21st century problem.

### Objectives

- Draw on cases and accounts of how people react and respond to certain problems. What did they do? What happened as a result of their action(s)?
- Gain a deeper understanding of people's definition of mythology through qualitative research.
- Investigate how people have come to describe problems through storytelling

## AIM 2

To investigate how the 21st century effectively uses mythology in modern industries.

### Objectives

- Investigate the advantages of using myth and stories as a part of necessary industries. Why are they taught? How are they applied?
- Investigate the common factors of why myth is used in these industries through cited sources. In the end, what are they for?



# AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

## AIM 3

To understand how mythology might play an active part in design, specifically in branding or the strategic communication of a business.

### Objectives

- Discuss the benefits and difficulties that these businesses face when using these strategies to connect to an audience in the 21st century.
- Investigate how mythology is used as a form of commercial strategy in the businesses of the 21st century.

## AIM 4

To understand how mythology might play an active part in design, specifically in branding or the strategic communication of a business.

### Objectives

- Define value by collecting and reviewing examples of what and how people view things as valuable.
- Investigate the specifics of valuation. Why is something more important than another?

## AIM 5

To understand how mythology might play an active part in design, specifically in branding or the strategic communication of a business.

### Objectives

- Review the findings of the project and highlight specific pain points for future inspiration.
- Look back at present solutions and products the regularly use or have applied Myth as part of their solution. Are they effective?

# METHODOLOGY

## SURVEYS

To further the understanding of Design, Mythology and its regard in modern society, conducting several data-gathering methods are important to getting a direct experience towards the subject matter. Due to its social approach of the project, conducting research into mythology and design requires qualitative methods to better understand what may be a problem and a solution.

(Jamshed, 2014) explains this benefit through the purpose of qualitative interviews in their amorphous form which is useful in long-term projects when opinion and controlled pace are important to gaining honest answers and opinion "To be precise, unstructured interview resembles a conversation...which is skewed towards the interests of the interviewer".

## OBSERVING

Alongside supplementing my works further with insights from cited resources, observing how people react to my subject during the process of interviews and interaction may hint to further answers than just what they give. Behaviour, gesture and action of responses towards questions of Mythology and Design might detail how they might feel about the topic and to what regard it is considered.

## INTERVIEWS

However, interviews are limited by their space and investment of time, which is less effective when engaging with a much broader audience range for insights into more varied views. The use of surveys are ideal in reaching larger groups of audiences concerning a certain subject.

(Pointo, 2015) qualifies surveys as useful in psychological research, such as polls and questionnaires that explore human behaviour and are thus sufficient in exploring norms and traits as suggested by Singleton and Straits (2009). Having been influenced by trends and opinions, researching how Design and Mythology is applied on a wider spectrum could help further understand defining its strengths and weaknesses in the 21st century.



# DESCRIPTION

Mythology impacts many factors of the human self especially around function and bodies of a belief that influences how we do things, what we do with them, what we see and what we interpret. It is mainly present in many platforms we use such as Television, Film and, Storytelling such as superheroes, villains and monsters. In education, the use of myth is often used to understand a part of how and why cultures came to be and its relevance in history. However, modern mythology also exists from peoples norms and lifestyles, as described by Barthes 1957 about the popularity of theatrical wrestling and the generally accepted view of an idyllic holiday taking place in a beach resort. As part of social belief, the study of mythology has remained the same, albeit its role has drastically changed.

Extensively, whilst its most academic forms still exist in educational industries, Mythology still plays a significant – albeit at times by appearance alone – to other professions and audiences. It is not a unique concept that Mythology is used to entertain and influence before, which is evident in today's younger audiences. An example noticeable in the gaming industry due to the fantastical elements of storytelling within them, which is an intrinsic part of Mythology and its overall theme. "...video games communicate, like all storytelling traditionally has, the essences of what is good and bad" (Garfield and Manders, 2019)

Essentially, other audiences have also clung towards myth for this reason; that story has inspired older audiences that look and reflect in creative arts such as taking inspiration from classical period of reform "Artwork, music, and literature of the Renaissance frequently incorporated stories of mythology to convey a message..." (Johnson, 2017). Modern brands that use mythology as part of their product placement held this same trend as selling points for their intended audiences, becoming a popular method of branding that utilized the mystery and fantasy of myth for their products. "Mythological brands make a spiritual connection with the user, delivering something that we can't find on our own..." (Godin, 2006)

**“Ultimately, studying mythology gives us context into our world, our literature, and our own beliefs.”  
(Woods, 2017)**



# DESIGN AND MYTH

While today's modern interpretation of Mythology is commonly found and used for its entertainment value, its features are still present in driving the success of a product. Designing for brands, products and they are intended for plays an essential part in the attraction of success a product needs. An element of effective design considers how the product in question affects the human senses, such as how it can be seen, felt and even heard. (Roper, Micheli, Love and Vahter, 2016) consider this perspective important to the necessity and success of design by examining the increase of attraction towards products that bear attractive appearances. Essentially, design has become an important tool to solving a problem with an effective solution through appeal.

Another key component behind attempting to connect products to consumers is the understanding of user experience "If we don't know our users, how can we create great products for them?" (Babich, 2018). User experience dictates the efficiency and capability towards its intended audience with more than just the appearance of the product, it is what designers rely upon to answer fundamental questions behind a product's connection to its targets.

When further explored, user experience must know where their products and audiences fit due to how it might not wholly cover the desires of their audience.

"Designing a product without understanding your users is like packing for a trip without considering your destination" (Whitenton, 2019). Specific methods have been put into practice to accomplish this further, placing stock in what demographics could uncover through researching age groups, living standards, and even financial status. As an example, interviews are used as a reliable method of uncovering the important needs of a product. "Design research is a vote against hunch-based reasoning. It prevents the need for endless testing and provides a basis for evidence-based decision-making" (Lee, 2012).

Another way of beneficial connectivity is how products can compare to current trends and beliefs. (O'shea, 2018) expands on these trends and designer use by referring to Gannett's Creative Curve, which explains that a working product and its appeal relies a majority of its success on the highest point of a trend belief. An example being the rise and fall of the "hipster" movement that protested current social norms, including the hype and use of unconventional products and acts of deviated behaviours.

The nature of trends curving back and forth have thus displayed progress towards further innovation. These include new adaptations echoing to old formats such as the rise of smartphones and renewing iconography.





# VALUES OF THINKING

Due to the function of favouritism, both Design and Mythology are also subject in the way people perceive anything around them, which is present trends that provide an insight of how people put value in something because of the tribalism it has generated. It is familiar to the decline of Mythology through the gradual change of cultural belief such as the collapse of certain religions due to scientific influences and the historical rise of differing interests and opinions.

Prime evidence can be found in the Renaissance. A monumental period that focused on the “rebirth” of education, arts and science. Beyond material worth, value is also an inclusion of the human personality as suggested by (Richards, Cain and Carpenter 2019). Values in character and self-esteem alongside how people see worth in relationships and relatives, where importance is determined differently “Valuation is how we estimate the importance or worth of something, be it a product, service, or characteristic of something” (Richards, Cain, Carpenter 2018). Another instance is when considering the value of something to others and not just by self-interest or selfish worth, often subject to answering questions.

(Day, Purkiss, Gloyn and Wood 2017) details these questions in full about the use of Mythology and where it is applied to their according to their time and place such as to explain the unfathomable in history’s mythical views of the unknown ‘Wilderness’ and the Pied Piper by the Brothers Grimm during a Germanic period of emigration. At the turn of the century, perceptions of self and character gave way to further the disbelief and mystery these stories brought in exchange for fact.

In their place, the favour of certain famed beliefs at the time had also taken focus “... they did not understand the deeper significance and function of myth within the human psyche” (Longenecker, 2014). These beliefs – conventionally agreed to have been influenced by the value of science and biases of religious belief were also contested with the considerate opinion of myths playing an essential role in social study. (Longenecker, 2014) examines Jung’s works and the value of mythology in other industries through modern results of George Lucas’ adaptation in Star Wars and even J.R.R Tolkien’s Lord of the Rings as support of this contest. The latter having changed the perception of English mythology from its well-known biases in Arthurian fantasy.

Inclusively, Christopher Vogler’s text *The Writer’s Journey: Mythic Structure for Writers* (1992) is also accountable for the role of Mythology in scriptwriting to evoke social reflections in plot and story writing. A technique that remains present in many modern adaptations in the movies and television.



Several examples of how people perceive the importance and influences of design and society's perceptions have changed to influence a trend in some of today's current brands. The use of mythology in these brands apply a strict sense of identity to their business model. The evocation of emotion and mystery related to the mythological subjects they utilize are intended to promote their products in several different ways, as explained by Godin (2006).

### Starbucks Coffee – Restaurants

Founded in 1971, the well-known global coffee shop had gone through some of the most famous rebranding and logo designs since its beginnings. However, whilst its variety of products have come to promote and raise its reputation well, it is the use of its symbolic Siren and its mythical connotations that has stood firm.

The Siren belongs to a 17th-century woodcut with controversial sources of its true origin, which presents an idea of mythology's broad nature often questioned about its worth and belonging. (Calabrese, 2015) describes how this Siren came to be, dedicating the imagery of seduction, beauty and temptation to be of the same intention for the Starbucks logo. Whether intended as a warning of carnal intentions or a rendition of the beauty of Melusine, Howard Shultz improved on the image of Starbucks with the Siren to draw in customers with the potential attraction and persuasion their products could bring.

Over time, Starbucks and its logo from 1971 had gone through several critical iterations influenced by society's norms and perceptions. (Wilson, 2017) and (Vrobyeva, 2019) explains through Starbucks' partnership with Lippincott that the Siren and its colour scheme became the primary influence for the company at large. To the point where even specific trends could not curb its structure and fame "...to reimagine the original 1971 logo, possibly to appeal to the new hipster movement. The rebrand attempt failed with both designers and the public at large" (Vrobyeva, 2019).

## CASE STUDIES

**“...the Siren logo is alluring by design, beckoning you into the store to grab a latte or pastry” (Wilson, 2017)**



## Nike – Sports

Another form of mythology and its place in branding lies in Nike Sporting. Formerly considered insignificant and a secondary form of its identity, Nike's symbology and terms started from its origins as the Blue Ribbon Sports brand by creators Phil Knight and Bill Bowerman. Having changed its name and branding a few years after its growing success, Nike drew its name from the Greek goddess of victory for the meanings of positivity it inspires.

Keeping to the spirit of motion in their design through the 'Swoosh' symbol as designed, Knight had expressed little satisfaction for its structure. (Meyer, 2019) briefly explored alongside the progressive signages of the logo and its character to have changed over time, intending to favour efficiency and simplicity as its fame through its products grew further over time.

Eventually, as designs grew to favour more simplistic imagery, the company used the original piece of mythical motivation as its singular brand image.



1971



1978



1985



## Versace

In the fashion industry, to appeal an audience with different tastes in what is trending in beauty and fame. This was realized by Gianni Versace who, in 1970 grew successful from an initial range of products that received high praise, leading to the designer's rise in fashion with an independent brand of his own during the 1980's. However was when the first iteration of logo and mythical identifier came to be. (Brandon, 2020) and (Finley, 2019) explains the use of the medusa and its impact for the branding as a mythical connection to the attraction of desire and beauty. Claimed to have been an inspiration from the historical architecture of his home, Gianni Versace wanted to relate his products in the similar ideal of drawing consumers with an attractive product.

As an example of the creative curve by (O'shea, 2018) on the basis of trends, Versace and its mythical logo upon its public rendition also drew in controversy that ultimately led to further acknowledgement and popularity. The use of the Medusa, a terrifying monster that serves as a warning to the dangers of desire was often paralleled with the brand due to its core as a fashion icon "the myth of Medusa serves as a warning against vanity and lust" (Brandon, 2020). In part, Gianni did not define why he used the Medusa as its icon, lending suspicion to other possible reasonings.

Over time however, Versace and its use of the Medusa became gradually famous, with its current iteration better known firmly as a symbol of beauty and desire, but also its simplicity of design. Since Gianni's first interpretation, the logo posed very little change or rebranding, posing incredible efficiency to a world of ever-changing trends.



# VERSACE

# INTERVIEWS

Starting my interview with Helen, a Greek student who placed her experience of Mythology in her upbringing. The unstructured interview continued as a qualitative discussion on highlighting the importance of cultural identity through myth from her parenthood and early education; as suggested by (Woods, 2017) and (Buxton, Bolle and Smith). Comparatively, the origins of questions began to differ heavily in other interviews, such as from Yordan Yordanov whose experience of Mythology did not hold a large role in his education. Despite this, he placed its greatest exposure and success on the tourism industry, another implication of myth as a study of cultural difference and identity.

Certain common patterns from the interviews began to stand out when questioning their personal opinions of the current place of Mythology. During the interview with Jenna de Jong, who also held a high regard for Mythology admitted that her working environment lacked regard or place for its influence. It is not so dissimilar to Yordanov's answer due to his technical lifestyle beyond personal engagement of fantasy. A possible argument could be drawn from the interview with Alexander Bell, posing his struggles to engage his interests in learning mythology was made difficult by his education reserving the lessons of myth for the socially 'elite'. Extensively, these experiences also shared external factors beyond learned education, such as De Jong and Helen's promotion of the resurgence of a popular trend of Mythology in gaming and literature.

Essentially, other audiences have also clung towards myth for this reason; that story has inspired older audiences that look and reflect in creative arts such as taking inspiration from classical period of reform "Artwork, music, and literature of the Renaissance frequently incorporated stories of mythology to convey a message..." (Johnson, 2017). Modern brands that use mythology as part of their product placement held this same trend as selling points for their intended audiences, becoming a popular method of branding that utilized the mystery and fantasy of myth for their products. "Mythological brands make a spiritual connection with the user, delivering something that we can't find on our own..." (Godin, 2006)



**Alexander Samuel  
Robert Bell**  
Steward, Museum  
Assistant



**Helen/Eleni**  
Student of Political  
Sciences and  
Relations



# INTERVIEWS

To extend the qualitative variety of the interviews, the questions also extended on how Design and Mythology came together. When inquired, Bell painted a positive picture towards the use of myth in branding design, agreeing with the arguments displayed by (Godin, 2006) as to the strategy of utilizing myth and its fantastical attachments to promote a product. In contrast, Yordanov disagreed with this by stating how certain brands have incorrectly or ineffectively used this strategy to generate attraction towards a product. As (Lee, 2012) and (Babich, 2018) pointing out that attraction towards the design of a product can be inherently successful if clearly understood. Conclusively, despite Alexander's claims of an innate awareness towards myths used in product design, the rest of the interviews shared the view that myths should share a better, definitive presence even in design.

Lastly, the interview directed towards their personal value towards Mythology. Perhaps most unexpectedly due to backgrounds and similar favourites, Helen and De Jong shared a certain optimism towards the Mythology as bringing colour and cultural understanding to a modern time that is often too busy or concerned with its technical climate. On a differing standpoint, both Yordanov and Bell imposed on the wealth of mythology's purpose already present in society and culture, pointing towards its ongoing focus and presence already. Conclusively, this suggests that the repute of Mythology, whilst present, has still shifted to a lower degree of belief in comparison to history.

Each interview beheld certain insights that differed and also shared similarities to, many of which led to the belief that Mythology was not as forgotten or as downplayed as I thought when certain industries and hobbies have been repeatedly stated to have regularly used myth as a theme, product or subject. Acknowledgements of its resurgence as a trend also provided further renewal as discussed by (O'shea, 2018) and the creative curve.



**Yordan Yordanov**  
Quality  
Management and  
Team Leader



**Jenna de Jong,**  
Software Delivery  
Consultant

# SURVEY

Most respondents were in their mid to late 20's followed by 30's, according to ongoing insights from a rise of interest in current studies and use of Mythology in familiar industries such as entertainment.

Surprisingly, respondents from 60+ year old expressed interest in Mythology's academic study of social studies and cultural understanding.



Though expectations favoured a lack of mythology in education, the number of individuals involved had near equated having included the lessons of myth and legend in their education in primary, secondary or private schooling.



Once more displaying an unexpected precedent, many of the respondents answered with a greater understanding of Mythological studies' purpose beyond its base meanings. The most common answer is the definitive understanding of its purpose, a study of society and culture through fantastic means. Storytelling, folklore and civil study were standing out.

1.) What is your age range?

2.) Is/was mythology a part of your education?

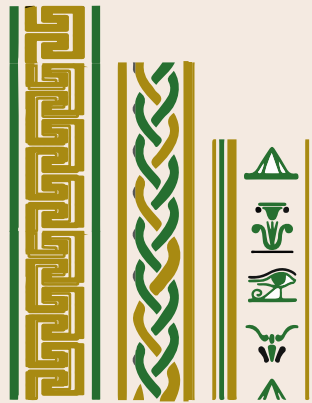
3.) How would you personally describe Mythology?

**“Ancient legends and Fantasy”**

**“Non-active (Somewhat) Religion.”**

**“Lessons of the past...”**

Likely due to their famed focus and attachment, it was not unexpected to see most respondents place knowledge of Greek and Norse mythology. However, there was much more familiar with local myth and lesser-known mediums, which implies traditional mythology may not be as detached as thought.



Though assumption led to a leader in entertainment and academia, the respondents displayed learned interests in other mediums such as books and self-interested research. Positivity towards individual authors and titles led to understanding myth and its lessons being better known today.

Many respondents expressed that their interests in mythology came from discovering different expressions and understandings from another time. Curiosity led interests around subject humanities and culture, with degrees of escapism was also prevalent.

4.) What forms of Mythology are you most familiar?

5.) Why and how are you familiar with them?

6.) When reading/watching interacting with Mythology, what interests you the most?

**“Books, popular culture, studies”**

**“Multiple sources, mostly modern interpretations.”**

**“Movies, stories, games.”**

**“How people conjured such fascinating, intricate and complex ideas to describe their world.”**

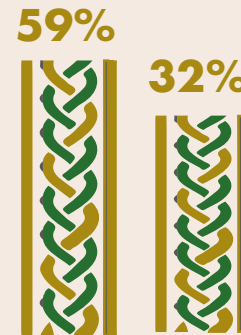
**“Symbolism in storytelling.”**



After considering their interests, most of the respondents answered with an agreeing interest towards the study of Mythology followed by those unsure of what benefits it could provide for them. With a more significant expression to its importance, those who disagreed stated that Myth had little use or no place in their current lifestyle.



Taking on Design's involvement, many respondents recognized one brand out of all due to their appearance and reputation. Despite their use of myth in branding, Amazon and Nike won out by far with other services and titles lacking.



Recognition towards the displayed brands came from familiarity overall. Perhaps due to the presented brands' success and less the symbology or relevance of mythical attachments that drew their recognition the most.

When asked to detail their critique or change, many did not find the need to shift their current image, relying not only on the mythical imagery used towards their branding.

7.) Would the study or leaning of Mythology benefit you?

8.) Which brands do you recognise?

9.) Would you improve upon these logos/brands?



# SUMMARY

At the start of this research, I held the assumption of the questionable role and further decline of Mythology due to the importance of fact in today's busy modern lifestyles. Though I had already been living a life that regularly engaged fantastical myths and works of fiction, I still held the belief that it was not as popular as I would have liked to believe. Yet drawing from comprehensive research detailed throughout this project, I have uncovered several insights that have gladly disproven the bleak premise and outlook of my project.

(Helen and Bell, 2021) solidified this change of opinion when engaging in their set interviews, setting out their experiences by discussing mythology as deep influences in their education. As suggested by (Woods, 2017) on the integral participation of myth in cultural and social study. Comparatively, certain biases towards other beliefs became present the older age groups become, where the presence and relevance of myth falls deeper into sophisticated study. An example found in the survey due to the number of involved participants being largely a share of teenagers and people in their early-to-late 20's. Another expression made by the interview conducted with (Bell, Jong and Yordanov 2021) agreed with this view further when they discussed how myth was less evident in their everyday lifestyles despite their great interests towards its attached genres. Conclusively, this led to the belief that while Mythology held a surprisingly stronger role than first assumed, it was still largely ignored perhaps with the inclusion of certain biases.

Having seen more of the younger audiences being more presently active in the survey, I turned back to look at what factors could have led to this result. (Bell, Jong and Helen 2021) understood this as a genuine resurgence of interest through storytelling and escapism from the pressures of a lifestyles growing increasingly difficult and busy. With the entertainment industry still using the techniques of scriptwriting provided by (Vogler, 1992), it is not surprising to see the regular use of fantastical myth in movies and television being more present in today's younger audiences. Especially when the interaction of electronic devices has become more evident to today's modern lifestyle.

However, the extent of older participants and their reasoning is what caught me off guard; acknowledging that the lessons behind the use of mythology was once again also more popular. Especially in the more rural and countryside regions as discussed in the interview conducted with (Yordanov, 2021).

Lastly, exploring the presence of Mythology in branding and design confirmed a change of perceptions. The case studies behind Starbucks and from Nike which used mythic symbology as provision to the promotion of their brand and products agreed with the arguments of (Babich, 2018) and (Godin, 2006). Whilst not necessarily utilizing a myth and its lessons to the fullest, they were still recognized for the value they brought as identifiers and positive inclusivity for their products. These identifiers were also immediately apparent when collecting critique from the survey and insights from the interviews carried out. (Bell and Helen, 2021) posed agreements with (Babich, 2018) and (Lee, 2012) around the subtle acknowledgements these brands had credited towards the identity of Mythology.

Conclusively, the research of this project had rightly questioned the validity of my question from the start. I have acknowledged that Mythology had shifted in terms of focus and regard, mainly where its popularity now belonged and how it was used. Today, Mythology remains popular for the mediums of storytelling and appearances it provides, whilst its study and academia still cling to the study of society and culture. Therefore, I believe that Design does not necessarily need to draw in the attraction of Mythology and its lessons, but how to renew an already existing understanding towards the lessons it brings beyond its attractive appearances.

## REVISED TITLE

How might **design** renew the  
importance of **Mythology**  
in today's modern lifestyle?

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