

Divisions in Healthy Living  
Gatekeeping Theory in Wellness Branding

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The media industry has undergone many cosmetic changes in the past decade. In that time, the transition from print to a predominantly digital age revealed different and diverse target markets. In the quest to reach specific needs, some markets are ignored by brands. Many businesses have taken advantage of the wellness industry boom in recent years. Boosted by the influence of social media, a healthy lifestyle is reimagined as one filled with luxury. Proper wellness is as simple as choosing water over soda, but today's wellness branding portrays the opposite. It now consists of intercontinental retreats and unpronounceable foods, and many influential companies neglect to acknowledge their exclusionary branding tactics. By failing to recognize those with limited access to healthcare, gyms, and healthy foods, the gatekeeping theory is introduced and further fueled by the media industry's portrayal of wellness as a universal luxury.

### **Gatekeeping Theory**

News sources continually relay information to the public. The progression of technology, combined with the inception of social media, generated an unlimited news source. A single individual cannot process thousands of news reports daily, and gatekeeping was invented as a solution. Gatekeeping theory acts as the "center of media's role in modern public life" by gathering information and reducing it to a manageable amount to be consumed by the populace (Shoemaker and Vos 1). The filtering method, often referred to as a mediator, shapes "a person's social reality or a particular view of the world (Shoemaker and Vos 3).

The function of gatekeeping modified after traditional media shifted to a digital platform. Journalists, the original gatekeepers, believe the theory ceased after the shift because "traditional mass media no longer have the same level of control that they once had" (Ernste, 33). Their influence was systematically biased and driven by "a combination of organizational factors, new

norms, and audience interests," but similar to their audience, journalists cannot absorb thousands of pieces of information at once, and eventually, they too became obsolete (Soroka, 514). The foundations of social media and gatekeeping intersect (Ernste, 40). Instead of dissipating along with several aspects of the print industry, gatekeeping grew more decentralized where "central nodes within the gatekeeping process now operate within the structure of internet-mediated networks" (Ernste, 70).

Traditional gatekeeping "indicates a unidirectional flow" in which journalists singularly exercised "various levels of control and influence on the flow of information" (Chin-Fook and Simmonds, 22). The conventional method's maturation surrendered journalists' original role to "institutions, professional communicators, networked individuals, and everyday individuals" to influence social reality (Chin-Fook and Simmonds, 22). Traditional gatekeeping became known as cultural or contemporary gatekeeping. The theory is intended to ease the massive flow of information towards an audience and, in turn, they acquire reports of interest; the "theory argues that there are forces that constrain or enable the movement of information through news production channels" (Ferrucci and Tandoc Jr, 104). The constraint of information is the primary concern of the gatekeeping theory. While its original intentions were pure; its goals eventually led to a process laced with impurities.

### Historical Background

Born in 1890 in Poland and later raised in Berlin, Kurt Lewin founded the gatekeeping theory framework. In the United States, Lewin established his merit through his skills in applied psychology. His development of a "conceptual apparatus for studying human behavior and motives with methodological rigor" and other practices led social scientists to navigate the social world with the same level of expertise as natural scientists understand the physical world

(DeJuliis, 4). Lewin lived in a time where the consideration of social theory as science was debated. In response, Lewin summoned a happy medium and generalized the social world based on conclusions constructed from analyzing human behavior. He concluded that the social world's goal is conceptualization, where scientists "translate the phenomena in the world to concepts in the mind" (DeJuliis, 5).

Conceptualization is the building block from which the gatekeeping theory arose. This practice determines that "each individual constitutes a life space," that involves an individual or group and their environment (DeJuliis, 5). The life space of every person combines into a social field. In social areas, every individual's life space coexists within an ecological setting. Life space is determined by identifying its distinct components and observing its connection to the entire field. Human behavior is defined by the relationship between an individual's lifestyle and the social field. The association is limited by a social scientist who "determines specifically what things are to be included in the representation of any given life space at any particular time" (DeJuliis, 5). The process transformed these scientists into the original gatekeepers.

Lewin categorized life spaces as an entity influenced by a series of factors, including the individual, environment, needs, goals, cognitive structures, politics, economic, and legal processes, because they directly affect behavior. By concluding that "life spaces move through history and are affected by past experiences, but only the system as a whole can show effects at any one time," Lewin's ideology undulated through concepts later introduced to the world of social science (DeJuliis, 5). Although Lewin introduced the gatekeeping concept, he modeled his version after the way food travels through a restaurant, not the news process. In Lewin's thoughts, he identifies two clear channels a meal travels from kitchen to customer and "person or persons buying, transporting, and preparing the food items" (Ferrucci and Tandoc, 104). His

research supports the possibility of his intention to apply gatekeeping to media, but the first academic to use the concept alongside mass communication research was his pupil, David Manning White, in 1950. White observed a news editor's role and connected the editor's decision-making process to his mentor's gatekeeping discovery.

### **Gatekeeping for the Digital Age**

The internet is comprised of a global community that connects its accessors far beyond international waters. The transition from a print to digital platform "enabled less filters and gates online, leaving individuals to determine truth, what is news, and what is important" (Chin-Fook and Simmonds, 14). Key influencers, social influencers, or known peer influencers have assumed the role of journalists. Many organizations have resorted to influencers to promote their brand on message because "if you reach influencers, you reach their network" (Chin-Fook and Simmonds, 18). Social influencers are found on YouTube and across every social network. They have a large following up to the millions; in most cases, this new profession fuels an extravagant lifestyle. Through endorsements, influencers receive more funds, and in response, companies "reach hundreds, thousands, and millions of other individuals through their network's reach" by contacting only a few key people (Chin-Fook and Simmonds, 18).

Media organizations are influential factors in society, and those that contribute to the revenue of the organizations are equally as important; without them, we wouldn't have access to news sources. Unfortunately, the public garnished their funds excessively into digital, supplementing digital media's rise, indicating print's downfall.

### **Levels Of Gatekeeping**

In theory, the study of gatekeeping is divisional by "five levels of analysis: the individual, the communication routines, the organizational, the social institution, and social system levels"

(Ferrucci and Tandoc, 105). The framework of influence introduces a multitude of topics, approaches, and styles that merit evaluation through the lens of gatekeeping theory.

The individual-level studies a person's characteristics such as "their demographic profiles, their life experiences, their values and attitudes, and their work experiences" (Shoemaker and Vos, 31). It's rare for a journalist to make a lone decision because there are constant socialization factors that influence the final decision. News organizations follow a set of procedures or directives from their superiors. Although "individual journalists resist overt direction, because they choose instead to abide by trusted media routines," there are cases where individual agencies persevered (Vos and Heinderyckx, 14). In instances of economic upheaval, journalists have entered the practice under their terms and "vowed to practice a kind of journalism they could not in legacy newsrooms" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 14). Technology has reshaped the roles and practices of journalism. The digital transition has enabled journalists to prosper in an individual approach. Their "expertise and following make them global brands, which in turn affords them more discretion in their work" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 14).

The communication routines are not rehearsed by a person or organization but instead focuses on "the application of routine news values, such as timeliness, proximity, interest, or oddity," with this level, the number of news sites visited, the time spent on each page, and the characteristics of the visitor are tracked (Shoemaker and Vos, 32). News organizations created a procedure to regulate the news stories they publicize each day. Researcher Van Dalen observed these algorithms and concluded that the method produces rudimentary news stories. Historically, successes in the journalism world were accomplished "within the limits of the publication or broadcast style," the move to digital "has disrupted routines, pushing journalists to embrace greater creativity and complexity in their journalism and to rely less on factual, inverted pyramid

styles" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 15). In a study conducted by Serena Carpenter comparing online journalistic behavior to traditional, it was found that the "citizen journalists relied less on official sources and more on their own opinions," which suggests that economic incentives influence routine methods (Vos and Heinderyckx, 16). The electronic platforms' transition gave journalists the freedom to speak on issues they strongly support without investors prohibiting their pieces.

The organizational level evaluates "characteristics that differentiate among communication organizations," these characteristics include organization size, decision-making structure, ownership, and markets (Shoemaker and Vos, 32). Serena's case study exhibited in the communications routine theory revealed that "different organizational environments result in different routines and different news styles" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 16). Businesses are frequently searching for new forms of digital delivery to differentiate themselves from their competition. Some companies utilize new advertising techniques such as disgusting ads as editorial content and contacting influencers to enhance their brand. Others are opting for philanthropic routes by establishing "nonprofit news sites, seeking support through foundations, though audience based micro-funding, and performance of auxiliary services" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 16). The struggle for individuality has caused organizations to steer journalists away from the investigation and social media interaction or update the website. The digital world doesn't have a clear distinction between professional and personal life; the new "time constraints enforced by news organizations have robbed journalists of their professional autonomy" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 16).

The social institutions "concentrate on forces outside of media organizations, such as advertisers and their audiences, governments, and interest groups," by studying the interrelationships between social institutions, a network of cooperation is revealed (Shoemaker

and Vos, 32). Formerly, mainstream media was the only course of action social institutions could use to reach an audience. This method resulted in institutions "investing significant efforts into trying to influence how news media would tell the stories important to those institutions" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 17). The establishment of the internet created new communication channels, including "governments, sources, advertisers, public relations practitioners, and interest groups" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 17). Initially viewed as a turning point in the industry, the "digital tools seem to have aided in the development of new forms of press criticism," the new methodology took a disastrous turn. It was abused by groups who "seem no less intent on pressuring or helping the news media to tell those institutions can live with" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 17).

Journalist, Matt Carlson, spoke on his experiences with press critics and how critics shape the journalistic field. They not only bury specific news stories but "they also push to discredit those journalistic conventions that will shape subsequent reporting" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 18). Before the digital age, journalists were rarely aware of their audience reactions; now, their readers assume a vital role. The ability of an individual to comment on news stories through social media influences the reports later published. Many factors contributed to journalism changes, and the government, audience, and critics all serve as gatekeepers.

The social system level observes the extent a country's political and economic system has over its gatekeeping process while simultaneously tracking the influence of its culture's ideology. Researchers must examine news content around the world for similarities and differences because "social structures, social values, attitudes, and ideas that generally came with social systems understandably influence how everyone in a news ecosystem thinks or acts" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 19). Globalization has somewhat eradicated the individual social system. News

organizations no longer run in the confines of their own countries and now extend past borders. Transnational journalism emerged from this process as a community of practice as news organizations co-oriented with one another. Although anyone can now access a news station from across the ocean with a simple tap of a screen, larger stations became mainstream because smaller news organizations are less likely to be noticed as they do not have an excess of funds to invest in foreign correspondents and press corps.

These five levels accommodate social scientists in examining gatekeeping from a complex angle. Hundreds of research questions and hypotheses emerge from each level of analysis. Social scientist Lea Hellmueller conducted a study in Washington, DC, in which she determined that "levels of influences cannot be theorized in isolation from each other" (Vos and Heinderyckx, 14). While scientists can compare their subjects to a singular level, all the stations are interconnected. Excluding one can prevent proper examination of a study.

### **Network Gatekeeping Theory**

The gatekeeping theory was created before the idea of the internet, social media, and digital branding was invented. Therefore the gatekeeping theories previously discussed are not applicable in a networking environment. The reconstruction of gatekeeping theory into network gatekeeping theory is a "hybrid interpretation of the gatekeeping and gatekeeper concepts and are scarcely employed with reference to the Internet, information society, or networks" (Barzilai-Nahon, 1495). The theory is primarily used in illustrative situations or for applying standard management, communication, and information science theories.

Due to the growing public's growing dependency on technology, the print media industry sustained several damaging blows over the past decade. The seniority behind print enables the corporation to "own the vast majority of media in the United States," but the advancing

technology weakens the entry barriers (Ferrucci and Tandoc, 116). In traditional gatekeeping theory, journalists or editors used gates to prevent information from passing prior to reaching an audience. In a networked context, gatekeepers, primarily influencers, "treat gatekeeping as a type of control exercised on information as it moves in and out of gates" (Barzilai-Nahon, 1496). Networking theory is reduced into information control lenses, "a locking in of gated inside the gatekeepers network, protecting norms, information, gated, and communities from unwanted entry from outside; and maintaining ongoing activities within network boundaries without disturbances" (Barzilai-Nahon, 1496). Gatekeeping theory undertook an update, as did it gatekeepers, and now companies enlist in new tools to keep pace with the internet's interchanging branding techniques.

Gatekeeping mechanisms are defined as "a tool, technology, or methodology used to carry out the process of gatekeeping," cell phones, laptops, social media, and the internet are all considered mechanisms (Barzilai-Nahon, 1496). Companies aim to maximize the interaction between their followers and potential followers. Customer relationship management, "the development, execution, and reflection on connections made between companies and targeted markets," is a widely used method by companies to understand the reach communication technologies have made in accessing and interacting with media platforms (Coddington and Holton, 241).

### **Classism and Gatekeeping**

Institutional classism is a system that reinforces the values of the privileged class. The process is hugely influential, but hides discreetly in branding practices. Classism is mostly similar to racism and sexism because it contributes to normalizing prejudice, shaming, stereotyping, and discrimination against the middle to lower classes. Discrimination issued in

gatekeeping was deemed accurate by a study illustrating Harvard law students' attitudes towards the working class. The students appeared "afflicted with the stigma of working-class origins were subtly (but powerfully) encouraged to disguise this fact" (Perrucci and Wysong 351). Instead of adjusting their mindset, the students learned how to separate themselves from the working class stigma to increase their chances of joining an elite firm. Acting as another form of gatekeeping, companies in a position of privilege convince their lower-income members that "they obviously lack the valued qualities necessary to succeed in a merit-based economic system" (Perrucci and Wysong 351).

Not initially intended for news comparison, gatekeeping grew to have an essential role in society's media consumption for the past sixty-five years. At first, the adaptation from print to digital appeared to dismantle the gatekeeping method because journalists no longer obtained the same control over information flow. Instead of withering, gatekeepers' jobs expanded from a singular organization to levels, and the people themselves assumed the role. Initially, gatekeeping was positive, determined to help control the increasing flow of information to a manageable amount. With time, the method developed harmful elements; news stations used the process to appease investors, and companies further manipulated it to promote classism's connotations in their branding tactics. Gatekeeping is impossible to dissolve and has proven to evolve through any circumstance, and the exploitation of the theory may propel it into eventually mirroring censorship.

A shock wave of healthy eating and exercise techniques have rippled throughout western media. Alternative medicine does not require expensive health insurance policies or medicinal side effects and has threatened public dependency on modern medicine. Health-related diseases have developed into epidemics in several countries. In the United States of America, "American's

are dying from conditions that could be solved in part through an increase in activity like obesity and diabetes," instilling fear within citizens for the future of their health and their families (Meadows-Fernandez, 3). Companies profit from the public's growing health worries by marketing new wellness methods and utilizing social media to promote their brand. Thousands of products enter the Market annually, from compression clothes to nutritional supplements, to detox teas. The expenses involved with modern medicine are rising at an extensive rate. Westerners are now aware of the financial strain caused by an improper diet. Now recognizing they "are no longer content to enjoy the trappings of contemporary life (computers, automobiles, air travel, access to a wide variety of foods) while forsaking their health" (Burch, David, and Lawrence, 3).

A moderation focused diet combined with a consistent exercise regime doses wellness as a relatively straightforward practice. However, in the United States, citizens find difficulties attaining fitness goals due to careers and monetary commitments; according to the Department of Health and Human Services, "less than 5% of Americans receive 30 minutes of physical activity a day" (Meadows-Fernandez, 3). The increased demand in the wellness sector has influenced companies to rebrand the industry better, associating it with a luxury lifestyle. The new branding method promotes expensive commodities as a requirement for a healthy manner of living. The industry's new tactics reveal a lack of economic transparency, only appearing available to the wealthy while excluding those with reduced funds.

Capitalism's involvement in the wellness industry has policed the former protest style into a commercial enterprise. Capitalism has become so entangled with self-care that current practices "bypass its true purpose (which is about deeper love with yourself)" (Love, 19). Historically self-care was popularized as a form of protest by "activists as a reaction to

institutional shortcomings of women, people of color, and the LGBTQ communities" (Love, 7). In time, the initial goal of wellness grew manipulated by big-box companies transforming the practices into a "commodified, marketed, and suddenly shiny and expensive," no longer self-care, but "morphed into something else," possibly a cleverly marketed dishonest scheme.

A proper brand orientation model, brand personality, and customer value-perception contributed to the spike in demand for alternative medicine. Corporations quickly recognized a need for active lifestyles. They created an "approach to branding in which the processes of the organization revolve around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity" (Jenkins, 4). By creating campaigns associated with social interest and presenting "tangible, psychological, and social advantages," the anticipated value an individual maintains of the company is heightened (Jenkins, 4).

### **Wellness' Social Networking Awakening**

The accessibility of alternative health is now better for consumers. Still, for employers, the "competition to differentiate from others is high, and to capture the hearts of loyal consumers, brands must form a personal relationship with each and everyone" (Jenkins, 4). The search for brand individualization expanded into social media after the establishment of Instagram in 2010. Soon, businesses utilized consumer social media engagement, and in 2013 "brand engagement grew 3.5 times as 55% more brands started using Instagram (Ginsberg, 2).

Social media is converted into a medium where businesses interact with their audience in real-time through posts, direct messages, and comments, creating unique identities and forming emotional connections with consumers. With the platform, companies can easily showcase product launches and events. Still, their lifestyle content "presents aspects of their brands that would not be seen through product posts, and allows for further brand individualization"

(Ginsberg, 4). By sharing "a visual and engaging glimpse into the lives behind their brand names, and presenting themselves as loyal friends, social butterflies, inspirational coaches, and quirky creatives," companies humanize their brand. In turn, they developed an opportunity for a "more genuine, relevant, and meaningful relationship to be formed with consumers" (Ginsberg, 4). The approach creates a loyal community of followers where customers resemble a family rather than a source of income, "ultimately influencing their buying behavior and brand loyalty" (Ginsberg, 4).

Instagram significantly contributed to the wellness phenomenon and luxury wellness's popularity, serving as a hub for those honing their "health, instrumental, and social-support goals" (Chung, Chia-Fang, et al., 1676). The phenomenon can be divided by the goals of the participants; those who seek to "build an audience or educating others" and those who implore methods to "improve their health behaviors" and "pursue emotional support from an online health community" (Chung, Chia-Fang, et al., 1674 and 1677). "According to a 2013 survey, 72% of US internet users search for health information online justifying Instagram's potential to serve as an inexpensive "tool to dispense health information and promote health" in which companies can exploit to market goods related to healthy lifestyles (Chung, Chia-Fang, et al., 1676) (Blackstone and Russie,1).

### **Economic Discrimination**

Social media is a platform using carefully staged photographs to showcase a different (mostly better) lifestyle than it realistically is. Instagram serves as the leading outlet for brands to reach large audiences, but as a result, they've inherited biases surrounding social networks in marketing schemes. They've unknowingly created an environment where shaming the lower class for inadequate health practices is embraced.

Famous R&B singer Summer Walker went under fire for shaming young moms for improperly feeding their children. In an Instagram rant, Walker stated, "Y'all weird for even giving babies that processed government s\*\*\* throw some real fruits/veggies in the blender and give it to them." Mother's protested the statement explaining that affording organic nutrition while raising children is difficult to understand from the viewpoint of a rich, childless celebrity. Walker refused to recant on her account, further neglecting budget and location constraints an individual may face, stating, "a pear is 34 cent[s], Similac is \$32 to \$36. I don't understand. A bowl of fruit for the child would still cost less than formula for the week" (Reads, 1). Instead of recognizing her fans' financial constraints, Walker's following of 3.2 million followers were made to feel ashamed of their inability to afford the "simple demands" associated with healthy living.

One's living environment determines their access to nutritious food and adequate exercise facilities. "Structural problems related to food retail appear to further disadvantage low-income and minority," but branding tactics are blurring the lines separating communities, assuming expenses isn't a relevant issue (Kristjansson and Cummins, 1). The term food deserts originated in 1990 in Scotland, described as "areas characterized by relatively poor access to healthy and affordable food, may contribute to social disparities in diet and diet-related health outcomes, such as cardiovascular disease and obesity" (Kristjansson and Cummins, 1). Convenience stores and fast-food restaurants are known for selling unhealthy food at an affordable cost and display an increased presence in lower-income neighborhoods. Simultaneously, supermarkets are only accessible outside of these communities, serving as a disadvantage for those with limited transportation. In 2001, "26.5% of Americans with incomes below \$20,000 did not own a car," transportation costs combined with the steady incline of grocery store prices deter low-income

communities and leave them with limited alternatives for sustenance within budget (Kristjansson and Cummins, 3).

## **Analysis**

The latest technological advancements have allowed individuals to access groceries, gyms, and even mental health facilities from a screened device. Technology further benefits users by removing the transportation difficulties associated with accessing health brands. Companies insistence on profiting from the wellness boom requires them to enlist in all forms of media. The creation of the internet has increased the accessibility of wellness companies where users can join a fitness class, find a therapist, or buy inexpensive produce from any timezone, state, and even country.

SELF magazine, a popular online women's magazine specializing in health, beauty, and style, created a budget-friendly wellness sub-blog where stigma doesn't determine living quality. At first glance, the blog appeared to foster a universal alternative design and adopt concepts regarding lessening daily living costs. The money-saving tips included affordable bridal wear, low-cost healthy meal plans, navigating Whole Foods on a budget, reasonable beauty recommendations, home exercise alternatives, debt consolidation, travel hacks, gift ideas, and budgeting apps.

The budget portion of SELF isn't arranged with a menu bar, categories, or search bar, and accessors must suffer a monotonous scroll through a single page of articles. The organized delivery of their Instagram account creates a more painless navigation process than through the company website. Most of the items provide wellness tips and interviews with individual nutritionists and stylists. Yet, Self mainly relies on personal promotion rather than giving the

details for similar wellness brands. The website's intimate nature preserves its popularity, but users rely on its social media for more straightforward methods of achieving a healthier lifestyle.

Complete with 819 thousand followers, SELF concentrates its flow media through the social network, Instagram. The business heavily utilizes the platform's stories, and reels feature to promote their message. A subcategory that provides short video compilations to consumers located separately from the typical post section. SELF uploads a variety of content related to celebrities and popular trends, including quick health segments. Anyone with a digital device can access the account for free and gain access to a short exercise routine, meal hack, or mental health break. SELF creates an intimate environment where users can access content where price doesn't compromise quality serving as one of the few budget-friendly brands attractive to a younger audience.

Opposite of SELF, Mind, Body, Green presents a website with a sole focus on wellness and offers health programs apart from its blog. Mind, Body, Green is an inspirational lifestyle media brand dedicated to providing its consumers with tactics to live their best life emotionally, mentally, spiritually, physically, and environmentally, serving as an invaluable resource for self-care. MBG provides informative pieces validated by medical professionals claiming the business as more than an advice blog, but a functional medical tool alternative.

Like SELF, MBG's social network focus is Instagram, with a following of 1.1 million, the business connected to the majority of its customer base through social media. Since MBG's sole focus is wellness, their Instagram account is more structured than SELF. They utilize Instagram stories by dividing them under twelve categories; podcasts, partners, health, gut health, classes, sleep, coaching, recipes, supplements, beauty, calm, and movement. They neglect to exploit the Insta reels option and instead opt for the IGTV feature, allowing accounts to post

clips spanning a sixty-minute length. MBG makes use of the attribute and provides free content of a higher quality without time restrictions.

MBG's promotion tactics' primary focus is internalized, but its product recommendations consist of high-end beauty products costing upwards of hundreds of dollars. MBG contracts its own brand of supplements and health courses. The supplements average at \$80 a bottle (\$70 with a subscription), and the health courses last about week-long with classes averaging a cost of \$150. Although, the company mindfully assists in advice from medical professionals to provide factual information regarding their consumers' demand and avoid promoting fad based trends. The high price of their services and expensive branding recommendations defeats alternative health's real purpose; to provide quality health alternatives at an affordable cost relative to price-related restrictions associated with corporate health care.

Mind-Body Green is excellent for those with disposable income wanting to plunge into the world of wellness. Still, their lack of trend following, celebrity promotion, affordable recommendations, and low-cost program fees doesn't fit within the interests of a younger age group and the lower-income community's capabilities.

Both companies utilize social media to display tactics and adapted social networks' shortcomings in their marketing strategies. Social media brands itself on creating a dreamscape where users can reimagine their lives as anything they wish; in most cases, their hopes to comply with a wealthy livelihood; where money reduces the number of limitations keeping us from reaching our goals. In a hunt to contact a broader audience, the wellness industry mirrored tactics used by social networks and inadvertently made the system more gated. They've branded real-life scenarios where access to a significant sum of excess money is a requirement to achieve true wellness.

Individuals seek the aid of companies for advice, confidence, and hope. Industries are more than a money-hungry corporation, but their reliance on a luxury approach lessens the publics' trust in their intentions, pushing them to smaller indy companies. The branding tactics, once used to lure in consumers, are now considered unpleasant characteristics. Unable to afford the products or feel the branding is targeted towards their chaotic lifestyles, lesser income communities use MBG for aspirational or aesthetic purposes but never actually invest in the brand.

A successful wellness brand must cater to all levels of economics. While it is simpler to create a strategy geared towards a specific demographic, a series of campaigns appear to serve a similar purpose while successfully enticing a broader audience. Wellness is not a goal that only exists within the realm of dreams. By releasing the prejudice associated with the lower-class community, brands can reap the benefits they bring to the company.

### **New & Inclusive Branding Steps**

To diversify wellness branding, companies must forgo previous campaign models and restructure their intentions. The five dimensions of brand personality must be acquired to attract a broader audience: "sincerity (honest, genuine, cheerful); excitement (daring, imaginative, spirited); competence (reliable, responsible, efficient); sophistication (glamorous, pretentious, charming); and ruggedness (tough, outdoorsy, strong)" (Ginsberg, 1). As aforementioned, branding models are more effective when deciding a theme where a single demographic is in mind. However, the glory and riches theme appears to be a recycled method; by utilizing articles geared towards the lower-income demographic, a new line of revenue and brand loyalty is possible.

Products introduced to consumers endure a design process in which the customer can associate the brand with "a symbol having memorable associations and 'strong' meanings" (Jenkins, 7). Although many dream of accessing unlimited riches, only a select few achieve that goal. "Brand strength is due to the meaning that a brand creates," while a luxurious marketing approach attempts to connect with an individual's hopes, a materialistic vision doesn't emphasize with an audience or guarantee brand loyalty (Jenkins, 7). Most companies' primary logic is to create and promote a product in a method distinguishable from the competition, "being different doesn't matter if the difference is not a meaningful one" (Jenkins, 7). Thrive Market, an online grocery retailer, prides itself on providing an easy and affordable healthy shopping experience, emphasizing their business as accessible for everyone. They serve as a prime example for companies opting to market financial strains as an ordinary and unapologetic phenomenon sparking great success and a large customer following with their transparency.

The main goal of wellness brands is to secure a lucrative profit for the company by providing content that attracts loyal consumers. Companies have enlisted in social media to reach a mass audience and adopted methods that promote an upscale lifestyle to remain relevant. The lower class, middle class, and teen youth are significant demographics neglected by this lifestyle. By opting for a revenue-driven marketing tactic, brands aren't attaining a loyal customer base. The business's longevity is sustained from "hype" or popularity, which can easily be achieved by a competitor with a better product. Alternative health marketed to a broader audience encourages economic transparency and builds a customer base who're confident they are acknowledged, further ensuring business to consumer respect and trust.

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