Music, Branding, and Consumer Culture in Church

Starting as a single congregation in Australia, Hillsong Church now has campuses worldwide, releases worship music that sells millions of albums, and its ministers regularly appear in mainstream media. So, how has a single church gained such international prominence? This book offers an ethnographic exploration of the ways in which music and marketing have been utilized in the pursuit and production of spiritual experience for members of Hillsong Church. An experience that has proven to be incredibly popular.

The main theme of this book is that marketing, specifically branding, is not just a way to 'sell' religion but rather an integral part of spiritual experience in consumer society. Focusing on the London Hillsong church as a case study, the church's use of its own music in tandem with strong branding is shown to be a co- and re-productive method of organizing, patterning, and communicating information. The church provides the branded material and cultural context in which participants' sacred experience of self unfolds. However, this requires participants to 'do the work' to properly understand, and ultimately embody, the values associated with the brand.

This book raises important questions about the role of branding and music in forming modern scared identities. As such, it will be of great interest to scholars of religious studies, ethnomusicology, and media studies.

Tom Wagner is a London-based percussionist and ethnomusicologist. He is currently a Lecturer in Ethnomusicology at the University of Manchester, having previously held positions at the University of Edinburgh and Royal Holloway, University of London. His writing on Hillsong has appeared in the *Australian Journal of Communication* (co-authored with Tanya Riches), *Journal of World Popular Music*, and the edited volume *Religion as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality* (Ashgate, 2014). He is also the co-editor (with Tanya Riches) of the collection *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters* (Palgrave, 2017).

Routledge Studies in Religion

Said Nursi and Science in Islam
Character Building through Nursi's Mana-i harfi
Necati Aydin

The Diversity of Nonreligion
Normativities and Contested Relations
Johannes Quack, Cora Schuh, and Susanne Kind

The Role of Religion in Gender-Based Violence, Immigration, and Human Rights
Edited by Mary Nyangweso and Jacob K. Olupona

Italian American Pentecostalism and the Struggle for Religious Identity
Paul J. Palma

The Cultural Fusion of Sufi Islam
Alternative Paths to Mystical Faith
Sarwar Alam

Hindi Christian Literature in Contemporary India
Rakesh Peter-Dass

Religion, Modernity, Globalisation
Nation-State to Market
François Gauthier

Gender and Orthodox Christianity
Helena Kupari and Elena Vuola

Music, Branding, and Consumer Culture in Church
Hillsong in Focus
Tom Wagner

For more information about this series, please visit: https://www.routledge.com/religion/series/SE0669

Music, Branding, and Consumer Culture in Church

Hillsong in Focus

Tom Wagner

Routledge
Taylor & Francis Group
LONDON AND NEW YORK

First published 2020
by Routledge
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

and by Routledge
52 Vanderbilt Avenue, New York, NY 10017

Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business

British Library Cataloguing-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
A catalogue record has been requested for this book

ISBN: 978-1-138-57955-2 (hbk)
ISBN: 978-0-429-50795-3 (ebk)

Typeset in Sabon
by codeMantra

Visit the [companion website/eResources]: [insert comp website/ eResources URL]

To Mom and Dad

Contents

	Acknowledgements	ix
	Introduction	1
1	Hillsong in its socio-historical context	19
2	Hillsong Church: a musical brandscape	47
3	In, but not of, the (Christian) culture industry	75
4	'With One Accord': brand identity and participation	101
5	The 'Hillsong Sound': hearing place in the Hillsong network	126
6	Learning to listen	150
	Conclusion	172
	Index	179

Acknowledgements

This book is only possible because of the generosity, encouragement, and patience of a great many people. I am grateful for the support and advice I received from Henry Stobart, who as my PhD supervisor reminded me to 'write about the music from time to time'. I would also like to thank Byron Dueck and Liz Moor, my thesis examiners, for their helpful comments and suggestions.

My colleagues and collaborators at the Christian Congregational Music: Local and Global Perspectives conference have generously provided the support and spaces for me to experiment with ideas and develop my writing. This includes, but is by no means limited to, Monique Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, Anna Nekola, Maryn Percy, Mark Porter, and Laryssa Whittaker. Mark and Laryssa have furthermore provided helpful comments on draft chapters of this book, as have Denise Austin, Andrew Mall, Marcus Moberg, and Tanya Riches,.

A very special thanks to Tanya Riches is in order. Tanya's master's thesis provided the first major 'aha!' moment for this project. Over several years, she has selflessly shared ideas, insights, and encouragement through countless Facebook messages and Skype sessions, which have proven invaluable.

I am indebted to the friends and acquaintances I made during my fieldwork at Hillsong Church London, who have very kindly shared their ideas, opinions, and in some cases life stories with me. I am also grateful to George Aghajanian, the General Manager of Hillsong Church, for taking time out of his busy schedule in 2012 to speak to me on behalf of the church. Any inaccuracies, misunderstandings, or misconceptions contained in this book are mine and mine alone.

None of this would have been possible without the unwavering love and support of my parents, Janet and Richard Wagner; thank you both. And finally, life is no fun without someone to share it with. That someone is my partner, Katerina Paramana.

Parts of Chapter 1 have been reprinted from 'Music, Media, Evangelical Protestantism: A Very Short History', in the *Foccalblog* feature 'Music and Capitalism' (2 April 2015), edited by Anna Morcom and Patrick Neveling, with permission from Berghahn Publishing. Parts of Chapter 2 have been

revised from 'Music as a Mediated Object, Music as Media: Towards a Media Ecological View of Congregational Music', in *Singing a New Song: Congregational Music Making and Community in a Mediated Age*, edited by Anna Nekola and Tom Wagner (2015): 25–44, with the permission of Routledge Publishing. Parts of Chapter 3 have been revised from 'No Other Name?: Authenticity, Authority and Anointing in Christian Popular Music', *Journal of World Popular Music* 1(2) (2014): 324–42, with permission from Equinox Publishing Ltd. Parts of Chapter 5 have been revised from 'Branding, Music, and Religion: Standardization and Adaptation in the Experience of the "Hillsong Sound"', in *Religion as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Jean Claude Usunier and Jörg Stolz (2014): 59–73, with permission from Routledge Publishing.

Introduction

The first thing one sees when emerging from the London Underground station on the northeast corner of Tottenham Court Road and Oxford Street is the marquee of the Dominion Theatre. If you had done this between May 14, 2002, and March 11, 2014, a giant golden statue of Freddie Mercury, the front man of the legendary British rock band *Queen*, would have confronted you from atop it, fist held high in the iconic pose he struck so many times during the band's glory days. For almost 12 years, Mercury's statue welcomed theatregoers to the jukebox musical *We Will Rock You*, the roaring review of *Queen*'s greatest hits that uses no small amount of quasi-religious imagery to sacralize rock and roll, the apostles *Queen*, and the saviour Freddie Mercury. Constructed in 1928 at the edge of London's theatre district, the Dominion Theatre is the West End's largest theatre, boasting a seating capacity of 2,182. The theatre's architecture suggests a mix of a theatre, jukebox, and religious space: replete with lush burgundy carpeting and audacious gold railings, it recalls both the luxury of high-end, old-time theatre-going, the aesthetic of many of Freddie Mercury's outfits, and the opulence of an Eastern Orthodox church. Stained glass frames the theatre's box seats.

We Will Rock You ran six nights a week in the Dominion, as have the shows that followed such as Meat Loaf's *Bat Out of Hell*. But on the seventh day, while the rock and roll faithful rest, a different group of devotees converge on the theatre. Hillsong London has held its Sunday services in the here since 2005.[1] The church's services are every bit as spectacular and professionally produced as the *We Will Rock You* show. Dry ice fills the stage. Lights flash. The music is loud and driving. Indeed, to a layperson who saw the musical on Saturday evening and returned for church on Sunday morning, the main difference she might notice is that the Hillsong logo is projected at the top left of the theatre's proscenium stage.

Freddie Mercury literally cast a shadow over the entrance of the Dominion, and his figurative presence continued to be felt once inside during the Sunday services. One could sense him: roaming about the lobby, mingling with the crowd, always just in the background. In the upper foyer photographs of Mercury's early years peeked out from behind the temporary signs marking Hillsong's 'Ask Me' and 'Living in London' team stations.

Downstairs, the theatre's merchandise stand served as the church's cloakroom, so that the T-shirts worn by Hillsong team members working the station were juxtaposed against the *We Will Rock You* and *Queen* T-shirts that hung just behind them. This semiotic mash-up contributed to a particular experience of church—a (post)modern pastiche in which music, marketing, and meaning coalesced alongside the search for sacred experience.

The 'New Paradigm' of religious experience: lifestyle, branding, and value(s) in consumer culture

Hillsong London's presence in the Dominion Theatre is a colourful example of the 'New Paradigm' of evangelical Christianity (Miller 1997). The New Paradigm is a broad rubric that describes religious organizations that use 'seeker-sensitive' approaches to evangelism and church building (Trueheart 1996; Miller 1997; Sargeant 2000). In contrast to established denominations, which have struggled to appeal to the post-1945 'baby-boom' generation, New Paradigm churches 'have succeeded in responding to the therapeutic, individualistic, and anti-establishment themes of contemporary culture' (Aldridge 2007, 126; cf. Roof 1999). Worship at these churches uses contemporary music and language and often focuses on physical and emotional experiences (Albrecht 1999). Preaching is rooted in the Bible and draws on an evangelical Protestant tradition in which the clergy were often not formally trained.[2]

New Paradigm churches take a range of forms, the most prominent of which is the megachurch. Megachurches are usually defined as ones that attract at least 2,000 worshippers a week (Thumma and Travis 2007, xviii–xxi). However, this definition does not capture the diversity both between and also within megachurches (ibid, 135–46). The internet has also radically expanded the notion of the 'local church', and many (if not most) megachurches are more accurately described as 'network churches' that operate several locations in a given geographic area, country, or—as in Hillsong's case—across the globe. Furthermore, individual homes can also be thought of as part of network churches, as people who do not attend a physical church location because of proximity or other reasons can still experience the service via live internet feed or by accessing recorded services or other media content on the churches' websites (Campbell 2005, 2010).

New Paradigm churches are often described as 'non-denominational', but this is a misnomer in two ways. First, while these churches do not necessarily have a denominational title in their name, their beliefs and practices are deeply rooted in the denominational legacies of their founders. The second is that many of the largest New Paradigm churches undertake the same functions and provide the same services as the denominations that they are supplanting. For example, many churches provide training for clergy, educational resources for individuals and other churches, and perhaps most importantly a musical liturgy—all with a brand name attached.

The vertically integrated structure of New Paradigm churches such as Hillsong, and the self-referential nature of their resources, leads to a situation where the church brand is, in essence, the 'new paradigm' of a denomination.

Donald Miller (1997) suggests that New Paradigm churches are successful because they appeal to the 'postmodern' ways that their constituents make meaning in consumer culture. Religious consumers do not practice the religious 'brand loyalty' of pre-baby boomer generations, eschewing the churches of their parents for new forms of religious experience that are synergetic with their everyday experiences. But this does not mean that the constituents of New Paradigm churches endlessly float from church to church. On the contrary, the argument I make in this book is that New Paradigm churches engender intense new forms of community and loyalty through branding, a powerful organizational and communicative method that leverages the vernacular of the consumer culture to embed religious meaning in everyday life.

Consumer culture is a multivalent concept. Sociologist Celia Lury writes that it is not a single process but rather a variety of social, cultural, and political-economic processes that pull in various directions and have various effects (2011, 5). According to Lury, some of the most significant processes associated with consumer culture are as follows:

- The organized interpenetration of economic and everyday life.
- The increasing importance of the exchange of commodified objects and services within a global capitalist division of labour.
- The interrelatedness of different kinds of exchange and regimes of value, meaning that even non-economic exchanges and forms of value creation are ultimately subsumed by capital.
- The growth of consumer politics, where consumerism becomes the ascendant form of citizenship.
- The use of goods by different social groups and cultural intermediaries in the creation of subcultures and lifestyles.
- The political identification of freedom with individual choice. (ibid: 5–6)

Consumer culture is one in which society is structured through the production, circulation, and consumption of goods and services within the dominant paradigm of economic exchange. This does not mean, however, that theories of consumer culture should focus primarily commodity exchange. Rather:

> [The study of consumer culture] involves a dual focus: first, on the cultural dimension of the economy, the symbolization and use of material goods as 'communicators' not just utilities; and second, on the economy of cultural goods, the market principles of supply, demand, capital accumulation, competition and monopolization which operate *within* the sphere of lifestyles, cultural goods and commodities.
>
> (Featherstone 2007, 82; italics original)

For Mike Featherstone, the production, circulation, and consumption of goods structures society, yet consumer culture is not so much about consumption *practices* as it is about the symbolism that is produced in the consumption *act*. Cultural products have 'social lives', acquiring layers of meaning as they move from production, to circulation, to consumption (Appadurai 1986). These overlaid meanings are contested and often change as the products move through different networks based on different value systems (Lash and Lury 2007, 19). Because of this, the meaning of branded products is never fixed, but instead always multiple and evolving.

A central concern of this book is the meanings that Hillsong's brand accrues within the dialectic of consumer cultural and evangelical Christian cultural value systems. Goods, ideas, and practices are not intrinsically valuable but accrue value through use within cultural contexts (Appadurai 1986; Graber 2001); it is what people *do* that is valuable. David Graber (2001) writes that value 'is the way people represent the importance of their own actions to themselves' (45). But the meaning and value of these actions are only understood and realized in reference to a totalizing binary within which comparison occurs (e.g., good/bad, right/wrong, or sacred/secular), and this evaluation also implies some kind of audience, which may be either 'real' (i.e., constituted by direct, interpersonal relationships) or 'imagined' (Anderson 2011). In other words, meaning and value are constructed in relation to both society and culture.

For the purposes of this book, then, consumer culture is the 'superculture' within which ideas, goods, and practices accrue value as materials participants use to construct and experience meaning and, ultimately, themselves. The material I will be focussing on in particular is the brand and how it is used to construct and maintain a (subcultural) evangelical Christian lifestyle. As will be evident throughout this book, Hillsong is a lifestyle brand that is inseparable from the economic, social, and cultural value(s) that define both consumer culture and evangelical Christian culture. The culture industries understand and exploit the fact that values are valuable: brands 'add value' to the consumption experience if the consumer feels that the values associated with branded products or services align with her own values and identity. An important consideration of this book, then, is how values and identity are marketed and experienced in a 'Christian culture industry'.

The interplay between economic, social, and cultural value(s) becomes clearer when the practical and critical marketing perspectives of modern branding are contrasted. By practical marketing, I am referring to the body of literature that focuses on 'how to' approaches to marketing. This body of literature tends to celebrate branding as a co-productive activity, through which value is generated for both brands and their participants. An example of this is the Ford Motor Company's 'user-generated' advertising campaign for its 2013 Fiesta. Participants were provided a Ford Fiesta, fuel, and insurance for eight months. In return, they agreed to blog, tweet, and post on YouTube about their (presumably positive) experiences of the car

(Heine 2013). From a marketer's view, this 'Web 2.0' type of campaign is a win-win endeavour: participants derived value by getting a free car, fuel, and insurance, and Ford derived value in the form of user-generated advertising content for a fraction of the cost of a traditional advertising campaign (along with whatever metadata was generated through user interaction with the campaign). More importantly, though, Ford had the opportunity to generate long-term value for its brand by integrating its product into the everyday lives and lifestyles of consumers.

In contrast to practical marketing, critical marketing draws on critical theory to present a less rosy picture of branding (Saren et al. 2007). The critical perspective asserts that, although marketers claim to afford participants creative freedom, this freedom is illusory because the closed nature of the brand predetermines the ways in which branded material can be used and understood (Lury 2004; Arvidsson 2006; Carah 2010). Critical marketing views marketing as a technology that reinscribes capital ever more deeply into the fabric of culture and individual bodies (cf. Foucault 1976 [1998]; Smythe 1981; Featherstone et al. 1991). Contrary to the marketing perspective, the critical perspective holds that participants do not 'really' author the brandscape through their actions. Rather, their agency re-creates a cultural context in which the brand delimits and determines the range of meanings and uses branded products and services afford them.

Research questions

This book draws on insights from both the practical and the critical marketing perspectives to understand how Hillsong's branding 'adds value' to the organization and the experiences of its participants. Branding both affords and delimits meaning making in consumer culture, and this raises questions about how it is used in charismatic groups, particularly evangelical Christian churches such as Hillsong. What is the nature of the value that the brand adds to its participants' worship experiences, and how does the quality of those experiences in turn add value to the brand? What values are encoded and decoded in Hillsong's musical and marketing messages? How do marketing, expectations, and experience interact in the embodied meaning-making activities of participants? Do worshipers 'find God' more easily, or have a more intense worship experience, when engaging with Hillsong's branded music rather than other music? Does the context matter? The contrasting views of marketing presented above also raise questions about agency, particularly of who is 'in charge' of Hillsong's brand meaning. These questions are not easily untangled. However, I hope this book offers a unique perspective for addressing them. In the remainder of this introduction, then, I offer an overview of the existing perspectives on music, marketing, and religion. I then give a chapter overview that provides a framework for reading this book.

Music, marketing, and religion

This book is situated primarily in three fields of scholarship: music studies, marketing studies, and religious studies. Although there have been several recent academic and popular studies of music and branding, branding and religion, and countless treatises throughout the ages on religion and music, there have been few attempts to study music, branding, and religion as a single rubric. This is surprising given the major roles of both marketing and popular music in the spread of evangelical Christianity throughout history (Moore 1994; Sargeant 2000; Twitchell 2007; Nekola 2009). This book begins to address this omission by addressing the experience of music, branding, and religious meaning as a gestalt.

Studies of the relationship between music and branding have tended to be written from the practical marketing perspective that focuses on the ways music and sound can be used to create an aural brand identity. With titles such as *Audio Branding: Brands, Sound and Communication* (Bronner and Hirt 2009) and *Sounds Like Branding: Using the Power of Music to Turn Customers into Fans* (Lusensky 2010), their authors promote audio branding as the next frontier of marketing. The most 'audible' brands use music and sound in ways that encourage stakeholders to experience them beyond the simple memorability of a jingle. For example, audible brand elements include the sounds the product makes (such as the revving of a Harley Davidson motorcycle engine); sonic logos and themes (such as the three-note 'chime' logo of the American television network NBC); and collaborations with artists, sponsorship of music events, and even the lilt of the brand name and slogan (Kilian 2009, 41). When the audibility of a brand is combined with touchpoints that stimulate other senses, such as taste or smell, the brand accesses the deep meaning-making machinery of the human body. In other words, the brand is *embodied* by the stakeholder.

Another popular view of music and branding is that lessons in brand identity management can be learned from rock stars like Madonna and KISS. Examples of this view can be found in books like *Brands that Rock: What Business Leaders Can Learn from the World of Rock and Roll* (Blackwell and Stephan 2004) and *Brand Like a Rock Star: Lessons from Rock 'n' Roll to Make Your Business Rich and Famous* (Jones 2012). Aimed primarily at brand managers, these breezy 'how to' tomes seek to explain how iconic musicians have built, managed, and capitalized on their 'brand' and why devoted fan/brand communities such as Jimmy Buffett's 'Parrot Heads' and Lady Gaga's 'Little Monsters' coalesce around artists.

Music studies works that engage critically with branding are still relatively rare, although books such as Nicholas Carah's (2010) *Pop Brands: Branding, Popular Music, and Young People*; Elizabeth Barfoot Christian's edited volume *Rock Brands: Selling Sound in a Media Saturated Culture* (2011); and Kristin J. Lieb's (2013) *Gender, Branding, and the Modern Music Industry: The Social Construction of Female Popular Music Stars*

suggest that the subject is getting more attention, at least in relation to popular music. The most complete treatment of the political-economic relationship between music and branding can be found across Tim Taylor's corpus of work, particularly *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture* (2012) and *Music and Capitalism: A History of the Present* (2016). In *The Sounds of Capitalism*, Taylor traces the changing role of music in twentieth-century American advertising as it moves from a stand-alone medium to part of an ever-expanding media ecology that includes film, television, product placements, and brand extensions. However, it is not until he reaches the 1990s in the final two chapters that he begins to use the term 'branding', reflecting its incorporation into popular discourse during that period. In *Music and Capitalism*, Taylor traces the connections between music and branding within a framework that links globalization, digitization, and the cultural industries within neoliberal capitalism. Of particular interest in relation to the present study is Taylor's focus on the roles of music and the brand in the creation of both non-economic and economic forms of value, and the various ways branding converts the former to the latter.

Similar to the work on music and branding, treatments of branding and religion also tend to proceed from either a practical marketing perspective or a critical sociological perspective. Those written from the former promote the view that successful companies and successful religions are both intense corporate cultures built on shared corporate values. For example, in *Primal Branding: Create Zealots for Your Brand, Your Company, And Your Future* (2006), Patrick Hanlon posits a seven-piece 'primal code' of corporate communication that is shared by successful companies and religious organizations. Similarly, Jesper Kunde's *Corporate Religion: Building a Strong Company through Personality and Corporate Soul* (2002) uses case studies of secular brands like Virgin and Harley-Davidson to find the 'right formula' to create a 'brand religion'. The idea of a 'corporate religion' is one that circulates widely in popular culture (e.g., the 'Cult of Mac', see Kahney 2004), and there are undoubtedly similar social process of identification between secular brand communities and religious communities. But viewing secular brands and religions as homologous ignores an important difference between the two, which is one of seriousness. Simply put: while morality, values, and even transcendence may all be part of the experience of secular brands, they do not hold the existential weight that religion both engenders and demands.

Because of the 'consumerist' connotations of the terms 'brand' and 'branding', religious organizations have traditionally been reluctant to use them in describing their organizational and marketing techniques, even if their practices tell a different story. However, Phil Cooke's *Branding Faith: Why Some Churches and Nonprofits Impact Culture and Others Don't* (2008) as well as a proliferation of church-branding consultancies indicate that this has changed in the twenty-first century. One of the best examples of the

'Christian Branding' movement is Artistry Labs, which offers churches and ministries a range of branding, consulting, and content management packages that seek to improve congregational engagement through marketing.[3] The company's description of branding is particularly telling:

> Great branding is enduring. It takes people deeper. It ascribes value on them. It makes them want to engage.[4]

Artistry Labs views branding as a way of inculcating people into the Christian faith and value system. Not surprisingly, they emphasize the integral place of worship music in the process:

> We often run into a church that is in transition, looking for decisiveness on tender topics … 'Should we have multiple worship styles?' 'Do we go more acoustic?' 'More Hillsong?' 'What about the hymns?' 'Why are we not attracting certain groups of people?'[5]

It is telling that churches looking to grow their congregation would ask if they should play more Hillsong songs, but the above statement also reveals that Christian organizations' embrace of branding is driven at least in part by the need to attract and maintain participants who have a variety of choices of both religious and secular organizations and activities with which to engage. This is the view taken in many sociological treatments of religion and branding that, drawing on a tradition of economic analysis, view religious landscapes as competitive markets (e.g., Stark and Bainbridge 1986; Young 1997; Finke and Stark 2005). From this perspective, organizations that have best fulfilled the spiritual wants and needs of religious consumers have historically thrived, while those that haven't have stagnated or disappeared. Donald Miller (1997), Wade Clark Roof (1999), and others suggest that the most successful religious organizations erase the line between the sacred and the secular by making use of the vernacular communicative techniques of their time, which in the case of the New Paradigm is (post)modern consumer culture. But this is not a simple case of the sacred appropriating the secular: Mara Einstein's *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age* (2008) argues that 'religious' and 'secular' are collapsing in popular and consumer culture.[6] For example, 'new' televangelists such as Joel Osteen, Creflo Dollar, and Joyce Meyer unabashedly use their celebrity to promote their faiths, but so do 'secular celebrities' such as Maddona for Kabbalah and Tom Cruise for Scientology. Furthermore, Oprah Winfrey uses religiously inflected language, which to some qualifies her as a 'faith brand' (Einstein 2008, 122). The distinction between 'sacred' and 'secular' is further obscured with the rise of 'religious lifestyle branding' (Clark 2007), which is fuelled by a massive industry that produces 'parallel' products and services marketed to religious groups. The meanings that accrue during the production, circulation, and consumption

of these goods and services are not merely the results of the sacred and secular mutually appropriating one another but rather a fundamental dialectical relationship in which each (re)produces the other (Ram 2007).

Methodology

The foundation of this book is data collected during three years of participant observation (Shelemay 2008) at Hillsong Church London. Between 2010 and 2013, I attended weekly church services, served on volunteer teams, participated in 'connect group' meetings, attended Hillsong's night college, and attended conferences and special events.[7] I also conducted 17 semi-structured face-to-face, Skype, and email interviews with participants and staff of Hillsong London and Hillsong Church. My observations and interviews are supplemented by content analysis of a variety of media produced by and about the church, including CDs, videos, websites, blogs, advertisements, books, secular and Christian press, and scholarly articles.

My decision to use participatory research as the primary method of inquiry is related to one of the main arguments of this book: that it is through the experiential dynamics of participation that 'participants' become 'stakeholders' in social groups, in this case churches and brands. This focus on the centrality of experience in the (re)production of social groups is at the heart of Lave and Wenger's theory of learning called 'legitimate peripheral participation'. Lave and Wenger (1991) argue that while most *teaching* (at least in the Western system of knowledge production) is done abstractly (i.e., in a classroom), actual *learning* comes through active participation in social processes. For Lave and Wenger, knowledge is embedded and embodied through experience. This claim is based on studies of different types of apprenticeships in different cultures, including those of Yucatec Mayan midwives in Mexico, Vai and Gola tailors in Liberia, the U.S. navy quartermasters, butchers in U.S. supermarkets in the 1970s, and 'nondrinking alcoholics' in Alcoholics Anonymous. In each social group, participants learned to perform the skills necessary to be a 'productive' member of the community by engaging in the actual process of trying to perform them; they learned from, and through, experience. Furthermore, as participants mastered productive skills, they gradually moved from the 'periphery' of the group to the 'centre', and in doing so, they assumed more important roles in the maintenance and reproduction of the group. It is no coincidence that apprenticeship (either formal or informal) is an essential part of experiential religions in cultures throughout the world (e.g., Qureshi 1986 [2006]; Kapchan 2007; Jankowsky 2010). These traditions seek, among other things, a visceral encounter with the divine. The 'affective volitional' states (Hirschkind 2001) needed to enter into these encounters are culturally framed and acquired through various degrees of enculturation, socialization, acculturation, and practice (Rouget 1985; Becker 2004).

During my fieldwork, I was the apprentice. I come from a 'mildly' Episcopalian background, in which I was taken to church more to acquire a working knowledge of the Bible than to receive a spiritual or ideological education. Through my fieldwork, I experienced (to a degree) the evangelical Christian 'educational' process that lies at the heart of the New Paradigm experience; beginning as a 'seeker', I gradually acquired knowledge in Hillsong's beliefs and practices that, through participation, would allow me to 'get saved'.

I should make it clear that I was not actually seeking a conversion, nor did I find one. I am not an advocate of the 'radical epistemology' espoused by Edith Turner (1993). Participatory inquiry is a social process, and therefore the meaning it searches for is inherently unstable and uncertain. Although its focus on participation is meant to close the hermeneutic divide through experience, the divide will always be there to some degree, even if the researcher is a 'native' of the culture he or she is researching. 'Meaning transfer' between participants is never a perfect match. The ethnographic problem of communication and representation becomes even more complicated when the audience of the ethnography is taken into consideration (e.g., Clifford and Marcus 1986). In order to nuance the conversation, then, I solicited 'fieldback' from my collaborators, and their responses were considered in what follows.[8] In some respects, the researcher has no choice but to take participants 'at their word'. However, I seek to balance this assumption with my own voice and, from time to time, 'problematize' some of what is said in order to provide an alternative view. What I hope emerges is a provocative look into the ways that music, branding, and meaning intersect in the production of (religious) subjectivities and the inculcation of values.

By the time this book is published, some of the information in it will already be out of date. Hillsong moves quickly, and at the time of this writing, it is expanding at such a rate that it would take an army of ethnographers to keep up. For example, since I began my fieldwork in 2010, the church has: opened over 30 new locations across Europe, North America, and South America; overhauled its Web presence several times; started a television channel; produced nine United and nine Worship (formerly LIVE) albums (as well as countless other releases); and added Young and Free as a third music sub-brand. Furthermore, new musicians such as Taya Smith-Gaukrodger have emerged, while others, most notably Darlene Zschech (the subject of Chapter 3), have left the church. The purpose of this book, then, is not to 'capture' the elusive subject that is Hillsong Church. Rather, it is to use Hillsong as a case study through which to consider broader questions about the synergy between music, branding, and (religious) meaning-making in consumer culture.

A note about language

This book analyses Hillsong using the language of branding: it speaks of, for example, Hillsong's brand name, brand personality, brand equity, brand positioning, brand image, and brand promise. This language is used

with regularity in academic writing, the popular and Christian press, and in everyday discussions about the church. Even Hillsong's founder, Brian Houston, will occasionally use the term 'brand' (with ambivalence) when referring to his church.[9] However, marketing language is territorially ambitious, and today the notions of a brand and branding have expanded to the point where they are applied to almost any phenomenon.[10] As David Voas puts it:

> … there is little difficulty in applying the terminology of brands to religion. The question is whether it is wise or illuminating to do so. How far are we willing to allow the empire of markets to extend? And are we speaking in metaphors, or is it really the case that religious belief and practice are most usefully analysed with the tools of microeconomics?
> (Voas 2014, xviii)

The language of branding helps identify some of the tools and strategies used by Hillsong, but perhaps not all. Furthermore, branding may not be the most helpful language to use when describing the intent of Hillsong's actions. This is to say that, because branding is a *range* of tools and strategies, it is difficult to know when the marketing ends and something else begins. For example, Hillsong collects royalties from its music, and its sales (and thus brand equity) are undoubtedly boosted by the fact that people draw positive associations with its brand name (see Chapter 4). However, most (and probably all) of Hillsong's musicians, administrators, and participants would argue that the economic benefits of branding are a secondary effect of a primary goal (to spread the Gospel), and besides, the money is reinvested into growing the church, which helps achieve this. This can be seen, for example, in the church's approach to copyright: Hillsong's music is copyrighted, but for the most part, it allows its music to be freely shared on YouTube, perhaps most notably as the backing tracks to fan-produced worship videos and compilations. By allowing its music to be used in this manner, Hillsong bolsters its claim that its music is first and foremost a resource for worship rather than a source of income (see Chapter 3). Simultaneously, though, non-enforcement can be seen as an economic strategy in which music is given away in the hope of generating name recognition that drives returns in other areas.

In this book, the use of branding language is to be taken literally when describing some of the tools and strategies regarding matters such as distribution mechanisms, but at other times, it should be understood as a strong metaphor that points to the context that Hillsong operates in, which is consumer culture. The latter usage can be found in the final chapters, which explore the normative and governmental effects of branding. This view of branding, held by sociologists such as Adam Arvidsson (2006), Celia Lury (2004), and Liz Moor (2007), is one that I employ, because it makes important points vis-à-vis the hegemonic aspects of branding (see

also Carah 2010). However, one could argue that this view of branding is a 'market' perspective on social processes that could equally be explained through other means, such as psychologist Marc Galanter's 'systems' approach (Galanter 1989). In the chapters that follow, then, I use a set of marketing terms that are part of the contemporary cultural and economic conjuncture, in part because they are active within this conjuncture but also because they may call into question assumptions about just how far 'the market' extends. This is perhaps reflected in the ambivalence that many evangelical Christians feel towards 'the market', which is reflected in the language my collaborators use throughout the book. Perhaps more importantly, the use of branding language is meant as a provocation to the music studies community, whose project is to understand the place of music as a sociocultural phenomenon. On the one hand, I believe that in applying the language of 'the market' to the things we study, we come closer to understanding how actors in it think, understand, and experience everyday life. However, one could also argue that in relying on this language, we further normalize the ethos that we seek to critique (e.g. Usunier 2014, 34–40). Evangelical faiths have always reflected the socio-historical milieu within which they exist. In the end, then, the broad application of branding terminology as a way of describing a church like Hillsong (or any organization or social process for that matter) is just one of many ways of viewing both evangelical Christianity and consumer culture.

Book structure

A brand never exists only in the here and now. Rather, brand meaning is a condensation of associations distributed across time and space, reaching into the past, suggesting the future, and connecting the 'global' and 'local'. Brand meaning is ultimately an embodied experience. I have therefore structured this book to reflect the 'temporal-glocality' of the Hillsong brand, and its final locus in the individual. The book moves, roughly, from the 'macro' to the 'micro' (or from the 'global' to the 'local'), concluding in the embodied experience—and I seek throughout to emphasize the interconnectedness of these constructs. Each chapter in the main body (Chapters 3–6) explores a different formation of the 'imagined' and 'imaginary' community that constitute Hillsong Church. These chapters are bookended by two introductory chapters that provide socio-historical context for the study and a concluding chapter that (re)associates the main themes explored.

Chapter 1 outlines the socio-historical context for this study. The first part of the chapter traces the historical development of the social role of the brand, particularly in the United States and Britain, showing how the brand has evolved from a mark of distinction into a media object and belief system in consumer culture. The second part of the chapter traces the rise of the megachurch, Christian Popular Music (CPM), and the development of a 'Religious Experience Economy'. This shows how the use of music,

media, and marketing by evangelical Protestants in the United States has developed in concert with changes in communication technologies. This is significant because many of the communication techniques pioneered in the United States have underpinned the 'globalization' of evangelical Christianity in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The third part of the chapter focuses on the Australian religious and political-economic context out of which Hillsong arose. Much of Hillsong's success can be attributed to its founder's, Brian Houston, ability to consistently address the shifting social and cultural landscapes of Australia and beyond, and in doing so building the iconic religious brand that Hillsong is today.

Chapter 2 discusses the ways that Hillsong and its brand are organized and how the brand in turn organizes the experience of its stakeholders. The first section posits Hillsong's brand as a *brandscape*. Brandscapes are environments that organize consumer action and therefore affect the interpretation and experience of the brand. They do this by leveraging the dialectical relationship between the symbolic and sensorial aspects of the brand. Some important 'touchpoints' that comprise Hillsong's brandscape are its physical places, internet spaces, products, and people. The second section describes how one of Hillsong's most important touchpoints, its music, has evolved in tandem with the church as its congregation has transformed from a small Australian gathering into a transnational enterprise. The final section describes Hillsong as a music-led brand and demonstrates how the production of its music affects the production of its liturgy, and vice-versa.

Chapter 3 explores the dichotomy that is essential to the development of Hillsong's brand identity: the biblical call to be 'in, but not of', the world, cast as a dialogue between the 'sacred' and 'secular' realms. Evangelical Christians generally agree that the Bible mandates them to engage with 'the world'—especially for evangelistic purposes—but sometimes disagree about how this should be done in practice. These arguments manifest themselves in the discourses that frame contemporary worship music. Against this background, the chapter explores how Hillsong manages its identity vis-à-vis 'the world', especially a mass-mediated, celebrity-conscious one. Hillsong's transnational structure dictates that it uses mass-mediated, 'celebritized' images of its musicians to communicate its values efficiently. However, it must do so in an evangelical Christian context in which only Jesus is the 'Famous One' and celebrity is often viewed with suspicion. The 'celebrity' of its musicians must therefore be carefully managed. To do this, Hillsong promotes its values and message through a group of well-known worship leaders who are also part of the church's inner circle. Darlene Zschech, perhaps Hillsong's most well-known worship leader during its transition from a locally facing Australian congregation to a globally focused one, was during that time co-branded with Hillsong—she and the church were inextricably associated with each other. I argue that the key to the success of this partnership was a synergy of values. Zschech was the medium that connected stakeholders to the church, and the activities of all its participants were framed by and condensed in the brand.

Chapter 4 explores the evangelical ideal of the 'Body of Christ', an 'imagined' and 'imaginary' (Ingalls 2011) community that comprises all the world's Christians. In this chapter, I use an 'ecumenical' evangelical Christian event, the 2011 Pentecost celebration at London's O2 arena, as a case study to discuss how music is used in the formation of Hillsong's brand identity. At this event, Hillsong positioned itself in the Body of Christ by using music in the discursive frame of the Pentecost story to affirm commonalities between itself and similar churches, while simultaneously asserting its uniqueness. In doing so, an image of Hillsong's brand(ed) community was formed in the hearts and minds of participants, which in turn influenced their worship experiences.

Chapter 5 analyses the global Hillsong Church network. Hillsong brands itself as *part of* a global community but also *as* a global community in its own right. While Chapter 4 focused on the 'Body of Christ' as a community, this chapter examines the Hillsong Network—the complex web of people and places that act in the sociocultural entity that is Hillsong Church—as another community formation. Focusing on the London and Australian locations in the Hillsong network, I argue that Hillsong's brand transforms physical and virtual spaces into places by condensing them into an associational package that, through global flows (Appadurai 1996) and mediated imaginations (Anderson 1983 [2006]), affords participants meaningful experiences of its music—the 'Hillsong Sound'.

In positing a branded 'Hillsong Sound', the chapter first discusses the problem of global translation that Hillsong faces, as well as some of the advantages of and limitations to the use of branding as a method of cross-cultural communication. After defining 'sound' as a primarily discursive construction that posits a space/place as a musical 'centre of production', it notes how Hillsong's music production process establishes its flagship Australian church as the centre of production of the music and the brand. This Australian centre of production is imbued with essentialist cultural associations that anchor the 'Hillsong Sound' in its brand's creation story. It is through the brand's mythology that the transcendent efficacy of the music is realized. Finally, the chapter discusses how Hillsong London's congregation members' images of places and people in the Hillsong Network inform their experience of Hillsong's worship music vis-à-vis the 'Hillsong Sound', which is the sonic signifier of the Hillsong brand. Because the 'sound' is important to the efficacy of the music, Hillsong actively positions the church and its network within an evangelical discourse that relies on a global and local dichotomy to articulate its identity.

Chapter 6 focuses on the individual participant, the locus of the transcendent experience. It suggests that the brand is efficacious because it teaches 'how to listen'. However, the 'lessons' of the brand can only be 'learned' through active effort on the part of the participant. The brand shapes the transcendent experience by framing participants' activities, thus suggesting certain ways of understanding while delimiting others. By encouraging

participants to actively seek certain affective-volitional states, it adds value to the experience by allowing them to make their experiences their own. In other words, the brand accrues value for both Hillsong and its participants by harnessing the participants' own productivity.

Chapter 7 discusses the *instrumentalization* of Hillsong's brand. Hillsong's music and brand have *transcendent* and *transgressive* potential that is grounded in participants' understandings of the 'sacred', 'profane', and 'mundane'. Hillsong's participant stakeholders use the brand to draw connections between these conceptually separate—but dialogically dependent—worlds and, in doing so, activate the spiritual efficacy—the 'power'—of the Hillsong brand.

Notes

1 Hillsong Church London began as the London Christian Life Centre in 1992, and was renamed Hillsong London in 1999. After spending time moving between various London university halls and West End theatres, in 2002 it took up residency at the Mermaid Conference and Events Centre. Hillsong London has held services at the Dominion Theatre since January 2005.
2 Many of the largest churches such as Hillsong now offer training in the form of educational packages, seminars, conferences, and even their own colleges. Hillsong College, for example, offers courses in pastoral leadership, worship music, dance, television and media, production, and a Bachelor of Contemporary Ministry. The college's focus on arts and media-related offerings is telling not only of Hillsong's own communicative focus, but also that of modern evangelical Christianity.
3 www.artistrylabs.com/our-services. Accessed March 3, 2019.
4 www.artistrylabs.com/our-services/branding. Accessed March 3, 2019.
5 www.artistrylabs.com/our-thoughts/worship-style-transitions. Accessed March 3, 2019.
6 C.f. Gauthier and Martikainen, 2013.
7 In preparation for this book, I also conducted follow-up visits in the summer of 2017 and the spring of 2019.
8 I have anonymized or changed the names of some of my collaborators upon request. Others were happy to have their real names used. It should be noted that out of all of my conversation partners, only Hillsong Church's General Manager George Aghajanian was authorized to speak, and should be understood as speaking, for Hillsong. All others are expressing personal opinions.
9 'Hillsong has got a credibility that I want to look after. I don't like using a marketing term, but if you did use a marketing term it is "strong brand"' (Carswell 2013).
10 Many thanks to Liz Moor and Byron Dueck for this point.

References

Albrecht, Daniel E. 1999. *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality*. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Aldridge, Alan. 2007. *Religion in the Contemporary World: A Sociological Introduction*. Second edition. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Anderson, Benedict. 1983 [2006]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition. London: Verso Books.

Anderson, Ryan. 2011. 'Value, Social Conflict, and Tourism'. *Savage Minds: Notes and Queries in Anthropology* (blog), December 23. https://savageminds.org/2011/12/23/value-tourism/.

Appadurai, Arjun, ed. 1986. *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Arvidsson, Adam. 2006. *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Becker, Judith. 2004. *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing*. Pap/Com. Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press.

Blackwell, Roger, and Tina Stephan. 2004. *Brands That Rock: What Business Leaders Can Learn from the World of Rock and Roll*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Bronner, Kai, and Rainer Hirt, eds. 2009. *Audio Branding: Brands, Sound and Communication*. Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos edition Reinhard Fischer.

Campbell, Heidi. 2005. *Exploring Religious Community Online: We Are One in the Network*. New York: Lang.

Campbell, Heidi. 2010. *When Religion Meets New Media*. London and New York: Routledge.

Carah, Nicholas. 2010. *Pop Brands: Branding, Popular Music, and Young People*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Carswell, Andrew. 2013. 'Hillsong's Message and Music Has a Resonance Worldwide That Eclipses That of the Church's Aussie Birthplace'. *CourierMail*, July 13. www.couriermail.com.au/news/queensland/hillsong8217s-message-and-music-has-a-resonance-worldwide-that-eclipses-that-of-the-church8217s-aussie-birthplace/story-fnihsrf2-1226678522761.

Christian, Elizabeth Barfoot. 2011. *Rock Brands: Selling Sound in a Media Saturated Culture*. New York: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

Clark, Lynn Schofield. 2007. 'Identity, Belonging, and Religious Lifestyle Branding: Fashion Bibles, Bhangra Parties, and Muslim Pop'. In *Religion, Media, and the Marketplace*, edited by Lynn Schofield Clark, 2007. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Clifford, James, and George E. Marcus, eds. 1986. *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Cooke, Phil. 2008. *Branding Faith: Why Some Churches and Nonprofits Impact Culture and Others Don't*. Ventura, CA: Regal.

Einstein, Mara. 2008. *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*. London: Routledge.

Featherstone, Mike. 2007. *Consumer Culture and Postmodernism*. Second edition. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Featherstone, Mike, Mike Hempworth, and Bryan S. Turner, eds. 1991. *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. 2005. *The Churching of America, 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. Revised edition. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Foucault, Michel. 1976[1998]. *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*. London: Penguin

Galanter, Marc. 1989. *Cults Faith, Healing and Coercion*. Reprint. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gauthier, François, and Tuomas Martikainen, eds. 2013. *Religion in Consumer Society: Brands, Consumers, and Markets*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing.

Graber, David. 2001. *Toward an Anthropological Theory of Value: The False Coin of Our Own Dreams*. New York: Palgrave.
Hanlon, Patrick. 2006. *Primal Branding: Create Zealots for Your Brand, Your Company and Your Future*. New York: Simon & Schuster Ltd.
Heine, Christopher. 2013. 'New Ford Fiesta Campaign Will Be Entirely User-Generated: Creative for TV, Print and Digital to Derive from Social'. *Adweek Online*, February 19, 2013. www.adweek.com/news/advertising-branding/ford-campaign-will-be-all-user-generated-147384.
Hirschkind, Charles. 2001. 'The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt'. *American Ethnologist* 28 (3): 623–49.
Ingalls, Monique. 2011. 'Singing Heaven Down to Earth: Spiritual Journeys, Eschatological Sounds, and Community Formation in Evangelical Conference Worship'. *Ethnomusicology* 55 (2): 255–79.
Jankowsky, Richard C. 2010. *Stambeli: Music, Trance, and Alterity in Tunisia*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.
Jones, Steve. 2012. *Brand Like a Rock Star: Lessons from Rock 'n' Roll to Make Your Business Rich & Famous*. Austin, TX: Greenleaf Book Group LLC.
Kahney, Leander. 2004. *The Cult of Mac*. San Francisco, CA: No Starch Press.
Kapchan, Deborah. 2007. *Traveling Spirit Masters: Moroccan Gnawa Trance and Music in the Global Marketplace*. Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press.
Kilian, Karsten. 2009. 'From Brand Identity to Audio Branding'. In *Audio Branding: Brands, Sound and Communication,* edited by Kai Bronner and Rainer Hirt, 35–48. Baden-Baden, Germany: Nomos.
Kunde, Jesper. 2002. *Corporate Religion: Building a Strong Company through Personality and Corporate Soul*. London: FT Prentice Hall.
Lash, Scott M., and Celia Lury. 2007. *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.
Lave, Jean, and Etienne Wenger. 1991. *Situated Learning: Legitimate Peripheral Participation*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
Lieb, Kristin J. 2013. *Gender, Branding, and the Modern Music Industry: The Social Construction of Female Popular Music Stars*. New York: Routledge.
Lury, Celia. 2004. *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*. New York: Routledge.
Lury, Celia. 2011. *Consumer Culture*. Second edition. Cambridge, UK: Polity.
Lusensky, Jakob. 2010. *Sounds Like Branding: Using the Power of Music to Turn Customers into Fans*. London: Bloomsbury.
Miller, Donald E. 1997. *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
Moor, Liz. 2007. *The Rise of Brands*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
Moore, R. Laurence. 1994. *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.
Nekola, Anna. 2009. 'From This World to the Next: The Musical "Worship Wars" and Evangelical Ideology in the United States, 1960–2005'. Dissertation, University of Madison–Wisconsin.
Qureshi, Regula. 1986 [2006]. *Sufi Music of India and Pakistan: Sound, Context and Meaning in Qawwali*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.
Ram, Uri. 2007. 'Liquid Identities: Mecca Cola versus Coca-Cola'. *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 10 (4): 465–84.
Roof, Wade Clark. 1999. *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Rouget, Gilbert. 1985. *Music and Trance: A Theory of the Relations between Music and Possession*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Saren, Michael, Pauline Maclaran, Christina Goulding, Richard Elliott, Avi Shankar, and Miriam Catterall, eds. 2007. *Critical Marketing: Defining the Field*. Oxford, UK: Elsevier.

Sargeant, Kimon Howland. 2000. *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Shelemay, Kay Kaufman. 2008. 'The Ethnomusicologist, Ethnographic Method, and the Transmission of Tradition'. In *Shadows in the Field: New Perspectives for Fieldwork in Ethnomusicology*, edited by Gregory Barz and Timothy J. Cooley, 141–56. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1981[2001]. 'On the Audience Commodity and Its Work'. In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks*, edited by Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 230–56. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. 1986. *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation*. First Edition. Berkley, CA University of California Press.

Taylor, Timothy D. 2012. *The Sounds of Capitalism: Advertising, Music, and the Conquest of Culture*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Taylor, Timothy D. 2016. *Music and Capitalism: A History of the Present*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press.

Thumma, Scott, and Dale Travis. 2007. *Beyond Megachurch Myths: What We Can Learn from America's Largest Churches*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Trueheart, Charles. 1996. 'Welcome to the Next Church'. *The Atlantic Monthly* 278 (2 August): 37–58.

Turner, Edith B. 1993. 'The Reality of Spirits: A Tabooed or Permitted Field of Study?' *Anthropology of Consciousness* 4 (1): 9–12.

Twitchell, James B. 2007. *Shopping for God: How Christianity Went from In Your Heart to In Your Face*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Usunier, Jean-Claude. 2014. '"9591": The Global Commoditization of Religions through GATS, WTO, and Marketing Practices.' In *Religion as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Jean-Claude Usunier and Jörg Stolz, 27–46. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing.

Voas, David. 2014. 'Preface'. In *Religion as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Jean-Claude Usunier and Jörg Stolz, xvii–xix. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Young, Lawrence A. 1997. *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*. New York: Routledge.

1 Hillsong in its socio-historical context

Introduction

This chapter provides the socio-historical and political-economic contexts for this study. It suggests that the communicative strategies and organizational forms of transnational New Paradigm churches, such as Hillsong, developed concomitantly with the emerging consumer culture centred in the United States and the United Kingdom. The first part of this chapter traces the evolution of the brand and branding from a mark of ownership to an array of sophisticated marketing techniques that are deployed in an increasing number of social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. The cultural role of the brand has expanded from a descriptive mark to an associational gestalt, media object, postmodern identity marker, and belief/value system. Yet although the uses of branding have increased, the brand has retained its primary function as a mark of identity. The second part of this chapter traces the development of a 'Religious Experience Economy' and the related emergence of Christian Popular Music (CPM) and New Paradigm churches. It outlines the concomitant rise of a religious marketplace, CPM, and the New Paradigm church, emphasizing the role of marketing in the process. The processes outlined in the first two parts of this chapter take place in a context of increasing globalization and concomitant political-economic change. While these are important to understanding the global context, we also must understand how they manifest on the local level. The third part of this chapter, then, discusses the changes in the Australian religious and political-economic landscape that provided the foundation for the 'rise and rise' (Power 2004) of Australian Pentecostalism and Hillsong's *Iconic Brand*.

Part I – the evolving social function of brands and branding

Brands, branding, and the value of values

Brands are common currency in consumer culture, not only as markers of the things we buy and sell but also as organizational frameworks for ideas and practices. As Jane Pavitt notes:

> From cornflakes to cars, our daily lives are increasingly dominated by branded goods and brand names; the brand is a prefix, the qualifier of

> character. The symbolic associations of the brand name are often used in preference to the pragmatic description of a useful object. We speak of 'the old Hoover', 'my new Audi' or 'my favourite Levi's'—not needing to qualify them with an object description. The brand is at the heart of this process for many of the goods we buy and sell.
>
> (Pavitt 2000, 16)

Brands serve a metonymic function in our cultural discourse. As Pavitt notes above, they act as stand-ins for product categories; for example, in the United States, one often orders a 'Coke' instead of a 'cola'. Brand names are also used as verb: we are probably more likely to 'Google' information on the internet than we are to 'search' for it. Brands are proxies not only for products and actions but also for places and people; branding is increasingly a central consideration in the making of cultural policy for towns, cities, and even countries (e.g., Pratt 2011; Ulldemolins and Zamorano 2015), and an entire industry has developed around 'Brand You' (e.g., Lair et al. 2005; Gandini 2016). They are furthermore icons around which communities form and values are contested (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001). With the terms 'brand' and 'branding' applied to such a variety of objects, places, people, and activities, one might think that the terms' meanings would be diluted (Murphy 1998, 1). However, their ubiquitous presence in the discourse of consumer culture suggests instead a concentration with profound cultural, social, political, and economic implications.

It is important to understand the distinction between a brand and branding. Simply put: the brand is the result of a branding process. A brand is the condensation of meanings from which a brand identity—an identity that maps onto both the brand and its stakeholders—emerges.[1] Branding is the process through which the brand is realized.

Digging deeper, a brand's purpose is to add value to the experience of a product or service. It does this by binding consumers to the organization and its products through 'interactive consumer experience[s]' (Klingman 2007, 8). For consumers, the value added is primarily the result of emotional associations. For organizations, the 'ultimate' value of a brand is usually calculated in economic terms, but a brand's profits are a function of its affective value. Branding is therefore, at its core, a set of non-economic activities: it is an integrated communications (or marketing) strategy that synthesizes the physical, aesthetic, rational, and emotional elements of a brand into a consumable affective gestalt (Murphy 1998, 3).

A brand represents the values that an organization is built upon and that its employees (ideally) hold and promote. A brand also reflects the consumer's values. When a consumer associates her values with those of the brand, the resultant affect 'adds value' to the consumption experience. In consumer societies, economic benefits often follow from this. Consumers who have developed affective ties to the brand are more likely to be 'repeat customers' and are more likely to recommend the brand to others.

They are also more likely to pay a premium for the branded experience. To paraphrase the film *A Field of Dreams*: build it and they will come; brand it, and they will come back, and pay more when they do. This condensation of affective value, individual values, and economic value is referred to as brand equity.

The yearly 'most valuable brands' lists pioneered by the brand consultancy Interbrand reflect this conflation of different types of value (Interbrand 2018). Although brands are 'intangible assets', Interbrand assigns a monetary value to them. This valuation is derived from an analysis of an organization's tangible assets, such as physical infrastructure and available cash flow, balanced against factors such as debt and current sales figures. The added brand valuation is based on the view of 'brand loyalty' discussed in the previous paragraph: that consumers' emotional associations with a brand will engender future sales. The relative weighting of tangible and intangible assets in the valuation of brands reflects the increasing importance of branding in consumer culture. For example, in 2018 Interbrand valued Coca-Cola's brand at $66.3 billion (ibid). At the end of 2018, the company's stock market capitalization was approximately $210 billion.[2] In other words, almost a third of Coca-Cola's monetary value was derived from its name alone.

Sixty-six billion dollars is a lot of money for a name. The best way to understand why Coca-Cola and other brand names are so 'valuable' is to examine how they function in modern consumer culture. This may be done by tracing the evolution of the brand and branding from a method of denoting ownership and content to one of connoting different types of values, meanings, reputations, and identities for a range of stakeholders. As with other social phenomena, branding's evolution is inextricable from the changes in technology and communication that have accompanied it. However, although the cultural contexts of the brand and the modes of branding have changed over time (Room 1998, 13–23; Olins 2003, 46–69; Moor 2007, 15–38), the brand's basic function of distinguishing the offerings of one producer from those of another has arguably remained unaltered (Murphy 1998, 1).

The origins of branding: distinguishing products

The terms 'brand' and 'branding' are used to describe a diverse set of phenomena that can be contextualized within multiple histories and frameworks (Lury 2011, 139). Most accounts of brands suggest that branding emerged as an organizational force for production and consumption in industrializing countries during the second half of the nineteenth century (e.g., Olins 2003, 46–69; Lury 2004, 17–47; Moor 2007, 15–38). Yet, branding as a method of communicating identity and difference has a much longer history. The origins of product branding can be traced back to ancient Greece and Rome, where marks indicated the ownership and origin of vessels as well as their content (Room 1998, 13–14; Moor 2007, 16; see also Mollerup 1997).

Over time, the informational content of these marks increased as they were used to denote the distinctive qualities of a product. For example, in Britain watermarks described the size and weight of paper. Similarly, hallmarks for precious metals indicated their composition, the assay office where they were tested, the date of issue, and the name of their manufacturer. Brands thus became not only descriptors of content but also guarantors of quality by linking products to reputable sources (Moor 2007, 16).

Brands were further linked to identity during colonial expansion as marks not only for goods and livestock but also for people; during the transatlantic slave trade, slaves were routinely branded. These marks connoted identity on multiple levels by simultaneously identifying the slave owner and conferring the social status of 'permanent marginal' upon the slave (ibid, 17). However, the brands were also appropriated as badges of honour by successful runaway slaves and as symbols of resistance and solidarity (Patterson 1982, 59, in Moor 2007, 17). In branding's nascent stages, then, the contested, multiple meanings of the brand were already evident.

In the 1870s and 1880s, concomitant developments in communication, transportation, and manufacturing technologies ushered in the first 'great' period of branding in the United States and Europe (Olins 2003, 51). Manufacturers were increasingly able to standardize, and thus regulate, the size and consistency of their products. Also, developments in printing allowed the packaging itself to communicate a greater array of images and meanings, which helped create distinct identities for products (Moor 2007, 18–19). The development of a product-based 'corporate personality' allowed the producers to speak 'directly' to the consumer, usurping the retailer's role as the trusted intermediary between the two (Lury 2011, 139).

Concomitant with the technical advances of the late nineteenth century was an explosion in population, which provided a market for an ever-widening range of goods. This increased both the need for the meanings of a brand to be communicated and the ways through which this could be done. For example, the first great branders in post–Civil War America were the makers of patent medicines. Patent medicine makers took advantage of a market in which there were few trained doctors but a relatively high proportion of literate people, expanding newspaper circulation, and growing transportation and distribution networks. Because of the competitive environment (not to mention the dubious nature of many of their products), the makers of patent medicines were 'the first to sell image rather than product' (Olins 2003, 50).

A move towards corporate identity

The period from the end of the nineteenth century to the first half of the twentieth century saw an increase in the competition between similar products. This led to a more systematic use of advertising, and particularly a shift away from emphasizing the functionality of goods to imbuing them

with emotional significance. Advertisers' shift of interest to consumer psychology is often credited to Edward Bernays, who (by no coincidence) was Sigmund Freud's nephew. Bernays was one of the pioneers of market segmentation; he organized focus groups in order to gain insight into the lives of different kinds of consumers and then used those insights to influence those consumers through marketing (Tye 2002).

As the twentieth century progressed, consumer psychology became more nuanced; it moved away from an emphasis on wants, needs, and desires towards a focus on communal and personal identity. Simultaneously, the idea that corporations had identities and should be understood as 'pseudo-people' was making headway in both theory and law.[3] Initially, corporate identity was viewed as a design coordination problem. In the post-war period, corporations increasingly recognized the importance of building a corporate image through an integrated media strategy that used multiple kinds of media. Speaking from a design perspective, Henrion and Parkin (1967) wrote in *Design Coordination and Public Image*:

> A corporation has many points of contact with various groups of people. It has premises, works, products, packaging, stationery, forms, vehicles, publications and uniforms, as well as the usual kinds of promotional activities. These things are seen by customers, agents, suppliers, financers, shareholders, competitors, the press and the general public, as well as its own staff. The people in these groups build up their idea of the corporation from what they see and experience of it. An image is therefore an intangible and essentially complicated thing, involving the effect of many and varied factors on many and varied people with many and varied interests.
>
> (Henrion and Parkin 1967, 7, cited in Moor 2007, 30–33)

Henrion and Parkin's work showed that a brand is multifaceted and that different actors encounter different elements of it in different contexts and thus understand it in different ways. For them, the challenge was to coordinate those disparate encounters in a way that communicated a single concept.

In contrast to Henrion and Parkin's visual focus, James Pilditch's *Communication by Design: A Study in Corporate Identity* (1970) drew its inspiration from Marshall McLuhan's ideas about the interconnectedness of media and identity. Pilditch argued that companies needed to understand the 'total situation…of information movement':

> [F]ar from being an adjunct of advertising, corporate communications have become the new total…. Advertising, like public relations, architecture, merchandising materials, and any part of a company's outpourings, must be coordinated with the rest so that each contributes to one appropriate whole.
>
> (Pilditch 1970, 9, cited in Moor 2007, 32)

The acknowledgement that all of a brand's offerings are potential semiotic material in identity design (or assemblage) informed many of the consumer-oriented branding strategies that emerged in the 1980s and 1990s.

Both *Design Coordination and Public Image* and *Communication by Design* were concerned primarily with communicating an identity to stakeholders outside of an organization. In contrast, Wally Olins' 1978 book *The Corporate Personality* focused on the internal aspects of corporate identity. In it, Olins argued that, rather than simply projecting an identity, successful organizations had to create one from within. This presaged the global corporate mergers of the 1980s, which demanded newly international companies streamline their communications and make them comprehensible to their multi-cultural workforces (Moor 2007, 30). In the emerging context of global capitalism, companies needed to create 'a common culture…. [W]hen employees visit one another's factories and offices they [should] find familiar things, familiar names, familiar signs, familiar systems, even familiar furniture – things that make them feel at home' (Olins 1978, 61, cited in Moor 2007, 32).

Liz Moor (2007) suggests that the sociological orientation of Pilditch's and Olins' works, as well as their frequent oscillation 'between conceptions of workers as employees on the one hand and consumers on the other', points towards 'a growing awareness of the shifting relationship between production and consumption [that was occurring in the 1970s], in which people's identities as consumers were becoming nearly as important as their identities as workers' (33). In other words, both authors recognized that the emergence of post-Fordist economies of flexible labour, on the one hand, and the rise of post-modern consumerism, on the other hand, entailed the need to understand marketing as a social and cultural enterprise.

The 1980s marked the beginning of the present 'branded' era, a new social and cultural context in which brands are now 'central components of the social fabric' of consumer culture (Arvidsson 2006, 3). Until the 1970s, branding was the purview of companies such as Proctor and Gamble, Heinz, and Kellogg's, which produced 'fast moving consumer goods' (FMCGS). During this time (and despite the insights gleaned from Bernays), competitive advantage was still viewed—especially outside of the United States—as product based. In other words, it was believed that if product A were better designed and cheaper than product B, the consumer would make the 'logical' choice of product A. In many cases, this proved to be true. However, at this time, there was much more 'room' in the market. For example, in the 1950s, the average grocer's shop in Britain carried about 2,000 products. At the turn of the millennium, the number had risen to around 40,000 (Olins 2003, 57). Because of the ubiquity of technology, there is today often very little, if any, difference in the quality of similar goods. Thus, from the 1970s onwards, corporate emphasis has shifted from products to brands, their organizations, and the services that those organizations provide (ibid, 63). In particular, corporate branding recognizes that the human element of brand identity involves not only internal participants but external ones as well.

Branding and the service sector

Since the practical features of products rarely separate one brand from its competitors, companies seek to differentiate themselves by enhancing their customers' experiences of their products through services. For example, when I owned a Honda Civic, the dealer would email me to remind me when to have it serviced, schedule an appointment for me, and attach 'discount' coupons for those services to the email. Honda sought to make the tiresome elements of owning a car, such as maintenance, easy if not enjoyable; both the product and the services became parts of the overall experience of Honda ownership.

In some cases, a brand's products and services are more than just connected; they are one and the same. Banks and airlines, which provide specific services to a customer, are examples of 'service brands'. Like all brands, service brands seek to develop and maintain the emotional ties with consumers that produce 'added value' for both parties. But since consumers have no products per se to interact with, their impressions of an organization are often derived primarily from interactions with the organization's representatives, usually its employees. As meaningful 'touchpoints' of interaction with the customer, employees represent the brand and communicate its values. Organizations know that employees are important to brand image. Far beyond uniforms and personal appearance, social cues, such as bodily comportment and language, are key factors in consumer satisfaction and in establishing relationships that may lead to brand loyalty. For this to happen, though, the interaction between brand representative and consumer must be experienced as 'authentic'. For example, if a representative is thought to be working from a script ('Welcome to Burger King; may I take your order please?') rather than being 'genuinely' involved, the customer may experience the interaction as inauthentic. This is why service brands put considerable time, money, and effort into employee-training programmes. For example, British Airways runs workshops as part of its 'breakthrough programme'. This programme seeks to ensure that everyone in the organization shares a common vision and purpose and follows prescribed steps to communicate this (Hart 1998, 209).[4] The idea is that by instilling a sense of purpose and commitment in its employees, they will 'authentically' communicate the airline's purpose and values through word and action.[5] In other words, British Airways follows Wally Olins's advice: 'Train your people to live the brand' (Olins 2003, 89).

An experience economy

Service brands are driven by the desire to enhance the consumer's experience. Pine and Gilmore (2011) argue that the current phase of capitalism is one in which the 'consumable experience' is a commodity. For Pine and Gilmore, the first stage of capitalism was the agrarian economy, where raw materials were extracted, bought, and sold. When extracted

materials were used to produce marketable goods, the industrial economy developed. As an industrialized market matured, it became cluttered with goods of similar type and quality. Producers, therefore, had to differentiate their products through services, which enhanced and ultimately replaced goods as the primary commodity. Thus, the industrial economy developed into the service economy. As the service economy has matured, good service has become common to most service brands, just as quality products became common in the mature industrial economy. Since good service is no longer a point of differentiation, then, Gilmore and Pine argue that the new point of differentiation is experience, which is constructed (or as they put it, 'staged') through a combination of goods and services.

Two standard-bearers of the experience economy are Nike and Disney. They devote themselves less to creating products than they do to promoting holistic, multisensory brand experiences (although products remain an important part of this). This is no more apparent than at their flagship experience hubs, Nike Town in Chicago and Disneyland in California, respectively. John Sherry, Jr., describes Nike Town as 'surely the embodiment of the corporate dictum "Just Do It"' (Sherry 1998, 109), a branded 'servicescape', where the 'brand is both a noun and a verb' (ibid, 112; c.f. Klingmann 2007, 86–89). Nike Town is designed as a 'material and symbolic environment that consumers build with marketplace products, images and messages, that they invest with local meaning, and whose totemic significance largely shapes the adaptation consumers make to the modern world' (ibid, 112): a place where '[t]he co-creation of experience by marketers and consumers—the performance of negotiated meanings—is engendered…by design' (ibid). Nike Town is more of an interactive museum than an actual store—it stocks products that cannot be found at local dealers and never runs sales. In it, customers can 'touch greatness' in a variety of ways, from trying out their moves on the half-court that covers part of the second floor to taking in the videos of famous athletes that run throughout the store. Nike Town strives to create a multisensory 'rhetoric of the place' (ibid, 140) where one can touch, smell (and taste—these two senses are linked), hear, and feel 'Nikeness'.

The sensually immersive experience is perhaps even more complete at Disneyland, the iconic theme park that for Mark Gottdiener (1998) is nothing less than 'a large sign-vehicle of the Disney ideology [that] forms the semantic universe within which the many objects of merchandising with the Disney theme make sense' (31). Thematic coherence is inspired through architecture, landscaping, costuming, and other theatrical effects (not to mention the ubiquitous mouse ear hats that are available at every turn), which immerse the consumer in the Disney experience (Chidester 2005, 143). Disneyland even has its own currency, the 'Disney Dollar', which further divorces the consumption experience from 'the real world', enveloping the consumer in an all-encompassing branded ecology.[6]

Nike and Disney understand that we experience brands as we experience life, through all five senses. Because sensory experience is an essential part of how we 'know' things (especially because it is linked to our emotional awareness), the more sensual the experiences we associate with a brand are, the more visceral and memorable they become. This is why engineers at car companies such as BMW, Rolls-Royce, and Cadillac go far beyond appearance when designing their automobiles, also focusing on (and patenting) details such as how their cars smell, how the doors feel when being opened, and the sound they make when being closed. For these companies, the automobile should be a holistic experience of the brand, a medium that ingrains the brand in the very being of the consumer (c.f. Lindstrom 2005).

The brand as a form of governance

Even the most powerful sensual experiences mean nothing without cultural context; the experience of a BMW will mean nothing unless it is articulated to sets of associations. As a collection of meanings drawn from a variety of other media, the brand is a mediated object (Lury 2004). But the brand is also a sign vehicle and is, therefore, media in and of itself. This duality is important because, while the range of meanings available to a brand are dictated by its cultural context, it also organizes those meaning by providing a framework in which brand experiences are interpreted by the consumer vis-à-vis its position within that cultural context. In other words, the brand is afforded certain meanings within consumer culture and simultaneously affords certain experiences to its stakeholders.

In contemporary media-saturated 'knowledge' economies, information is arguably more 'valuable' than ever (Castells 2010; c.f. Webster 2006). The brand converts affect and information into economic capital (Arvidsson 2006) and does so primarily through its role as a managerial device, 'a form of governance, a way of managing populations and reshaping existing perceptions and practices among citizens as well as workers and consumers' (Moor 2007, 38; original emphasis). As Moor notes:

> What unites…functions of branding is a renewed emphasis on the tactility and materiality of communication, and its capacity to affect people at the level of perception and affect rather than only through the more obviously cognitive work of 'persuasion'.
>
> (ibid)

Branding is a way of condensing and streamlining flows of information between an organization and its stakeholders. In doing so, it both interacts with and to some degree shapes its stakeholders' worldviews. Drawing from information already 'in the world', a brand anticipates certain kinds of meanings and thus predetermines certain kinds of actions and attachments through a kind of 'framing' (Arvidsson 2006, 74). In other words,

brands 'provide part of the context in which products are used' (ibid, 8; see also Carah 2010). However, this does not mean that a brand imposes context or meanings on the user, at least not in the Taylorist sense.[7] Rather, in post-Fordist fashion, 'brands work by *enabling* consumers, by empowering them in particular directions' (ibid, 8; original emphasis). There is irony in Arvidsson's observation, however. His point is that brands exercise control through empowerment by harnessing the human need to 'create the social'. In other words, by making the information and meanings drawn from associations our 'own' through our own productivity, we are embodying the worldview shaped by the brand on deeply personal levels.

While Arvidsson is chiefly concerned with the economic implications of this form of 'informational capitalism', where social interaction becomes embedded as an economic activity, I am more concerned with the non-economic implications of what could be called, following Arvidsson as well as Fredric Jameson (1992), an 'enabling logic of late capitalism'. If we use brands as part of our everyday communication and meaning-making activities—as ways of sharing information that shape our lives and worldviews—then the power and potential of brands becomes clear. Building on Lury and Arvidsson's insights, the brand can be understood as a social media object that both creates and extracts value in a 'Web 2.0' manner.

The brand in/as social media and culture jamming

The insight that brands leverage our innate need to be social and convert it into economic capital is exemplified by the value creation strategies of corporate brands like Google, Amazon, and Facebook. These organizations leverage information collected through monitoring and recording of user activity in order to, among other things: target advertisements specific to the individual consumer, outsource technical support to community forums (which has the added value of also creating brand community), and react quickly to consumer suggestions or complaints. The internet, in other words, provides ways for organizations and brands to connect with participants and stakeholders in unique and personal ways. While the 'Big Brother' implications of this are clear, the flip side is that participants are also immediately connected to each other and can therefore—at least to some degree—bypass the organization in the branding process. Since a brand image is socially constructed, it is subject to the vicissitudes of 'the social'. For brands, social media can be a dream-come-true if people have good things to say. However, the smallest rumour or complaint can also quickly damage a brand's reputation if mishandled.

The symbolic nature of the brand simultaneously presents opportunities to but also creates potential problems for brand managers. As discussed above, brands have carried multiple or contested meanings almost since their inception. Thus, while a brand may add value to an experience for some, for others, the opposite may be true. For example, while for some people the trip to Starbucks is an important part of their daily routines, others avoid the chain at all costs (Thompson and Arsel 2004). One of the

best-known articulations of this brand-averse stance (which often, but not necessarily, is tied to anti-consumerist sentiments) is Naomi Klein's book *No Logo* ([2000] 2010). Taking the same view as the 'Ad-busters', 'Culture Jammers', and World Trade Organization protesters she documents, brands are, for Klein, symbols of the excesses of capitalism and neoliberal hegemony. Yet Klein's examples also point to why her position is overstated; the mere fact that brands can be 'culture jammed'[8] suggests that they can be controlled. Although branding is first a non-economic activity, like most things, it very rarely occurs outside the purview of capital. All organizations need participants because of the social and economic capital they provide. In an era of fierce competition, not only in the for-profit but also in the non-profit sector, brands are subservient to the whims of these participants, who can vote with their feet and their wallets. For example, in 2012 Starbucks was pilloried in the press and on the internet for its avoidance of corporate taxes in the UK. After the story broke, sales of rival British coffee chain Costa rose by eight per cent, while Starbucks' sales dropped by almost the same amount (Bowers 2013). Although some might view Starbuck's claim that it subsequently started paying taxes because '…we felt that our customers should not have to wait for us to become profitable before we started paying UK corporation tax' (Saul 2013) sceptically, the event nevertheless shows how bad press (or the threat of bad press) can affect corporate action. This is not to suggest that international corporate brands are not hegemonic. Indeed, one critique of 'ethical consumerism' is that it privileges the citizen-consumer above other forms of citizenship (see Heath and Potter 2006). However, it also highlights the dialectic between consumers and companies from which the brand emerges: the brand is never closed or complete, which allows it to evolve along with social, cultural, and political-economic changes.

The above discussion has traced the changing cultural and social functions of brands and branding. Always marks of distinction,[9] the ways in which brands differentiate have multiplied through the centuries. One consequence of this is that they have become more social. Brands are today culturally contested signs and symbols around which communities form. Brands mediate the past, present, and future; the 'local' and the 'global'; and the individual and the collective. Most importantly, the brand's efficacy lies in its ability to add value to the consumption experience of a product or service, or if not (as in the case of Klein's adherents) add value to the experience of not consuming it. In other words, brands are part of how we experience others, our environments, and ourselves, whether we like it or not.

Part II – the Religious Experience Economy

Having established a socio-historical context for, and the experiential dimensions of brands and branding in consumer culture, I will now turn to the Religious Experience Economy, which developed concomitantly within this same context. The forces that shaped the evolution of brands and branding

and gave rise to the experience economy have also shaped the development of religious institutions and the forms of religious experience and expression associated with them. Organizations reflect the larger socio-economic environments in which they operate, and thus in capitalist societies, they acquire the 'character and mass-mediated ethos' of these contexts (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001, 412). In other words, markets and technologies affect the ways that participants in various economies organize and communicate in order to achieve their goals—an insight that undergirds the idea of a 'religious economy'.

The notion of a religious economy first gained currency in sociological circles in the 1960s (c.f. Stark and Bainbridge 1985, 39–96; Stark and Finke 2000, 193–276; Finke and Stark 2005), and it is useful for understanding the concomitant developments of New Paradigm churches and CPM, from organizational and stylistic perspectives.[10] Religious economy views religion as a commodity and religious organizations as merchants that compete with each other for clients. While many participants are uncomfortable describing their activities in these terms (Cooke 2008, 10), religious economy accounts for the organizational forms and communicative strategies that an increasing number of religious organizations—evangelical and otherwise (Einstein 2008)—are adopting around the world. Religious economy is grounded in classical economic theory and therefore frames religious change as a supply-and-demand problem driven by rational actors who make rational choices (c.f. Young 1997). This is helpful in understanding the way religious landscapes change over time, but its weakness is the same as that of classical economic theory: neither *homo economicus* nor *homo religiosus* is rational. This is where the related concept of the 'spiritual marketplace' (Roof 1999) is helpful. The spiritual marketplace focuses on the *consumption* of spiritual 'goods' rather than the *production* of them, and is therefore better suited to an analysis of religion in consumer societies (Gauthier and Martikainen 2013). Yet when speaking of religious branding, the most useful concept is that of *prosumption*—the 'Web 2.0' economic model in which the processes of production and consumption process are concomitant (Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010; Wagner 2014b).

Transnational New Paradigm churches are similar to global brands in that they communicate 'glocally', harnessing both 'global' and 'local' discourses and images in dialectic processes (Wagner 2014a). Like most glocal phenomena, the 'global' organizational forms and marketing/evangelizing techniques of evangelical Protestantism are usually posited as 'American'—traceable to what Finke and Stark (2005) describe as 'The Churching of America'. In Finke and Stark's account, the separation of church and state inscribed in the Constitution of the United States of America opened a religious free market in which religious organizations competed for adherents. To gain and retain these adherents, the organizations addressed participants' wants and needs in ways that were broadly appealing and easily understandable. This was in contrast to the state-sponsored religious organizations in Europe, which enjoyed 'religious monopolies'.[11] With little or no competition, these organizations did not have to address their

participants' needs in order to survive, which led to a stagnation not only in religious participation but also in diversity and, most importantly, actual *belief* (Finke and Stark 2005, 8–12; see also Stark and Finke 2000, 218–58).[12]

The expansion and diversification of religious organizations in early America was characterized by successive waves of 'aggressive churches committed to vivid otherworldliness' (ibid, 1). For example, while the dominant religions in the colonies were initially mainline denominations, such as the Congregationalists, Presbyterians, and Episcopalians, by the 1850s, they had largely been supplanted by the more evangelically minded Methodists. The Methodists were in turn challenged and gradually supplanted by a newer strain of evangelicals, the Baptists. The keys to these movements' successes were their preachers, who made 'careful use of vernacular imagery, metaphors, and stories that applied to the everyday life of their audience' (ibid, 86).[13] Importantly, the Methodists and Baptists (and later on, some Presbyterians) 'adopted a belief system that justified both intense emotion and religious ecstasy' (Nekola 2009, 91), which was seen as proof of salvation. In contrast to the 'intellectual' approach favored by mainline religions, these new upstarts privileged *experience*.

Starke and Finke attribute the early successes of the Methodists and Baptists in part to their informal power structure: for both groups, there was little or no separation between clergy and laity; nor was there a codified system in which clergy were educated. Thus, the history of Protestantism in the United States has been marked by a succession of famous entrepreneurial preachers who were eager users of media and clever marketers. These include George Whitefield and Charles Finney in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, the preacher/musician teams of Billy Sunday and Homer Rodeheaver and Dwight Moody and Ira Sankey in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the (multi)media star Sister Aimee McPhearson in the 1930s and 1940s, Billy Graham in the mid- to late-twentieth century, and the current crop of branded preachers like Joel Osteen and T.D. Jakes, who reach millions of faithful across the world and are nothing less than fully fledged media conglomerates. Through these preachers, a picture of the co-evolution of religious structure and forms of expression, media, and marketing can be constructed.

The first great revivalist in the United States was George Whitefield (December 27, 1714 – September 30, 1770). According to Frank Lambert's study of colonial revivals, 'what was new about Whitefield was the skill as an entrepreneur, and impresario, that made him a full-fledged forerunner of evangelists like Charles Grandison Finney and Billy Graham' (Lambert 1999, 813; cited in Finke and Stark 2005, 88). Finke and Stark note that Whitefield:

> …was a master of advance publicity who sent out a constant stream of press releases, extolling the success of his revivals elsewhere, to the cities he intended to visit. These advance campaigns often began two

> years ahead of time. In addition, Whitefield had thousands of copies of his sermons printed and distributed to stir up interest. He even ran newspaper advertisements announcing his impending arrival.
>
> (Finke and Stark 2005, 88–89)

Whitefield's media campaigns were not only effective but also profitable, so much so that none other than Benjamin Franklin became Whitefield's publisher. Franklin evidently knew a good thing when he saw it, as 'sales of the Great Itinerant's journals and sermons soon amounted to a very large proportion of Franklin's gross receipts' (ibid, 89).

Whitefield and Franklin were pragmatists, and Charles Grandison Finney (August 29, 1792–August 16, 1875), known as the 'Father of modern revivalism' (Hankins 2004, 137), was more pragmatic still. He wrote that '[A revival of religion] is not a miracle…. It is a purely philosophical result of the right use of the constituted means' (Finney [1835] 1960, 13; cited in Finke and Stark 2005, 89). For Finney, this meant not only the judicious use of handbills, pamphlets, and newspapers but also practical measures such as the construction of venues with good ventilation, keeping prayers short, and encouraging participants to leave their dogs and young children at home (Finke and Stark 2005: 90). In doing so, Finney created a worship environment free of distractions, an idea that is central to the design of most purpose-built New Paradigm churches today. Like today's most successful evangelical pastors, Finney was not afraid of the new. Indeed, he wrote: 'The object of our measures is to gain attention, and you *must have* something new' (Finney [1835] 1960, 181; cited in Finke and Stark 2005, 90; original emphasis).

'Something new' included new music. Congregational singing at the camp meeting, a staple of nineteenth-century revivals, was often characterized by new choruses or refrains added to existing hymns by Watts and Wesley (Nekola 2009, 93). As Anna Nekola points out, these songs were easy to learn and remember and had cross-generational appeal because their subject matter eschewed theistic content in favour of a 'pietistic, emotional, and subjective experience' (ibid). Significantly, Finney's collaborator, Thomas Hastings (October 15, 1784–May 15, 1872), believed music had the power to channel these emotions and thus influence the moral character of its listeners. He believed that by appealing to worshippers' aesthetic tastes, one could engage them in the act of worship and through this inspire 'the appropriate mix of devotion and piety' (ibid, 100).

The late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries saw a new generation of celebrity preachers who took advantage of the advances in technology and communications to spread the gospel. These star preachers were self-reliant, building their own venues and even starting their own publishing houses in order to disseminate materials. Two preacher-musician partnerships that were particularly adept at this were Dwight

Moody (February 5, 1837–December 22, 1899) and composer Ira Sankey (August 28, 1840–August 13, 1908); and later Billy Sunday (November 19, 1862–November 6, 1935) and his musical collaborator Homer Rodeheaver (October 4, 1880–December 18, 1955). Dwight Moody, for example, was not only a famous preacher but also a skilled businessman. He recognized that evangelism took many forms, and to this end, he used his fortune to found not only what is today known as the Moody Church but also the Moody Bible Institute and Moody Publishers, all of which are still thriving. Similarly, Nekola notes that both Billy Sunday's grand Tabernacle in New York City and his collaboration with Homer Rodeheaver were emblematic of an attempt to control both the physical and emotional atmosphere of his revival meetings (Nekola 2009, 334; footnote 18). As for Rodeheaver himself, he started a successful music publishing house, and later his own record label, Rainbow Records—the first to be devoted exclusively to publishing gospel music. This presages by almost half a century the beginnings of CPM, when record companies devoted exclusively to Christian music, such as Vineyard and Maranatha!, were established.[14] By consolidating the means of production and dissemination 'in house', Moody and Sunday were able to control their messages across a variety of platforms.

The twentieth century's evangelical upstarts, the Pentecostals, made full use of mass media from the very beginnings of the movement. For example, the Azusa Street Revival's publication *The Apostolic Faith* had a peak circulation of 40,000 in 1907 and was distributed around the world (McGee 2007). The Pentecostals also used popular music such as the brass instrumentation of the Salvation Army bands (Eskridge 1998). This tradition, infused with the pragmatism and media savvy of previous generations, was embodied in Sister Aimee Semple McPherson (October 9, 1890–September 27, 1944), who, according to Harvey Cox, 'was a genuine celebrity, one of the best-known women in America' (Cox 1995, 124). As 'the first of…a series of full-fledged Pentecostal media stars' (ibid, 127), McPherson built her own church, the Angelus Temple, in Echo Park, Los Angeles in 1923. With floors 'softened by red carpets', the temple seated 5,300 and accommodated two large choirs and a full orchestra. Despite its size, 'visitors often lined up for hours to get seats for services' (ibid, 123).

Cox's description of 'Sister Aimee' aptly describes the mediated Christian celebrity:

> Sister Aimee was a talented thespian as well as a legendarily eloquent preacher…. With professional lighting, imaginative costuming, and entertaining scripts typed out by the Sister herself, she had attracted hundreds of thousands of people to the Temple with production values that rivalled Florenz Ziegfeld.
>
> (ibid, 124)

In doing so:

> Aimee Semple McPherson was the principal pioneer in what has become one of the most characteristic—and most problematical—qualities of Pentecostalism, its uncanny ability to utilize the prevailing popular culture for its own message, while at the same time raising questions about that culture…in this lover's quarrel with Tin Pan Alley.
>
> (ibid, 128)

This 'lover's quarrel' with popular culture—and especially popular music—came to a head when the 'Worship Wars' broke out in the 1960s,[15] but Billy Graham (b. November 7, 1918) was appealing to youth through popular music decades earlier (Eskridge 1998). Graham's use of popular music to engage his audience was not new in and of itself. What was new was that, while his predecessors thought of the music as a tool of transcendence and the preacher as the evangelical voice, Graham (and later the Jesus Movement) viewed music increasingly as a way to spread the message of Christ separately from the transcendent experience. In other words, they saw music as a way into the hearts and minds of unbelievers (Nekola 2009, 335). This is the philosophy behind the 'Seeker Church' strategy, which sees 'churching' as a journey on which the seeker must be invited to take his or her first tentative steps through reassuring, familiar means such as music (Sargeant 2000). So while the use of popular music increasingly influenced Pentecostal-style charismatic worship and the pursuit of transcendence for the faithful, it was simultaneously increasingly divorced from transcendence as a way to reach the 'unchurched' (Nekola 2009, 335–36). In other words, the same music was used differently according to market segment; it was used first as a means of 'attracting an audience' in the hope of eventually transforming the seeker into a believer, and then as a medium of worship through which the believer achieved a transcendent experience of God.

Bill Hybels (b. December 12, 1951), the founder of Chicago's Willow Creek Church, is often credited with popularizing the 'Seeker Church' strategy (Sargeant 2000), which sees the 'unchurched' as a distinct market segment. Willow Creek Church is one of the first and largest nondenominational network churches in the United States. While not officially a 'denomination',[16] its network—the Willow Creek Association—provides many of the organizational functions that have traditionally been the purview of denominations. This includes defining a musical liturgy, providing training and resources, and organizing networks for the sharing of information and hiring of staff (Sargeant 2000, 134).[17] Hybels and Willow Creek are just one example of the New Paradigm of church leader and organization that are equal parts media conglomerate and brand.[18] This model of church marketing is most strongly associated with evangelical Christianity, but it has also been adopted by a range of other religious organizations, such as the Jewish mystical Kabbalah movement (which counts Madonna as one

of its vocal supporters), the Japanese Buddhist organization Soka Gakkai International, and even Scientology (Einstein 2011).

This section has traced the development of a Religious Experience Economy that was shaped by the same forces that drove the development of branding and consumer culture. Both New Paradigm churches and brands were presented as products of a mass-media ecology in which affect and experience are central. Music has played the role of a catalyst of affect within this media ecology, often as the 'b side' to a celebrity preacher's vision and message. Having established these links between consumer culture and the Religious Experience Economy, we will now turn to the Australian religious and political-economic landscape within which Hillsong Church arose.

Part III – Hillsong in its Australian context

Early Pentecostalism in Australia

In order to understand the growth and popularity of Hillsong Church, we need to understand not only the international frame but also the national context (Miller 2016, 299). While the previous sections contextualized the New Paradigm's emergence within the frames of consumer culture and a Religious Experience Economy that developed primarily in North America and the United Kingdom, this section contextualizes the church within religious and political-economic changes in Australia and Australian Pentecostalism.

Most scholarly accounts of New Paradigm churches (including the one presented above) present them as American (or sometimes Anglo-American) exports (e.g., Coleman 2000). In these accounts, flows of missionaries and media radiated outward across the globe, spreading new forms of worship not only to the 'unchurched' but also to their Protestant brethren. However, Allan Anderson (2007) argues that these accounts fail to adequately consider the agency of local actors. In Australia, for example, the relationship between international missionaries and their local counterparts was complementary but also complicated—as Elizabeth Miller notes, 'while the ideas, practices, and theology of Australian Pentecostals were influenced by the American and British contexts, Australian Pentecostalism followed a different path' (Miller 2015, 56). For example, after Aimee Semple McPherson visited the Australian evangelist Sarah Jane 'Jeannie' Lancaster's Good News Hall in 1922, the former reported to her constituency the 'horror' she felt when encountering the anti-Trinitarian and annihilationist teachings of Lancaster (Duncan 1947).

While evidence of the charismata was reported as early as the 1850s, classical Pentecostalism appeared in Australia at the beginning of the twentieth century (Austin and Clifton 2019). Absorbing some features of global Pentecostalism, the pioneer efforts of Lancaster and others shaped a uniquely 'translocal' Australian Pentecostalism (Hutchinson 2017b). However, it remained at the periphery of the international and Australian

religious landscape until after World War II (Chant 2011). Miller suggests that part of the reason for this was that, although influential American and British evangelists such as Smith Wigglesworth, Aimee Semple McPherson, Adolpho Clarence (A.C.) Valdez, Sr., and William Booth-Clibborn visited Australia during the 1920s, the practices and doctrinal positions of some early Australian Pentecostals, such as Lancaster, were so different from those of the visitors that the latter group criticized and distanced themselves from the former (Miller 2015, 58). However, Denise Austin offers an alternative view, noting that early Australian Pentecostal meetings exhibited a style and emphasis on holiness that was drawn from North American preachers. Austin suggests that since this holiness bent was 'largely a migrant import spread predominantly by middle-class Pentecostals', socio-economics and class were significant impediments to the spread of Pentecostalism, especially in poorer urban centres such as Sydney (Austin 2017c, 117). Despite early opposition, the Pentecostal Church of Australia was approved as an official denomination in 1932, and the Assemblies of God in Australia (AGA) was inaugurated five years later in 1937.

The 15 years following World War II saw an increase in Christian belief and church attendance in Australia. This phenomenon likely had several causes, including the existential threat of nuclear weapons and the Cold War, the 'Americanization' of Australian culture (particularly music), and the rise of a middle-class lifestyle linked to materialism and consumption. Miller (2015, 61) argues that the overall effect of this during the 1950s was that a 'civic Protestantism' became embedded in Australia's middle class, creating a voting block that was recognized and exploited by the Australian political class. This did not yet translate into substantial growth for evangelical Christianity in Australia but instead served to bolster the mainline denominations that dominated the religious landscape.

The 1950s and 1960s were a period of renewed interest in revival across the international and Australian evangelical Christian landscapes. Billy Graham first visited Australia in 1959, but the Australian religious and popular press discussed his visit for at least five years beforehand (ibid, 62). The Latter Rain preacher Rob Wheeler of Auckland, New Zealand, also visited Australia in 1960 (Austin 2017a, 22). Although these visits did not have an immediate effect on the number of people attending evangelical Christian churches, they had a profound effect on the 'new generation' of Pentecostal leaders, including Andrew Evans, David Cartledge, and Phillip Hills (among others), who would oversee the explosion of AGA membership beginning in the late 1970s and early 1980s (ibid; see also Austin 2017b).

Hillsong rides the 'third wave'

The origins of Hillsong church are usually traced back to 1977.[19] This year marked two occasions that would prove important to Hillsong: First, Brian Houston's father, Frank, planted Sydney Christian Life Centre Sydney

(SCLC) in Doublebay, an eastern suburb of Sydney. Second, Brian and Bobbie Houston were married in 1977, cementing the union that has driven Hillsong for what is, at the time of this writing, 35 years. SCLC would continue to grow over the next decade, eventually establishing a hub in Waterloo that featured a 600-seat auditorium and a Bible and Creative Arts college. Brian served for three years as an assistant pastor in SCLC, before leaving in 1980 to start a church on the central coast, and later one in Liverpool (Hutchinson 2017a, 42). In 1983, Brian and Bobbie opened Hills Christian Life Centre (HCLC), which would become Hillsong Church.

The year 1977 was also a turning point for Australian Pentecostalism, when its 'third wave' broke. This was the year that Andrew Evans was elected president of the AGA— the largest Pentecostal denomination in Australia—at its annual Commonwealth Conference in Melbourne (Austin 2017a, 23). In the following years, Evans transformed the AGA's national and state leadership structure from one that encouraged administrative leadership to one that encouraged growth-oriented, autonomous 'visionary' leadership. The 1977 meeting also led to several other important changes. The 'new' Pentecostal leaders of AGA, notably Andrew Evans in Adelaide, David Cartledge in Townsville, Philip Hills in Melbourne, and Reg Klimionok in Brisbane, embraced the charismatic renewal and pushed for the acceptance of charismatic worship, largely coming out of New Zealand. They also adopted the megachurch model and the cell group system inspired by Yonggi Cho's Yoido Full Gospel Church in South Korea. Cartledge pushed the boundaries of Australian Pentecostal traditionalism even further, making adjustments such as moving the Sunday service time from 11 a.m. to 9 a.m.,[20] relaxing the dress code, de-emphasizing holiness teaching, instituting an alter call, and founding the first independent Pentecostal K-12 schools in Australia (Austin 2017a, 24–25; see also Austin 2017c). Over the next two years, the AGA experienced the highest rate of growth in its history, with a continued trajectory of rapid growth through a major church-planting drive over the next two decades of Evans' tenure as general superintendent.

Elizabeth Miller argues that the success of the AGA's new approach should be understood as an alignment of Australian Pentecostalism with the new neoliberal political economy, which was taking root both in Australia and globally during the late 1970s and early 1980s (Miller 2016, 302). She identifies three shifts in Australian society that help explain this. First, economic changes in the 1980s—what Miller calls the 'greed is good' decade—'made palatable a form of religion arguing that God wanted individual congregants to be successful' (Miller 2015, 39). The rhetoric of neoliberalism espoused by Reagan, Thatcher, and the Australian government ingrained in Australian society the idea that meeting individual needs was the key to the greater good. The primacy of the individual thus ordered social and economic life in both the 'secular' and the 'sacred' realms and found particular resonance with the prosperity gospel, which was prominent in both Australian and

global Pentecostalism. Second, Miller argues that the concept of a 'lifestyle' that emerged in the 1980s—particularly the focus on diet, fitness, and 'wellness'—provided a basis for the resurgence of the belief in divine healing. The articulation of the pursuit of health and well-being to moral virtue resonated particularly with affluent suburban Australians, such as the ones who lived in Baulkham Hills, and would attend the fledgling HCLC (ibid). Finally, Miller suggests that Pentecostals reacting to the feminism of the 1970s sought a 'return to conservative articulations of "the family" as the central social and economic unit of the nation' (ibid, 40).[21] The late 1970s and early 1980s, then, were a time of cultural and political-economic retrenchment following the upheaval in the social order of the previous decades. Australian Pentecostalism's new growth-oriented, individual-focused doctrine was synergetic with the postmodern, neoliberal consumer culture that was developing around it. It also addressed the contradictions and tensions felt by conservative evangelical Christians within a national context of declining religiosity in Australia, changes in (sub)urban geography, and the continuing culture wars in Australia and abroad (Hutchinson 2017a, 40–41). According to the historian of Australian Pentecostalism Mark Hutchinson, the 'post-modern pluralizing "soup"' of the Australian culture wars arouses intense 'passions' from both supporters and critics of Hillsong who frame Hillsong's success as a 'problem' to be explained (Hutchinson 2017a, 41). The ensuing media (and academic) scrutiny has accelerated the church's journey from the fringes of Australian culture to its centre, where it has become an icon of the contradictions, uncertainties, and passions of a fragmented society. It is to this iconicity, and its role in mediating cultural tensions, that we now turn.

Hillsong as an iconic brand

In consumer culture, brands such as Coca-Cola, Disney, and Nike have attained the status of *iconic brands* (Holt 2004). They have done so by crafting compelling identity myths that consumers use to address identity desires and anxieties caused by tensions within society (ibid, 2–6). Hillsong Church is also an iconic brand. Much of Hillsong's success over the past 30 years is due to Brian Houston's ability to read the cultural flows of the moment (Hutchinson 2017a) and craft an identity myth that helps evangelical Christians find their place in a society they are 'in' but do not necessarily feel wholly part 'of' (see also Chapter 3).

Holt writes that brand identity myths are stories performed primarily through mass-mediated advertising (ibid, 7). As the brand performs its myth over time, its audience begins to perceive that the myth resides in markers such as the brand's logo, people, and products. Consumers use these markers to experience and share iconic brands through ritual action and, in doing so, forge emotional bonds to the brand and with each other (ibid, 8–9). Ritual action is central to the ways that Hillsong's stakeholders experience and share their church's brand. This includes 'sacred' corporate rituals such as worship services and conferences (Chapter 4), but

also 'mundane', everyday rituals and routines, such as preparing for work, through which an individual Christian lifestyle is maintained (Chapter 6).

Holt suggests that identity myths are 'usually set in populist worlds' (ibid, 9; original emphasis). For Holt, populist worlds are:

> Places separated not only from everyday life but also from the realms of commerce and elite control. The people living in populist worlds share a distinctive ethos that provides intrinsic motivation for their actions. Often populist worlds exist at the margins of society. But what unites people in a populist world is that they act the way they do because they want to, not because they are being paid or because they seek status or power.
>
> (ibid)

Hillsong's stakeholders do not necessarily live at the margins of society, but they are part of a subculture with a distinctive ethos, set of motivations, and values. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, this is articulated through the Protestant dilemma of living 'in, but not of', the world, and Chapter 4 will discuss Hillsong's populist world as imagined and imaginary communities articulated through the idea of a global 'Body of Christ'.

Holt identifies a further three features of iconic brands: first, they work as cultural activists, encouraging people to think differently about themselves and addressing 'the leading edges of cultural change'. An example of this is Nike's 2018 advertising campaign that featured Colin Kaepernick, the NFL quarterback who became a cultural icon by kneeling during the national anthem to protest police brutality and racism in the United States. By featuring Kaepernick, Nike inserted itself into long-simmering tensions between the African American community and law enforcement and resurgent white nationalism encouraged by the election of Donald Trump as president, and it aligned its brand with the #blacklivesmatter movement and the progressive values of its stakeholders. Hillsong's mission statement also clearly positions the church as a (sub)cultural activist. In Hillsong's case, it aligns its brand with evangelical Christian values, seeking to 'reach and influence the world by building a large Christ-centered, Bible-based church, changing mindsets and empowering people to lead and impact in every sphere of life'[22]. Second, Holt suggests that, although consistent communication is key to maintaining the integrity of a brand, it is 'a handful of great performances' that capture the collective imaginations of stakeholders (ibid, 10). Hillsong consistently produces hit worship music, but it has also released a handful of massively influential songs that are now central repertoire in the new evangelical Christian worship music cannon. The most important of these is Darlene Zscech's 'Shout to the Lord'. As will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, 'Shout to the Lord' introduced Hillsong to the world stage and cemented its reputation as perhaps the single biggest influence on Christian worship music and culture since the 1990s. Finally, Holt identifies a 'cultural halo effect' of iconic brands through which the myth enhances other aspects of the brand, such as its quality reputation,

distinctive benefits, and status value (ibid). Holt gives as an example Budweiser's 'Lizards' advertising campaign in the 1990s, which invented a new 'slacker' myth that spoke to men who had become cynical of the idea that their manhood was tied to a hard day's work (ibid, 106–109). According to Holt, those who bought into the myth 'reported the beer tasted much better' (ibid, 10). The final chapter of this book suggests that Hillsong's brand myth acts in much the same way: as an affect-inducing medium, it intensifies (or in brand-speak, 'adds value') the embodied worship experience, which in turn adds value to the brand as an anointed 'resource' for worship, creating a feedback loop that reinforces the 'power' of Hillsong's brand (see also Wagner 2017).

Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to introduce brands and branding and to open up questions about the relationship between music, markets, political economy, and forms of religious organization and communication. The attention paid to brands and branding highlighted some of the transformations in the forms, times, and spaces of consumer and religious culture that inform the New Paradigm. Brands and branding are the vernacular of consumer culture, so it is no surprise that branding is a powerful communication device for a vernacular religion such as Pentecostalism. Perhaps the most important aspect of this is that brands and evangelical Christian practice both rely on *affect* and *experience* as ways of embodying knowledge and identity. The iconicity of Hillsong's brand performs an identity-grounding function by addressing the cultural contradictions that stakeholders experience in their daily lives. The next chapter further discusses how Hillsong's brand organizes its stakeholders' experiences by weaving music, design, and message into an all-encompassing environment—a *brandscape*.

Notes

1 Participants in the branding process are often referred to in the branding literature as 'stakeholders'. In this book I use the term 'participants' when seeking to emphasize the active components of brands and branding and 'stakeholders' when emphasizing affective components.
2 Google Finance search, December 14, 2018.
3 The idea of 'corporate personhood' has its roots in nineteenth-century legal precedents that granted corporations, as collectives of people, certain legal rights under the Fourteenth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution (Johnson 2011). It is related to, but distinct from, the idea of 'corporate identity', which developed in the later part of the twentieth century and grafts 'human traits' onto corporate entities (c.f. Fournier 1998; Aaker et al. 2004).
4 Anna Klingmann analyses the branded airline as a combination of design ('hardware'), entertainment ('software'), and service ('humanware'). She sees these elements as the three parts through which the aircraft delivers a holistic experience of an airline's brand personality (Klingmann 2007, 23). Note the integration (although 'conflation' may be a better term) of machine and employee as branded material.

5 See also William, 2012.
6 Disney has perhaps gone further than any other company in attempting to infuse its brand into everyday life: it has its own branded town, the master-planned community of Celebration, Florida (Frantz and Collins 2000).
7 Broadly speaking, Taylorism is the 'top-down' management theory that seeks to improve productivity through the implementation of 'Scientific Management'. It is often associated with Fordism, the economic and social system that is itself associated with industrialization and mass-production. In contrast, post-Fordism is associated with flexible labour, small production runs, and the 'personalization' of commodities. The Marxist perspective sees both Fordism and post-Fordism as capital's means of control. The difference is that while the former tells the worker 'You must!', the latter tells the consumer 'You may!' (Arvidsson 2006, 8).
8 Culture jamming is the anti-consumerist practice of altering or parodying adverts of major corporations to make ironic comments on those products and, by extension, capitalism in general (Klein [2000] 2010: 279–309). However, as Heath and Potter (2006) point out in their discussions of Klein and the culture jamming publication *AdBusters*, culture jamming is at best ineffectual entertainment and at worst perpetuates the consumerism that it purports to critique.
9 The use of the term 'distinction' here will probably remind the reader of Pierre Bourdieu's *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* ([1984] 2010). There are parallels. For example, Burberry's problems balancing between popularity and exclusivity (Heath and Potter 2006, 127–29) very much reflect Bourdieu's analysis of taste and class. While taste in music certainly comes into play in this book, in several places I argue that the brand hegemony and the discourses of 'unity' that shape it overrides, tempers, or changes taste rather than reproduces it (see Chapters 4 and 6).
10 I will use the term 'Christian Popular Music' because it most accurately describes the contentious interplay between ethical and economic value that is at the heart of the development of the Christian lifestyle. Ingalls et al. (2013) define CPM as:

> … a sonically diverse umbrella category of late twentieth and early twenty-first century commercial popular music. CPM is characterized by Christian lyrics or themes, created by artists whose self-identification as Christian is central to their public persona, mediated by self-identified Christian companies (i.e. magazines, publishing firms, radio stations, and record labels that promote Christian values), and listened to and purchased by a primarily self-identified Christian audience. In many cases, 'Christian' is used as a descriptive adjective to refer to specific genres of this music, such as Christian rock or Christian metal, that fall into the broad class of Christian popular music. Other industrial terms for this music that may be used outside of the US include 'inspirational' and 'gospel'…. Within the category of Christian popular music thus defined, several distinct subcategories based on musical genre, industrial context, or function have emerged, including Jesus Music, Contemporary Christian Music (CCM), Praise & Worship music, and Christian Rock.

Importantly, what defines the genres incorporated under the CPM rubric is intention. For example, some music may be written to facilitate congregational singing, while other music may be written for devotional listening. Furthermore, as Ingalls et al. note, although they may be created with specific intentions, CPM songs often slip between categories as a result of their commodity status. Because the mechanisms of production and distribution are often the same for different categories of CPM music, and also because commercial profitability and popularity often go hand in hand, CPM is often ground zero for

discourses over intention that characterized the 'Worship Wars' (see Howard and Streck 1999; Nekola 2009; Mall 2012).

11 While there has long been a diverse range of other religions/sects in such countries that were not supported by the state, the lack of a free market meant that they were consigned to the 'fringe'. Only in a free market could the 'fringe' have access to, and thus become, 'mainstream' (Stark and Finke 2000, 199–209 and 228–42).

12 While the religious market functioned differently in Britain, evangelical faiths such as the Methodists and Quakers were far from stagnant in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Indeed, the Quakers might be seen as the first great branders: devout Quakers the Cadburys created the village and community of Bourneville, Birmingham, which reflected a kind of utopia based on their brand values (Dawson 2009).

13 Finke and Stark go on to note that 'It is not only content that is involved here, but the style of delivery—Marshall McLuhan might have suggested that in some ways the minister was the message' (Finke and Stark 2005, 86).

14 Like Hillsong Music, both Vineyard and Maranatha! began as in-house publishing operations. Vineyard began as Mercy Records at Vineyard Church in 1985 and Maranatha! produced its first records at Calvary Chapel in 1971.

15 For an excellent history of the 'Worship Wars' that shaped evangelical worship during the second half of the twentieth century, see Nekola (2009).

16 In the Seeker Church view, a denominational marker may keep a seeker from exploring a new church because, as a mark of identity, it denotes insider/outsider status. Therefore, many of these churches eschew the marker while remaining true to many of the beliefs and practices.

17 https://globalleadership.org/. Accessed December 14, 2018.

18 Other U.S. notables include: Rick Warren's Saddleback Church in Orange County, CA, Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston, TX, and T. D. Jakes' The Potter's House in Dallas, TX (Jakes also runs the for-profit production company TDJ Enterprises). Outside the U.S., Joseph Prince's New Creation Church in Singapore and Ulf Ekman's Word Of Life Church in Uppsala, Sweden are prominent international examples of the 'New Paradigm' of evangelical Christianity.

19 Although 1977 was a benchmark year for Hillsong, Denise Austin notes that much of Brian Houston's style and theology reflects his formative years in New Zealand and the Latter Rain movement (Denise Austin, personal communication, April 8, 2019).

20 Although it might at first seem counterintuitive that an earlier starting time would attract more people to services, many churches in the 1980s did not have air-conditioning, which meant that in the summer months the heat would already have been oppressive by 11am (Denise Austin, personal communication, April 2, 2019).

21 While Pentecostalism encourages women to attain education, a career, and act as church pastors and planters, this is framed by an ideal of femininity articulated to a 'nurturing' role as wives and mothers (cf. Maddox 2013; Miller 2016; Austin 2017a; Riches 2017).

22 https://hillsong.com/vision/. Accessed April 3, 2019.

References

Aaker, Jennifer, Susan Fournier, and S. Adam Brasel. 2004. 'When Good Brands Do Bad'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (1): 1–16.

Anderson, Allan. 2007. *Spreading Fires: The Missionary Nature of Early Pentecostalism*. London: SCM Press.

Arvidsson, Adam. 2006. *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Austin, Denise A. 2017a. '"Flowing Together": The Origins and Early Development of Hillsong Church within Assemblies of God in Australia'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 21–37. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Austin, Denise. 2017b. *Jesus First: The Life and Leadership of Andrew Evans*. Sydney: Australasian Pentecostal Studies.

Austin, Denise. 2017c. 'A Contagious Church: Theological Influences of Pentecostalism in Sydney, 1916–2016'. *St Mark's Review* 242: 114–32.

Austin, Denise A. and Clifton, Shane. 2019. 'Australian Pentecostalism: From Marginalised to Megachurches'. In *Asia Pacific Pentecostalism*, edited by Denise A. Austin, Jacqueline Grey, and Paul W. Lewis, 372–99. Leiden: Brill.

Bourdieu, Pierre. [1984] 2010. *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*. London: Routledge.

Bowers, Simon. 2013. 'Costa Breaks through £1bn Sales Mark as Tax Anger Leaves Starbucks Suffering.' *The Guardian*, April 30, 2013. www.theguardian.com/business/2013/apr/30/costa-coffee-sales-tax-starbucks.

Carah, Nicholas. 2010. *Pop Brands: Branding, Popular Music, and Young People*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Castells, Manuel. 2010. *The Information Age: Economy, Society and Culture*. Oxford, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Chant, Barry. 2011. *The Spirit of Pentecost: The Origins and Development of the Pentecostal Movement in Australia 1870–1939*. Lexington, KY: Emeth Press.

Chidester, David. 2005. *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Coleman, Simon. 2000. *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Cooke, Phil. 2008. *Branding Faith: Why Some Churches and Nonprofits Impact Culture and Others Don't*. Ventura, CA: Regal.

Cox, Harvey G. 1995. *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books.

Dawson, Katie. 2009. 'Cadbury: The Factory in the Garden.' *BBC News*, December 14, 2009. http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/england/8411696.stm.

Duncan, Philip B. 1947. *Pentecost in Australia*. Sydney: Assemblies of God in Australia.

Einstein, Mara. 2008. *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*. London: Routledge.

Einstein, Mara. 2011. 'The Evolution of Religious Branding'. *Social Compass* 58 (3): 331–38.

Eskridge, Larry. 1998. '"One Way": Billy Graham, the Jesus Generation, and the Idea of an Evangelical Youth Culture'. *Studies in Christianity and Culture* 67 (1): 83–106.

Finke, Roger, and Rodney Stark. 2005. *The Churching of America, 1776–2005: Winners and Losers in Our Religious Economy*. Revised edition. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Finney, Charles Grandison. [1835] 1960. *Lectures on Revivals of Religion*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Fournier, Susan. 'Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 24 (4): 343–53.

Frantz, Douglas, and Catherine Collins. 2000. *Celebration, U.S.A: Living in Disney's Brave New Town*. New York: Owl Books.

Gandini, Alessandro. 'Digital Work: Self-Branding and Social Capital in the Freelance Knowledge Economy'. *Marketing Theory* 16 (1): 123–41.

Gauthier, François, and Tuomas Martikainen, eds. 2013. *Religion in Consumer Society: Brands, Consumers, and Markets*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Gottdiener, M. 1998. 'The Semiotics of Consumer Spaces: The Growing Importance of Themed Environments'. In *Servicescapes: The Concept of Place in Contemporary Markets*, edited by John F. Sherry, Jr., 29–54. Chicago: NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group.

Hankins, Barry. 2004. *The Second Great Awakening and the Transcendentalists*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Hart, Susannah. 1998. 'The Future for Brands'. In *Brands: The New Wealth Creators*, edited by Sussanah Hart and John Murphy, 206–14. New York: Palgrave.

Heath, Joseph, and Andrew, Potter. 2006. *The Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can't Be Jammed*. Ontario, Canada: HarperPerennial.

Henrion, F.H.K., and A. Parkin. 1967. *Design Coordination and Public Image*. London: Studio Vista.

Holt, Douglas B. 2004. *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Howard, Jay R., and John M. Streck. 1999. *Apostles of Rock: The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

Hutchinson, Mark. 2017a. '"Up the Windsor Road": Social Complexity, Geographies of Emotion, and the Rise of Hillsong'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, Edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 39–61. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Hutchinson, Mark. 2017b. 'Australasian Charismatic Movements and the "New Reformation of the 20th century?"' *Australasian Pentecostal Studies* 19: 24–53.

Ingalls, Monique M., Anna E. Nekola, and Andrew Mall. 2013. 'Christian Popular Music'. In *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*, edited by J.R. Watson and Emma Hornby. Available online at www.hymnology.co.uk.

Interbrand. 2018. 'Best Global Brands 2018'. Accessed December 10, 2018. www.interbrand.com/best-brands/best-global-brands/2018/ranking/.

Jameson, Fredric. 1992. *Postmodernism: Or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. New York: Verso Books.

Johnson, Lyman. 2011. 'Law and Legal Theory in the History of Corporate Responsibility: Corporate Personhood'. *Seattle University Law Review* 35: 1135–64.

Klein, Naomi. [2000] 2010. *No Logo*. 10th anniversary edition. London: Fourth Estate.

Klingmann, Anna. 2007. *Brandscapes*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lair, Daniel J., Katie Sullivan, and George Cheney. 2005. 'Marketization and the Recasting of the Professional Self: The Rhetoric and Ethics of Personal Branding'. *Management Communication Quarterly* 18 (3): 307–43.

Lambert, Frank. 1999. *Inventing the 'Great Awakening'*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Lindstrom, Martin. 2005. *Brand Sense: How to Build Powerful Brands through Touch, Taste, Smell, Sight and Sound*. London: Kogan Page.

Lury, Celia. 2004. *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*. New York: Routledge.

Lury, Celia. 2011. *Consumer Culture*. Second edition. Cambridge, UK: Polity.

Maddox, Marion. 2013. '"Rise Up Warrior Princess Daughters": Is Evangelical Women's Submission a Mere Fairy Tale?' *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29 (1): 9–26.

Mall, Andrew. 2012. '"The Stars Are Underground": Undergrounds, Mainstreams, and Christian Popular Music'. Diss. University of Chicago.

McGee, Gary B. 2007. 'William J. Seymour and the Azusa Street Revival'. *Enrichment Journal: A Journal for Pentecostal Ministry*, May 19, 2007. http://web.archive.org/web/20070519213536/http://www.ag.org/enrichmentjournal/199904/026_azusa.cfm.

Miller, Elizabeth. 2015. 'A Planting of the Lord: Contemporary Pentecostal and Charismatic Christianity in Australia'. Diss. University of Sydney.

Miller, Elizabeth. 2016. 'Hillsong: Australia's Megachurch'. In *Handbook of Global Contemporary Christianity*, edited by Stephen J. Hunt, 297–316. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill.

Mollerup, Per. 1997. *Marks of Excellence: History and Taxonomy of Trademarks*. London: Phaidon Press Ltd.

Moor, Liz. 2007. *The Rise of Brands*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.

Muñiz Jr., Albert M., and Thomas C. O'Guinn. 2001. 'Brand Community'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 27 (4): 412–32.

Muñiz Jr., Albert M. and Hope Jensen Schau. 2005. 'Religiosity in the Abandoned Apple Newton Brand Community'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (4): 737–47.

Murphy, John. 1998. 'What Is Branding?' In *Brands: The New Wealth Creators*, edited by Susannah Hart and John Murphy, 1–11. New York: Palgrave.

Nekola, Anna. 2009. 'From This World to the Next: The Musical "Worship Wars" and Evangelical Ideology in the United States, 1960–2005'. Diss. University of Madison-Wisconsin.

Olins, Wally. 1978. *The Corporate Personality: An Inquiry into the Nature of Corporate Identity*. London: Design Council.

Olins, Wally. 2003. *On Brand*. London: Thames & Hudson.

Patterson, Orlando. 1982. *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study*. Boston, MA: Harvard University Press.

Pavitt, Jane. 2000. *Brand.New*. London: V & A Publications.

Piggin, Stuart. 1988. 'Towards a Bicentennial History of Australian Evangelicalism'. *Journal of Religious History*15 (1): 20–36.

Pilditch, James. 1970. *Communication by Design: A Study in Corporate Identity*. New York: McGraw-Hill.

Pine, B. Joseph II, and James H. Gilmore. 2011. *The Experience Economy, Updated Edition*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Power, Rachel. 2004. 'The Rise and Rise of the Pentecostals'. *Arena Magazine* 74: 27–30.

Pratt, Andy C. 2011. 'The Cultural Contradictions of the Creative City'. *City, Culture and Society* 2 (3): 123–30.

Riches, Tanya. 2017. 'The Sisterhood: Hillsong in a Feminine Key'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner 85–105. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ritzer, George, and Nathan Jurgenson. 2010. 'Production, Consumption, Prosumption: The Nature of Capitalism in the Age of the Digital "Prosumer"'. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 10 (1): 13–36.

Roof, Wade Clark. 1999. *Spiritual Marketplace: Baby Boomers and the Remaking of American Religion*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Room, Adrian. 1998. 'History of Branding' In *Brands: The New Wealth Creators*, edited by Sussanah Hart and John Murphy, 13–23. New York: Palgrave.

Sargeant, Kimon Howland. 2000. *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Saul, Heather. 2013. 'Starbucks Pays Corporation Tax, Promising the Exchequer £20m over Two Years', *The Independent*, June 23, 2013. www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/starbucks-pays-corporation-tax-promising-the-exchequer-20m-over-two-years-8669972.html.

Sherry, John F. Jr. 1998. 'The Soul of the Company Store: Nike Town Chicago and the Emplaced Brandscape.' In *Servicescapes: The Concept of Place in Contemporary Markets*, edited by John F. Sherry, Jr., 109–146. Chicago: NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group.

Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Stark, Rodney, and William Sims Bainbridge. 1986. *The Future of Religion: Secularization, Revival and Cult Formation*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Thompson, Craig J., and Zeynep Arsel. 2004. 'The Starbucks Brandscape and Consumers' (Anticorporate) Experiences of Glocalization'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (3): 631–42.

Tye, Larry. 2002. *The Father of Spin: Edward L. Bernays & the Birth of Public Relations*. New York: Henry Holt.

Rius Ulldemolins, Joaquim, and Mariano Martín Zamorano. 2015. 'Spain's Nation Branding Project Marca España and Its Cultural Policy: The Economic and Political Instrumentalization of a Homogeneous and Simplified Cultural Image'. *International Journal of Cultural Policy* 21 (1): 20–40.

Wagner, Tom 2014a. 'Branding, Music, and Religion: Standardization and Adaptation in the Experience of the "Hillsong Sound"'. In *Religion as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Jean-Claude Usunier and Jörg Stolz, 59–73. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Wagner, Tom. 2014b. 'Music, Branding and the Hegemonic Prosumption of Values of an Evangelical Growth Church'. In *Religion in Times of Crisis*, edited by Gladys Ganiel, Heidemarie Winkel, and Christophe Monnot, 11–32. Leiden, NL: Brill.

Wagner, Tom. 2017. 'The "Powerful" Hillsong Brand'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 253–69. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Webster, Frank. 2006. *Theories of the Information Society*. London; New York: Routledge.

William, Robin. 2012. 'Getting Employees to Act on Your Brand Promise'. *Gallup Business Journal*. Accessed March 13, 2019. http://businessjournal.gallup.com/content/159425/getting-employees-act-brand-promise.aspx#1.

Young, Lawrence A. 1997. *Rational Choice Theory and Religion: Summary and Assessment*. London: Routledge.

2 Hillsong Church
A musical brandscape

Introduction

The previous chapter outlined the social functions of brands as well as Hillsong's cultural and political-economic contexts. This chapter looks more closely at some of the ways the church and its brand are organized, and how this in turn organizes the experience of its stakeholders. The first section posits Hillsong's brand as a *brandscape*. Brandscapes are environments that organize consumer action and, therefore, affect the interpretation and experience of the brand. They do this by leveraging the concamitant relationship between the symbolic and sensorial aspects of the brand. Some important 'touchpoints' that comprise Hillsong's brandscape are its physical places, internet spaces, products, and people. The second section describes how another important touchpoint, Hillsong's music, has evolved along with the church as its congregation has transformed from a small Australian gathering into a transnational enterprise. The final section describes Hillsong as a music-led brand and demonstrates how the production of its music affects the production of its liturgy and vice-versa.

Part I – Hillsong's brandscape

Hillsong Church

Head Pastors Brian and Bobbie Houston founded Hillsong Church in 1983 as the Hills Christian Life Centre. The initial congregation of 45 met in a rented school hall in the Baulkham Hills district, a suburb of Sydney, Australia. By 2017, around 40,000 worshippers a week attended services at its purpose-built 3,500-seat flagship church (which is located in Baulkham Hills) and 29 other locations across Australia's Eastern seaboard (Hillsong Church 2018). Outside of Australia, an estimated 90,000 more attended Hillsong-branded churches in 21 countries across six continents, many of which are located in major cosmopolitan cities such as London, Kiev, Cape Town, Stockholm, Paris, Moscow, Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Barcelona, and New York City (Hillsong Fact Sheet 2018). The church also hosts three

annual conferences: the Hillsong Conference and Colour (its women's conference), which are held in multiple locations across Australia, Europe, and North America, attract a combined audience of 48,800 (ibid). The Worship & Creative conference, which was added in 2017, drew 6,000 attendees to Sydney in its first iteration. Hillsong also runs Hillsong College, with campuses in Sydney, Australia, and Phoenix, Arizona, through which students can earn vocational, undergraduate, and postgraduate diplomas and degrees in subjects such as ministry and theology.[1]

Hillsong's beliefs and practices are rooted in Pentecostalism, but Hillsong does not officially align with a specific tradition or denomination (McIntyre 2007, 176).[2] This is standard practice for most 'seeker' churches (Sargeant 2000). In this respect, then, Hillsong Church can be classified under the broader categories of 'evangelical Christian' and 'New Paradigm'.

Like most megachurches, Hillsong is registered as a not-for-profit organization. The Board of Directors is responsible for legal compliance, financial assurance, and risk oversight in accordance with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission governance standards.[3] Senior Pastor Brian Houston is the head the Board of Elders and also the Global Board of Directors, a group that includes the lead pastors of its London, South Africa, and Los Angeles churches, as well as lay members with considerable business acumen such as General Manager George Aghajanian (who has a background in senior management for Australian and international companies), Nabi Saleh (CEO of Gloria Jean's Coffee), and Lalitha Stables (Head of Sales for Google UK).[4]

A general picture of the church's finances can be constructed from its annual report.[5] Its 2017 Annual Report listed revenues of AUS$109.5 million (Hillsong Church 2018, 80). Income is generated from donations (its members are encouraged to tithe);[6] ticketed events such as conferences; and numerous products, including CDs, DVDs, MP3s, books, and clothing. It holds trademarks that cover everything from its logo to its social services.[7]

Worship services at Hillsong are emotional, energetic, and standardized across all of its churches (Wagner 2014a). The 'Hillsong Experience' begins outside of the worship venue, which at most locations outside of Australia is a rented theatre or similar space that is equipped to support the performative aspects of the service. Often—and especially during special events such as holiday specials or album recordings—participants will wait in a queue that stretches around the block while the previous service disperses.[8] Participants are met at the door by a smiling volunteer who extends a 'Welcome to Church!' greeting, and then by banners in the lobby emblazoned with images of church members or the worship team in action. From there, participants are directed towards the worship space, where they are met by another set of volunteers, who direct them to empty seats. Before the service starts, recorded ambient pop music fills the auditorium, and the LED screen at the back of the stage projects the Hillsong logo along with the church's tagline, 'Welcome Home', and pictorial montages of local

church members and iconic buildings and locations relevant to that particular venue. At the scheduled start time, the stage darkens. The worship band enters, silhouetted against the LED screen, flashing lights, and dry ice, and begin to play the first song as their sound is seamlessly crossfaded with the recorded music. The band usually plays four songs—two upbeat 'praise' numbers followed by two slower 'worship' songs—the lyrics of which are projected on the screen. This is followed by live and pre-recorded video announcements of things going on 'in the life of the church', before a fifth upbeat number leads into the main portion of the service, which includes the preaching and the collection of tithes and offerings. The service ends with an alter call and an upbeat 'kickout' song.

The description above presents Hillsong's music as part of a multimedia, multisensory, and meaning-full experience. The tempo and volume of the music, the flashing lights, the dry ice, and the projected lyrics are all designed to envelop and entrain the participant with the goal of facilitating a transcendent experience of God. The worship service is the focal point of this experience, situated at a particular time and in a particular place. But the meaning-fullness of it is rooted in Hillsong's wider media ecology—its brandscape—to which we now turn.

An experiential brandscape

In the study of consumer behaviour, a brandscape is understood as 'consumers' active constructions of personal meanings and lifestyle orientations from the symbolic resources provided by an array of brands' (Thompson and Arsel 2004, 632). As noted in the previous chapter, Nike is one of the standard-bearers of consumer experience. John Sherry, Jr.'s (1998) ethnographic study of the experience of the company's flagship Nike Town store in Chicago provides a phenomenological account of a brandscape in action. On each of the store's three floors, consumers are invited to interact with, experience, and ultimately embody Nike's iconic brand mythology. Like the experience of Hillsong's participants, who often queue on the busy sidewalks outside venues in cosmopolitan city centres before the service, the Nike Town begins outside the store, which is strategically located on the celebrated stretch of North Michigan Avenue known as 'the Magnificent Mile'. As consumers enter the vestibule, they are greeted with a banner that proclaims 'There Is No Finish Line', surrounded by framed images of Nike's celebrity athletes. As they ascend the three levels of the store, they encounter opportunities to interact with the brand through, for example, interacting with store employees, sitting on benches built to resemble the air-support technology that give both athletes and the company a competitive advantage, or by testing custom-made shoes out on the half-court basketball court on the second floor. When consumers finally reach the third floor, they are treated to an aerial view of the city, accompanied by a birdsong soundscape, before entering what Sherry describes as the 'shrine to the

Jump Man': the Air Jordan Pavilion and a ceiling display of the solar system composed of orbiting planets made out of Nike-branded sports balls (128).

Through design and dramaturgy, Nike makes its brand essence tangible. The combination of the verticality of the ascent through the building and the nods to both cosmology and technology afford a quasi-religious experience and suggests transcendence (of gravity, at least) (ibid, 129). But this transcendent potential is only available because consumers are already aware of the cultural meanings that have been embedded in the iconic 'swoosh' logo through years of integrated marketing communications (ibid, 116). A similar dynamic is at play in Hillsong worship services, where the logic of the performance space and the spectacle of the performance of worship afford affective experiences of 'greatness' that participants recognize and embody (Goh 2008). Unlike the Nike Experience, though, the Hillsong Experience is not quasi-religious or sacralized; it is a sacred experience in which it is not gravity but 'the world' that is transcended.

Sherry's ethnography highlights the ways brandscapes organize and enable the consumption experience. Participants are ostensibly consuming Nike's branded material such as videos and shoes within a store, but what they are ultimately consuming is the brand itself and, furthermore, the frame of their consumption activities is not just the physical space but also the brand. In other words, Nike's brandscape is an ideological space that simultaneously *mediates* consumption and is *mediated* by it. Viewing the brandscape as a 'media environment' helps clarify the dynamics of this.

A media ecological view of Hillsong's brandscape

Media ecology views *media as environments* and also *environments as media* (Lum 2006, 31). It furthermore considers environments to be concomitantly symbolic and sensorial. Media ecology is therefore a useful way to approach the dually media(ted) nature of Hillsong's brand because it takes a holistic view of the relationship between media, marketing, and experience.[9] Viewed as a symbolic environment, every medium (and brand) is 'systemically constituted by a unique set of codes and syntax' (ibid, 29). For example, the use of English as a communication medium requires an understanding of (and facility with) its vocabulary (i.e., its symbols and their assigned meanings) as well as its grammar (i.e., its syntax and rules that govern the construction of meaning) (ibid). Similarly, the way Hillsong's brand is 'understood' requires familiarity with the cultural codes that give it meaning in a given context. For example, the various components of Hillsong's worship service include recognizable language (Ingold 2014), technology (Klaver 2015), people (Evans 2017), music (Riches 2010; Riches and Wagner 2012), and even the venue itself (Goh 2008). Each component 'speaks' to worshippers, yet what is 'heard' is complicated for at least two reasons: first, because communication is culturally coded and intertextual (Kahn-Harris and Moberg 2012); and second, because no medium

is value-neutral. This can be seen, for example, in the ways Hillsong's theology affects how different worshippers and churches choose to use—or choose not to use—Hillsong's music in relation to their own theologies.[10] Similarly, technologies are never value-neutral, so religious actors will—or will not—use them to achieve ends that are compatible with their idiosyncratic worldviews (Campbell 2010). Thus, Hillsong's brand of worship, which operationalizes the cultural codes, communicative techniques, and technologies of both evangelical Christian culture and consumer culture, is hotly contested according to different sets of values, ethics, and theologies.

Media acts on—and to some extent shapes—our sensorial apparatuses. Viewing media (and brands) as sensorial environments therefore foregrounds their physiological-perceptual effects (Lum 2006, 28–9). We experience ourselves relative to the constant flow of information from our external world and our internal states. According to Marshall McLuhan ([1964] 2001), every medium engages the user's senses differently and thus embodies a unique set of sensory characteristics. For example, reading primarily engages the visual apparatus, while listening to the radio primarily engages auditory capabilities. McLuhan's student, Walter Ong (2012), suggested that a society's dominant communication medium determines which of its peoples' senses are most acute and that this has far-reaching cultural implications because it influences the way people comprehend the world around them. Thus, media as sensorial environments influence the ways in which we experience the world and ourselves. This has profound implications for the experience of Hillsong's brand, which is an affective, associational gestalt that is not only mediated (i.e., comprised of and delivered through different media) but is also a medium in and of itself. This branded symbolic/sensorial environment is a powerful context for the affect-encouraging practices that Hillsong engages in during its worship services.

Hillsong's ecosystem of branded media affords participants different, mutually informing ways of knowing (Wagner 2014a). As with the worship services described above, components of this ecosystem include not only old and new communication technologies but also commodities, people, places (both physical and virtual), and institutions that are engaged with by different people, in different contexts, for different reasons. For example, Hillsong communicates to those who participate in its services through print media, such as the seat drops, and to the larger Christian community through books by Brian and Bobbie Houston and articles in its lifestyle magazine *Relevant*. Demographically targeted CDs, DVDs, and MP3s circulate both sonic and visual tropes that are repeated, recombined, and elaborated as elements of worship services and conferences. Hillsong's pastors and worship leaders are also important parts of its message: they function as both local ministers and mediated celebrities, whose images and personalities are co-branded with the church (Wagner 2014b). Additionally, Hillsong maintains a network of institutions, including name-brand churches in major cities around the world, its 'family' of affiliated churches, and

Hillsong College. Finally, an important part of Hillsong's brandscape is its online infrastructure of both official and unofficial websites and social media. These platforms are connected by mutually reinforcing sonic, textual, or visual references. The following discusses some of the physical places, media spaces, products, and people that constitute Hillsong's brandscape.

Physical spaces

Physical places are the foundation of Hillsong's brandscape. They are where stakeholders meet, interact, and worship. Hillsong's portfolio of physical places radiates outward from its flagship Hillsong Convention Centre in Castle Hill, New South Wales. As of 2017, Hillsong also owns or operates churches in 29 other locations across the Australia and Bali, which hosted a combined 82 services a week for around 40,000 attendees (Hillsong Church 2018, 10). At each location, a local pastor oversees the day-to-day operations. Services at some locations are catered to Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD), such as those with Spanish-, Cantonese-, or Mandarin-speaking backgrounds. Translation services are also available in 20 languages. Outside of Australia, Hillsong operates churches in major cosmopolitan city centres, such as London, Kiev, New York, and Sao Paulo. These centres act as regional hubs, around which satellite churches and services are established. For example, Hillsong's London church on Tottenham Court Road is the centre of its UK activities, which as of the time of this writing have expanded to 10 locations, including Oxford, Newcastle, Liverpool, and Edinburgh.[11]

Hillsong's main venues are purpose-built performance venues. For example, the Hillsong Convention Centre features stadium seating, a retractable baptismal pool, and can be converted to host rock concerts. Hillsong London and New York hold services in venues built for West End and Broadway theatre performances. Similarly, Hillsong's conferences are held in large convention centres, such as the O2 Arena in London, and Hillsong United regularly tours stadiums, such as the Staples Center in Los Angeles. These venues all are equipped with the stadium seating, giant LED screens, professional rigging, lighting, and sound equipment necessary for the multimediated, multisensory experience of Hillsong-style worship.

Robbie Goh theorizes the 'mixed use' venues that Hillsong uses as spaces that afford the 'performance of the mega'. For Goh, megachurches are not defined by the number of attendees, theological orientation, or organizational structure. Rather, megachurches can be recognized by the ways the semiotics of liturgy and the logic of the performance space combine during the worship service to afford an affective experience of 'greatness' that participants recognize and embody. Hillsong's Baulkham Hills and Waterloo sites, for example, are 'studiedly functional and almost plain in terms of their architecture, façade, and external and internal fittings', with very few displays of Christian imagery (Goh 2008, 292). In place of the traditional trappings of religion, these spaces are almost 'entirely filled up' with sound, images, equipment,

church personnel, and the congregation itself (ibid). The lack of physical signs of Christianity, combined with a preponderance of media, directs the embodiment of meaning from the physical space to the individual worshipper, and this is the foundation and goal of the New Paradigm experience.

As noted above, Hillsong's expansion strategy involves 'planting' churches in major cosmopolitan cities, which act as hubs, around which smaller services in outlying areas cluster. High-speed internet connections allow sections of the hub's service—usually the sermon—to be broadcast in real time or recorded and replayed at services later in the day to churches throughout the regional network. For example, Hillsong London's 'hub' in the Dominion Theatre (at the time of this writing) broadcasts portions of its services to 11 other locations around London and across the UK, and also to Milan. By reproducing the same 'sermonic event' (Klaver 2015) in multiple locations, Hillsong ensures the consistency of its message, an important consideration for a global religious brand (Wagner 2014a). In Australia, a rural variation on this was introduced in 2017. Called 'Church of the Air' (ChAir), the initiative is designed to connect homes in remote rural Australian communities to Hillsong's weekend services. After completing a short self-assessment and signing a standard licencing agreement, hosts gain online access to weekly services and events, as well as social media groups and dedicated volunteers, which they use to lead small group meetings.[12]

Hillsong's 'performance of the mega' attracts the majority of academic and popular press attention, but the Church of the Air initiative is an example of Hillsong's focus on 'making church small', something that is equally important to the maintenance and growth of its brand community. Indeed, an often-overlooked component of Hillsong's brandscape is the network of small public and private venues in which Hillsong's participants meet outside of the worship service. Hillsong is aware of the limitations of large corporate worship, which may obscure the personal connections that underpin stakeholders' strong emotional attachments to the church community and its brand. It therefore encourages participants to meet outside of church services. For example, after each service, people who have answered the alter call are taken out to a nearby coffee shop, where they are often connected with a volunteer team. Pastors encourage church members to socialize before and after services; for example, the All Bar One on Tottenham Court Road is a favourite after-service hangout for Hillsong London participants. There are also a variety of groups designed to connect participants with similar interests in, for example, business, art, social justice, or politics that meet in public venues throughout the week.[13] Perhaps the most important small venue in the Hillsong network is the private home. Hillsong's participants are encouraged to join small, volunteer-led Bible study groups called 'connect groups', which meet throughout the week in private homes around the city. These groups, which usually range from 5 to 15 members, are designed to foster more intimate relationships than are afforded by corporate worship services.

Internet spaces

Hillsong's physical places are important sites of interpersonal contact within Hillsong's brandscape, particularly for those stakeholders who consider Hillsong their 'home' church. However, it is Hillsong's internet spaces that facilitate its global expansion by circulating its message to stakeholders outside its network of churches. Hillsong's core internet spaces include a television station that runs 24 hours a day; its local church websites; and social media accounts on YouTube, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

Hillsong's television channel, the Hillsong Channel, is a joint venture between the church and the U.S.-based Trinity Broadcasting Network. According to Hillsong's 2017 Annual Report, for every person who attended a physical service in Australia, an average of three other people streamed the Hillsong Channel (Hillsong Church 2017, 10). The channel carries a variety of Hillsong-branded programming that targets different demographics within its community, including shows such as *Let's Talk with Brian Houston*, *Worship by Hillsong*, *The Best of Hillsong Conference*, *What's Cooking? With Young and Free*, and *Hillsong Kids: A Big Life*. Hillsong TV also broadcasts content from world-famous megachurch pastors such as Joel Osteen.

Another important kind of internet space in Hillsong's brandscape is its regional church websites. Through these websites, the size and scope of Hillsong's global activities are made visible. For example, as of April 2019, clicking on the 'Locations' tab on Hillsong.com reveals a dropdown menu of 22 different regional websites. Hillsong.com also provides links to pages devoted to its television channel, ministries, music, events, store, blog, and a page for media enquiries. Like any good 'glocal' brand, Hillsong's regional websites maintain the look and feel of the brand but are 'localized' for each local context. For example, each of Hillsong's regional websites opens to a photograph—usually a skyline or cityscape—that is iconic of that region, with 'Welcome Home' emblazoned overtop in the local language. The content of each region's website is similarly standardized and localized, with information such as upcoming events, locations, service times presented alongside the biographies of Brian and Bobbie Houston as well as the local lead pastors.

A third essential kind of internet space in Hillsong's brandscape is social media. Platforms such as YouTube, Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook are important for two reasons: first, because they provide the church and its pastors the ability to 'authentically' communicate with the brand's stakeholders (see Chapter 3); second, because they afford stakeholders the opportunity to 'prosume' (Toffler 1980; Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010) the church's 'spreadable media' (Jenkins et al. 2013; Wagner 2014c). Social media spaces are indispensable to branding because, while broadcast media such as television or websites primarily facilitate one-way information dissemination, social media allows for a 'brandversation' (Musa and Ahmadu 2012, 75). That is, social media link 'touchpoints throughout the user's experience, making the experience more rewarding' (Thurlbeck 2003, 278; cited in Musa and Ahmadu 2012, 75). Importantly, social media facilitates

conversations not only between Hillsong's pastors and stakeholders but also between different groups of stakeholders, which creates overlapping webs of relationships that bind participants to each other and the brand.

YouTube is probably Hillsong's most important social media platform for the circulation of its music among its stakeholders. As of March 2019, Hillsong Worship's channel boasted 3.7 million subscribers, and the channels for United and Young and Free both counted over 1 million subscribers each. (In contrast, the Hillsong Church YouTube channel, which carries primarily non-musical content, had a little over 243,000 subscribers). Hillsong regularly posts its official worship videos on YouTube, where they are viewed millions of times and also shared by stakeholders across a variety of other platforms. Stakeholders also create their own extended worship videos, using home video-editing software or the tools provided by YouTube to string worship songs together (usually for an hour or more). These videos usually feature scrolling lyrics across stock 'evangelical' background imagery that depicts an expansive ocean or scenic mountain view (Ingalls 2016). Sitting at the juncture of religious ritual, popular music fandom, and amateur media production (ibid, 294), the videos are part individual devotional acts and part self-presentation but are also resources for other worshippers and churches to use in their own devotional activities (ibid, 299). An example of this is the video 'Playlist Hillsong Praise & Worship Songs 2017 //With Lyrics//', published by user Daniel Costa.[14] It is telling that Costa's video has accumulated over 30 million views since it was posted in 2017—so many that it appears above Hillsong Worship's official channel in the YouTube search results for 'Hillsong Worship'. As Ingalls notes, although these videos may in some cases contravene copyright (Costa's video carefully attributes the rights holders to each song), they more than make up for this by increasing circulation, which serves to consolidate the power of a few big names by promoting a 'canon' of popular worship music and the celebrities who make it, as well as reproducing the visual techniques used in churches, concerts, and large concert settings (ibid, 302; see also Coleman 2000). In other words, social media users such as Costa help build Hillsong's brandscape (free of charge—see Ritzer and Jurgenson 2010) through their everyday creative and social activities.

Products

Products are a third important category of touchpoints in the Hillsong's brandscape. Items such as books, T-shirts, DVDs, and MP3s are important because they are artefacts through which stakeholders experience the Hillsong brand and their personal identities. They are 'resources' through which people engage with material religion (Arweck and Keenan 2006) in consumer culture—and Hillsong markets them as such.

A trip through Hillsong's online store reveals the centrality of Hillsong's products in its brandscape. Laid out like a standard online emporium, the

store lists five product categories: Books, Music, Teaching, Apparel, and Curriculum.[15] Within each of these categories are several subcategories. For example, under 'Books', one can find the latest offerings from Brian and Bobbie Houston, the Hillsong Kids *Faith Hope and Love Bedtime Story Book* (discounted from £10 to £8), or a photobook (with complimentary tote bag) from United's 'Empires' tour.[16] Under the Music category, one can find releases from United, Worship, Young and Free, as well as niche categories such as Kids, Languages, and Instrumentals. The Apparel category of the website offers Hats and Beanies, Jackets, Shirts, Pants, Accessories, and Gifts.

Hillsong's online store is a study in cross promotion, revealing how different product categories are leveraged to tie the brand together. For example, the title of Brian Houston's book *There Is More: When the World Says You Can't, God Says You Can* is also the title of Hillsong's Worship's 'There Is More' album. Clicking on the album reveals a plethora of choices. One can download the album digitally or order it in CD, vinyl, or Blu-ray formats. For more devoted listeners, the Special Edition includes an audio CD, a DVD, and a 30-page hardcover book that 'provides a stunning visual experience of the lyrics from each song, exclusive writings from our songwriters, and scriptures that inspired the writing journey'.[17] For worship leaders, there is the £45 Worship Kit, which features the Special Edition as well as instructions for playing each song (with instructional videos and minus mixes with click track for drums, bass, guitar, and keys), sheet music and lyrics, and MP3 files of backing music for each song. There is also an instrumental version of the album available for those who wish to use it as background music for Bible study and daily devotionals. One can also look the part: on offer in the 'Apparel and More' section is a black sweatshirt emblazoned with the phrase 'There Is More'; there is also the 'There Is More' Special Edition and Book gift set, a denim jacket emblazoned with the title and the album's cover art, the 'There Is More' three-pin set, and the 'There Is More' journal.

Like the YouTube worship videos discussed above, Hillsong's products serve a variety of functions; for example, the music can be used in worship services or as background to personal devotional activities; the journal can be used during daily devotionals or for taking notes during the sermon, which is a common evangelical practice; and donning the clothing, which is emblazoned with slogans made meaningful through preaching and music, can be experienced as an act of devotion and self-presentation. In this regard, it is important to note that none of the products (other than the music) actually have the word 'Hillsong' on them, but instead either promote one of its bands (e.g., 'United' or 'Young & Free', but not 'Hillsong United') or feature texts or symbols from related to a specific theme (e.g., 'There Is More') within Hillsong's discourse. By not explicitly promoting the church by name, the products focus attention on specific discourses and language that are familiar to church 'insiders' and thus reinforce the subcultural 'worship capital' (Mall 2018), which is an important part of Hillsong's brand and ties stakeholders' identities to the brand.

Hillsong's people

The above discussion makes clear that it is ultimately Hillsong's stakeholders who provide the biopower (Foucault 1976; Smythe 1981) for its brandscape. Intentionally or otherwise, brands communicate through the people they are associated with, such as owners and employees, endorsers, and consumers. For Hillsong, communication begins with lead pastor Brian Houston, whose vision guides the church (see Houston 2014), and a small circle of family and friends, especially his wife Bobbie and his sons Joel and Ben. At the local level, each church has a lead pastor, some of which (e.g., New York's Carl Lentz) are celebrities in their own rights. Pastors are the most visible public faces of Hillsong; they are the ones whose words and actions are perhaps most closely associated through the brand. It is for this reason that only they and a few others are allowed to speak officially on the church's behalf.

Hillsong's volunteers are also important touchpoints of its brand. Volunteers are the core members of Hillsong's community; they provide a significant amount of labour for the church, especially in the weekly production of the Hillsong Experience. For example, volunteers greet visitors at the door, help find empty seats for latecomers, and provide help for those looking to become more involved in the life of the church. Outside of the weekly service, volunteers do important work, such as helping produce the church's media and running connect groups. As core members of Hillsong's brand community, they project the ethos of mass volunteerism that validates Houston's vision of 'a church that is big enough to dream on a global scale, yet personal enough for every ONE to find their place' (Houston 2014, original emphasis).

The appearances, actions, and words of Hillsong's pastors and volunteers 'speak' for the brand. However, brands are equally—if not more—defined by the 'kinds' of consumers they are associated with. Hillsong promotes itself as a diverse, multicultural community, and with churches in cosmopolitan centres on six continents, its global brand community is certainly that.[18] Yet the transnational reach of Hillsong's churches, and the diversity within them, raises questions of just 'who' a member of Hillsong is. Miranda Klaver (2018) identifies six 'kinds' of people who attend Hillsong's churches. While acknowledging that the demographic for each local church is unique, Klaver suggests that Hillsong's focus on cosmopolitan centres means that its core demographic skews towards those in their late 20s and early 30s, who hail from the 'creative class' (242). These Christians are often well-educated, geographically mobile, and tend to work in creative industries. Furthermore, as denizens of the new 'gig economy' of flexible and precarious labour, they are already steeped in a culture of self-branding and promotion. A second active demographic in Hillsong's global churches is young people from migrant backgrounds (see also Rocha 2017). According to Klaver, this group consists of those who experience the

ethnic boundaries of their 'home' churches as 'a hindrance for their aspiration of upward mobility' and for whom Hillsong offers 'a mode of cosmopolitan identification, based on inclusive religious discourse and shared economic aspirations; … a socio-religious identity and lifestyle beyond ethnicity' (ibid, 243). Klaver further identifies four other groups that attend Hillsong's global churches: international students who stay temporarily before returning to their home countries, older evangelicals who are disappointed in their previous churches and are looking for 'revival', Christian tourists, and visiting youth groups (ibid, 242–43).

While Hillsong's global congregation is generally young, mobile, hip, and ethnically diverse, its leadership and social structure is significantly white, patriarchal, and hetero-normative (Maddox 2013; Miller 2016; c.f. Austin 2017, 31–32; Riches 2017). This means the church often is caught in the tension that exists between the liberal-leaning popular culture that it draws on and its own conservative Pentecostal heritage. One example of this is the issue of homosexuality, which has been particularly challenging to Hillsong's brand message of inclusivity: on the one hand, Hillsong brands itself as a home for all people; on the other hand, its message is rooted in traditional evangelical Christian values. Hillsong's official position is that it 'welcomes ALL people but does not affirm all lifestyles' (Houston 2015, original emphasis). That is, Hillsong welcomes homosexuals to worship, but they are barred from taking active leadership roles. Hillsong's brand is therefore one that sits on a faultline between popular culture and evangelical Christian subculture: on the one hand, it is on the leading edge of media, music, and fashion; on the other hand, it holds true to a conservative Christian moral order that is the heritage of the Pentecostal movement. This line between inclusion and exclusivity reflects one of the primary challenges that both churches and brands must face: as they grow and acquire more stakeholders, they inevitably become 'more things to more people', and in doing so, they risk losing the identity that defines and differentiates them within the market (c.f. Stark and Finke 2000, 141–68). Hillsong has thus far been able to maintain, and even strengthen, its brand integrity. This partially has to do with its focus on small groups within the church, especially the connect groups, which maintain the (sub)cultural cohesion (and conformity) within the community (ibid, 157). But it also has to do with its popular cultural acuity, especially in the realm of music. The following, then, discusses what are perhaps Hillsong's most important touchpoints, its music and musicians.

Part II – Hillsong's music and musicians

Hillsong is a globally influential evangelical Christian powerhouse (Riches and Wagner 2017). Yet few would suggest that it could have achieved its scope and influence without its genre-defining music. As of the time of this writing, an estimated 50 million people in churches around the world sing Hillsong songs every week (Hillsong Church Fact Sheet). At the end of

2017, its music had been streamed 760 million times (McKinney 2018). Hillsong's music is, according to the writer and worship leader Wen Reagan, 'the music that just about everyone sings' (Reagan 2017).

Hillsong's core musical output consists of three product streams: Hillsong Worship, Hillsong United, and Hillsong Young and Free. Hillsong Worship is the church's 'original' music product and is promoted as the congregational expression of the church. Since 1992, it has released a 'live' album annually. These albums are recorded during a series of worship services and then heavily mixed in the studio. Hillsong United formed in 1998 out of the church's youth ministry. Headed by the Houstons' son Joel, it is considered the international 'face' of the church and engages in yearly world tours as well as also releasing annual studio albums. Worship and United are sonically similar, producing immersive soundscapes that are characterized by booming reverberation, layers of ostinatos, and expansive song structures that make effective use of dynamics with long, controlled crescendos and sudden pianissimo suspensions. The church's youth ministry produces Hillsong's most recent music product, Young and Free. Formed in 2012, its music retains the stadium rock ethos of Worship and United but employs more synthesized sounds that are commonly heard in the latest pop and electronic dance music. Hillsong also offers several other demographically targeted sub-brands, such as Hillsong Kids and Hillsong Kids Jr., the latter of which includes two volumes of Hillsong Worship and United songs arranged as piano lullabies for babies.

Hillsong's music is not only one of its primary mediums for its message; it is also a significant source of revenue. In 2017, the church made about AUS$14 million from its music activities (McKinney 2018). Hillsong's music is produced by its own publishing arm, Hillsong Music Australia (HMA), and distributed by Capital CMG in North and South America, and Universal Music Group in Europe and the UK. It can be purchased at church events like weekly services and conferences, through the Hillsong Store website, via music download sites, such as Amazon.com or iTunes, or streamed via services such as Spotify. In addition to income generated from album sales, the church also receives royalties paid by other churches that use its songs in services or other events. These licensing fees are collected in part through the Christian Copyright Licencing International (CCLI) organization.

Hillsong's music has been influential because of its quality, but also in no small part because of its reproducibility (Martí 2018); while not all churches have the expertise and kit to put on the elaborate stage shows of Hillsong's main campus, the songs are written in such a way that the general aesthetics can be mimicked using readily available instruments. Hillsong also offers a host of resources to help worship leaders reproduce their songs. For example, the aforementioned worship leader packs provide sheet music, lyrics, technical schematics, and backing tracks to aid in rehearsal and performance. It also provides official translations in 60 languages. Hillsong's worship style therefore 'provides a sonic identity, one that is portable and

reproducible' to churches and individuals who more likely than not are not 'officially' connected with Hillsong (ibid, 382). 'Doing church' the Hillsong way, through its branded materials, both affirms the transnational bonds that tie its brand community together and contributes to an aesthetic (and some would argue theological) 'Hillsongization' of global Christianity (ibid, 382–84; see also Raiter 2008; Povedák 2017).

The evolution of Hillsong's music

As Mark Evans notes, while the New Paradigm model of church in Australia developed in 'the shadow of North American Pentecostalism', its model of music making did not (Evans 2006, 87). In North America and the United Kingdom, the Christian Worship Music scene was (and to an extent remains) organized around individual artists, such as Graham Kendrick and Matt Redman, or bands, such as Jesus Culture. This reflects the organization of popular music industry more generally, which seeks to produce cross-marketable stars instead of musical hits. In Australia, though, Christian music production was (and largely remains) organized around the congregation, and especially megachurches such as Hillsong, C3, and Planetshakers. This congregationally focused ethos underlies Hillsong's music production and also cements the relationship between its corporate and brand identity. Riches and Wagner (2012) observe that the relationship between Hillsong's congregation, music, vision, and brand identity can be mapped onto five phases of the church's evolution from an inward-looking Australian congregation to a globally focused one. Visual imagery on the album covers, as well as the songwriters represented and sonic signature (Evans 2017), identify each of these phases.[19]

Hillsong's musical journey began in 1978 when songwriter Geoff Bullock joined Frank Houston's Sydney Christian Life Centre (Evans 2017, 65). Brian Houston hired Bullock as worship pastor in 1985 (Riches 2010, 13), but it was not until his appointment as full-time worship pastor in February 1987 that he began writing deliberately (Evans 2017, 65). This produced Hillsong's (then Hills Christian Life Centre) first two studio albums, *Spirit and Truth* (1988) and *Show Your Glory* (1990). According to Evans, these albums don't display the stylistic coherence that now defines the 'Hillsong Sound' (ibid). However, there is a discernible gospel influence that can still be heard in some of Hillsong Worship's offerings. *Spirit and Truth* is notable because it produced the song 'The Great Southland', which became an anthem of Australian Pentecostalism. Bullock also helmed the release of *The Power of Your Love* (1992), Hillsong's first international release and also the first album to use the 'live' format that would characterize Hillsong's subsequent yearly releases. Hillsong's music during this stage was conceived of as an Australian congregational expression; this is reflected not only in the titles of songs such as 'The Great Southland' but also in the imagery on the cover of its albums, which feature iconic Australian

landscapes by the acclaimed Australian photographer Ken Duncan (Riches and Wagner 2012, 26).

The second phase of Hillsong's musical development began with the appointment of Darlene Zschech as Head of the Worship and Creative Arts Department in 1996, following Bullock's departure a year earlier. As will be discussed in Chapter 3, Zschech quickly became the 'face and sound' of Hillsong (Evans 2006, 107). She wrote or co-wrote several of Hillsong's hits during her tenure, but it was 'Shout to the Lord' in 1993 that propelled her and Hillsong onto the international stage. As Evans notes, the success of 'Shout to the Lord' is due in no small part to its songcraft. The verse structure, for instance, contains a call and response between the first two lines, which speak the attributes of Christ, and the second two lines, which respond. Likewise, the first half of the chorus praises, while the second half responds (Evans 2017, 69–70). Musically, the common I-vi-IV-V progression, small vocal range of a fifth, and catchy melody all make the song easy for the congregation to learn and sing (ibid, 70). This model of biblically grounded lyrics, formal balance, and relative technical simplicity has come to define Hillsong's music and is one of the primary reasons for its success with congregations around the world.

Zschech's songwriting skills and international celebrity catapulted Hillsong into the international spotlight, but it was her mentorship of a generation of Christian celebrity songwriters, such as Joel Houston, Rueben Morgan, Marty Sampson, and Brooke Ligertwood (née Fraser), that is perhaps her most lasting contribution (Evans 2017, 70). In 1998, the church's youth band, United, began to write original songs. The release of *Everyday* in 1999 thus marked the beginning of a third phase for Hillsong's music, as United became the second line of annual product running parallel to the LIVE albums. *Everyday* also marked the beginning of a move towards the expansive 'Hillsong Sound', which has come to dominate the global Christian Worship Music market for the past two decades. As Mark Evans describes it, the Hillsong Sound 'seeks to communicate a bright, contemporary, victorious Christianity' (2015, 182–83):

> Hillsong releases tightly produced, polished albums that are more reminiscent of the brightness and perfection often associated with Nashville production than rock and pop from Australia. Live congregational albums are meticulously overdubbed to create perfect performance and arrangement. Part of the 'victorious' nature of the sound can be attributed to its density of texture. Congregational albums feature standard pop instrumentation, but often with multiple keyboard players, multiple guitarists, and a brass section. Lead vocalists are backed by a team of backing vocals and also vocalists as well as a full choir. As a result, Hillsong music is marked by a 'wall of sound' aesthetic, particularly in the climatic sections, which listeners find to be rousing and anthemic.
>
> (ibid, 183)

According to Evans, this aesthetic shift was part of a strategic reorientation on the part of the church. Markers of Australian-ness such as 'The Great Southland' were replaced with songs that would 'sit comfortably within various denominations and churches around the world' (ibid), something confirmed by the head of Hillsong Music Publishing, Steve McPhearson:

> I do believe we initially set out to write music for our congregation but as time went on and we saw the impact our songs were having across all denominations, we became more and more aware of the responsibility and the privilege to be speaking into the broader church, and I believe our songwriting changed accordingly. Our focus went from being purely local to global.
>
> (ibid)

Darlene Zschech's tenure, then, can be viewed as a transitional period for Hillsong Church and its music, both in terms of sound and focus. It can also be viewed as a time during which the church's music and musicians, but not Hillsong Church itself, exerted the global charisma the brand enjoys today. This is particularly noticeable on the album covers from the 1996 to 2005, on which Zschech and worship leaders such as Rueben Morgan and Marty Sampson feature prominently. Zschech added the sheen of celebrity to Hillsong's brand, and this was further polished by the next generation of musicians she mentored.

The release of *Mighty to Save* in 2006 marks the beginning of a fourth phase in Hillsong's musical evolution. This phase is characterized by a move away from the focus on individual songwriters to one that foregrounded the church as the locus of brand identity. Although Zschech and Morgan are still featured on album covers during this period, their images are obscured by the LIVE moniker (which appears for the first time), as well Hillsong's signature logo. The following two albums, *Saviour King* (2007) and *This Is Our God* (2008), feature stadiums of worshippers, their hands held high in the globally recognizable worship posture. What is important here is the way that the worshippers are presented: on *Saviour King*, they are pixilated, and on *This Is Our God* they have their backs to the viewer. This stands in contrast to earlier albums such as *Touching Heaven Changing Earth* (1998), where the choir member's faces are clearly visible. The lack of identifiable congregational or celebrity presence allows the brand's sign-value to become more mobile, as it can now be mapped onto any number of real or imagined stakeholders. It also shifts the focus from individual personalities to the Hillsong logo, which resembles a signature and therefore confers a sense of authenticity and 'personhood' on the brand (Frow 2002). Phase four of Hillsong's brand development saw other changes as well. Leadership

of United transferred to Brian Houston's son Joel. Hillsong London also began to release yearly albums, which added a third product stream to Hillsong's portfolio.

The year 2008 marked the beginning of a fifth phase of Hillsong's musical brand development (Riches and Wagner 2012, 24). During this phase, Joel Houston assumed the role of creative director for Hillsong Church and Rueben Morgan replaced Zschech as worship pastor. Hillsong's musical product lines were also consolidated and clarified: the Hillsong London album line was discontinued, leaving Hillsong LIVE as the congregational expression of worship and United as its 'touring ambassadors' (ibid). Hillsong's 'global focus' is apparent during this phase. With the exception of *A Beautiful Exchange* (2010), the album covers cease to depict people and instead feature graphics and designs that are also used in Hillsong's other communications. In this phase, then, Hillsong's brand fully integrated its music, design, and communications into a single package.

Riches and Wagner's study ends in 2012, but this is the year that a new phase of Hillsong's brand development can be discerned. The year 2012 saw the formation of Hillsong's new youth band, Young and Free, which, as noted above, stays true to the stadium aesthetic of Worship and United but is also more pop oriented and makes heavy use of electronic sounds and four-on-the-floor dance breaks. In 2014, Hillsong rebranded their LIVE product line Hillsong Worship. This change made clear the intention of the product, as well as differentiated it from United and Young and Free, which both also produced 'live' albums. Hillsong's brand has also taken a 'celebrity' turn, largely the result of its New York plant and its pastor, Carl Lentz. Hillsong has since the days of Darlene Zschech produced celebrities within the Christian culture industry and has also featured band members who have had fairly successful 'secular' music careers, such as Brooke Ligertwood (née Fraser). But since opening its New York church, Hillsong has also welcomed several A-list celebrities, including musical superstars such as Justin Bieber (whom Lentz baptized in NBA player Tyson Chandler's bathtub) and Selena Gomez, who has covered the United song 'Transfiguration' and has performed with Young and Free. United has also arguably achieved some mainstream 'crossover' success, appearing with some regularity on the American morning show *The Today Show*.

The above discussion has shown that Hillsong's music and message have evolved in tandem with the church's congregation and vision. The following section discusses the relationship of the music and brand to its liturgy. In it, I suggest that Hillsong's yearly production schedule produces a specific kind of liturgy in which occasions such as album release dates are equally, if not more, important than traditional holidays to the experience of its message.

Part III – Hillsong as a music-led brand

Hillsong is just one of a growing number of churches that engage in branding. The act of evangelizing is itself a form of marketing communications, and evangelicals have long travelled far and wide to spread the word. From this view, the rise of the branded New Paradigm church is a contemporary manifestation of age-old proselytising practices (Coleman 2000, 4). Richard Reising is the president of Artistry Labs, a consulting firm that works with churches to 'strategically present each client's unique message'.[20] According to Reising, although advertising the gospel is nothing new,[21] referring to it specifically as 'advertising' or 'marketing' has until recently been avoided:

> [T]en years ago it [branding] was met with extreme scepticism. The whole concept of promoting church was taboo. But there has been a growing acceptance over time. Now people realize what it means and what it doesn't mean. They see it as part of going out into the world to preach, promote and publish the Gospel.
>
> (Richard Reising; in Colyer 2005, cited in Einstein 2008, 61)

The increase in Christian-oriented branding firms since around the turn of the millennium testifies to the acceptance of branding as the 'new paradigm'. Hillsong is not the first or only church to brand itself, nor is it the first or only church to produce its own music. Hillsong is unique, though, in that its music and brand identity are inseparable. Indeed, Hillsong is so named *because* of its music. Hillsong has operated continuously since 1983, but it was not until 2001 that it officially changed its name from Hills Christian Life Centre to Hillsong Church. Until that time, the 'Hillsongs' label was reserved for its musical product. As the 'Hillsongs' music became increasingly well known, though, its origins and intent as an expression of worship from the congregation of Hills Christian Life Centre became lost. Many listeners thought that 'Hillsongs' was just a band. Thus, the decision was made to 'brand' the church as the artist—fusing the identity of the organization with its music. According to Brian Houston:

> Hillsong was originally the name of our music and the church was called Hills Christian Life Centre, but people used to talk about 'that Hillsong Church' and the name Hillsong actually became famous, if you like, around the world. So in the end, we thought, that's what we're known as, so we became Hillsong Church.
>
> (Jones 2005)

Music is featured in almost all of the church's communications. For example, it is present in both the foreground and background of promotional videos and is also played in the lobbies of its churches. Visually, images of

its musicians and congregation members in worship adorn many of the banners, ads, and magazines that are distributed. Perhaps most importantly, Hillsong's music is a primary component in most aspects of the 'Hillsong Experience' at events such as services and conferences. While Hillsong's use of music is not necessarily different from that of the many evangelical Christian churches that emphasize the experiential aspects of worship, its almost exclusive use of its own music reveals the extent to which marketing is interwoven with the life of the church, and to some extent drives it. This in turn speaks to the concomitancy of branding and experience that is the focus of this book. An example of this can be seen in the 'Scarlet Thread', the leitmotif of Hillsong's music, preaching, and marketing during 2012. To understand the significance of marketing to the overall functioning of the church and the way it delivers its message, it is necessary to examine the production cycle that governs a year in the 'life of the church' through the lens of branding.

Branding as liturgy

Branding organizes different media communications into a meaningful gestalt. Each interaction with something or someone associated with the brand—from videos, songs, and printed material, to the organization's representatives, to word of mouth and things written and said about the organization (both positive or otherwise) 'in the media'—contributes to the experience of it. While the fundamentals of Hillsong's message have remained consistent over the years, as the church has grown and its needs, participants, and environment have changed, the ways it has communicated that message have evolved. This evolution includes changes in not only the style and doctrinal emphasis of the music but also the linguistic and visual imagery associated with it (Riches and Wagner 2012). The following discussion analyses how this marketing package is disseminated over the course of a year and how the marketing and roll-out of its musical offerings, and important events such as conferences, to some degree dictate what music is used and when. In other words, branding concerns influence Hillsong's liturgy and liturgical calendar.

A year in Hillsong's liturgical calendar begins with 'Vision Sunday', which is generally the first Sunday in February. As the name suggests, Vision Sunday is the day that Brian Houston's vision for the coming year is shared with Hillsong's global congregation. This is done via a video presentation, which is shown in every service at every Hillsong church around the world. Although the style of the video varies from year to year, it always introduces the central message and the metaphorical and visual materials that the church will use to communicate during the particular year. For many participants, this is a highly spiritual service in which a prophetic unction is brought for the year (Riches, personal communication; July 1, 2013).

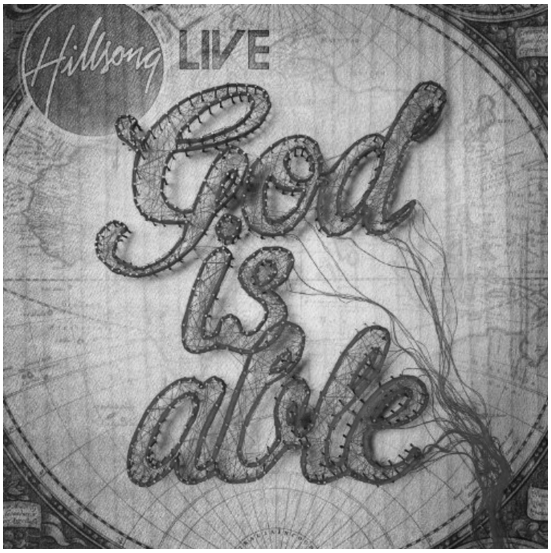

Figure 2.1 The cover of *God Is Able*.

The 2012 Vision Sunday video was entitled 'The Scarlet Thread'.[22] Shot through an Instagram-like filter, its central image was a red thread that symbolized Jesus Christ as the cord that holds together the tapestry of humanity—the red colour symbolizing His blood. Short 'chapters' of the video interspersed dramatic scenes of a tapestry being handwoven on a loom in Jerusalem, punctuated with the testimonies of two congregation members from Australia and one from a Londoner at the New York church. The image of The Scarlet Thread appeared throughout 2012, in communications such as advertisements, in-service videos, pastoral messages, and perhaps most spectacularly at Hillsong's conferences: it both figuratively and literally took centre stage at Hillsong's European conference, where a giant loom was erected. The Scarlet Thread was also the central figure on the cover of the 2012 Hillsong LIVE release, *God Is Able*.

Here was integrated marketing at work: spread across videos, advertisements, album covers, and in preaching throughout the year, The Scarlet Thread tied together Hillsong's media in a branded tapestry of interwoven communications.

Hillsong's music and marketing are closely tied to its yearly calendar, which is marked by three important kinds of events: conferences, holidays, and album releases. Tanya Riches (2010) shows in her analysis of the role of Hillsong's yearly 'product rollout' calendar that the functioning of the church and its branding are directly linked to a production schedule:[23]

Table 2.1 Hillsong's yearly production and events calendar

Month	*Event*	*Event*
January		
February	Vision Sunday	
March	Colour Conference; Hillsong Worship Recording	Hillsong United Album Release (option 2)
April	Easter special	
May		Hillsong United Tour
June	Pentecost Celebration (Hillsong London)	
July	Hillsong Conference; Hillsong Worship Album Release; Hillsong Europe Conference	Hillsong United Album Recording (option 1)
August		
September	Hillsong Worship Tour	
October	Hillsong USA Conference	Hillsong United Album Release (option 1); Hillsong United Album Recording (option 2)
November	Men's Conference	
December	Christmas Production	

As the above chart shows, conferences, which are an important part of Hillsong's global reach, are synchronized with album releases. Hillsong's production calendar can also be thought of as its 'liturgical calendar'. Hillsong celebrates two of the traditional Christian high holidays (Easter and Christmas) and does so with special theatrical productions. Of at least equal importance to these are its own branded events, which are more heavily promoted.[24] Taken in the context of the New Paradigm's quasi-denominational evangelical Christianity, in which independent church networks are supplanting traditional denominations (Sargeant 2000), this is not surprising.

The form and content (especially musical) of Christian church services historically have been dictated by a liturgical calendar. In contrast, the musical content of Hillsong's services is dictated by recording and production concerns. New songs are introduced to the congregation throughout the year in the run-up to July's Hillsong Conference, when the year's new Worship album is released. For the rest of the year, these (and new United studio songs) are the main repertoire sung in worship services. According to my interviews, as well as my own observations, there is an overall integration of the year's message, the weekly preaching, and the songs played in services. Local pastors will deliver different weekly messages at different churches throughout the Hillsong network, but the brand's Vision Sunday meta-narrative remains visible and audible. Yet even though the Vision Sunday themes, the preaching, and the songs are clearly thematically related, one doesn't necessarily

beget the other. This was expressed to me by a number of my conversation partners, including Hillsong's General Manager George Aghajanian:

> The songwriters don't necessarily take the Vision Sunday elements and make them the focal point for the albums. I think the albums are more of an organic process. Now, at times they'll take the theme of Vision Sunday … like the theme of the Scarlet Thread … and some of those songs may be reflective of that, but that's not the prerequisite for [inclusion on the album].
>
> (Interview with author, September 28, 2011)

Jorim, a worship leader at Hillsong London, echoed this:

> I don't purposely sit down and go, 'Right, I need to write a song about healing or about such and such'. I kind of start an idea in the moment. [However] at church here, the songs are for backing up the preach, as opposed to having separate preach and songs. The song should actually back up what [Hillsong Pastor] Gary [Clarke] is preaching.
>
> (Interview with author, April 22, 2011)

Although songs may not always be written with the express purpose of dovetailing with Vision Sunday, there is nevertheless a thematic correlation. For example, in 2011, Hillsong LIVE released the album *A Beautiful Exchange*. The title of the album and the title track itself are references to Jesus' death on the cross as well as the act and meaning of communion. During my fieldwork at Hillsong London that year, I observed an emphasis on these topics in the preaching and also in connect group and team meetings, where communion was, for a time, instituted.[25] When I asked Jorim about this, he responded that:

> The pastors definitely decide. Like Peter [Wilson] or Gary [Clarke] and then maybe Brian [Houston]. I'm not sure [of] their thinking behind preaching, but yeah, 'A Beautiful Exchange', that's a perfect example of how a song comes second to preach at Hillsong, and how it literally backs up whatever is being said at the pulpit. I think some of the places that we go to, sometimes it can be a bit misread or misunderstood that we're a band and we're very much not in that sense. Just to reiterate that songs come second to whatever is being preached. Every Sunday, the preparation for a Sunday is literally 'How will this song work in the grand structure of a Sunday after who's preaching and what they're talking about'. So it's very much not left until the last minute.
>
> (Interview with author, April 22, 2011)

Here, Jorim is talking about song selection rather than songwriting. At Hillsong churches, the worship leaders choose songs from the repertoire that are pertinent to the pastor's message that week.[26] Whether the song

precedes the preaching or vice versa, it is clear that both are integrated in the gestalt message that Hillsong conveys. Chapter 5 details the process in which songs travel from inspiration to release on a Hillsong album. This includes a number of 'quality control' steps that ensure they are synergetic with Hillsong's mission, values, and theology. Here, though, it is enough to say that while song composition does not *necessarily* derive directly from a single pre-planned talking point or theme, the music and message are intimately connected.[27] Furthermore, because the message is also contained in the visual and discursive tropes that are introduced each year, the product releases and their associated events are important temporal markers that influence the rituals that communicate and (re)affirm the church's purpose and values. Hillsong's production schedule can thus be understood as—along with album releases and traditional holidays such as Christmas and Easter—constituting Hillsong's branded liturgical calendar.

Conclusion

This chapter has discussed the organizational and communicative aspects of Hillsong's brand. Stakeholders experience Hillsong's brand when they interact with any 'touchpoint' they associate with it, be it a place, space, product, or person. The meanings of these interactions are almost always already shaped by knowledge of the brand, and thus the brand over time organizes the experience of itself. One reason that Hillsong's brand is so 'powerful' in this regard is that it has evolved organically along with the church. As it has grown, Hillsong has become savvier in weaving music, design, and message into an all-encompassing environment, a brandscape that invites and enables its stakeholders to (re)produce it through participation. But what has not changed is that, as a congregational expression, it emanates from its stakeholders and therefore retains its perceived integrity. Yet this expression is also shaped by the mechanics of its production. This is seen in the way Hillsong's product roll-out schedule dovetails with its message to create a branded liturgy that is part of its brand message.

Having established the context and character of the Hillsong brand, the next chapter discusses it in relation to another closely related feature of consumer culture: the celebrity. This is done in the context of the dialectic between the 'sacred' and the 'secular', which shapes how Hillsong's participants experience themselves and their actions in relation to consumer culture and humanity as a whole. Hillsong's brand provides continuity to the experience of the world, providing the discursive material that they use to justify their attitudes and actions as being 'in, but not of, the world'.

Notes

1 https://hillsong.com/college/. Accessed March 10, 2019.
2 Brian Houston's father, Frank Houston, was a Pentecostal minister and Brian is a former head of Assemblies of God in Australia (AGA), which he helped to re-brand as Australian Christian Churches, or ACC.

3 https://hillsong.com/policies/corporate-governance/. Accessed December 12, 2018.
4 https://hillsong.com/leadership/board/. Accessed December 12, 2018.
5 Hillsong's audited financial statements are lodged annually with the Australian Charities and Not for Profit Commission (Aghajanian; email exchange with author, August 5, 2013).
6 Tithing is the practice of giving the first tenth of one's income to the Church. While the practice is not uncontroversial (usually grounded in debates over whether or not it is 'biblical'), it is widely encouraged in New Paradigm churches and often provides them with a significant revenue stream (Teichner 2009).
7 This includes trademarks for audiovisual, printed material, clothing, Christian conferences, church, and religious services. In Australia, Hillsong holds additional trademarks for microfinance activities, business development training, medical and counselling services, and social welfare services.
8 During my follow-up visits to Hillsong London in 2018, the participants at the previous service were directed out of the theatre's side entrances to keep the lobby clear for the incoming participants.
9 For a discussion of how this works in congregational music, see Wagner (2015).
10 See, for example, Herwig (2015).
11 https://hillsong.com/uk/. Accessed March 10, 2019.
12 https://hillsong.com/church-of-the-air/. Accessed March 3, 2019.
13 E.g., https://hillsong.com/uk/collectives/. Accessed February 6, 2018.
14 www.youtube.com/watch?v=qCZAynQU_-8&t=3s. Accessed March 5, 2019.
15 https://hillsongstore.com/. Accessed February 25, 2019.
16 Under the product description: 'Have you ever wanted to feel as a part of a United Tour while in the comfort of your own home? Purchase the Empires Tour Photobook and enjoy the beautiful landscape photos and hand written lyrics within. The photobook also comes with a United Tote Bag!' (https://hillsongstore.co.uk/empires-tour-photobook/. Accessed February 25, 2019).
17 https://hillsongstore.co.uk/there-is-more-special-edition/. Accessed February 25, 2019.
18 For example, Hillsong devotes 11 pages of its Annual Report to the diversity of its Australian churches, which it breaks down along the lines of age, nationality, and gender. Hillsong's focus on these markers of identity is telling: it does not keep demographic data on ethnicity or race, which are perhaps more politically charged markers of identity and point to the thornier issues surrounding multicultural endeavours, instead promoting a vision of 'home' comprised of 'a diverse people who share a common unity in their pursuit of truth' (Hillsong Church 2018, 10).
19 Riches (2010) and Cowan (2017) also posit changes in theological emphasis. For example, Cowan suggests that as Hillsong has grown, it has adopted a more 'generalist' theology that reflects its status as a global community. Riches and Cowan both use thematic and lyrical analysis to support their findings, which show shifts in some themes but not others. However, the differences in the themes the two studies analyze and the small data sets they use make it difficult to draw any definitive conclusions.
20 *Our Work*. www.artistrylabs.com/our-work. Accessed January 23, 2013.
21 The Rev. Charles Stelzle, for example, published *Principles of Successful Church Advertising* in 1908 (Twitchell 2007, 141).
22 Video available at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=VnG1si3xLto; Accessed March 6, 2019.
23 Table 2.1 is based on Table 19 'HB and UB Annual Calendar and Marketing Rollout' (Riches 2010, 146). Some dates change from year to year as Hillsong has adapted to new products, the expanding Hillsong Network of churches, and local constraints. For example, although Hillsong's European conference is usually held in London in July, the 2012 conference was held in October in two locations, Den Haag and Stockholm, because of the Olympics.

24 This observation should be nuanced by noting that the holiday specials are more 'local' affairs, while the conferences are intended to be more globally focused. Therefore, it is difficult to assign more 'importance' to one or the other in the context of Hillsong's branding. However, this bolsters my contention that traditional holidays and the events most important to Hillsong's global branding can both be considered 'high holidays' in its liturgical calendar.

25 Because of the roughly 2,000 participants in each service, the design of the Dominion Theatre, and the tight scheduling of four services every Sunday at Hillsong London, it was impractical if not impossible to offer communion during the worship services. Thus, during 2011, communion was practised in team meetings before services and also encouraged at weekly private connect group meetings around London. By 2012, this had subsided at team meetings, although it continued in the connect group I attended. Several participants within the church told me that the lack of consistency I observed had to do with the difficulties of 'doing church' in a rented space like the Dominion. The point here, though, is that before *A Beautiful Exchange* came out, I had not observed or participated in any communion services, nor had it been emphasized in the preaching. When the album was released, *A Beautiful Exchange* became the material—both musically and thematically—of worship services for the next year.

26 Hillsong often welcomes guest pastors to preach. These pastors bring their own messages. However, it should also be noted that they are drawn from a transnational—but still fairly small—circuit of preachers and churches that preach variations on the same theme. Very often, the guest preacher will begin by telling the congregation what good friends he or she is with the host Pastors, and how he or she had a great time hanging out with their family the previous evening. Thus, the message never strays from the values that are promoted by the hosts.

27 Although they may do, as many of Hillsong's main songwriters are also part of Hillsong's inner circle and are intimately familiar with the church's long-term plans. See Chapters 3 and 5.

References

Arweck, Elisabeth, and William Keenan, eds. 2006. *Material Religion: Expression, Performance and Ritual*. Aldershot, UK: Ashgate.

Austin, Denise A. 2017. '"Flowing Together": The Origins and Early Development of Hillsong Church within Assemblies of God in Australia'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out Upon The Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 21–37. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Campbell, Heidi. 2010. *When Religion Meets New Media*. London; New York: Routledge.

Coleman, Simon. 2000. *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Colyer, E. 2005. 'Churches put their Faith in Branding'. March 14, 2005. www.brandchannel.com/features_effect.asp?pf_id=254.

Einstein, Mara. 2008. *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*. London: Routledge.

Evans, Mark. 2006. *Open Up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church*. London: Equinox Publishing.

Evans, Mark. 2015. 'Hillsong Abroad: Tracing the Songlines of Contemporary Pentecostal Music'. In *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, edited by Monique Ingalls and Amos Yong, 179–98. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Evans, Mark. 2017. 'Creating the Hillsong Sound: How One Church Changed Australian Christian Music'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out Upon The Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 63–81. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Foucault, Michel. [1998] 1976. *The History of Sexuality Vol. 1: The Will to Knowledge*. London: Penguin

Frow, John. 2002. 'Signature and Brand'. In *High-Pop: Making Culture into Popular Entertainment*, edited by Jim Collins, 56–74. Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers.

Goh, Robbie. B.H. 2008. 'Hillsong and "Megachurch" Practice: Semiotics, Spatial Logic and the Embodiment of Contemporary Evangelical Protestantism'. *Material Religion: The Journal of Objects, Art and Belief* 4 (3): 284–304.

Herwig, Bruce. 2015. 'Why I Stopped Singing Hillsong'. Food for Thought (blog), June 14. https://bruceherwig.wordpress.com/2015/06/14/why-i-stopped-singing-hillsong/.

Hillsong Church. 2017. 'Hillsong Church Annual Report 2017'. https://d9nqqwcssctr8.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/02064537/Hillsong_Church_Annual_Report_2017-66-FINAL-Updated-3-Hires.pdf.

Hillsong Church Fact Sheet. 2018. https://hillsong.com/fact-sheet/. Accessed December 11, 2018.

Houston, Brian. 2014. 'The Church I Now See'. https://hillsong.com/vision/. Accessed March 12, 2019.

Houston, Brian. 2015. 'Do I Love Gay People?' Hillsong Collected (blog), August 4, 2015. https://hillsong.com/collected/blog/2015/08/do-i-love-gay-people/#.XHfZf3Pgo1g. Accessed March 11, 2019.

Ingalls, Monique. 2016. 'Worship on the Web: Broadcasting Devotion through Worship Music Videos on YouTube'. In *Music and the Broadcast Experience: Performance, Production, and* Audiences, edited by Christina Baade and James Deaville, 293–308. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Ingold, Richard. 2014. 'God, the Devil and You: A Systemic Functional Linguistic Analysis of the Language of Hillsong'. *Literature & Aesthetics* 24 (1): 85–116.

Jenkins, Henry, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green. 2013. *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*. London: New York University Press.

Jones, Caroline. 2005. 'Life of Brian'. *Australian Story*. Australian Broadcasting Company, August 1, 2005. www.abc.net.au/austory/content/2005/s1428533.htm.

Kahn-Harris, Keith and Marcus Moberg. 2012. 'Religious Popular Music: Between the Instrumental, Transcendent and Transgressive'. *Temenos* 8 (1): 87–106.

Klaver, Miranda. 2015. 'Media Technology Creating "Sermonic Events": The Hillsong Megachurch Network'. *CrossCurrents* 65 (4): 422–33.

Klaver, Miranda. 2018. 'Global Church Planting in the Media Age: Hillsong Church'. *Interculturelle Theologie. Zeitschrift Für Missionswissenschaft* 44 (2/3): 234–46.

Lum, Casey Man Kong. 2006. 'Notes toward an Intellectual History of Media Ecology'. In *Perspectives on Culture, Technology and Communication: The Media Ecology Tradition*, edited by Casey Man Kong Lum, 1–60. Cresskill, NJ: Hampton Press.

Maddox, Marion. 2013. '"Rise Up Warrior Princess Daughters": Is Evangelical Women's Submission a Mere Fairy Tale?' *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 29 (1): 9–26.

Mall, Andrew. 2018. 'Worship Capital: On the Political Economy of Evangelical Worship Music'. *American Music* 36 (3)3: 303–26.

Martí, Gerardo. 2018. 'The Global Phenomenon of Hillsong Church: An Initial Assessment'. *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, 78 (4): 377–86.

McIntyre, E. H. 2007. 'Brand of Choice: Why Hillsong Music Is Winning Sales and Souls.' *Australian Religion Studies Review* 20 (2): 175–94.

McKinney, Kelsey. 2018. 'How Hillsong Church Conquered the Music Industry in God's Name'. *The Fader.* October 11, 2018. www.thefader.com/2018/10/11/hillsong-church-worship-songs-music-industry.

McLuhan, Marshall. [1964] 2001. *Understanding Media*. Second edition. London: Routledge.

Miller, Elizabeth. 2016. 'Hillsong: Australia's Megachurch'. In *Handbook of Global Contemporary Christianity*, edited by Stephen J. Hunt, 297–316. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill.

Musa, Bala A. and Ahmadu, Ibrahim M. 2012. 'New Media, Wikifaith and Church Brandversation: A Media Ecology Perspective'. In *Digital Religion, Social Media and Culture: Perspectives, Practices and Futures*, edited by Pauline Hope Cheong, Peter Fischer-Nielsen, Stefan Gelfgren, and Charles Ess, 63–80. New York: Peter Lang.

Ong, Walter J. 2012. *Orality and Literacy: 30th Anniversary Edition*. New York: Routledge.

Povedák, Kinga. 2017. 'Hillsongization, Religious Ecumenism, and Uniformity: A Hungarian Case Study'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 181–98. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Raiter, Michael. 2008. 'The Slow Death of Congregational Singing'. *The Briefing*, April 2, 2008. https://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2008/04/the-slow-death-of-congregational-singing-4/.

Reagan, Wen. 2017. '"The Music That Just about Everyone Sings": Hillsong in American Evangelical Media'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 145–61. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Riches, Tanya. 2010. 'SHOUT TO THE LORD! Music and Change at Hillsong: 1996–2007'. Masters Thesis. University of Sydney, Sydney College of Divinity.

Riches, Tanya. 2017. 'The Sisterhood: Hillsong in a Feminine Key'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner 85–105. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Riches, Tanya, and Tom Wagner. 2012. 'The Evolution of Hillsong Music: From Australian Pentecostal Congregation into Global Brand'. *The Australian Journal of Communication* 39 (1): 17–36.

Riches, Tanya, and Tom Wagner. 2017. *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ritzer, George, and Nathan Jurgenson. 2010. 'Production, Consumption, Prosumption The Nature of Capitalism in the Age of the Digital "Prosumer"'. *Journal of Consumer Culture* 10 (1): 13–36.

Rocha, Cristina. 2017. '"The Come to Brazil Effect": Young Brazilians' Fascination with Hillsong'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 125–41. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Sargeant, Kimon Howland. 2000. *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Sherry, John F. Jr. 1998. 'The Soul of the Company Store: Nike Town Chicago and the Emplaced Brandscape.' In *Servicescapes: The Concept of Place in Contemporary Markets*, edited by John F. Sherry, Jr., 109–46. Chicago, IL: NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group.

Smythe, Dallas W. 1981[2001]. 'On the Audience Commodity and Its Work'. In *Media and Cultural Studies: Keyworks*, edited by Gigi Durham and Douglas M. Kellner, 230–56. Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing.

Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkley: University of California Press.

Teichner, Martha. 2009. 'To Tithe or Not to Tithe?' *CBS News*, February 11, 2009. www.cbsnews.com/8301-3445_162-3896728.html.

Thompson, Craig J., and Zeynep Arsel. 2004. 'The Starbucks Brandscape and Consumers' (Anticorporate) Experiences of Glocalization'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 31 (3): 631–42.

Thurlbeck, K. L. 2003. 'Brand Experience'. In *The Digital Designer: 101 Graphic Design Projects for Print, the Web, Multimedia, and Motion Graphics*, edited by Stephen Pite, 276–81. New York: Thomson Learning.

Toffler, Alvin. 1980. *The Third Wave*. New York: William Morrow.

Wagner, Tom. 2014a. 'Branding, Music, and Religion: Standardization and Adaptation in the Experience of the "Hillsong Sound."' In *Religion as Brands: New Perspectives on the Marketization of Religion and Spirituality*, edited by Jean-Claude Usunier and Jörg Stolz, 59–73. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Wagner, Tom. 2014b. 'No Other Name? Authenticity, Authority and Anointing in Christian Popular Music'. *Journal of World Popular Music* 1 (2): 324–42.

Wagner, Tom. 2014c. 'Music, Branding and the Hegemonic Prosumption of Values of an Evangelical Growth Church'. In *Religion in Times of Crisis*, edited by Gladys Ganiel, Heidemarie Winkel, and Christophe Monnot, 11–32. Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill.

Wagner, Tom. 2015. 'Music as a Mediated Object, Music as Media: Towards a Media Ecological View of Congregational Music.' In *Singing a New Song: Congregational Music Making and Community in a Mediated Age*, edited by Anna Nekola and Tom Wagner, 25–44. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

3 In, but not of, the (Christian) culture industry

Introduction – the (Christian) culture industry

An effective brand communicates an organization's purpose and values, and it does so by demonstrating fidelity to, and being literate in, the cultural codes of its target market(s) (Holt 2004, 65). As an evangelical organization, Hillsong has multiple 'target markets'. For example, it seeks the 'unchurched' but also ministers to a demographically diverse international congregation (Klaver 2018). There are myriad differences between and among the individuals who constitute these markets, but to some degree, all of Hillsong's participants are denizens of consumer culture. Brands are part of the language of consumer culture (Lash and Lury 2007), so it should be no surprise that branding is a way through which Hillsong and its stakeholders communicate their purpose(s) and values among themselves and to others.

As noted in Chapter 1, the integration of brands and branding into the fabric of consumer culture affords them an influential role in the ordering of society. This is possible because of the central role that the culture (or cultural, see Hesmondhalgh 2013) industries play in the production of 'the social' (Adorno 1991; Lash and Lury 2007). Culture industries are industries such as broadcasting, film, music, publishing, design, and fashion, which engage in the production and circulation of cultural texts. According to David Hesmondhalgh, these industries are important for three reasons: first, they make and circulate products that influence our knowledge, understanding, and experience; second, they are systems that manage creativity and knowledge; and finally, they are agents of economic, social, and cultural change (2013, 4).

This chapter begins with a short discussion of Christian Popular Music (CPM), an umbrella under which both Christian Contemporary Music (CCM) and Christian Worship Music (CWM) resides (Ingalls et al., 2013). As part of the Christian culture industry, CPM has historically been a locus of struggle over the values that define Protestantism (Nekola 2009).[1] As a mass-mediated phenomenon, it draws on a variety of 'sacred' and 'secular' languages, images, and discourses to communicate identity and values. Although Christians recognize that it is inextricable from the economic and

cultural influences of the 'worldly' society that they are part of, they are beholden to living within a tension—they both seek to engage culture in order to influence it but also distance themselves from non-biblical activities in pursuit of 'holiness'. They are therefore sometimes at odds over which elements from secular and Christian cultures should be drawn upon and which should be avoided. This equivocation is evident in the unease with which some Christians view celebrity pastors and worship leaders (e.g., Teoh 2005; Ward 2005, 165–81). While it is recognized that these people may be doing God's work on a global scale, the fame and fortune that often accompany (and may also be necessary for) their approach to this work is viewed ambiguously. Celebrities are mediated signs, and it can therefore be argued that they are important not for who they are but for what they represent (Ward 2011). However, I suggest that, in a branding context, the expectation of 'authenticity' that stakeholders place on their brands make the 'who' and the 'what' inseparable. People attach meanings to celebrities, transforming those celebrities into icons that are used as cultural shorthand for a variety of (sometimes conflicting) values. When associated with a brand, celebrities and the organizations they represent may become co-branded in the minds of participants, so that the values of the organization, the celebrity, and the participants become inseparable from one another.

The second part of this chapter analyses how Darlene Zschech, Hillsong's Head of the Worship and Creative Arts Department from 1996 until 2007, communicated the Hillsong brand's purpose and values in word and action—in other words, through her *lifestyle*. It discusses how Hillsong discursively managed her image—and thus the image of its music and its organization—in order to tell its own story. Hillsong did (and continues to do) this by acknowledging the contradictions inherent in the discourse of CWM and adopting a range of strategies, vis-à-vis the Hillsong brand, to manage those contradictions. In doing so, the brand provides a way for its stakeholders to understand their personal activities in terms that resonate with their everyday lives. The chapter concludes by revisiting the notion set out in the previous chapter that brands rely on cultural contradictions to promote their utopian promises (Holt 2004). Participants use brands to harmonize dissonances in their everyday lives. Hillsong's brand promise is one of transformation and transcendence of the 'sacred/secular' divide, affording its stakeholders a means by which they can live both 'in and of' the world.

Part I – the Christ/culture conundrum

There have been markets for religious or 'sacred' goods and services throughout history, two examples being the artefacts sold at pilgrimage sites and services such as indulgences (Moore 1994). Today these goods and services circulate on a global scale and often share the same production methods and distribution channels as their secular counterparts in the

marketplace of culture (Einstein 2008; Ingalls et al. 2013). Structural anthropologists suggested that religious objects and practices are 'set apart' from those of ordinary life. One of the most influential articulations of this line of thinking was Emile Durkheim's notion of the 'sacred' and 'profane' (Durkheim [1912] 2001, 36–40). Durkheim argued that religion is not constituted by belief in gods or spirits but instead in a distinction between things imbued with otherworldly meaning versus things of the world. Religions 'presuppose a classification of things, real and ideal, of which men think, into two classes or opposed groups, generally designated by…the words profane and sacred' (ibid, 36). While recognizing the limitations of the Durkheim's structuralist approach, his suggestion that dichotomies often frame thought and action is important. For many evangelical Christians, the sacred/profane dichotomy is most clearly articulated in the biblical mandate to live 'in, but not of, the world', a paraphrasing of Jesus' words to his followers in John 17, 13–16:

> 13 And now come I to thee; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. 14 I have given them thy word; and the world hath hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. 15 I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. 16 They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. (KJV)[2]

Evangelical Christians believe that they are called upon to engage with society in everyday life (especially for evangelism purposes) but should also maintain a higher moral standard than that of secular society. According to the Christian theological ethicist H. Richard Niebuhr ([1951] 2001), Christians negotiate the tensions between 'Christ and Culture' by adopting five strategies that relate the sacred to the secular. These strategies are differentiated by the degree to which the sacred and the secular are 'mixed'. One extreme, which Niebuhr calls the 'Christ against culture' view, separates the realms of the sacred and secular and calls for a withdrawal from the latter into the former. The other extreme, the 'Christ of culture' view, sees Christian values as the 'best' of human culture, and thus the two cannot be separated. Niebuhr also posits three mediating positions, which he calls 'Christ above culture', 'Christ and culture in paradox', and 'Christ the transformer of culture'. Each of these positions seeks, in different ways, to maintain a distinction between the realms of sacred and secular while still drawing from both. The 'Christ above culture' perspective acknowledges the synthesis of the two realms but argues that Christians must distinguish between the two in daily life. The 'Christ and culture in paradox' view essentially argues that Christians must struggle to live a holy life but will ultimately fail to do so. For those who subscribe to the third mediating position, 'Christ the transformer of culture', culture is a product of fallen humans and therefore redeemable through Christ.

Since the first publication of *Christ and Culture* in 1951, Neibuhr's work, and in particular his abstract (or at least, nonspecific) concept of 'culture', has been the subject of almost constant discussion and critique.[3] However, it is exactly this openness that allows for his core idea—that Christians inescapably must articulate 'Christian' culture in relation to 'secular' culture—to remain a valuable tool of analysis as both the former and the latter evolve. In their book, *Apostles of Rock: The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music* (1999), Jay Howard and John Streck apply Niebuhr's typology to show how concepts of the sacred and the secular (which, I suggest, are bound up with concepts of the sacred and the profane) shape Christian Contemporary Music. Using the rhetoric of the sacred and the secular that frames the Christ and Culture conundrum, Christian music artists, labels, and fans adopt different and often contradictory views about the nature and purpose of Christian music in order to justify their activities. For example, 'crossover' artist Amy Grant's songs are grounded in her faith but her lyrics are generally not explicitly Christian. To some, Grant is helping 'covertly' spread Christian values by reaching the 'unchurched'. To others, however, the lack of explicitly Christian lyrics in her songs is understood as a capitulation to the secular market. Arguments over artists like Grant reveal the rift within evangelical Christian culture about how to engage with contemporary secular culture—and particularly with its 'profane' consumer elements.[4]

Sacralizing consumer culture

Durkheim's dichotomy of the sacred and the profane is part of the sociological tradition that viewed the rise of scientific rationalism and the declining influence of centralized religious institutions as evidence of a 'secularization' process that would eventually lead to the collapse of organized religion, if not a complete disregard for the otherworldly (Stark and Finke 2000, 57–58). However, challenges to this view began to arise in the 1960s and 1970s (ibid, 62), and with a few exceptions (e.g., Bruce 2011), it is now widely recognized that religion is not dying, nor has it assumed lesser importance in people's lives (c.f. Berg-Sørensen 2013). Instead, the ways people express, practice, and experience belief are changing; religion is being 'updated' to reflect vernacular culture. This is nothing new: the history of evangelical Christianity is a history of dialogue between the practice of the Church and vernacular culture (Nekola 2009; Mall 2012; Ingalls et al. 2013). And while the debate continues over the extent to which, or indeed if, society is secularizing, it is clear that evangelical Christianity has *sacralized* consumer culture, appropriating and adapting the practices and organizational structures of the 'secular' in ways that afford not only a 'sacred' Christian cultural experience but a Christian *lifestyle* as well (Sargeant 2000; Twitchell 2007).

This sacralization of consumer culture is concomitant with a massive market for religious goods. From movies, books, and music to clothing

and coffee, billions of dollars are spent each year on 'Christian' products (Einstein 2008, 6). Significantly, much of this money is not spent in niche Christian shops, but in cathedrals of consumer culture, such as Walmart, which, at the turn of the millennium, was selling around $1billion worth of Christian books, movies, music, and other merchandise annually (Coolidge 2003). The 'Christian' appellation is now a selling point, a mark of differentiation that 'adds value' to the products and services by aligning them with Christian discourses and values.[5] The recognition of Christians as a potentially lucrative niche market has led to the development of a 'Christian culture industry' that exists as both a subset of and an alternative to the secular culture industries. For example, the Christian music label Tooth & Nail records counts among its imprints several independent Christian labels such as BEC (pop), Solid State (metal and hardcore), and Plastiq Music (electronica) and is also distributed by RED, a subsidiary of Sony Music (c.f. Nekola 2009, 226–37).

One fixture of both the secular and Christian culture industries is the celebrity (Ward 2011). The Christian celebrity is not a new phenomenon—all of the influential evangelists presented in Chapter 1 could be considered celebrities—but it is now an increasingly globalized one. World-famous pastors, worship leaders, and Christian bands circulate both physically and 'virtually' in a transnational web of conferences, products, and mass media (Coleman 2000). This is also true of Hillsong, which through the years has produced a steady stream of internationally known worship leaders such as Darlene Zscech, Reuben Morgan, Joel Houston, and Taya Smith-Gaukrodger, as well as crossover pop stars such as Brooke Ligertwood (née Fraser) and Natasha Bedingfield. These musician-spokespersons are the 'faces' of the church, which relies on them to disseminate its message and values via music. However, while harnessing the communicative power of celebrity, Hillsong must also manage the real and imagined dangers of the culture industries that it is part of.

The Christian culture industry is big business (Romanowski 2000), but as Howard and Streck (1999) show, this can be a source of consternation for those who engage with Christian music. On the one hand, money, fame, and corporate backing may be needed to reach—and also come with reaching—a large audience, and thus they are tools that, theoretically, can maximize the evangelical potential of Christian music. On the other hand, however, the glitz and glamour needed in order to gain recognition in an overcrowded market risk distorting the values that the music is supposedly grounded in and meant to communicate. Artists, labels, and consumers are thus often forced to reconcile perceived dissonances between economics, fame, and Christian values. This is often justified in the same economically inflected language that is used in the larger music industry (e.g., 'selling out'), something which points to one of the most influential discourses that shapes all culture industries: the discourse of authenticity.

Authenticity and the value of values

The look, feel, and sound of the sacred and the secular may be merging—and even sharing the same worship and retail spaces—but the meanings ascribed to the offerings that travel in and between the two spheres are often different. It is not always clear, for example, what defines 'Christian' music (Ingalls et al. 2013). 'Christian music' nevertheless clearly exists, at least as a marketing category through which the Christian music industry is positioned in relation to the music industry as a whole. Another concept that is difficult to grasp but is central to both the Christian music industry and the music industry as a whole is 'authenticity' (e.g., Kotarba 2009); it is a concept that brands, bands, and people are judged against (c.f. Cavicchi 1998; Lim 2005; Elliot and Davies 2006; Gilmore and Pine 2007). Despite philosophical arguments that authenticity is an ideal rather than an ontological possibility (e.g., Taylor 1991; Guignon 2004), it nevertheless remains real in that it is ascribed to goods, people, organizations, and experiences, and this has real social (and often financial) implications (Alexander 2006; Gilmore and Pine 2007).[6]

For Gilmore and Pine (2007), organizations achieve authenticity by first articulating a set of values that guide the company and then performing those values through offerings. An organization that produces offerings that perform its values is likely to be perceived as authentic; an organization that produces offerings that are perceived as incongruous with its values is likely to be considered inauthentic. Furthermore, a consumer is most likely to recognize authenticity in an organization's offerings when those offerings resonate with her own self-image (Gilmore and Pine 2007, 5). In other words, when the values of an organization and its participants are perceived to be synergetic, those 'shared' values become associated with its offerings. The offerings become branded, imbued with the shared ethos and meaning of a brand(ed) community (Muñiz and O'Guinn 2001; McAlexander et al. 2002), which in turn adds value to the experience of those offerings.

Musicians are often evaluated according to the same, if not more stringent, standards of authenticity as brands. For example, Bruce Springsteen's longevity is due in part to his ability to remain a 'real person' in the minds of his fans despite his success. From the stories he tells at the concerts to the ways he makes himself accessible to fans in hotel lobbies and bars, Springsteen's professed desire to remain true to his New Jersey roots is backed up by his actions (Cavicchi 1998, 63–72). For Springsteen fans, his authenticity is associated with the way he uses the music industry machinery for his own ends; like many CPM participants, both Springsteen and his fans seek to be 'in, but not of' the music industry.

Brands and celebrities (and celebrity brands—see Lim 2005) are culturally important because of the meanings that stakeholders attach to them (Ward 2011). Both are used as cultural shorthand for values. This is one reason why celebrities are often chosen as spokespeople for brands. Yet not just

any famous person can promote a brand; for a brand spokesperson to be effective, there has to be synergy between the spokesperson and the brand (Kamins 1990). For example, one of the most successful brand/celebrity pairings of all time is Nike and Michael Jordan. Nike's brand ethos is conveyed in its ubiquitous tagline 'Just do it', which is perfectly embodied in Michael Jordan, who even in retirement is renowned for being willing to 'just do' anything in order to win. The associations between Nike's swoosh and the iconic Jumpman are so strong that the company and the player have become 'co-branded' (Seno and Lukas 2007; c.f. Keller et al. 2011, 310–25).

Pepsi had the opposite experience with another famous 'MJ'—Michael Jackson. In 1983, Pepsi signed Jackson to what was, at the time, the most lucrative sponsorship deal ever, which led to a string of successful ad campaigns. However, in the following years, Jackson's behaviour became increasingly odd, and in 1993, Pepsi chose to sever its relationship with him after charges of child molestation were filed against him.[7] Although the charges were not proven at the time, Pepsi did not want the negative publicity around Jackson to be associated with the Pepsi brand. In this case, the suspect values of 'The King of Pop' vis-à-vis children did not play well for a brand with the tag line 'The Choice of a New Generation'.

The two 'MJ' examples above illustrate an important point: that ethical values are an important part of brand value and the brand experience. The efficacy of a brand is realized when the values of its participants—the brand itself, its stakeholders, and its spokespeople—are perceived to be synergetic. The difference between the above examples and Hillsong's 'celebrities' is that, while Jordan and Jackson were chosen to *market* already existing products, Hillsong's songwriters *create* the product and then become celebrities (or at least 'celebritized') because of the marketing, circulation, and use of their songs.[8] Furthermore, because the songs are the creations of the songwriters and by extension the church, the relationship between them and the brand is actually tighter than that of an 'outsider' who has been hired to promote a product.[9] The next section explores how this works in the case of Darlene Zschech and Hillsong and how the values of each are articulated in relation to 'sacred' and 'secular' discourses.

Part II – Darlene Zschech: face of the Hillsong brand

As mentioned, a brand and a celebrity that are perceived to have complementary attributes can become synergetic, or 'co-branded'. Hillsong has built its brand through its internationally renowned musical offerings, and as Dann and Jansen (2007) point out:

> … Music relies on brands that are formed by human delivery, and human interaction—the persona of the band or musician is part of the total branding performance….
>
> (Dann and Jansen 2007, 2; cited in Riches 2010, 143)

Alongside founders Brian and Bobbie Houston, Hillsong's stable of internationally known worship leaders are the church's human faces. These worship leaders are at the forefront of many of Hillsong's marketing communications, continually espousing the values that define the brand through word, song, and action. Riches and Wagner (2012) highlight the integration between the worship leaders and Hillsong's branding in their analysis of the church's musical offerings. They argue that the worship leaders' personalities and song repertoire are inextricable from the musical branding of the church. This is clear in the association between Darlene Zschech and Hillsong. Zschech's song 'Shout to the Lord' (1993) is one of the staples of the new Christian music canon: it is sung in thousands of churches around the world every Sunday.[10] Having sold over five million albums worldwide, Zschech is one of the most successful Christian music performers in the world (Connell 2005, 326; Evans 2006, 108) and during the height of her fame was by far the best-selling female Australian artist (Sams 2004, 38; see also McIntyre 2007, 177). During Zschech's tenure as Head of the Worship and Creative Arts Department at Hillsong Church from 1996 until 2007,[11] the church transitioned from a local Australian congregation into a fully branded transnational church, with various ministries (Riches and Wagner 2012). She was, according to Mark Evans, 'the face and sound of HMA [Hillsong Music Australia] and, in some people's estimation, of Australian congregational music generally' (Evans 2006, 107).

During Zschech's tenure, for example, her image appeared on the covers of all eleven of Hillsong's LIVE album releases, twelve if the re-release of *Friends in High Places* (1995) is counted. This is telling considering that no images of worship leaders appeared on Hillsong's album covers before this period, nor have they since (Riches and Wagner 201, 26–31). According to Russell Fragar, a worship pastor at Hillsong, Zschech's ubiquitous presence was part of the church's marketing strategy:

> I think there was a concerted effort to make Darlene a star.…And the funny thing is, that anyone who knew Hillsong kind of regarded it as a team, but in America, it was just Darlene. And it probably is still like that, to some extent.
>
> (Quoted in Riches 2010, 161)

Fragar suggests that the 'concerted effort' to promote Zschech was a response to a particular (American) market, the implication being that Zschech's celebrity was the language that Hillsong felt that an American audience (or at least one with 'American' values) would be drawn to.[12] However, he also suggests that those with insider knowledge of the church understood that Hillsong's ethos was more accurately embodied in the worship *team*, while to those unfamiliar with the church (in America), Hillsong was represented by a single star performer (c.f. Regan 2017). There is an implication here that specifically American consumerist values were at play and were mapped onto Zschech by the American market but were not necessarily 'authentic' to Zschech or to the church.[13]

Regardless of whether or not this is actually the case, what Fragar's assertion reveals is that Zschech's celebrity image was a focal point at which a myriad of values and associations coalesced and coexisted. It also reveals that, at least in the United States, Hillsong's brand name was at that time synonymous with both its music and its musicians.[14] While people who were familiar with Hillsong were likely to understand the team ethos as a core value of the church, those less familiar with its everyday activities (but familiar with its music) were more likely to map their own associations and values onto the organization through the individuals associated with it. As an icon of Hillsong, Zschech was arguably the popular language through which the church reached new audiences.[15] This reveals the value of branding for a transnational church. With five million albums sold and a song that is part of the new Christian canon, Zschech's celebrity was an evangelistic opportunity. Hillsong is a savvy marketing organization and has leveraged its worship leaders' fame to spread the gospel across the globe. But, as Ward (2011) has noted, fame is not due to *the celebrity* being everywhere but *the celebrity's image* being everywhere. Celebrity is created through repetition of mediated images that over time coalesce into a set of meanings and associations in the hearts and minds of those who consume them. From this view, it was not Zschech herself who spoke to Hillsong's stakeholders but her mediated image and the values associated with it.

Negotiating celebrity

Many of the branding challenges that Hillsong faces have to do with 'who' the church is. Because it is a transnational organization, Hillsong communicates its brand through mass media. This requires it to mediate its worship leaders' images in ways that allow those images to be easily disseminated and recognized. The church has done this to great effect; in a secular context, the recognition that Hillsong's worship leaders receive would qualify them as rock stars (Hartje-Döll 2013, 144). Yet for evangelical Christians there is only one rock star: Jesus. Hillsong is thus faced with the challenge of promoting 'non-celebrity' celebrities. It is stuck in the Christ versus culture paradox that informs Howard and Stark's analysis of CCM.

Some Christians see CPM as tainted by the inauthenticity of celebrity commercialism (Ingalls 2016). Therefore churches, artists, and listeners adopt a range of discursive positions in order to justify their activities in relation to it (Howard and Streck 1999). Hillsong, for example, markets its music as a resource for congregational worship—an aid to direct connection to God—rather than as entertainment. Accordingly, the website that promotes its 'Hillsong LIVE' (now 'Hillsong Worship') product line stated in 2012:

> Hillsong LIVE is the congregational expression of worship from Hillsong Church—a local church with global influence. This local church worship team has a commitment to continually resource the Body of Christ with fresh songs of worship and a deep passion to see

> people connect with the Living God in a real and personal way.... Looking to the future, Hillsong LIVE remains committed to inspiring and empowering the authentic worship of Jesus and resourcing the Body of Christ, everywhere.[16]

By positioning its music as a resource for worship, Hillsong circumvents the suspicions that evangelical Christians hold regarding famous Christian artists by suggesting a use value that is positioned in opposition to entertainment and economics, and thus to the CCM 'industry'.[17]

Another way Hillsong tries to mitigate the negative connotations of celebrity is by emphasizing the collective aspects of its musical activities. Like most evangelical churches, Hillsong refers to its worship groups as worship teams.[18] Aside from paid worship leaders, most of the worship team's members are volunteers. However, worship leaders are not paid for the performance aspects of their jobs. Rather, they are employed for other activities, such as providing pastoral care, carrying out various administrative duties, and training other team members. This important distinction ingrains the notion of worship as a lifestyle (as opposed to a 'job') into the ethos of the worship team.[19] The makeup and administration of worship teams in Hillsong churches across the globe are, with small variations, standardized. Each team consists of a few worship leaders and a large number of volunteer musicians, who perform according to their own availability and the needs of the church. A Hillsong worship team is generally made up of a worship leader, who sings and often plays acoustic guitar; up to five frontline singers; an electric guitar, a keyboardist, a bassist, and a drummer. Depending on the size of the church space, the team will also use backing vocalists. For example, the worship team that leads worship in the 3,500-seat Hills Campus auditorium is usually backed by a full onstage choir. In contrast, Hillsong London's team, which leads worship in the 2,000-seat Dominion Theatre, is supported by a group of four to six offstage singers, whose voices are layered into the front-of-house mix. Although worship leaders lead services weekly, they and the worship team volunteers will often rotate between morning and afternoon services and, in the case of the multi-site churches like Hillsong London, appear at different locations according to the needs of the church. In doing so, Hillsong makes apparent the number of musicians involved and is also able to maximize the number of volunteers who can participate on the team.[20]

Hillsong's team ethos is further evident in its album song credits. For example, a typical Hillsong album will feature an average of 12 different authors, and songs are often co-written. Additionally, although the songwriters retain the copyrights to their songs, Hillsong Church, rather than its songwriters, is named the 'Artist' in its distribution deals (Riches 2010, 147–49). This arrangement further integrates the songwriters into the collective that is the Hillsong brand. Hillsong thus positions its musical product in such a way as to set the songs and the church apart from the

CCM industry (in discourse as well as practice) and its attendant associations with consumer and celebrity culture. Yet it would be disingenuous for Hillsong's worship leaders to deny that they are famous. Hillsong's worship leaders therefore speak openly and often about the dangers of success, always taking care to acknowledge the true 'Famous One'. A typical example of this is seen in an interview with Darlene Zschech for AwesomeCityTV:

> I think we've got to be really careful, because worship is marketable. God will take his hand off once you turn it into just a product or something to do with dollars. I'm not on the 'Darlene trail' at all, but people can easily turn it over. So you've got to be real careful on why you're doing it—your agenda. Making sure it's for the right reasons. Not just for your opportunity to get your songs heard or whatever…but more for that communion with God, to point people towards Christ.
>
> (AwesomeCityTV 2019, begins at 4m54sec)

By proactively acknowledging that they are famous, Hillsong's worship leaders 'take control' of the conversation, an important brand management strategy (Cooke 2008, 88–125; c.f. Holt 2004, especially pp. 39–62 and 155–88). Like all brands, the Hillsong brand is a story, so it is important that the church is the one telling it.[21]

Shaping the 'Darlene' image

Zschech's personal brand is a story as well, one of a reluctant star whose rise to, struggle with, and ultimate acceptance of leadership and international fame is inextricable from Hillsong's brand. A child star from the age of 10, she accepted Christ at the age of 15 and joined the Hills Christian Life Centre's choir in the mid-1980s (Evans 2006, 107–108). Although she was content to sing in the choir, her talent shone through and she became the vocal director:

> I loved to sing, especially in a back up role—but God had another plan. After about two years of trying to convince me, one day as Pastor Brian [Houston] was leading the meeting, he just walked off and left it to me. It was just as well I didn't have anymore time [*sic*] to think about it because I was now doing it.
>
> (Zschech 1996, 81; cited in Evans 2006, 108)

When Hillsong's first 'star' songwriter, Geoff Bullock, suddenly resigned in 1996, Zschech was thrust into the spotlight, this time on the international stage:

> Before the *Shout to the Lord* album…we had been practising for weeks, getting everything ready. And four days before recording, through

> various situations, he [Bullock] decided to move on. Brian Houston said, 'You have to lead this', and I said, 'I can't, I really can't.' But through Christ we can do all things. For the next 48 hours my friends got on the phone and said 'You can do this, you can do this.' I just thank God we had no video cameras there that night, because all of us cried our way through that project.
>
> (Zschech, panel discussion, July 15, 1999; cited in Evans 2006, 107)

Following the release of *Shout to the Lord*, which featured the title track that established her as one of the best-known worship leaders in the world, Zschech was named the Head of the Worship and Creative Arts Department, a position she held until 2007. As long-time staff member Donna Crouch maintains, upon Zschech's appointment as worship leader: '…[i]t's almost like Darlene became the face and the leader' of Hillsong's worship (quoted in Riches 2010, 161). With her face appearing not only on the aforementioned LIVE album covers but also in countless other Hillsong-branded products and communications such as books, videos, and event flyers, Zschech's image and that of Hillsong became inseparable.

Even with her hit song, Zschech could not have become such an integral part of Hillsong's image and marketing strategy if she did not also speak to its target audience(s). Zschech resonated with many of Hillsong's stakeholders not only because they liked her music but also because they identified with the values articulated in her story. Importantly, she did not just espouse evangelical Christian values of modesty, humility, and devotion; she lived them as well. Like Bruce Springsteen, Zschech's mediated image and the 'real' Darlene were seen by her fans to be one and the same, and by all accounts, this is the case. For example, Don Moen (formerly of the Christian music label Integrity Music, which distributed HMA's music until 2010) writes in the foreword of Zschech's book *Extravagant Worship*:

> Darlene is a true leader who is passionate about worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth and is committed to raising up others all around the world to do the same. She is real, transparent, and vulnerable as a worship leader, but more important, she is the same person when she is not in front of thousands.
>
> (Zschech 2001, 11)

Zschech was an icon of the Hillsong brand not only because she was marketed as such but also because she was seen to live her life in a way that was congruent with the evangelical Christian values expressed by the church and held by its members. Hillsong is a Christian lifestyle brand: it promotes a set of values that are offered as alternatives to secular ones. Zschech was considered authentic because she lived that lifestyle.

Like Michael Jordan and Nike, Zschech and Hillsong were co-branded. Zschech was a good spokesperson for Hillsong because she embodied its brand values authentically. Through her actions and statements, she communicated what the church is about. As a mediated 'celebrity', she was shorthand for the brand. Hillsong encouraged Zschech's celebrity image, using it to great effect to spread the gospel.[22] Recognizing that Hillsong's vision is one of global Church growth, it is clear that Zschech's celebrity image was concomitant with this mandate.

Today, Zschech is the pastor of her own church on the Central Coast of New South Wales, Australia. The Hillsong brand continues with a new generation of songwriters, and Zschech produces music of her own. Furthermore, other (secular) celebrities such as Justin Bieber, Hailey Bieber (née Baldwin), and Selena Gomez have in recent years been linked with the Hillsong. These affiliations, widely reported in the mainstream press, have brought it some positive attention. However, while taking advantage of the communicative expediency of celebrity, the church must also manage the negative connotations of celebrity culture. This is difficult, because while Hillsong can proactively shape its story and perform its values in discourse and action, it is ultimately performing for its stakeholders. These are the people who experience the brand as authentic and with whose values the brand must align in order for it to be a meaningful part of the worship experience.

Part III – worshipping the worshipper: fans, disciples, and the danger of authenticity

Celebrities (and brands) represent states of being that might be aspired to—ways of, as Pete Ward puts it, 'being human' (Ward 2011, 96).[23] Part of Zschech's appeal was just this: she presented an image of an evangelical Christian lifestyle that was aspired to by many of the church's participants (Riches 2010, 162–63). From a branding perspective, this holds a number of advantages. However, in the context of the Christian culture industry, Zschech's appeal also presented a problem: by being authentic, she may have inadvertently contributed to her own idolization. Hillsong's brand is partly communicated through the 'godly' lifestyle of its worship leaders. But this, combined with the 'anointing'[24] of their talents, may lead some stakeholders to 'worship the worshipper' (Teoh 2005) instead of worshipping God. As Zschech was always quick to point out, 'one of the great dangers we face at Hillsong is the fact that we have become famous for our worship. But our job is to make God famous in our worship' (Zschech 2001, 151). Hillsong's worship leaders often remind participants that the purpose of their music is to worship God. Yet despite Hillsong's attempts to position itself in opposition to celebrity culture, the church can never fully extricate itself from the contradictions inherent in the Christian culture industry.

Hillsong is not alone. Indeed, no participant in the Christian culture industry can avoid its contradictions. This is why, while evangelical Christians may sometimes question the intentions of famous pastors and worship leaders, many are equally (perhaps more) mistrustful of themselves and are vigilant in their efforts to direct their admiration away from the platform and towards God. They acknowledge that fame needs an audience, and thus the responsibility of remaining a disciple of Christ rather than becoming the disciple of a celebrity ultimately lies with the worshipper. The following passage, taken from an article entitled 'When Jesus Meets TMZ' in the online Christian magazine *Relevant*, is a typical expression of this:

> When Christians look to pastors for wisdom on how to better love God and love one another, they become better disciples of Jesus and better lights of hope in a dark world. [However], [w]hen Christians look to pastors to tell them how to dress, what to eat, what hobbies to have, what systematic theologies to prefer, how to vote and what personality to adopt, they become creepy, unthinking clones of broken people—and big red warning flags to a culture that has grown increasingly suspicious of authority figures.
>
> (Evans 2012)

Evans' description of some Christians as 'creepy, unthinking clones of broken people' bears a striking resemblance descriptions of fans that dominated the first wave of fan studies and still appears in the popular press. These representations often presented fans as feeding unthinkingly on the mediated mush of celebrity culture in order to provide meaning to their lives. In extreme cases, fans were pathologized, their behaviour associated with a mental illness or an allegiance to a cult leader.[25]

The religious-like activities of music fans have been well documented (e.g., Hills 2002). For example, Cavicchi (1998, 41–59) describes similarities in language, structure, and social importance between the personal stories of those who 'found' Bruce Springsteen and evangelical Christian conversion narratives and further notes that the narratives of both groups focus on a radical, enduring personal transformation (ibid, 59). Fans also find sacred meaning in physical places. For example, Gilbert Rodman (1996) suggests that Graceland is a 'sacred space' for Elvis fans akin to a pilgrimage site or church. Both Springsteen and Elvis fans find significance in their activities in ways that are similar to those in which worshippers find significance in theirs. However, Matthew Hills notes that, while the significance is *similar*, it is not (at least for most) *the same*. Most fans acknowledge the ritual similarities between their activities and religious ones—and may even use religious language to describe their activities—but they also strenuously deny any true religious elements in their fandom (Hills 2002, 124). As Ward notes, there is a certain seriousness in religious activities that is absent in fan analogues (Ward 2011, 57–86). This observation can be nuanced by

suggesting that, while fans often take their activities and the meanings derived from those activities very seriously, they rely on a certain quality of 'play' that is absent in most 'true' religious activities.

The overlap between religious and fan narratives is apparent in my interview with Roy, a 36-year-old member of the worship team at Hillsong London. Originally from the Philippines, he had been collecting Hillsong albums for years before he emigrated to the UK:

TW: So you collected the [Hillsong] albums back in the Philippines?

R: Yeah, because I was collecting all of their albums since the mid-nineties. I'm really an avid fan, I would say! I am an avid fan of Hillsong, from way back home. I am blessed with all their songs. I listened to them almost every day. And I said, 'Lord, I can't help but dream of going there'. And the Lord was really telling me, yeah, you have to see the world out there….I remember one night—I couldn't help but cry. Because I was listening to Christian music, and then when I searched for the composer and the church behind it, it was Hillsong. I was looking on the internet for Hillsong. I actually thought that Hillsong is a place in Australia! But I was told it's not a place in Australia. It's like David used to sing songs at the top of the hill.[26] That's where they started creating the church, Hillsong.

(Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

Like Graceland for Elvis fans, for Roy, Hillsong represents a sacred place that is imbued with spiritual power. Hillsong is also a pilgrimage site, both as a geographic destination and as a significant marker in Roy's personal narrative:

TW: How did you come to Hillsong?

R: It all started seven years ago when I got to collecting every Hillsong album. It all started with a dream that someday I would have to be either in Australia or somewhere else where there is a branch. I kept asking the Lord. I started praying in the year 2001. And then God made it possible for me, but it took me seven years. Before I came here, I kept asking the Lord. And I said: 'Lord, why does it take me seven years'? Then God referred me to the book of Genesis, when it says that, 'When I created Heaven and Earth, it took me seven [days]. And on the seventh day I rested'. And seven, biblically speaking, speaks of completion. And it speaks of perfection. So I said, 'Ok, this may be God already giving me a sign to go out, and I just have to follow wherever God will lead me'. When I came here, it took me about—I think two months. Before that, I was surfing the internet for where it says Hillsong London is actually located. And it was so amazing, because I was in the countryside at first. And then somebody called me—my uncle—and he said 'Why don't you visit me here, and let's talk about what you want to do here

> and we'll help you out'. And I was surprised, because I was reading a book then by Joyce Myer—I'm really into deep reading. And my flat mate, he asked me, 'Are you Christian?' and I said 'Yeah, how did you know'? 'Because I can see from the book you are reading'. And then he said, 'Do you want to go to church?' And I said, 'What church are you going to?' And he said 'Hillsong'. 'Are you serious?' I was really quite surprised. It's so amazing that God really orchestrated this thing.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

Roy had developed an affective connection with the Hillsong music. He was able to attend the London campus, which would not have the same preachers or musical performers as the Sydney campus. However, it carries the Hillsong brand, which was enough for him. As Blackwell and Thompson note:

> …building a brand on the key values of its customers causes them to connect with the brand at an emotional level, much more than just a cognitive level, evoking strong responses and connections that differentiate customers from fans. Fans feel, perhaps without knowing why, 'This is my brand'.
>
> (Blackwell and Stephan 2004, 36)

In interviews and conversations, many of Hillsong's participants referred to Hillsong as 'my church'—a testament to its focus on cultivating community. However, unlike Blackwell and Stephan's hypothetical fans, Hillsong's stakeholders know and are quite articulate about why Hillsong is their church. The church and its brand are integrated into their life stories, as is evident in Roy's testimony.

Brands are important to identity-making projects because, through them, stakeholders articulate themselves to themselves. When engaging with a branded offering, stakeholders are in part embodying, or at least taking part in a dialogue with, the values and image of the brand. One important focus of this book is the evangelistic 'power' of the Hillsong brand (see also Wagner 2017). Many of Hillsong's participants consider the church and its music 'anointed'. The brand is imbued with biblical authority and, as a resource for worship, has both inwardly focused and outwardly focused evangelistic potential. This is significant for evangelical Christians, for whom spreading the gospel is a mandate:

TW: What is it about Hillsong's music?

R: Well, I think God's specific mandate for Hillsong church is to really influence the lives of people through music. Because music for me is really powerful. It has the power to change lives, and move their emotions, you know? And quench their hearts. It's the life [of] the church. Without music, I don't think this church would have gone that far.

> Yeah, that's pretty much God's mandate for Hillsong. Because they have been sweeping the land, you know? They're really sweeping the land. And it's very popular back home. Every Christian church used to sing the songs from Hillsong. A lot of Filipinos—Hillsong is really well known to our country because—I mean, all Christian churches know the songs of Hillsong.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

Roy endows the songs with spiritual authority, recognizing Hillsong as anointed with a musical mandate from God. For many of Hillsong's participants, this anointing is part of the power of the music, which brands the church and its people. For example, as Geoff Bullock explained in an interview with Mark Evans:

> In the end [the Hillsong] fundamental is that the church is anointed, therefore all those people who come to the church are anointed by association…whatever success [those people] have is because of their association, not because of their own doing.
>
> (Bullock, interview with Mark Evans, 1998; cited in Evans 2006, 99)

Again emphasizing the church and the team ethos, Zschech, speaking on a Hillsong Conference panel, noted:

> Our church [Hillsong]…[has] an anointing for a new song. We have tried other things, but we have an anointing for a new song. We still sing hymns, we sing them often…. We haven't thrown out the old, but we understand the anointing on our house. Now that is going to be different from the anointing on your house. Once you understand the direction of your leadership [then] operate out of that in strength…. We have so many songwriters coming through, but that is the anointing of our house.
>
> (Evans 2006, 100)

The spiritual authority associated with Hillsong's songwriting is key to the experience of the Hillsong brand and the efficacy of its music. Since the church, its music, and its worship leaders are all integrated parts of a sacred understanding of the Hillsong brand, it follows that the musical talents of its songwriters are 'God-given', as expressed by Hillsong's General Manager George Aghajanian:

> Our albums are more of a distillation of many, many songs that are submitted to us through our various songwriters, and those songs are really a reflection of those songwriters' relationship with the church but also more importantly with God. So these guys have their own journey,

> obviously, their own Christian journey, and their gifting—these guys have got [a] gifting to write music, to lead worship, and so they're writing with the hope that they can get this song to connect people with Christ…. The songs really come back to the anointing that God puts on these guys. And out of that anointing, out of the leading of the Holy Spirit, the songs that they bring—which hopefully are fresh, they're new—[will] help people encounter Christ during a worship service.
>
> (Interview with author, September 28, 2011)

The authenticity of Hillsong's worship leaders and songwriters is in their personal relationships with God. Their songs are understood as authentic expressions of this relationship and, because the songwriters are also church members, are as such understood to be reflective of the church as a whole. The church, its values, its music, and its musicians are all parts of the gestalt of the Hillsong brand, and Hillsong's participants 'hear' the meanings imbued in Hillsong's brand through its worship leaders and their songs. This is evident in an email exchange between Vicki, a long-time participant/stakeholder at Hillsong London, and myself:

TW: What did you think of the [*A Beautiful Exchange*] album?

V: I especially liked Brooke Fraser's song.[27] The 'Beautiful Exchange' song has a special meaning for me—it is something extraordinary—the way it is constructed as a song and performed by Joel and the woman…. *It is the blend of music, scriptural truth, and the lovely personality of the performers that makes the Spirit of Jesus alive*. Having such songs is a powerful and an all-consuming experience for each and every personality that listens to it. I can imagine many unbelievers get to have a first encounter with our God, who I do not think has been worshipped in such a scale and with such sources on Earth so far… It reminds me of the greatness of God, who remains true to himself—that he is fulfilling every single scriptural promise with the purpose to glorify himself. This performance, the fact that this song is written and sung is a powerful testimony of the truthfulness of God.

(Email exchange with author, July 13, 2011; emphasis added)

The key here is to understand that an evangelical (and some might argue a specifically Hillsong) worldview is deeply embedded in the meanings that are associated with Hillsong's worship leaders and the brand. In particular, it is important to recognize the centrality of the transformative power of the Holy Spirit to the Pentecostal practice that is Hillsong's lineage (Albrecht 1999; Evans 2006). In Pentecostal belief, every Christian is imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit. This transforms them into a mouthpiece for God, a potential evangelist through whom the Spirit speaks to the world. Although the understandings and manifestations of this power vary among Pentecostal communities (Hollenweger 1972; Cox 1995; Anderson 2004), it

is in ritual contexts (where music is often, but not always, involved) that this power is most evident. For Hillsong and its stakeholders, then, God anoints the church's music and musicians. They are imbued with the power of the Holy Spirit, with which they can transform the world. As seen in Vicki's statement and Roy's comments above, there is a utopian element to this.

Conclusion – paradox, utopia, and transcendence

Brands articulate their utopian promises through the contradictions that are experienced by participants in their everyday lives (Heilbrunn 2006). A utopia is also always in dialogue with the real conditions of human existence (Wegner 2002). It is a 'nowhere', a critical representation that expresses the '*differences* between social reality and a projected model of social existence' (Heilbrunn 2006, 104). It is a picture of what 'could be', but like the Protestant dilemma of being 'in, but not of, the world', it cannot express itself except from within the dominant systems of values and ideas that structure the real conditions of existence:

> Utopia thus has a two-sided nature; on the one hand it expresses what is absolutely new, the 'possible as such', that is what is unthinkable in the common categories of thought used by the people at a given time; it must thus employ fiction or fable to express what it has to say. On the other hand, it appears impossible for Utopia to transcend the ordinary language of a period and of a place, that is it cannot totally transgress the codes by which people make reality significant to them.
>
> (ibid, 105)

For Heilbrunn, the power of a brand's story is derived from its utopian promise: it gives stakeholders a chance to experience what 'could be' through a 'real' offering. Hillsong's brand offers a sacred experience, an encounter with God, which is facilitated by its branded worship music.

However, utopia is elusive and even non-existent. Douglas Holt (2004) sees brands as materials with which people manage the contradictions they experience in their everyday lives. In his book *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*, Holt contends that iconic brands such as Coke, Harley Davidson, and Volkswagen are successful because they provide narratives that help people manage cultural contradiction and rupture. Holt gives the example of his experience of a Diet Coke advert. In it, a nerdy guy stands in the bathroom flossing his teeth while singing along to Cheap Trick's 1979 hit song 'I Want You to Want Me'. A female voiceover intones: 'He flosses too much. But you can't rule out a guy who knows all the lyrics to one of the greatest songs of all time' (Holt 2004, x). Holt confesses that he identified with the advert's character not because he liked the song but because it 'grabbed familiar cultural material and used it to tell a story about manhood, a story I wanted to believe in' (ibid). The song

juxtaposed his youth with the pressures of an adult middle-class existence, providing him, in musical shorthand, with 'a little ammunition to manage this contradiction' (ibid, xi).

For Hillsong and its participants, the Hillsong brand provides the 'ammunition' needed to resolve, at least momentarily, the tensions that evangelical Christians may feel in a world that they are inextricably part of but with which they do not necessarily always share the same values. For its part, Hillsong is faced with a Christ versus culture conundrum that shapes, even constitutes, the Christian culture industry. On the one hand, as a transnational organization, Hillsong is dependent on mass media to communicate its message. This means speaking in the vernacular of the culture industry, of which celebrity and branding are part. On the other hand, the church is held to a particular set of evangelical Christian ideals that at first glance may seem dissonant with the economic and communicative realities of consumer culture. However, closer examination reveals that while the mediated forms of the Christian culture industry may be similar—or even identical—to those of the secular culture industry, its content is different. Hillsong makes this clear by presenting its musical offerings as spiritual resources, its musicians as team members, and its worship leaders as 'reluctant' celebrities, thereby proactively shaping the image of its brand by (re)casting its communication in evangelical Christian language that resonates with the worldviews of its stakeholders. A key part of this worldview is an emphasis on the power of the Spirit's anointing, which is inseparable from the power of the music and the brand as a gestalt of the people, places, things, feelings, and experiences. The key to this is that Hillsong's discourse allows its position along Niebuhr's typological continuum to be fluid and multiple.

John J. Thompson claims that 'Christian rock melds faith and culture' (Thompson 2000, 11). As a key part of the Hillsong brand, this is certainly true. Hillsong's branded music harmonizes the dissonances between sacred and secular cultures that participants experience in their daily lives. The Hillsong brand harnesses the moral dualisms of the sacred and profane in ways that resonate with its participants, who also ascribe sacred meaning to the church, its music, and its musicians. As a product of 'godly' individuals, the brand is imbued with evangelical power. Hillsong's music is a resource, a way to experience the evangelical efficacy latent in brand promise. In other words, Hillsong's branded music affords its participants the possibility of experiencing Heaven on Earth, the power of the Holy Spirit in their daily lives, and even to be for a moment 'in, but not of, the world'.

Having explored how Hillsong's brand allows it to both embrace and distance itself from 'the world', the next chapter investigates how it positions itself in the 'sacred' world—specifically the imagined (Anderson [1983] 2006) and imaginary (Wegner 2002) community of the 'Body of Christ'—that is also an articulation of utopia.

Notes

1 Hillsong's musicians consider their worship music church-based rather than talent- (artist-) based, and therefore distinct from CCM. As noted in the Chapter 1, however, the commodity status of the music means that there is considerable overlap between the two. This being the case, Hillsong's music and CCM may only be differentiated at the discursive level.
2 See also James 1:27 and Romans 2:12.
3 For some recent discussions, see Greene (2004), Carter (2006), and Carson (2008).
4 For other accounts, see Thompson (2000), Joseph (2003), and Beaujon (2006).
5 The products and services that constitute the Christian culture industry are often indistinguishable from their secular counterparts in terms of quality (Einstein 2008), and the marketing strategies used by the Christian culture industry to reach its audiences are often as sophisticated as their secular counterparts (Romanowski 2000; Nekola 2013). Arguably, then, the only difference between the secular and Christian culture industries is the 'Christian' label, through which products and services become associated with specific Christian discourses.
6 *Authenticities* is a better term to describe the competing hierarchies that impact in different ways according to context and individual subjectivities. The main point here, though, is that authenticity—while slippery—is a powerful concept that affects people's judgements, decisions, and actions. In other words, it is from a phenomenological point of view, real.
7 *Pepsi Drops Michael Jackson*. www.nytimes.com/1993/11/15/business/the-media-business-pepsi-drops-michael-jackson.html. Accessed August 8, 2013.
8 Thanks to Tanya Riches for this insight.
9 The intimacy of association between Hillsong and its musicians overwhelmingly works to the church's advantage. However, Hillsong from time to time has been dogged by the behaviour of high-profile members that runs contrary to the church's professed values and brand image. For example, former youth pastor Michael Guglielmucci's song 'Healer', about his battle with cancer, was a hit track on the Hillsong LIVE album *This Is Our God*. On the DVD release, Guglielmucci appeared with an oxygen tank, something that he did regularly in performance over a two-year period. It was later revealed that he never had cancer, but was instead attempting to cover up a pornography addiction. Although Hillsong removed the video from later DVD releases of the album, it still serves as fodder for the church's critics. While Pepsi could easily, if expensively, sever ties with Jackson—who was recognized as an 'outsider'—this kind of incident poses a challenge for the church, which markets its music as congregational expressions of its corporate values. Brian Houston's YouTube response to Guglielmucci's actions can be found at: www.youtube.com/watch?v=eTZ4F5GW4M8. Accessed July 22, 2013.
10 https://songselect.ccli.com/search/results?List=top100&CurrentPage=2. Accessed March 15, 2019.
11 Zschech left Hillsong in 2011 to pastor her own church, Hope Unlimited Church, on Australia's South Coast.
12 Longtime Hillsong member Tanya Riches suggests that the decision to market Hillsong's worship leaders rather than the congregation was driven by the church's American distributor at the time, Integrity Music, and not the church itself (personal communication, May 28, 2019).
13 Fragar's comments were made in 2008, two years before Hillsong's expansion to NYC (although Hillsong United had previously toured in North America). As of 2019, there seems to be no culture clash, as Hillsong has 13 locations in the United States across the northeast, southwest, and California.

14 This is largely still the case. See Reagan (2017).
15 It should be noted that different Hillsong artists are more or less popular in different markets. For example, according to Tanya Riches, who is familiar with the Pacific Asian and South American markets, Hillsong's male worship leaders are more popular than the female ones (Riches, personal communication, June 23, 2013).
16 http://live.hillsong.com/. Accessed February 28, 2012.
17 As Mark Porter points out, this kind of usage is discursively positioned in opposition to 'the industry', but in practice, it actually adds value because of its commodity status (Personal communication; May 20, 2019).
18 As noted in Chapter 2, the 'team' ethos is an important aspect of the Hillsong brand. Numerous volunteer groups carry out most of the work that keep Hillsong's churches going from week to week, from acting as ushers during Sunday services and conferences to contributing to its many marketing activities like website building and video shooting and editing. This has the dual benefit of both promoting community and instilling a sense of ownership in participants while also, as noted earlier, keeping operating costs to a minimum.
19 Thanks to Tanya Riches for this insight (Riches, personal communication; April 18, 2013).
20 Another benefit of having a large worship team is that new vocalists are always being trained to be worship leaders. Participation as a backing vocalist is part of the training to be a frontline vocalist, and participation in the front line is part of the training to be a worship leader. Because of this, there is never a gap in the team (Riches, personal communication; April 18, 2013).
21 The rise of the internet means that brands are subject to the vicissitudes of public opinion as never before. While Hillsong enjoys a great deal of positive press in personal and industry blogs, websites, and social media, it also has to deal with negative press (e.g., Michael Guglielmucci—see note 9 in this chapter). Criticism has been particularly pronounced in the Australian press (e.g., Pearlman 2005; Pollard 2010), and also on the internet, where blogs and YouTube videos accuse it of 'cultish' activity (although most of this is rather polemical; see, for example: //www.jesus-is-savior.com/Evils%20in%20America/Apostasy/hillsong_music_cult.htm; accessed July 22, 2013). A former Hillsong member has also written a book criticizing the church (Levin 2007).
22 According to one worship leader I interviewed: 'I get the impression Brian thinks Darlene is pretty amazing…and [Hillsong worship leader Russell] Fragar felt it was the most ironic thing ever, as she is loved by the church because she is ordinary, but Hillsong promote(s) her like she is the only branding power they have. He [Fragar] didn't feel that it was them using her celebrity, but something that made Brian feel less insecure about the product—which was a self-fulfilling prophecy in a sense' (email communication with author, August 15, 2011).
23 Conversely, celebrities can also represent states to be avoided. Either way, they represent specific sets of values.
24 In evangelical Christian culture, something that is anointed is understood to have God's blessing and thus is imbued with the transformative power of the Holy Spirit. This is both a powerful and a controversial trope (Evans 2006, 100–106). In recent years, Hillsong has stopped referring to its music as 'anointed', at least in public communications. However, the idea still pervades the church's culture, as several participants I interviewed used the term to describe the music and/or the musicians.
25 For discussion, see Hills (2002, 1–23) and Sandvoss (2005, 1–10).
26 'After that thou shalt come to the hill of God, where [is] the garrison of the Philistines: and it shall come to pass, when thou art come thither to the city, that thou shalt meet a company of prophets coming down from the high place

with a psaltery, and a tablet, and a pipe, and a harp, before them; and they shall prophesy' (1 Samuel 10:5).

27 Brooke Ligertwood (née Fraser) does appear on the album *A Beautiful Exchange*. However, Joel Houston authors the song 'Beautiful Exchange', and the worship leaders are Houston and Annie Garratt. It is likely that Vicki's confusion stems from the fact that Ligertwood is a fairly well-known pop star outside of the Hillsong context, while Garratt is not.

References

Adorno, Theodor W. 1991. *The Culture Industry: Selected Essays in Mass Culture*. London: Routledge.

Albrecht, Daniel E. 1999. *Rites in the Spirit: A Ritual Approach to Pentecostal/Charismatic Spirituality*. Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press.

Alexander, Jeffery C. 2006. 'Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance Between Ritual and Strategy'. In *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*, edited by Jeffery C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast, 29–90. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Anderson, Allan. 2004. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Anderson, Benedict. [1983] 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition. London: Verso Books.

AwesomeCityTV. 2009. *Darlene Zschech the Heart of Worship Part 1*. www.youtube.com/watch?v=kfaB6MyzQsY. Accessed March 15, 2019.

Beaujon, Andrew. 2006. *Body Piercing Saved My Life: Inside the Phenomenon of Christian Rock*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press Inc.

Berg-Sørensen, Anders, ed. 2013. *Contesting Secularism: Comparative Perspectives*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Press.

Blackwell, Roger, and Tina Stephan. 2004. *Brands That Rock: What Business Leaders Can Learn from the World of Rock and Roll*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley & Sons.

Bruce, Steve. 2011. *Secularization: In Defence of an Unfashionable Theory*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Carson, Don A. 2008. *Christ and Culture Revisited*. Nottingham, UK: Apollos.

Carter, Craig A. 2006. *Rethinking Christ and Culture: A Post-Christendom Perspective*. Grand Rapids, MI: Brazos Press.

Cavicchi, Daniel. 1998. *Tramps Like Us: Music and Meaning among Springsteen Fans*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Coleman, Simon. 2000. *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Connell, John. 2005. 'Hillsong: A Megachurch in the Sydney Suburbs'. *Australian Geographer* 36 (3): 315–32.

Cooke, Phil. 2008. *Branding Faith: Why Some Churches and Nonprofits Impact Culture and Others Don't*. Ventura, CA: Regal.

Coolidge, Carrie. 2003. 'David Vs. Goliath'. *Forbes*, September 15, 2003. www.forbes.com/2003/09/15/cz_cc_0915wmt.html.

Cox, Harvey G. 1995. *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books.

AU: "Arvidsson 2006; Lury 2004; McLuhan [1964] 2001; Moor 2007" are provided in the reference list, but not cited in the text. Kindly provide citation for these references in the text or delete the references from the reference list.

Dann, Stephen, and Elisabeth-Bird Jensen. 2007. 'Brand Personalities with Real Personality: Strategies for Individual Brands and Branded Individuals in the Entertainment Industry.' Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy Conference, December 3–5, 2007. University of Otago. www.researchgate.net/publication/252606716_Brand_Personalities_with_Real_Personality_Strategies_for_Individual_Brands_and_Branded_Individuals_in_the_Entertainment_Industry.

Durkheim, Émile. [1912] 2001. *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*. Abridged edition. Edited by Mark S. Cladis. Translated by Carol Cosman. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Einstein, Mara. 2008. *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*. London: Routledge.

Elliot, Richard, and Andrea Davies. 2006. 'Symbolic Brands and Authenticity of Identity Performance'. In *Brand Culture*, edited by Jonathan E. Schroeder and Miriam Salzer-Mörling, 155–70. London: Routledge.

Evans, Mark. 2006. *Open Up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Gilmore, James H., and B. Joseph Pine II. 2007. *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Greene, Colin. 2004. *Christology in Cultural Perspective: Marking Out the Horizons*. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.

Guignon, Charles. 2004. *On Being Authentic*. London: Routledge.

Hartje-Döll, Gesa. 2013. '(Hillsong) United Through Music: Praise and Worship Music and the Evangelical "Imagined Community"'. In *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity and Experience*, edited by Monique Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, and Tom Wagner, 137–54. Farnham, UK: Ashgate Publishing.

Heilbrunn, Benôit. 2006. 'Brave New Brands: Cultural Branding between Utopia and A-topia.' In *Brand Culture*, edited by Jonathan E. Schroeder and Miriam Salzer-Mörling, 103–17. London: Routledge.

Hesmondhalgh, David. 2013. *The Cultural Industries*. Third edition. London: Sage Publications Ltd.

Hills, Matthew. 2002. *Fan Cultures*. London: Routledge.

Hollenweger, Walter J. 1972. *The Pentecostals*. London: SCM Press

Holt, Douglas B. 2004. *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Howard, Jay R., and John M. Streck. 1999. *Apostles of Rock: The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

Ingalls, Monique M. 2016. 'Transnational Connections, Musical Meaning, and the 1990s 'British Invasion' of North American Evangelical Worship Music'. *In The Oxford Handbook of Music and World Christianities*, edited by Jonathan Dueck and Suzel Ana Reily, 425–48. New York: Oxford University Press.

Ingalls, Monique M., Anna E. Nekola, and Andrew Mall. 2013. 'Christian Popular Music'. In *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*, edited by J. R. Watson and Emma Hornby. Available at www.hymnology.co.uk.

Joseph, Mark. 2003. *Faith, God and Rock 'n' Roll*. London: Sanctuary Publishing Ltd.

Kamins, Michael A. 1990. 'An Investigation into the "Match-up" Hypothesis in Celebrity Advertising: When Beauty May Be Only Skin Deep'. *Journal of Advertising* 19 (1): 4–13.

Keller, Kevin Lane, Tony Aperia, and Mats Georgson. 2011. *Strategic Brand Management: A European Perspective*. Second edition. Harlow, UK and New York: Financial Times/Prentice Hall.

Klaver, Miranda. 2018. 'Global Church Planting in the Media Age: Hillsong Church'. *Interculturelle Theologie. Zeitschrift Für Missionswissenschaft* 44 (2/3): 234–46.

Kotarba, Joseph A. 2009. 'Pop Music as a Resource for Assembling an Authentic Self: A Phenomenological-Existential Perspective'. In *Authenticity in Culture, Self, and Society*, edited by Philip Vannini and J. Patrick Williams, 153–68. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Lash, Scott M., and Celia Lury. 2007. *Global Culture Industry: The Mediation of Things*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Lim, Gerrie.2005. *Idol to Icon: The Creation of Celebrity Brands*. London: Cyan Books and Marshall Cavendish.

Mall, Andrew. 2012. '"The Stars Are Underground": Undergrounds, Mainstreams, and Christian Popular Music'. Dissertation. University of Chicago, 2012.

McAlexander, James H., John W. Schouten, and Harold F. Koenig. 2002. 'Building Brand Community'. *The Journal of Marketing* 66 (1): 38–54.

McIntyre, E. H. 2007. 'Brand of Choice: Why Hillsong Music Is Winning Sales and Souls'. *Australian Religion Studies Review* 20 (2): 175–94.

Moore, R. Laurence. 1994. *Selling God: American Religion in the Marketplace of Culture*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Muñiz Jr., Albert M. and Thomas C. O'Guinn. 2001. 'Brand Community'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 27 (4): 412–32.

Niebuhr, H. Richard. [1951] 2001. *Christ and Culture*. New York: Harper Collins.

Nekola, Anna. 2009. 'From This World to the Next: The Musical "Worship Wars" and Evangelical Ideology in the United States, 1960–2005'. Dissertation. University of Madison-Wisconsin.

Nekola, Anna. 2013. '"I'll Take You There": The Promise of Transformation in the Marketing of Worship Media in US Christian Music Magazines'. In *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity and Experience*, edited by Monique Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, and Tom Wagner, 117–36. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Pearlman, Jonathan. 'Hillsong Denies Bribe Allegation'. *Sydney Morning Herald*, December 23, 2005, sec. National. www.smh.com.au/news/national/hillsong-denies-bribe-allegation/2005/12/22/1135032135696.html.

Pollard, Ruth. 'Coffee Giant Embroiled in Bitter Battle over Beans'. *The Sydney Morning Herald*, April 19, 2010. www.smh.com.au/small-business/franchising/coffee-giant-embroiled-in-bitter-battle-over-beans-20100419-sn6q.html.

Reagan, Wen. 2017. '"The Music that Just about Everyone Sings": Hillsong in American Evangelical Media'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 145–62. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Riches, Tanya. 2010. 'SHOUT TO THE LORD! Music and Change at Hillsong: 1996–2007'. Masters Thesis. University of Sydney, Sydney College of Divinity.

Riches, Tanya, and Tom Wagner. 2012. 'The Evolution of Hillsong Music: From Australian Pentecostal Congregation into Global Brand'. *The Australian Journal of Communication* 39 (1): 17–36.

Rodman, Gilbert B. 1996. *Elvis after Elvis: The Posthumous Career of a Living Legend*. London: Routledge.

Romanowski, William T. 2000. 'Evangelicals and Popular Music: The Contemporary Christian Music Industry'. In *Religion and Popular Culture in America*, edited by Bruce David Forbes, 103–22. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.

Sams, Christine. 2004. 'One of These Sydney Singers Has Sold Five Million Records: And It's Not Delta.' *The Sun-Herald*, May 16, 2004.

Sandvoss, Cornel. 2005. *Fans: The Mirror of Consumption*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Sargeant, Kimon Howland. 2000. *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Seno, Diana, and Bryan A. Lukas. 2007. 'The Equity Effect of Product Endorsement by Celebrities: A Conceptual Framework from a Co-branding Perspective'. *European Journal of Marketing* 41 (1/2): 121–34.

Stark, Rodney, and Roger Finke. 2000. *Acts of Faith: Explaining the Human Side of Religion*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Taylor, Charles. 1991. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Teoh, Hannah. 2005. 'Worshipping the Worshipper: When Worship Leaders Become Famous.' In *Papers from the Trans-Tasman Research Symposium,'Emerging Research in Media, Religion and Culture'*. Ed. Peter Horsfield. Melbourne, Australia: RMIT Publishing, 86–94.

Thompson, John J. 2000. *Raised by Wolves: The Story of Christian Rock and Roll*. Toronto, Canada: ECW Press.

Twitchell, James B. 2007. *Shopping for God: How Christianity Went from in Your Heart to in Your Face*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Wagner, Tom. 2017. 'The "Powerful" Hillsong Brand'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 253–69. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Ward, Pete. 2005. *Selling Worship: How What We Sing Has Changed the Church*. Milton Keynes, UK: Paternoster Press.

Ward, Pete. 2011. *Gods Behaving Badly: Media, Religion and Celebrity Culture*. London: SCM Press.

Wegner, Phillip E. 2002. *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Zschech, Darlene. 1996. *Worship*. Sydney: Hillsong Australia.

Zschech, Darlene. 2001. *Extravagant Worship*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers, 2001.

4 'With One Accord'
Brand identity and participation

Introduction

> *The O2 arena lights dim. On stage, against a backdrop of deep blues and purples, the silhouettes of Tribe of Judah frame the figures of Hillsong, Holy Trinity Brompton, and Jesus House London musicians. Suspended chords mingle with dry ice as the 16,000 participants wait expectantly. Presently, a disembodied voice floats out from the arena's surround-sound speakers. A few moments later, the giant digital screen at the back of the stage reveals the voice's owner: Martin Smith of the band Delirious?, one of the best-known Christian bands in the UK. Smith proceeds with the opening lines to his group's hit 'Rain Down', not from the stage but from the audience. This signifies that he, the audience, and musicians are worshipping as one.*

The above description of the ethnographic moment is drawn from my fieldnotes from the Pentecost Festival finale that I attended on the evening of June 11, 2011. Organized by the missional events charity Share Jesus International, the Pentecost Festival was a ten-day, citywide celebration of Pentecost that presented public events such as art exhibitions, lectures, workshops, and worship services across London.[1] The event drew 16,000 participants to London's O2 Arena for a night of worship. Most of these participants attended Hillsong London, Holy Trinity Brompton (HTB), or Jesus House London, the three London-based, branded evangelical Christian megachurches that co-hosted the event, but some also came from other churches in the city or had travelled from abroad. The theme of the evening was 'With One Accord', an articulation of unity found in the Pentecost story:

> 1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, they were all *with one accord* in one place. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire,

> and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.
>
> (Acts 2:1–4, KJV, emphasis added)

Significantly, not once that evening did anyone on stage explicitly say, 'We are all with one accord'. Rather, this was made apparent discursively, actively, and musically through appeals to scripture, corporate worship and prayer, intergroup performances, as well as through the participation of several transnational evangelical Christian music celebrities.

This chapter examines the importance of positioning and expectation in the musical branding experience. Using the O2 event as a case study, this chapter first explores how Hillsong and its collaborators used music as a 'register of style' (Rommen 2007) to position themselves as distinct brands within the global evangelical Christian imagined (Anderson [1983] 2006) and imaginary (Wegner 2002) utopian community of the 'Body of Christ'. The second part of this chapter uses interviews I conducted with two of the events' participants to explore the ways in which brand identity framed expectations of participation and experience. The third part of the chapter uses the experiences of two more of the event's participants to question the ways in which branding afforded or hindered actual participation and experience. The chapter concludes by suggesting that, although Hillsong's brand meaning is derived from feelings of participation in a local and transnational community, the process of branding may in some cases preclude participation and therefore may be at odds with Hillsong's utopian brand promise.

Part I – 'With One Accord': style, brand identity, and community

Brand positioning is important because brands are marks of differentiation or, in the case of aspirational lifestyle brands such as Hillsong, distinction.[2] A brand's identity and the identities of its participants are co-dependent and co-productive: participants use the identity and values associated with the brand to perform their own identity and values, while at the same time, the brand's identity and values are associated with the perceived ethics and values of those who use it. Brands therefore express what is distinct both about their products and about their participants. But this distinction is also dependent on comparison with similar 'others'. A classic example of this is the co-dependent relationship between Coke and Pepsi. The two brands coexist in and also help constitute a 'product category' that helps consumers understand what they can expect from the products prior to experiencing them. Most people know that Coke and Pepsi are both fizzy cola drinks and therefore expect that both will be dark, sweet, and may cause one to burp if consumed too quickly. The two brands' names further focus

consumer expectations because each product is associated not only with measurable attributes such as sweetness but also with esoteric attributes that are instilled through the branding process. For example, Coke draws on its century-long history to brand itself as 'the Real Thing'—an inseparable and authentic part of Americana (Pendergrast 2000). In contrast, Pepsi positions itself as 'the Choice of a New Generation'—the alternative to the stodgy establishment drink in a red can. Each brand's tagline seeks to appeal to a set of values, which in turn articulates a community of users for whom cola is not just a beverage choice but a lifestyle choice as well.

Churches are not colas, but the branding principle of differentiation within a product category—as well as the relationship between branding, values, and lifestyle discussed above—is applicable to both. Hillsong London and its Pentecost Festival collaborators can be broadly classified as New Paradigm churches (Miller 1997). It can even be suggested that they ultimately offer the same 'product'—a personal relationship with God. However, the experience of church is profoundly communal, so access to the relationship with God is also affected by *participation* in the church community. I will therefore begin by examining how each church that participated in the O2 event performed a distinct cultural identity through *style*.

Style and the brand identities of the O2 event churches

Ethnomusicologist Tim Rommen suggests that *style* is composed of different 'registers' that include music, fashion, and language (Rommen 2007). These registers are not independent but instead work together to articulate identity and values. Rommen's work will provide the main theoretical positioning for this chapter, but I would first like to position it alongside Roger Wilk's notion of *systems of common difference* (Wilk 1995). For Wilk, globalization has not diminished the diversity of styles of local cultural expression. Rather, as globally circulating media reaches more and more people, the *frames* within which local styles are articulated have become fewer. Presenting the global Miss Universe beauty pageant as an example of an event in which style signifies local (in this case national) identity, Wilk argues that:

> … the global stage does not consist of common content, a lexicon of goods or knowledge. Instead it is a common set of formats and structures that mediate between cultures….that put diversity into a common frame, and scale it along a limited number of dimensions, celebrating some kinds of difference and submerging others.
>
> (Wilk 1995, 111)

For Wilk, difference is expressed through mutually recognized forms of expression, and it is the way those forms of expression are aestheticized that index difference. The music at the O2 event can be thought of in a

similar manner. All three groups played popular music that draws from centuries of transatlantic musical mixing; this meant that the music had similar tonality, chord progressions, rhythms, and instrumentation (drums, keyboards, guitars, bass, and voice). However, within the broad category of 'popular music', aesthetic differences branded each church's music (and congregation) as unique. Below is a brief description of each church's 'style'.

Jesus House London

Located in Brent Cross in North West London, Jesus House London is an affiliate of the Nigerian-based Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), an umbrella organization that claims parishes in 178 countries throughout the world.[3] The Jesus House brand can be found across the United States and Europe. The Jesus House London website states that, 'With… approximately forty [40] nations represented in its membership—and growing—Jesus House can confidently refer to itself as a home "for all nations"',[4] yet it is clear from the RCCG website and other media that RCCG-affiliated churches practise an African expression of Pentecostalism.[5] Indeed, the RCCG's founder, Enoch Adeboye, describes its brand of Pentecostalism[6] as: 'Made in heaven, assembled in Nigeria, exported to the world' (Rice 2009).

At the O2 Pentecost event, Jesus House London's gospel choir, Tribe of Judah, performed its church's Black/African Pentecostal identity. Its repertoire consisted of popular contemporary African American gospel songs, and its performance style included coordinated swaying, handclapping, and foregrounded the call and response that is emblematic of the style. Furthermore, Jesus House's music was piano-driven, which stood in contrast to the guitar-heavy offerings from HTB and Hillsong. This difference in instrumental emphasis was most apparent in the musical texture: HTB and Hillsong built sonic walls of overlapping chords, while Jesus House favoured interweaving the musical lines from the piano, voices, and bass, the latter instrument being noticably more active than in either HTB's or Hillsong's sets. The gospel choir image was further indexed through the matching outfits its members wore, which comprised black pleated trousers, white dress shirts, matching waistcoats, and burgundy ties.

Unlike Hillsong and HTB, Jesus House does not compose its own music. Instead, it draws from the repertoire of popular African American gospel artists such as Alvin Slaughter III and Bishop Paul S. Morton. This music is widely known in the Christian community, even outside 'gospel' circles.[7] For example, Tribe of Judah performed the song 'Let It Rain' at the O2 event. This song has been recorded not only by African American gospel artists, such as Morton, but also by groups that are stylistically similar to Hillsong and HTB, such as Jesus Culture and Delirious?. While widely known, it is not self-referential to the Jesus House brand in the way that the church-produced songs that HTB or Hillsong performed are.

Holy Trinity Brompton

In contrast to Jesus House and Hillsong, which trace their roots to Nigeria and Australia, respectively, Holy Trinity Brompton is the 'homegrown' church at the London O2 event. HTB is part of the Anglican charismatic movement (Hocken 2002) and seeks to revitalize struggling churches through two mediums that are not stereotypically 'Anglican': charismatic expression and popular music.[8] With a constituency that is majority white and British, HTB's music is the most 'folk-rock-like' of the three; it is more centred on the acoustic guitar than Hillsong's electronic pop/rock aesthetic, and more folk music inflected than the African American gospel sound of Tribe of Judah. As noted in the description of Jesus House's music, HTB's textures were achieved through a layering of strummed chords, with the emphasis on the acoustic guitars that gave it a 'twang'. The music was also not as syncopated as that of Jesus House. The members of HTB's worship band, which is associated with its music ministry, Worship Central,[9] dressed in casual jeans and either button-down shirts or T-shirts, less formal than Tribe of Judah's matching uniforms but also not as 'hip' as the skinny jeans that Hillsong's musicians favoured.

HTB's Director of Worship at the time of the event, Tim Hughes,[10] is well known in the UK and internationally, particularly for his Dove Award–winning song 'Here I am to Worship', which, like Darlene Zschech's 'Shout to the Lord', has become a staple of the new evangelical Christian worship canon. HTB's music ministry Worship Central is also similar to Hillsong's in that it produces music, tours, appears at conferences, and promotes worship, albeit on a smaller scale. However, in contrast to Hillsong—a church whose brand is synonymous with its music—HTB's brand is more strongly associated with the Alpha Course, an introduction to Christianity programme that is itself an internationally recognized religious brand (Einstein 2008). The disparity in brand recognition between Worship Central and the Alpha Course was clear in interviews I conducted with non-HTB members, many of whom were familiar with Hughes' music but couldn't recall his name, instead referring to him as the 'Alpha Course guy' (as opposed to the 'Worship Central guy'). In terms of the relationship between each church's branding and its music, then, HTB's music is branded more strongly than Jesus House London's, but less strongly than Hillsong's.

Hillsong London

In contrast to Jesus House London's predominantly black British/African and HTB's majority white British congregational identities, Hillsong London's ethnic and racial demographics are more diverse: its congregation members hail from all six continents, and its weekly services are translated into seven different languages. Hillsong's heritage is Pentecostal, but its theological emphasis and presentation of worship is very much in the

mainstream New Paradigm 'seeker' vein that, while not discouraging them, tends to avoid overtly charismatic displays of the Holy Spirit, such as glossalia (i.e., speaking in tongues) and holy laughter.[11]

Hillsong's overall musical style (especially Worship and United, whose members performed at the event) can be described as stadium pop/rock in the style of U2. The hallmarks of this style are a driving 'four on the floor' feel, with bass guitar and keyboards providing pedal tones and ostinatos under layers of electric guitars. These instruments were thus less melodically active than in Jesus House or HTB, making Hillsong's music sonically distinct. Hillsong's musicians and congregation members also tended to be more 'hip' in their sartorial choices, favouring skinny jeans and long T-shirts. The existence of a distinct 'Hillsong style' was confirmed by several of my conversation partners, including Flo, the head of the translation team at Hillsong London.

> Hillsong worship is known for being more rock 'n' roll and simple enough for new people to 'get it'. We also do have a Hillsong-worship-style: v-neck, skinny jeans and what I like to call the 'Peter Wilson' boots[12]… we've had moments of hats and scarves but I think that's gone (for now).
>
> (Email exchange, November 6, 2011)

Hillsong's music is the most strongly branded of the three churches that participated in the O2 event. Its 'global' congregation is reflected in all aspects of its musical product, from the visual imagery on its CD covers and in its videos to the lyrical content of its songs to its recognizable 'Hillsong Sound' (Riches and Wagner 2012; see also Chapter 5 of this book). Furthermore, its music is used in churches around the world on a regular basis (Evans 2015). Many of the worship leaders and congregants I interviewed spoke of a 'Hillsong style worship', by which they were referring to both the presentation and the content.[13] From this perspective, then, Hillsong would seem to have pioneered an iconic 'style' of worship.

Registers of style and the Body of Christ

What is interesting in Flo's statement about a 'Hillsong style' above is that she observes a confluence of music and fashion in the formation of Hillsong's worship style. Dick Hebdige introduced the importance of style to cultural studies in his book, *Subculture: The Meaning of Style* (1979). In it, he argued that style was a form of resistance in an asymmetric power struggle between the 'culture' and 'subculture' of post-war Britain. One of *Subculture*'s most significant contributions to music studies was that it showed that sonic and sartorial meanings are associated with one another. The Punks, Mods, and Teddy Boys in *Subculture* each preferred a mode of dress and style of music that they used to construct, maintain, and express life*styles*, and more importantly the values that underpinned them.

In his study of Trinidadian Christians, Tim Rommen (2007) also draws attention to the way stylistic choices signify values. During his fieldwork, Rommen attended a 'Unity Rally', during which two churches performed together. There, he observed one church perform North American gospel music while its preacher wore a suit and tie and spoke with an affected North American accent. In contrast, the other church performed in the 'Gospelypso' style drawn from the local dancehall music. Its members dressed in local garb and spoke the local vernacular. Rommen observes that at this rally music, dress, and language were 'discursive formations in their own right, at once illustrating their own powers of expression and broadening the ethical horizons of discourse about identity by taking their place alongside the use of musical style' (Rommen 2007, 76). The difference between the Punks, Mods, and Teddy Boys in Hebdige's study and the Gospelypsonians in Rommen's study is that while the former used style as a clearly antagonistic demonstration of subcultural difference, the latter deployed style within the rally's discursive frame of subcultural 'unity'.

Rommen draws a contrast between what he calls the *invisible church* and the *visible church* in order to illustrate the symbolic role of style in mediating a value-laden Trinidadian dialogue over nationalism, colonialism, and faith. He conceptualizes the invisible church as the 'sum total of believers everywhere' (ibid, 72); in other words, the global Church. This construction is similar to the evangelical Christian idea of the 'Body of Christ', which derives from the Pauline epistles in Corinthians 12:12–14[14] and is generally understood to be the sum total of all Christians on Earth, or the Christian Church with a 'capital C'. Participation in both of these global imaginaries is often signalled through the use of the 'non-local'. For example, in Rommen's study, participation in the invisible church is signalled by the use of North American gospel music, dress, and speech, all of which have been imported to Trinidad through migration and trade, but also through conferences and media.

Style works as an implicit value statement that becomes explicit through the senses. Rommen draws a contrast between the invisible, unified church and what he calls the visible church, a 'local' church, where Trinidadian Christians' value differences play out. In his fieldnotes on the event, Rommen writes:

> I am somewhat unsure what to make of this Unity Rally. To begin with, the word 'unity' does not even come up during the rally, a fact that adds to the uncomfortable sense that the surface sheen of the evening—including banners and flyers—only diverts attention away from a general lack of community. To be sure, a mass choir does perform….But beyond that, the event itself does not live up to its billing. The choir rehearsal…had the feel of an uncomfortable reunion—everyone knows each other but no one has much to say.
>
> (Rommen 2007, 74)

Although the 'Unity Rally' was intended to emphasize the *unity* of the invisible church, Rommen argues that the differing styles gave away the game, effectively displaying the *disunity* of the visible church. Through visible and audible style, participants in Rommen's case study signalled their attitudinal positions in relation to each other and the discourses that formed the invisible church. His analysis of music's ultimately differentiating effects highlights difference and unity as dialogically co-dependent. This co-dependence has been posited as one of the primary features of globalization (c.f. Appadurai 1990; Featherstone et al. 1995; Wilk 1995) and can be seen in the discourses that underpin 'unifying' international events, such as the Eurovision song contest and the Olympics. As evangelical Christianity has globalized, it has also become increasingly concerned with expressing unity through music (Martí 2012). The O2 event was an example of this.

The vast majority of evangelical Christian 'unity' rallies, including the O2 event, occur in the 'conference' format. A worship cocktail that is one part music festival, one part church service, and almost always uses an appeal to corporate 'unity' as its mixer, a conference is a place where style serves as a positioning tool 'in relationship to local and translocal Others within the global Christian community' (Ingalls 2011, 266). The vast majority of conferences are not as implicitly hostile as the event described by Rommen. In fact, evangelical Christian conferences are more often than not articulated as utopias, both imagined and imaginary.

'With One Accord': Pentecost as a utopian narrative, imagined and imaginary

Rommen's 'invisible church' and the evangelical 'Body of Christ' are both examples of Benedict Anderson's ([1983] 2006) 'imagined community', a community of people who are too spatially and temporally dispersed to meet face-to-face but who nevertheless feel united through the use of common mass media. The imagined community is useful for understanding how people learn about, and participate in, the Body of Christ. As Simon Coleman (2000) has proposed, the mass media that has propelled the spread of evangelical Christianity has also created a 'generic Pentecostal'. Through transnational flows of preachers, conferences, and especially digital media such as the worship videos that have made Hillsong famous, participants around the world 'learn' the normative language—verbal, physical, and musical—that constitutes evangelical Christian worship and, by extension, the evangelical Christian. Anderson's focus on the imagined community being built through mass media therefore illuminates how participants learn about 'others' in the Body of Christ and their roles in it. While there is clearly a utopian element to the imagined community, Anderson does not address this. However, Philip Wegner's 'imaginary community' does. For Wegner, literary utopian discourses function not as escapist fantasies but

instead 'have material, pedagogical, and ultimately political effects, shaping the ways people understand and, as a consequence, act in their worlds' (Wegner 2002, xviii, cited in Ingalls 2011, 264). In other words, stories have phenomenological effects; the lessons they have to teach can be embodied, experienced, and made real.

I suggest that the Pentecost story, then, provided the utopian narrative for the O2 event, painting a picture of a place where everyone worships as one in different but mutually intelligible ways:

> 1 And when the day of Pentecost was fully come, *they were all with one accord in one place*. 2 And suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. 5 And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. 6 Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language.
>
> (Acts 2: 1–6, KJV; emphasis added)

This discourse was the frame in which, through musical participation, 'biblical narrative and personal experience [became] conjoined in a dialectical relationship: the experience of conference worship [was] used to interpret evangelical narratives and beliefs…and vice versa' (Ingalls 2011, 264). As will be discussed in what follows, at the O2 event, registers of style worked between the narrative 'world as it should be' and the actual 'world as it is'. In the act of worship, the 'world as it is' was, for a moment, located (and perhaps experienced) within a discursive utopian frame.

The Pentecostal movement derives its name and core beliefs from the second chapter of the Book of Acts. In the narrative presented above, the Holy Spirit bestows the gift of tongues on the disciples, unifying humankind for the first time since God divided it in the Old Testament story of the Tower of Babel. In the Tower of Babel story, distinction was detrimental; it divided mankind and made cooperation towards building the tower impossible. In contrast, the gift of tongues made distinction an advantage; now, each group could maintain its own language (and presumably identity) but work together towards building the Church. The Pentecostal use of distinction is the exact goal of transnational branding. Transnational brands seek to unify the local and the global, to be a common language that appeals to common values while being authentically personal to the individual. The ideal brand is a dialogue between distinction and unity.

At the O2 event, distinction and unity were on display through the common medium of style, a 'system of common difference' (Wilk 1995). Different communication styles were celebrated. For example, when leaving

the stage after delivering his message, Jesus House's pastor Agu Irukwu brought participants to their feet by highlighting his 'Pentecostal' nature:

> You know, I can't help it…I am Pentecostal, and we make a lot of noise. So before I go, I want us to raise a shout that would cause an earthquake in the pits of Hell!

The crowd enthusiastically responded with a sustained barrage of clapping, cheering, and pounding of feet. Into this cacophony stepped HTB's pastor Nicky Gumbel, who both immediately acknowledged the diversity of the Body of Christ and established his place in it:

> We love every part of the Body of Christ, but we have a very special love for Jesus House and for Pastor Agu. Well, I'm an Anglican, and I need to ask your forgiveness in advance, because I can only talk quietly!

The ethnographic vignette that opened this chapter described ways in which distinction and unity were musically navigated through style, as well as how style articulated ways of participating in the Body of Christ. One obvious move was that musicians from all three churches were represented more or less equally. There was no clear 'leader', as this role was outsourced to Martin Smith. Smith is an interesting choice because of the way his own set of associations mapped onto the focus of the evening. Smith is the former leader of the now defunct UK Christian band Delirious?. In Christian music circles, Delirious? is considered a 'crossover' band in two respects: first, it achieved success in both the 'secular' and Christian charts,[15] and second, it achieved international success, 'crossing over' the Atlantic to the United States. Through Smith, then, the O2 engaged with the transnational character of the Body of Christ in a manner similar to Rommen's case study. As an internationally touring musician, Smith does God's work on a global stage—and as a 'local boy' his evangelical efficacy is rooted 'at home'. In other words, he localized the transnational Body of Christ in the UK.

The localizing of the transnational continued throughout the evening. For example, the first group to follow Smith was HTB's worship team from Worship Central. The band opened with Tim Hughes' hit 'Happy Day' and followed with 'For Your Glory (We Will Dance)', a worship standard written by the UK star Matt Redman. Most of the participants were familiar with both of these upbeat, guitar-driven tunes, and clapped and sang along happily. A strong folk-rock influence can be detected in Hughes' songwriting, but he is also known for venturing further afield in his collaborations with the West London hip-hop group 29th Chapter. In this spirit, the finale of HTB's set was an electrified hip-hop reworking of Hughes' hit 'Spirit Break Out'. In this version, the chorus' normally smooth hook was given a jagged edge by a rapper, whose frenetic repetition of the words 'Spirit-Break-Out' whipped the crowd into a chanting, fist-pumping frenzy.

Beyond a stylistic appeal to unity (fusing rock with hip-hop), the song itself appealed to the Pentecost story's notion of unity through the Holy Spirit. The chorus of 'Spirit Break Out' is as follows:

Spirit break out
Break our walls down
Spirit break out
Heaven come down

What I am interested in here is how the O2 event simultaneously constructed and transcended several 'walls'. Each church stylistically branded itself a distinct entity, yet performed with the others against a background that framed difference as harmony. Furthermore, the transnational nature of the groups—claiming roots in Africa, the UK, and Australia—was localized in the UK not only because London is the home of all three church branches and where the event took place but also because musical 'leadership' of the combined group was ceded to a UK superstar in the form of Martin Smith—himself both an 'outsider' and an 'insider'.

Furthermore, Hughes' engagement with hip-hop brings to the fore associations from which style is inextricable: those of race and ethnicity. An engagement with transnational identity cannot happen without consideration of these 'categories'. As noted in my description of each church at the beginning of this chapter, race and ethnicity are part of each of the three churches' identities and are mapped onto the music. For example, Jesus House's predominantly black congregation worships with African American gospel music, whereas HTB's predominantly white congregation uses a folk/rock aesthetic. While the connections between race, ethnicity, and style are of course problematic, the associations between the two nevertheless exist (c.f. Martí 2012).[16]

Just as the transnational character of the Body of Christ was gestured towards through an international star, so too was its multi-ethnic dimension. The evening was brought to a close by Israel Houghton, who was at the time a worship leader at Joel Osteen's Lakewood Church in Houston, Texas, the leader of the band New Breed, and one of the best-known and electrifying performers on the Christian music scene. As a performer, Houghton's energy, charisma, and technique are unparalleled. His music defies classification, a mix of rock, country, blues, and gospel that reflects his upbringing in the southern United States. Additionally, Houghton is biracial, the semiotics of which cannot be ignored in the context of the evening.[17] As a brand, Houghton embodies the discourses that framed the O2 event as well as anyone.

The preceding discussion has sought to highlight the interplay of style, identity, and values. Style, built through registers such as clothing, language, and music, interacts with local and translocal others in dialogues that are, at their root, about values. These dialogues work to form pictures

of 'unity', but it is ultimately the production of difference that makes the idea and experience of unity possible. The O2 event highlights the ways in which the production of difference and sameness, within the discursive framework of Pentecost, worked in collaboration with the branded identities of the churches. Pentecostalism's embrace of individualism makes it well suited to modernity and globalization and also makes it amenable to branding, which thrives on difference and differentiation. As the above discussion suggests, while the Body of Christ is predicated on unity—on worshipping as one—it is the difference within it that helps it grow. Branding is therefore a powerful tool for transnational churches like Hillsong in their mission to build the transnational imagined and imaginary Church.

For many of the event's participants, the O2 event was not merely a remembering, retelling, or re-enacting of a biblical story; it was an immediate experience of the Holy Spirit, a personal encounter with God that reinforced spiritual identity. Pentecostal identity is difficult to define because, as Allan Anderson puts it, 'Pentecostals have defined themselves by so many paradigms that diversity itself has become a primary defining characteristic of Pentecostal and Charismatic identity' (Anderson 2004, 10). Furthermore, the Pentecostal movement has been characterized by fissures between groups almost since its inception (ibid, 39–62). This tendency towards diversity and disunity has contributed to Pentecostalism becoming the twentieth century's fastest growing religious movement, as it has adapted to almost any socio-economic niche it has been introduced to across the globe (c.f. Hollenweger 1972; Cox 1995; Burgess and van der Mass 2002; Anderson 2004).

I suggest that parallels can be drawn between what the Holy Spirit 'did' at Pentecost and what modern global brands seek to do, which is to establish mutually intelligible communication across national, cultural, and ethnic barriers while simultaneously remaining distinct. Brand identities are predicated on the expectation that engagement with the brand will yield an experience that is different from that of another brand's similar offering. I argue in the next section that a worshipper's familiarity with brand identity sets up expectations that are vital for entrance into and the experience of the imagined transnational and imaginary utopian community that is the Body of Christ, and indeed the transcendent God encounter.

Part II – music, brand recognition, and expectation

Enduring brands use consistency to stake out a piece of 'mental real-estate' in the hearts and minds of participants (Jones 2012, 19–20). As a participant becomes familiar with an organization's values through repeated communications, a brand image coalesces. At the O2 event, the participants I interviewed arrived with already formed ideas of each church and its music. Our conversations revealed that the images they held were derived in part from their familiarity (or lack thereof) of the

church in question. Furthermore, these images informed the expectation of the 'type' of worship they would engage in. An example of this is seen in the following interview I conducted with Matt and his friend Geoff, two men in their early twenties. Matt is a member of HTB, and Geoff worships at a 200-member church in Canada (he was visiting to take part in HTB's Alpha Course). I questioned both while they were queuing to enter the arena.

TW: So you've both heard of Hillsong.
M: (immediately) Yes—big fan!
TW: What are you expecting out of tonight?
G: If I know Hillsong is going to be there, I think 'excellence' would be one of the things. (M: that's good; that's good). And I like excellence because I think it's worship as well; it's giving their all. So I know that the music will be tight, the production value will be good, and I won't find any elements of it distracting from what I'm really there for, which is to worship.
M: Yeah, I'm with that!

(Interview with author, June 11, 2011)

Geoff had a pre-formed idea of the 'personality' of each church and its worship even before he entered the arena. From Hillsong, he expected 'excellence', something that the church's brand has long been associated with both musically and technically (Stackpool 2009). It is also a value that the church constantly promotes in building its corporate culture (Zschech 2001, 12–44). The high production value of Hillsong and churches like it has sometimes been criticized as 'glitz', but the church counters that, for participants who experience the highest-quality level of media production in their everyday lives, anything less than that standard will be deemed amateurish and will distract from worship. Geoff, who claimed he knew in advance that there wouldn't be any technical flaws to distract him because of Hillsong's level of presentation, supported this contention. Part of branding is establishing consistency over time and across offerings, and over the years, Hillsong has built a reputation that engenders confidence in its product. Geoff doesn't just *expect* excellence—he *knows* it will be there, helping him to worship without distraction.

While Geoff's image of Hillsong was one of the technical wizardry of Hillsong, his image of HTB's brand of worship was based on the visibility—or lack thereof—of its musicians:

TW: What [are you expecting] out of HTB, then?
G: Oh, what am I expecting out of HTB? I don't know…faceless worship? That's what they're good at: faceless worship, where you don't notice the worship leader. Where you don't notice the worship leader; you just worship together. That's what I'm expecting.

TW: So do you think that Hillsong is more 'faced' then?
G: They get out more. They tour way more, so of course people begin to identify with the performers.
M: It's true. It's a slightly different model, but not in a bad way. I think both are good. I do think Hillsong is about grabbing your attention and pointing you at someone else—at Jesus Christ—whereas I think that HTB is about worshipping Christ and join in if you'd like to.

(Interview with author, June 11, 2011)

Although Hillsong and HTB's presentation styles might lead to different worship experiences, both Geoff and Matt agreed that the sum might be better than the individual parts:

G: It's kind of nice to get both [worship styles].
M: Yeah, it's a good combo. Obviously tonight you've got the gospel choir as well, and Israel [Houghton].
G: I didn't even know about that!
M: Yeah, it's good!

(Interview with author, June 11, 2011)

For Geoff and Matt, Hillsong's brand is associated with technical excellence and the recognition of its musicians. It grabs the worshipper. This stands in contrast to HTB's brand of worship, which is often less assertive. Matt and Geoff referred to the least-strongly branded church (at least in terms of music), Jesus House London, as 'the gospel choir'. There are many reasons why Matt and Geoff might have been less familiar with Jesus House than Hillsong and HTB, from geography to demographics to simple taste in music. However, I suggest that the fact that Geoff, who lives in Canada, was familiar with both Hillsong and HTB by name speaks to a disparity in brand recognition that is directly correlated both to the popularity of the two churches' music and also to the fact that the music of each is branded.[18] Hillsong's music is some of the best known in the world, to which its ubiquitous presence on music charts, at the Dove Awards (the Christian equivalent of the Grammys), and on social media attests. It also boasts a stable of internationally known stars, some of whom are pop stars outside of Christian music circles.[19] Here we see that distribution and marketing have an impact on the worship experience, something that is addressed further in Chapters 5 and 6. In particular, Chapter 6 explores the roles branding, agency, and participation play in the worship experience. As a prologue to this, the following section explores how branding can affect a participant's ability to participate. The 'God encounter' that is sought in worship is attained through participation, but 'the type' of people in a church—a branded community—affects the nature of this participation.

Singing along: expectation, participation, and a 'branded' church community

Matt and Geoff's worship expectations were based on brand familiarity; they expected a different type of worship, in terms of presentation, from each group. Significantly, this meant that the two men expected to *worship differently* depending on the group that was on the platform:

TW: Do you think you'll worship differently for each group?
M: Oh, that's a good question. Well, I suppose being from one church, I'm quite familiar with my own church's songs and stuff, so probably in that sense, yeah. But I hope the heart of it won't be any different anyway.
G: For me, there's going to be familiarity with one band that I know better than another, and that, when you're worshipping and you know the words, you can just enter in. If it's HTB, I might not know all the songs they're going to play, and I might end up spending more time looking at the words. It's obviously a different experience, but I don't think one is better than the other. I think they're very complementary and I like that.
(Interview with author, June 11, 2011)

Here, the distinction between the manner of worship that Geoff referred to is important. Although he was visiting from Canada to attend HTB's Alpha Course, he was more familiar with Hillsong's songs than with HTB's. He admitted that he would probably need to look at the words in order to participate in worship when HTB was on the platform, though not as much when Hillsong was. Although Geoff didn't explicitly say so, my interpretation of his comments is that he believed it would be easier to attain *flow* (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) during Hillsong's worship set because the text was already internalized. One of the reasons that hymnbooks are not used in many evangelical Christian churches is that the embodied experience, and particularly the emotional elements of that experience, is thought to be of the utmost importance in a transcendent 'God encounter'. This is why contemporary worship songs commonly feature memorable melodies and easily sung lyrics that are projected above the stage. Simply put, a participant whose head is buried in a book, trying to comprehend unfamiliar text, may not have the intellectual, emotional, or physical freedom necessary to engage with worship in the manner needed to achieve transcendence.

Familiarity with the church and its music is furthermore important because the pleasure derived from listening to music is linked to that familiarity (Unwin et al. 2002; King and Prior 2013). People enjoy knowing what will come next, which affords certain kinds of participation. Brand familiarity, then, is important because it influences how people expect to participate in the rituals that make worship efficacious. This is linked to exposure to the music, which for a transnational church like Hillsong is linked to distribution and marketing. A key point that emerges from the conversation

with Matt and Geoff is that of brand personality. Brands have personalities (Aaker [1996] 2010). As Matt and Geoff showed, we expect them to act in certain ways (Fournier 1998). However, the connection between a brand's personality and its stakeholders' identities is co-productive. People use branded products to express their identities both to themselves and others. As discussed in Chapter 3, they often choose brands that have values that they associate with their own. The flip side of this is that a brand, and thus its identity, becomes associated with the 'type' of person that uses its products.[20] For a musically branded church like Hillsong, then, music will probably be one of the major elements in determining the makeup of the congregation (Sargeant 2000; c.f. Martí 2012).

Part III – the Hillsong brand(ed) community: 'a certain type of people'

One of the major assumptions that drives musical selection in evangelical Christian churches is that music plays an important factor both in church choice (Sargeant, c.f. Martí 2012) and in the experience of worship (Nekola 2009). To appeal to congregational tastes, churches may feel that they have to choose between organ-based 'hymns' and rock-based CWM services. Some will address this supposed division in musical taste by offering either separate 'traditional' and 'contemporary' services or a 'blended' service that features both (Sargeant 2000). Similarly, especially in the United States, the concern to attract a 'multi-ethnic' congregation has led many churches to add different 'ethnic' styles, such as salsa and reggae, to their repertoires (Martí 2012).

Within evangelical Christian circles, then, worship music is often associated with a certain 'type' or 'brand' of person. It may also be seen as one of the strongest links between that person and his or her church. Although the theme of 'one accord' was the overriding discourse of the O2 event, and the participants I spoke with all acknowledged that all three churches had great worship music, members of each church nevertheless expressed strong affinities for their own church's music. As Julie, a Hillsong London worship team member who attended the event (not as a performer), told me in a later conversation:

> Were you at Pentecost? It was so different. Hillsong was my favorite, because everything came alive, and people were actually jumping. The other ones were like…it's like the thing you need to get there wasn't there. Like Hillsong, you know it's going to come. But I think that's also how they make us in the church. The character of the church is like that.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

Here we see that the character of the worship is linked to the brand, and the brand to the 'type' of people in the church. However, it would be a

mistake to assume that music directly determines the congregation: while it may be an initial identity marker, its efficacy is ultimately located in the community with which it is associated. Hillsong's members often talk about community as the thing that makes the church special. Although the music is often what initially drew them to the church, it is the friends they made and the communities they integrated into that kept them there and cemented the positive emotional associations that give the Hillsong brand its efficacy. As psychologist Marc Galanter has noted, group integration results in satisfaction with and commitment to the group's purpose and values (Galanter 1989, 129–75). This is shown by the very different experiences of two female congregation members at Hillsong. The first, Waî is a 30-year-old filmmaker who grew up in Nigeria and recently moved to London:

> I didn't know about Hillsong. So I go to London and I'm on the internet checking out Hillsong, and it was like, mmm, not bad. And it's in a place that I can go, you know? On Tottenham Court Road—that's where I usually work, so that's good. The first day I'm there, this lady introduces me to someone who sat with me, and I began serving that day. I'd not even gone into church and I was serving on a team! I'm welcoming people into church—and I've never been to this church! But anyway, so we went for the 3:30 service, which is usually really cool, and I sat with all of these girls who were on the same team as me, and the music began and I was like 'oh…my…word'! I go for a lot of gigs, and I was like, this is a gig! This is a rave! Are you for real? I was like: 'This is awesome; this is me!'
>
> (Interview with author, October 16, 2010)

Recognizing the importance of community as an offering, Hillsong relies on a large volunteer team that is tasked with identifying and 'plugging in' potential new members immediately. In addition to participating in team activities, members are encouraged to attend small, area-based 'connect groups' that are designed to build the more intimate relationships that may be difficult to establish in larger group settings. In Waî's case, she was immediately identified as a 'seeker' and given an active role in church life. Importantly, she connected with the people and music that she encountered. Sargeant (2000) has argued that large churches like Hillsong are often attractive to 'seekers' precisely because of the initial anonymity that the size of the church provides (Sargeant 2000, 51 and 165). However, if the seeker isn't soon integrated into the fold, she will likely be lost, as the experience of a second woman—a 'forty-something' nanny and native of New Zealand named Deidre—shows:

> I changed [churches] because [at Hillsong] I found it hard to get to know people. I found it very hard to make friends there. I made one

> or two friends. I was there for a year, so I gave them a chance. I love the worship, but that was the only thing I loved about it. I need more. I need friends, so I changed churches for that reason….Hillsong is great and I love it, but you need to push and push to connect with people you can't. I also found them quite fake, sometimes; like, 'Hi, how are you?' and then they'd quite literally just move on from you.
>
> (Interview with author, July 22, 2011)

Despite 'loving' the church's music, Deidre did not identify with the communication style that characterizes the church. While both Waî and Deidre enjoyed the music, one of them easily connected with a group of people, while the other found it difficult to relate. Their differing senses of connection profoundly affected their individual worship experiences. For Waî:

> Hillsong was life changing and the music just added into [the worship experience]. It was that sauce that needed to be put; do you know what I mean?
>
> (Interview with author, October 16, 2010)

This stands in contrast to Deidre's experience:

TW: Did not being able to connect affect your worship experience?

D: It did, yeah. Because when you're sitting by yourself in a huge place, and your mates are helping out and no one is around and you have a whole row to yourself. When no one's sitting next to you, it does affect your ability with God because you're feeling crappy because everyone else is happy but you and you've got no one to talk to. So you sort of find yourself going, 'you want us to be singing and happy…' but you're sort of feeling like you don't have anyone to be happy with. Even though God is there, you find yourself not worshipping as hard or listening as hard because you've got no one to talk to about what you're saying.

TW: So if I'm hearing you right, you like the music and you like the teaching but you need to bring someone with you to get the full experience?

D: Yeah, to get the full experience, because you will get lost in the crowd.

(Interview with author, July 22, 2011)

Hillsong goes to great lengths to integrate people into its community. Despite these efforts, some inevitably feel left out; taste in music may be enough to attract a seeker, but by itself, it cannot provide the satisfaction needed to retain her. The social elements of music contribute to its spiritual efficacy. Participants need people whom they can relate to, people like themselves. Is there such a thing as a 'typical' Hillsong participant? This is where the differentiating power of the brand, and especially music's role in the formation and deployment of this power, is most apparent.

'Those sexy young Christians'

Accounts of the 'typical' Hillsong participant, especially in the popular press, almost invariably describe that participant as young, hip, and energetic. For example, in a 2003 *Sydney Morning Herald* article suggestively titled 'The Lord's Profits', George Bearup describes his welcome to the Hills Campus church in Australia:

> A sexy young Christian, a walkie-talkie clipped to her hipsters, greets us on our walk from the car park. 'Hi, howya doin?' she says, with a flick of her mane and a smile. 'Welcome to God's house—what an awesome day!'
>
> (Bearup 2003)

Bearup stereotypes Hillsong Australia's participants for the sake of his article, but his poetic license is revealing because it is predicated on associations between the church's music and youth. As discussed in Chapter 2, Hillsong's international pool of participants is quite diverse in terms of nationality and ethnicity. However (Bearup's stereotypes notwithstanding), its demographics do tend to skew towards youthfulness, and there are well-established connections between age, musical preference, and religious belief.[21] This suggests that Hillsong's music plays at least some role in shaping the demographics and interpersonal dynamics of its (branded) community, something both Deidre's and Waî's experiences seem to support.

Deidre, who is in her forties, told me that she has listened to Hillsong's music 'since the beginning'. She described her preference for the Australian church's older worship songs, which she felt were not as 'loud' as the newer ones. Significantly, she related the loudness of the current songs to the type of person who attends a Hillsong church:

> I just prefer the older version better. I like the sound of it better. It sounds calmer. I always find myself going back to the older songs. Now, I'm a quiet person. They [Hillsong] produce lively people—very lively people. To be part of Hillsong, you've got to be a really outgoing, talkative person, because people who aren't will get misplaced. If you wanted to join a Hillsong church, you've got to make sure you're willing to put the effort in to get to know them.
>
> (Interview with author, July 22, 2011)

As Deidre's comments show, there many factors (musical and otherwise) that determine a participant's experience in church. Hillsong's doors may be open to anyone, but the fact remains that musical taste and communication styles are both factors in, on the one hand, church preference, and, on the other hand, congregation retention (Sargeant 2000, 64–66;

c.f. Martí 2012). Following this, I suggest that, in branding itself with a certain style of music, Hillsong attracts a 'certain type' of participant, which brands the community and will attract 'more of the same'.

Conclusion

This chapter has suggested that part of the Hillsong brand's spiritual efficacy is due to communal associations that are inexorably bound up with style, of which music is a 'register'. The O2 Pentecost event was an opportunity for Hillsong to build its brand image by positioning itself both in alliance with and in contrast to other organizations in an 'imagined' transnational community. The discourses that construct this community also framed a utopian imaginary community that 'taught' what heaven is like through the participatory experience. Undergirding these discourses was the story of Pentecost. Like branding, the Pentecost story presents a utopia in which each person's 'heart language' is mutually intelligible and therefore participants can be autonomous individuals in a collective—the answer to modernity's existential dilemma. This suggestion relied heavily on two expectations that were provoked by participants' familiarity with the brand. First, Hillsong's reputation for energetic, technically excellent music established an expectation of an enjoyable, uninterrupted worship experience. Second, participants' familiarity with the lyrics and melodies sung influenced the mode of the worship experience. In the end, then, the emotional attachments to the community with which each brand was associated gave the brand its spiritual efficacy. As two contrasting communal experiences showed, integration into the brand was, as Waî put it, 'the sauce that needed to be put'. Thus, it becomes clear that Hillsong's (and every church's) unique offering is not the God encounter *per se* but the branded community that is associated with it.

This chapter has focused on participation as a key to the experience of the Hillsong brand. The church's imagined and imaginary community was shown to be important because it provides a visceral experience of the brand and its associated values. Experience of the music is therefore of great importance to the brand's evangelistic efficacy. The next chapter further explores the relationship between imagination and experience. However, instead of focusing on the global 'Body of Christ', it will explore the Hillsong Church Network as a set of imaginaries, focusing on how participants' understandings of other participants within the network affect their experiences of the music.

Notes

1 History. www.pentecostfestival.co.uk/about/history/. Accessed April 12, 2012.
2 The classic understanding of brand positioning is that a brand differentiates one product from another product with similar functional attributes. However, as Heath and Potter (2006) argue, lifestyle is about distinction. Drawing on Pierre

Bourdieu, Heath and Potter argue that consumerism is unavoidable because it feeds on the paradox that 'good taste' is 'exclusive' (i.e., not everyone can have it, just as not every student can be above average). However, everyone wants good taste, so as soon as the market identifies it, it ceases to be special. This is the fine line trodden by aspirational or lifestyle brands, which are deployed as markers of distinction. The value of these brands (both intrinsically for the user and economically for the producer) is rooted in feelings of exclusivity. As will be discussed below, part of the 'specialness' of an evangelical church brand is that, through it, participants feel part of a 'mass movement' in the Body of Christ. However, simultaneously, that feeling is 'localized' or 'personalized' as a feeling of distinction.

3 http://rccg.org/welcome/. Accessed March 16, 2019.

4 Our People. http://jesushouse.org.uk/our-people. Accessed April 12, 2012.

5 For example, Anderson (2004, 103–22); Cox (1995, 243–63); Hollenweger (1972, 111–75).

6 Throughout this chapter, I will be referring to Pentecostalism in a broad sense. Although HTB is charismatic Anglican, Hillsong might be considered 'neo' Pentecostal, and Jesus House London more of an 'African' expression of Pentecostalism. In the context of the O2 event as a celebration of Pentecost and its associations, I will be applying a broad evangelical/Pentecostal/charismatic gloss to all three churches. As with all classifications, these terms are helpful tools for analysis but also insufficient, both because the practices of the churches they seek to describe/classify usually fall into several overlapping categories and also because the participants themselves may reject them.

7 The definition of 'gospel music' varies according to social context and involves judgements about both aesthetics and content. Columbia College Chicago's Center for Black Music Research defines gospel music thusly: 'The term "gospel music" refers to African-American Protestant vocal music that celebrates Christian doctrine in emotive, often dramatic ways. Vocal soloists are the best-known exponents of gospel, but vocal and choral groups of widely varying sizes have also helped to define the style. In gospel, simple melodies are heavily ornamented by blue notes, glissandi, and a dramatic use of a wide vocal range; and the form conducts an on-going dialogue of influence with blues, jazz, pop, rap, and folk styles' (Gospel Music. www.colum.edu/CBMR/Resources/Definitions_of_Styles_and_Genres/Gospel_Music.php. Accessed June 23, 2013). At Hillsong churches, and in the New Paradigm movement in general, 'gospel' music is taken in its broadest sense to mean 'any music that preaches the Gospel'. See discussions in Ingalls et al. (2013) and Rommen (2007).

8 HTB rose to international prominence as the UK centre for the 'Toronto Blessing'. See Roberts (1994); Percy (1996); Poloma (2003).

9 Worship Central is HTB's worship music resource hub. Essentially, it is a worship music-training centre that counts the worship team as one of its resources. It also offers sheet music, blogs, and online courses that can be downloaded and taught by any church wishing to do so. www.worshipcentral.org/. Accessed March 15, 2019.

10 Tim Hughes held the position of Director of Worship at HTB from 2005 until 2015, when he moved to Birmingham to launch Gas Street Church.

11 At the O2 event, for example, Jesus House's pastor Agu Irukwu spoke in tongues and HTB's Nicky Gumbel encouraged a bout of 'holy laughter' that swept through the arena. In contrast, Hillsong London's pastor Gary Clarke led the altar call but did not explicitly encourage any charismatic expression. Hillsong's statement of belief, however, does state, 'We believe that in order to live the holy and fruitful lives that God intends for us, we need to be baptized in water and be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit enables us

to use spiritual gifts, including speaking in tongues.' What We Believe. http://myhillsong.com/what-we-believe. Accessed August 7, 2013.

12 Peter Wilson was the Head of Worship at Hillsong London during my fieldwork. He often preached and led worship in a black shirt, black sport coat, black jeans, and a pair of large black boots.

13 For more on the 'Hillsongization' of worship, see Raiter (2008); Povedák (2017); and Martí (2018).

14 '12 For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bound or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For the body is not one member, but many.'

15 The dialectic between 'Christian' and 'secular' pop music, their perceived audiences and uses, is complicated. For an academic account of how this plays out, see Howard and Streck (1999), especially pages 89–90 (see also Ingalls et al. 2013). Other views are also instructive; for a fan history of CCM, see Thompson (2000). Joseph (2003) focuses on the current plurality of style in relation to 'the mainstream'. Beaujon (2006) takes a journalistic perspective.

16 The connection between musical style and race/ethnicity is also noted in Ingalls' (2012) study discussed above. Her account of the Passion and Urbana evangelical Christian student conferences in the United States reveals that different value sets lead to different articulations of unity as a utopian concept and that these concepts are revealed through musical choices. For instance, at the Passion conference, standard rock-based contemporary worship tunes played by predominantly white male musicians accompanied preaching that reinforced white male Christian hetero-normative values. In contrast, the Urbana conference's self-conscious use of a variety of music, from rock to hip-hop to gospel, sung by a worship group that included men and women of a number of ethnicities and led by an African American articulated the conference's conception of a diverse 'Heavenly Choir'. Ingalls notes that both concepts of unity were articulations of different visions of a utopian 'heavenly' community. Perhaps more importantly, music was a way for participants to access and experience, if only for the duration of worship, the utopian construction. In other words, music was used to articulate an imagined utopian vision of the world as it could (or should) be while also enabling participation in an imaginary one.

17 For a discussion of Houghton, see Reagan (2015).

18 Expansion strategies also play a role in (brand) name recognition. Hillsong and Holy Trinity Brompton are both parent brands: Hillsong usually plants churches across the globe with pastors trained at its college—often, but not exclusively, in major cosmopolitan cities. These churches engage in Hillsong-style worship, and if successful, will eventually become Hillsong-branded churches (Evans 2015, 185). HTB 'grafts' its name onto struggling Anglican churches in the UK, planting a small number of its congregation in the new church while often revamping the worship style. In contrast, Jesus House London is more of a 'spinoff' in the sense that the Jesus House name is affiliated with the RCCG, an umbrella organization that lacks the branding focus of either Hillsong or HTB. Because of this, Jesus House London's brand image and its attendant associations were not clear in the minds of those who were not members of the church.

19 The Grammy award–nominated British pop star Natasha Bedingfield was part of the Hillsong London worship, appearing on Shout to God's Fame. Brooke Ligertwood (née Fraser), a singer/songwriter for Hillsong's Australian team, has achieved fame in her native New Zealand, where her single 'Something

in the Water' reached number one on the singles charts. (http://charts.org.nz/showitem.asp?interpret=Brooke+Fraser&titel=Something+in+the+Water&cat=s. Accessed January 26, 2012).

20 One example of how this relationship can be problematic for Burberry's brand management is when Tania do Nascimento appeared on the reality show Big Brother 4. Burberry is an aspirational brand for which exclusivity (and the social class it connotes) is part of the brand appeal. Nascimento's antics, which included parading around the Big Brother house in a Burberry bikini while boasting that she would spend her prize money on breast implants, damaged Burberry's aspirational brand image in Britain. As one brand analyst asked: 'Burberry is supposed to be an aspirational brand. Are people on Big Brother aspirational?' (Fletcher 2003).

21 For example, Holbrook and Schindler (1989) have shown that musical preference is cemented during the teenage and early adult years, while Spilka, Hood, and Gorsuch (1985) have shown that religious belief is often solidified by around 15 years of age.

References

Aaker, David A. [1996] 2010. *Building Strong Brands*. London: Pocket Books.

Anderson, Allan. 2004. *An Introduction to Pentecostalism: Global Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Anderson, Benedict. [1983] 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition. London: Verso Books.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1990. 'Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy'. In *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity*, edited by Mike Featherstone, 295–310. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Bearup, Greg. 2003. 'The Lord's Profits'. *Sydney Morning Herald*, January 30. www.smh.com.au/articles/2003/01/28/1043804401241.html.

Beaujon, Andrew. 2006. *Body Piercing Saved My Life: Inside the Phenomenon of Christian Rock*. Cambridge, MA: Da Capo Press Inc.

Burgess, Stanley M., and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, eds. 2002. *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal and Charismatic Movements*. Revised edition. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Coleman, Simon. 2000. *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Cox, Harvey G. 1995. *Fire from Heaven: The Rise of Pentecostal Spirituality and the Reshaping of Religion in the 21st Century*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: HarperPerennial.

Einstein, Mara. 2008. *Brands of Faith: Marketing Religion in a Commercial Age*. London: Routledge.

Evans, Mark. 2015. 'Hillsong Abroad: Tracing the Songlines of Contemporary Pentecostal Music'. *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, edited by Monique Ingalls and Amos Yong, 179–98. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Featherstone, Mike, Scott M. Lash, and Roland Robertson, eds. 1995. *Global Modernities*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Fletcher, Richard. 2003. 'Burberry Takes a Brand Check'. *The Telegraph*, June 22. www.telegraph.co.uk/finance/2855687/Burberry-takes-a-brand-check.html.

Fournier, Susan. 1998. 'Consumers and Their Brands: Developing Relationship Theory in Consumer Research'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 24 (4): 343–53.

Galanter, Marc. 1989. *Cults: Faith, Healing and Coercion*. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Heath, Joseph, and Andrew, Potter. 2006. *The Rebel Sell: Why the Culture Can't Be Jammed*. Toronto, Canada: HarperPerennial.

Hocken, P.D. 2002. 'Charismatic Movement'. In *The New International Dictionary of Pentecostal Charismatic Movements*, edited by Stanley M. Burgess and Eduard M. Van Der Maas, Revised edition, 477–519. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan.

Holbrook, Morris B., and Robert M. Schindler. 'Some Exploratory Findings on the Development of Musical Tastes'. 1989. *Journal of Consumer Research* 16 (1): 119–24.

Hollenweger, Walter J. 1972. *The Pentecostals*. London: SCM Press.

Howard, Jay R., and John M. Streck. 1999. *Apostles of Rock: The Splintered World of Contemporary Christian Music*. Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky.

Ingalls, Monique. 2011. 'Singing Heaven down to Earth: Spiritual Journeys, Eschatological Sounds, and Community Formation in Evangelical Conference Worship'. *Ethnomusicology* 55 (2): 255–79.

Ingalls, Monique M., Anna E. Nekola, and Andrew Mall. 2013. 'Christian Popular Music'. In *The Canterbury Dictionary of Hymnology*, edited by J. R. Watson and Emma Hornby. Available online at www.hymnology.co.uk.

Jones, Steve. 2012. *Brand Like a Rock Star: Lessons from Rock 'n' Roll to Make Your Business Rich & Famous*. Austin, TX: Greenleaf Book Group LLC.

Joseph, Mark. 2003. *Faith, God and Rock 'n' Roll*. London: Sanctuary Publishing Ltd.

King, Elaine, and Helen M. Prior. 2013. *Music and Familiarity: Listening, Musicology and Performance*. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Martí, Gerardo. 2012. *Worship across the Racial Divide: Religious Music and the Multiracial Congregation*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Martí, Gerardo. 2018. 'The Global Phenomenon of Hillsong Church: An Initial Assessment'. *Sociology of Religion: A Quarterly Review*, 78 (4): 377–86.

Miller, Donald E. 1997. *Reinventing American Protestantism: Christianity in the New Millennium*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Nekola, Anna. 2009. 'From This World to the Next: The Musical "Worship Wars" and Evangelical Ideology in the United States, 1960–2005'. Dissertation. University of Madison-Wisconsin.

Pendergrast, Mark. 2000. *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola: The Definitive History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company That Makes It*. New York: Basic Books.

Percy, Martyn. 1996. *The Toronto Blessing*. Oxford: Latimer House.

Poloma, Margaret M. 2003. *Main Street Mystics: The Toronto Blessing and Reviving Pentecostalism*. Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Povedák, Kinga. 2017. 'Hillsongization, Religious Ecumenism, and Uniformity: A Hungarian Case Study'. In *The Hillsong Movement Examined: You Call Me Out upon the Waters*, edited by Tanya Riches and Tom Wagner, 181–98. Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.

Raiter, Michael. 2008. 'The Slow Death of Congregational Singing'. *The Briefing*, April 2, 2008. https://matthiasmedia.com/briefing/2008/04/the-slow-death-of-congregational-singing-4/.

Reagan, Wen. 2015. 'Blessed to be a Blessing: The Prosperity Gospel in Contemporary Worship Music Superstar Israel Houghton'. In *The Spirit of Praise: Music and Worship in Global Pentecostal-Charismatic Christianity*, edited by Monique M. Ingalls and Amos Yong, 215–29. University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press.

Rice, Andrew. 2009. 'Mission From Africa'. *The New York Times*, April 12, 2009. www.nytimes.com/2009/04/12/magazine/12churches-t.html.

Riches, Tanya, and Tom Wagner. 2012. 'The Evolution of Hillsong Music: From Australian Pentecostal Congregation into Global Brand'. *The Australian Journal of Communication*, 39 (1): 17–36.

Roberts, Dave. 1994. *The Toronto Blessing*. Eastbourne, UK: Kingsway Publications.

Rommen, Timothy. 2007. *Mek Some Noise: Gospel Music and the Ethics of Style in Trinidad*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Sargeant, Kimon Howland. 2000. *Seeker Churches: Promoting Traditional Religion in a Nontraditional Way*. New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press.

Spilka, Bernard, Ralph W. Hood, and Richard L. Gorsuch. 1985. *The Psychology of Religion*. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Stackpool, Tim. 2009. 'Hillsong Reaches Higher'. *AVT: The Magazine for Australian / New Zealand Audiovisual Professionals* 1 (1): 34–38.

Thompson, John J. 2000. *Raised by Wolves: The Story of Christian Rock and Roll*. Toronto, Canada: ECW Press.

Unwin, Margaret M., Dianna T. Kenny, and Pamela J. Davis. 2002. 'The Effects of Group Singing on Mood'. *Psychology of Music* 30 (2): 175–85.

Wegner, Phillip E. 2002. *Imaginary Communities: Utopia, the Nation, and the Spatial Histories of Modernity*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Wilk, Richard. 1995. 'Learning to Be Local in Belize: Global Systems of Common Difference.' In *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local*, edited by Daniel Miller, 110–33. London: Routledge.

Zschech, Darlene. 2001. *Extravagant Worship*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers.

5 The 'Hillsong Sound'

Hearing place in the Hillsong network

Introduction

At 2:30 on a wet, grey London afternoon, a queue is already forming outside the Dominion Theatre ahead of Hillsong London's 3:30 service. Despite the damp, people are in high spirits because this and the following 6:00 service will be special: both will be recorded for the new Hillsong LIVE album *A Beautiful Exchange*, which will feature music written and performed by Hillsong LIVE and the Hillsong London worship team. Anticipation has been growing for months, largely because of regular reminders from Head Pastor Gary Clarke and the cinematic trailers promoting the recording that have been shown during the 'what's going on in the life of the church' segment of weekly Sunday services. Also, many of the songs that are to be recorded this evening have been in heavy rotation in the services leading up to today, so participants know them well and are eager to start singing along.

Fifteen minutes before the service begins, the doors to the auditorium open. People rush to secure the best seats, reserving spots for late-arriving friends by draping coats over chairs with one hand while texting their friends with the other hand. At the appointed time, the auditorium goes dark. Howls erupt from the crowd as everyone claps in time to a thumping 'four-on-the-floor' beat. Not that anyone could help but be in time; each thud of the bass drum can be felt in the core of your being. THUMP – THUMP – WHOOT! – WHOOT!: participants hoot on every third and fourth beat. They know what's coming. After about 30 seconds, the stage explodes in a barrage of lights and sounds as the worship band cranks out 'The Answer'. A jumble of lines flashes across the huge LED screen that frames the stage, momentarily forming a sphere before dissolving away. This continues until the chorus drops. Then, as the lyrics 'When the World…' are sung, a globe—complete with latitude and longitude lines—forms on the screen, eventually coalescing into a fully rendered image of the Earth. Worship has begun.

(Author's fieldnotes; November 8, 2009)

Six months after the session described above,[1] *A Beautiful Exchange*, the nineteenth album in the Hillsong LIVE series, was released. It subsequently rose as high as number four on the U.S. iTunes album chart and reached number one on the Australian iTunes chart. On the US *Billboard* charts, it debuted at number one on Christian albums, number nine on digital albums, and 40th on the Billboard 200. In Australia, it reached number three on the ARIA (Australian Recording Industry Association) top 50.

During the month leading up to the album's recording, *A Beautiful Exchange* was marketed to Hillsong London's participants as a collaboration between the Australian and London churches. The album was a move towards a more 'global' Hillsong musical expression. A full night's worship was recorded at the Dominion Theatre that evening; yet upon final release, only one song made it on to the CD version of the album ('A Father's Heart') and five others were released on the DVD as part of the Bonus Disc. Why was this? In posing this question to Hillsong's congregational participants, worship leaders, and General Manager, I was given several reasons, all of which were connected (although usually not explicitly) to branding.

This chapter explores how Hillsong brands itself not only as *part of* a global community but also *as* a global community in its own right. While the previous chapter focused on the Body of Christ as an imagined and imaginary community, this chapter will examine the Hillsong Network—the complex associational web of people and places that constitutes the sociocultural entity 'Hillsong Church'. My discussion of the Hillsong Network will focus on Hillsong's Australian and London locations because of their prominence in the hierarchy of Hillsong's placemaking portfolio (Gilmore and Pine 2007, 154–70), which, as discussed in Chapter 2, comprises the physical and internet spaces where Hillsong has established its presence. The definition of space and place varies across disciplines (c.f. Lash and Urry 1994; Feld and Basso 1996; c.f. Hubbard et al. 2004). Here, I am defining a place as 'space made meaningful': the Hillsong brand makes physical and internet spaces 'places' by condensing them into an associational package that, through global flows (Appadurai 1996) and mediated imaginations (Anderson [1983] 2006), affords meaningful experiences of its music—the 'Hillsong Sound'.

In positing a 'Hillsong Sound', the chapter first discusses the problem of global translation that Hillsong faces, as well as some of the advantages of and limitations to the use of branding as a method of cross-cultural communication. After defining 'sound' as a primarily discursive construction that is built on notions of a space/place as a musical 'centre of production', it shows how Hillsong's music production strategy establishes its flagship Australian church as the centre of production of the music and the brand. This Australian centre is imbued with essentialist cultural associations that anchor the 'Hillsong Sound' in its brand's mythological creation story (Holt 2004). It is through this mythology that the spiritual power of Hillsong's branded music is experienced. Finally, the chapter explores how participants

at Hillsong London imagine the places and people in the Hillsong network and how this in turn informs their experiences of Hillsong's worship music vis-à-vis the 'Hillsong Sound'—the sonic sign of the brand. The chapter concludes by suggesting that, because the 'sound' is important to the efficacy of the music and brand, Hillsong actively positions both the church network and also the city of London within an evangelical Christian discourse that both demarcates and transcends notions of the global and local.

The Hillsong brand: a global language?

Like pop music and evangelical Christianity, global brands such as Coca-Cola, McDonalds, and Disney seem to be able to penetrate any sociocultural milieu and adapt to it. Furthermore—and also like pop music and evangelical Christianity—the meanings of these brands are multiple and contested. Some see global brands as agents of cultural imperialism (Cocacolonization), systems of bureaucratic rationalization (McDonaldization), and even engineers of the human imagination (Disneyization) (Chidester 2005, 131–49).[2] Others see global brands as symbols of neoliberal hegemony (Klein [2000] 2010) that homogenize our urban environments into cookie-cutter brandscapes (Klingmann 2007) and colonize our global ideoscapes (Askegaard 2006). Indeed, the association of branding with the hegemony of 'American-style' capitalism might lead one to see brands as a 'Brave New World' for transnational religious organizations. However, as McDonald's Maharaja burgers in India and McSushi in Japan show, even the most 'standardized' brands change to accommodate local tastes (Chidester 2005, 138–42; c.f. Wilk 1995).

Brands—and especially global brands—are shared semiotic material for processes of conflict, negotiation, and exchange (Holt 2004). As culture jamming and the annual anti-globalization protests at the World Trade Organization meetings demonstrate (Klein [2000] 2010, 280–323), brands are used as symbolic short-hand for disputes over the ethics and values that (capitalist) cultures and societies are built upon. For better or for worse, it is clear that brands are a form of cross-cultural communication in a globalized world, and branding is therefore not a luxury but an imperative for organizations that aspire to global reach (Tragos 1998), including religious organizations such as Hillsong.

This is not to say that branding is a failsafe method of cross-cultural communication—far from it. Even iconic global brands such as Coca-Cola, McDonalds, and Disney have made (sometimes comical) missteps. For example, Coca-Cola's supposedly panhuman message has been lost in translation on numerous occasions, as related by David Chidester:

> … Coca-Cola has sometimes generated a chaos of signification in its attempts at global translation. For example, the Chinese characters that most closely reproduce the sound of 'Coca-Cola' apparently

> translate as 'bite the wax tadpole'. In Dutch, 'Refresh Yourself with Coca-Cola' translates directly as 'Wash Your Hands with Coca-Cola'. French-speakers misheard the French version of the song 'Have a Coke and a Smile' as 'Have a Coke and a Mouse', while Spanish-speakers in Cuba reportedly misread the sky-writing for 'Tome Coca-Cola' (drink Coca-Cola) as 'Teme Coca-Cola' (fear Coca-Cola).
>
> (Chidester 2005, 135–36)

The above is a humorous illustration of the problem of cross-cultural translation that transnational brands like Hillsong face. As discussed in Chapter 3, stakeholders often associate authenticity with a core value system. For a religious organization such as Hillsong, the specificity of this system is paramount, as it is inherently bound up with a claim to Truth. As a transnational church, Hillsong faces a challenge of 'global' proportions: it must deliver a specific, consistent, and coherent message and must do so through a broad range of offerings delivered by a number of different people in a variety of cultural contexts. Further complicating the realization of this imperative is the fact that music is one of Hillsong's main communicative mediums. While popular music is easily absorbed into a variety of cultural settings, and thus is a good vehicle of communication, it is also notoriously subjective, and thus its ability to reliably communicate meaning through either sounds or lyrics is debatable (Negus 1996, 25–35). The culturally specific medium of music therefore presents Hillsong with unique opportunities for, as well as challenges to, its ability to communicate its brand in transnational contexts.

Part I – creating the 'Hillsong Sound'

'Sound' and the city

The word 'sound' has multiple meanings and uses. For example, a sound is a psycho-acoustic phenomenon, in which vibrations are detected by our sensory organs and interpreted in meaningful ways by our brains. However, a sound can also be thought of as a distinctive style or, as the *American Heritage Dictionary* defines it, 'a mental impression; an implication'.[3] Through culture and experience, we come to associate certain sounds and patterns of sounds—what we often call music[4]—with a variety of things such as emotions, people, life events, and so on. The sonic palettes of our environments therefore profoundly affect the ways in which we experience our environments and ourselves. Perhaps the most holistic view of sound and experience is that put forth in Steven Feld's work with the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea (Feld 1984, 1988). Feld argues that the acoustic environment of the rainforest in which the Kaluli live permeates and shapes the interlinked cultural, social, and perceptual aspects of their human experience. For Feld, the sonic environment of the rainforest is nothing less than the Kaluli worldview, a sociomusical reality (Feld 1984, 406).

Feld's work in the rainforests of Papua New Guinea dovetails with (post) subcultural treatments of Henri Lefebvre's writings about the relationship between spatial practices and cultural production in cities. In *The Production of Space* (1974), Lefebvre argued that economic modes of production shape cultural production, and thus the character of cities and their inhabitants. Cultural studies theorist Andy Bennett has usefully applied Lefebvre's work to thinking about the ways music, space, and place are intrinsically linked. As Bennett shows in his discussion of the 'Canterbury Sound', aficionados of a 'sound' claim particular (usually urban) spaces as 'active centres of production' (Bennett 2002, 87) of the music(s) they engage with. For Bennett, the technologically enabled mediascape is a space where images and information about spaces are 'recontextualized by audiences into new ways of thinking about and imagining place' (ibid, 89). The resultant imagined place exists in a self-referential 'mythscape', in which stories, discussions, and anecdotes exist 'entirely in relation to that place's representation' of the myth it is built upon (ibid). Myth building is a branding activity (Holt 2004) that cities engage in with the hope of cultivating cultural capital that will translate into financial capital (c.f. Klingmann 2007). For example, cities such as Vienna, New Orleans, and Memphis have sought to associate their identities with those of a musical artist or genre,[5] thereby distinguishing themselves from other cities in the global competition for tourism and tax revenue (e.g., Gibson and Connell 2007). If they are successful, their stories become inextricable from the music. As Bennett remarks, 'the marketing of canonized "genres" such as Cajun, blues, and "world music" has served to create a series of romanticized myths surrounding particular regions of the world as listeners use these musical styles to map out the relationship between social and geographical landscapes' (Bennett 2002, 89). Listeners connect musical sounds and styles with assumptions about where, why, how, and by whom music is/was produced. These assumptions inform ascriptions of authenticity and meaning. In this mix of (extra)musical associations, the city 'performs an important anchoring role as myths surrounding the city are constructed' among communities of music consumers (ibid, 88).

Bennett's work is primarily concerned with the roles that 'insiders' (i.e., the fans or aficionados of a music or artist) play in the creation of a sound. In contrast, Sarah Thornton's (1995) study of clubbing subcultures focuses on the roles of 'outsiders' and can be used to further nuance the understanding of the connection between city and sound. Often, associations between musicians, styles, and cities have material truth; for example, the Seattle bands Nirvana and Pearl Jam played important roles in the rise of grunge and the concomitant creation of a 'Seattle Sound'. However, Detroit's association with techno illustrates that a city's 'sound' does not require locally based artists to produce it. As Thornton points out, 'despite the fact that the music was not on the playlist of a single Detroit radio station, nor a regular track in any but a few mostly gay black clubs, the British press hailed 'techno' as the sound of that city' (75). For Thornton, both subcultures and

the 'sounds' that they are associated with are products of the media. She observes that 'communications media create subcultures in the process of naming them and draw boundaries around them in the act of describing them' (ibid, 162). From this perspective, a city's 'sound' is a discursive, mediated construct that is at least partially produced by people who may have never visited the city or heard the music in question.

People brand places, and places also brand people. For example, neither Bruce Springsteen nor Bon Jovi would 'sound' the same if they were not so intimately associated with New Jersey because it is understood that part of each artist's 'authentic' sound comes from the place in which it was honed. For Hillsong, its 'sound' is also part of the larger web of signification that ties its brand to the 'local' and 'global' places that constitute its network—places that are both physical and 'virtual'. The rest of this chapter, then, explores some of the ways in which the meaning and efficacy of Hillsong's branded 'sound' is bound up with associations stakeholders make with those places and those places' people. Stakeholders impart meaning to the places that constitute the Hillsong Network; again, place is 'a space made meaningful': places are made.

Placemaking

People make space meaningful in countless ways. James Gilmore and Joseph Pine's (2007) discussion of 'placemaking' illustrates some of the ways Hillsong makes its network of physical and internet spaces into branded places. Gilmore and Pine point out that—like Darlene Zschech and Hillsong's musicians in Chapter 3—organizations need to be perceived as authentic in order to be successful (ibid, 147–48). Stakeholders must be afforded the opportunity to experience an organization's authenticity through its offerings. Therefore, Gilmore and Pine's suggestion to organizations is:

> Stop ~~saying~~ what your offerings are through advertising and start creating places [my emphasis]—permanent or temporary, physical or virtual, fee-based or free—where people can experience what those offerings, as well as your enterprise, ~~actually~~ are.
>
> (ibid, 149, emphasis in original)

For Gilmore and Pine, everything associated with a brand has symbolic meaning and therefore can be considered an offering. This includes a brand's spaces, which become places when the brand's authenticity is both experienced and (re)produced (c.f. Sherry 1998).[6] According to Gilmore and Pine, a full organizational placemaking portfolio extends from a single place—its flagship location—to ubiquity in the worldwide market (Gilmore and Pine 2007, 153–62). The flagship location, whether it is a single store or a geographic area (usually both), is the focal point of the brand. In other words, it is the centre of production of the brand (although usually not the branded

products themselves, which are usually produced abroad). Hillsong's flagship location is the Hills campus in Australia. 'Experience hubs' are located in major economic centres such as London and New York City, both of which are part of Hillsong's portfolio. Further experience opportunities are presented at 'major venues', which are places that have a population large enough to support a primary outlet. For Hillsong, this includes its smaller (but growing) churches in cities such as Paris and Stockholm. Major venues are followed by places of 'derivative presence', which are venues that distil the essence of a larger venue in the portfolio in a more accessible way. Examples of this are Hillsong London's Surrey and Kent extension services, which are video-linked to services at the Dominion Theatre and thus allow participants outside of London to experience Hillsong London 'first-hand'. Finally, a 'worldwide market presence' is achieved when 'every feasible place where customers might encounter [an organization's] offerings' has been occupied (ibid, 160). While Hillsong certainly has not exhausted this level of its portfolio, the CCLI charts confirm that participants in churches all over the world encounter its music every Sunday.[7]

The 'Hillsong Sound' is, in part, a product of Hillsong's placemaking strategy, wherein Hillsong Australia is the brand's centre of production and Hillsong London is its European 'experience hub' (ibid, 156–57). The geographical and discursive positioning of these places, in conjunction with touring, album sales, and a ubiquitous internet presence, enables Hillsong to 'entice the greatest number of customers to experience [the church and] its offerings', through its 'rich portfolio of harmonized places flowing one from another' (ibid, 154). The ideal brand is one where meaning flows between offerings in a gestalt of harmonized communications. The following section discusses how Hillsong's congregation members experience the 'Hillsong Sound' in relation to the church's portfolio of branded physical and virtual spaces, to what extent these spaces 'harmonize' to become places, and how this ultimately feeds into participants' experiences of the music and the brand.

Hillsong Australia: the centre of production

Branding is a way of communicating, through a variety of offerings, a clear and consistent message to stakeholders who will engage with those offerings in a variety of contexts. To ensure the clarity and consistency of its musical offerings, Hillsong has codified a production process through which songs travel from inspiration to recording. First, a worship team member submits a song for consideration. Robert Fergusson—a Hills campus senior pastor—then vets the song to ensure that its lyrics align with the church's teachings. If it passes lyrical muster, the song is played in services in various Hillsong locations in Australia to gauge congregation members' reactions. This determines whether a song is either rejected or recorded. Although this process is straightforward in theory, song selection is also influenced by

extra-musical branding considerations. Hillsong's official policy is that any worship team member may submit a song for consideration, but according to an Australian worship leader with whom I spoke, some songs have a better chance of being recorded than others:

> I don't know if you've talked to the guys who have submitted maybe fifty songs and none have gotten returned, but they [Hillsong] do have an idea as to whose songs they'd like to see on the next album. So they want to see a couple from Joel [Houston], a couple from Reuben [Morgan], there's going to be a couple from Ben Fielding. It's pretty clear, you know? And maybe there will be two from random people in the congregation or the team, maybe a song or two that the youth really love and got brought out during summer camp, but it's pretty set.
>
> (Interview with author, June 1, 2011)

As discussed in Chapter 3, Hillsong needs 'stars' to be the face of its brand. But Hillsong's main songwriters are full-time worship pastors who draw a salary from the church. In contrast to most worship team members, who are volunteers and therefore spend the majority of their time occupied with other pursuits, Hillsong's core songwriting team has the time and institutional financial support to devote to writing songs for their church. They are also part of Hillsong's 'inner circle' and are therefore more intimately familiar with the church's vision at any given time. A strong brand is fluid, changing concomitantly with an organization as it evolves, and therefore the church's music needs to reflect that (Riches and Wagner 2012). From a branding perspective, then, it benefits Hillsong to maintain a core of songwriters who are deeply involved in 'the life of the church'.

As described above, if a song passes lyrical vetting, it is then 'field-tested' for efficacy in performance, usually during worship services at Hillsong's Australian churches. Since the primary goal of worship music at Hillsong is to facilitate a transcendent 'God encounter', it is vital that worshippers engage with it. This is why, according to most worship leaders I interviewed, a song that does not go over well will often be abandoned right away. However, according to others, a song may get a second chance if it has been identified as a candidate for an upcoming album, especially if a main worship pastor authors it. According to a worship leader for one of Hillsong's Australian extension services:

> The [song may not be immediately good], but they are often going to make it work because they know that they want it on the album. So they'll tell you 'we throw a song out if it doesn't have a response', but yes and no. Yes, if it's their song—if they put it out there and it doesn't have the desired response, they know it's not really good enough to get on the album. So they might retract it and rewrite it and then they'll try it again. So Reuben [Morgan] will do that, Joel [Houston] will do

> that, a couple of the worship leaders will do that. But in terms of other songs, it's a mixture. So they'll work a song, they'll do a back and forth. They'll try it in a few contexts. They'll try it with the youth or maybe a couple of the satellite churches to see whether different links or motifs make it work.
>
> (Interview with author, June 1, 2011)

In keeping with a core group of well-known songwriters, Hillsong manages the 'sound' of its musical offerings by integrating the songwriters' personas and styles with its brand (see also Chapter 3). Additionally, because songs are primarily field-tested in the Australian church, Hillsong Australia's congregation members are the de facto arbiters of taste for the entire Hillsong network. From a 'top-down' perspective, then, Hillsong Australia is the centre of production of the music that is identified with the 'Hillsong Sound'. However, as Sarah Thornton (1995) has discussed, 'sound' also relies on an expanded notion of production that integrates stakeholders outside of the song creation process. As the discussion of views from both Hillsong congregation members and the media in the next section will show, this side of production is mediated, imagined (Anderson [1983] 2006), and relies heavily on essentialist notions of 'others' within the Hillsong Network.

Remix! Part 1: a 'London Sound'?

From the discussion in the previous section, it may be tempting to label Hillsong's music as 'Australian', as it is largely written, produced, and vetted in an Australian context. Once it is released, however, the music is experienced in myriad 'local' contexts around the world. One prominent locality in the Hillsong Network is Hillsong London, which Gilmore and Pine (2007) would describe as Hillsong's European 'experience hub'. Because of its strategic location, Hillsong London is both a destination for international worshippers and a base for evangelism activities, which includes touring. Hillsong London's worship team regularly tours Europe, presenting Hillsong's worship music in a variety of cultural settings. According to Julie, a member of the worship team, these appearances are quite successful:

> Well, actually [Hillsong London Senior Pastor] Gary [Clarke] said something about [touring] yesterday. He said they call it tours, but it's actually [evangelical] crusades. Because London goes to Italy, they go to Europe, and like a thousand people get saved in one night.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

Julie may be exaggerating the number of souls saved nightly, but her account underscores Hillsong London's popularity across Europe. One of

Hillsong London's worship leaders who spoke to me, while acknowledging that the team will often play for much smaller crowds, told me it also encounters crowds of over 15,000 people (personal communication, April 22, 2011). However, it is not clear whether Hillsong London's reception is due to an idiosyncratic 'London Sound' or to the overall popularity of the Hillsong brand. Is it the 'Australian' music, or the particular way in which Hillsong London's worship team presents it, that affects people? One worship leader I spoke to believed it was the latter—a 'Euro Sound' that was distinct to Hillsong London:

> The London stuff goes off really well in Italy.... It's 'Euro', it's got its own flavour.
>
> (Interview with author, June 1, 2011)

This worship leader went on to tell me that, while he understood the confusion it might cause, he believed that a distinct 'Euro' sound would reach more Europeans than a sound they might hear as 'foreign'. Notably, this leader was neither European nor did he live in London; he was born and raised in Australia.

For a time, Hillsong attempted to fashion a distinct musical identity for Hillsong London. Between 2004 and 2008, Hillsong London released four albums under its own name. These releases revealed a range of stylistic influences but largely conformed to the overall rock-based style and high production values that characterized Hillsong's United and LIVE releases during the same period (Riches 2010). In 2007, however, Hillsong London broke from convention with the release of the *Jesus Is: Remix*. This album remixed the rock-based songs of its 2006 release, Jesus Is, as dance tracks. Much of the Christian music media portrayed the album using language similar to the following review, which appeared on the website Chritiancampus:

> Passionate Euro-styled worship has been a core driving force for the explosive growth at the new Hillsong London church. A group of talented and creative members of the church have taken 12 songs from the original Jesus Is worship project released in 2006 and remixed them from a pop and rock sound to electronic and ambient versions while maintaining the same lyrics and Biblical messages. Mixing a sound from their Hillsong Australia heritage with the current European/London music scene, this Euro-Worship has a fresh and exciting, yet familiar sound.... This creative project is a perfect addition to any Hillsong music fan and any fan collection of electronic and ambient music.[8]

Here, the importance of essentialized notions of place in the construction of 'sound' (as well as the media's role in this construction) is apparent.

Australia is posited as a musical lineage that is sonically remoulded in the Euro-London scene. The next section explores the role of these notions in the subjective creation of the 'Hillsong Sound'.

Remix! Part 2: city, sound, and scene

In the above review, the 'sound' of the *Jesus Is: Remix* album is connected to a 'Euro' music scene in London. According to (post)subcultural theorist Geoff Stahl, a scene is 'the formal and informal arrangement of industries, institutions, audiences, and infrastructures' that over time 'becomes spatially embedded according to a dense array of social, industrial, and institutional infrastructures, all of which operate at a local and trans-local level' (Stahl 2004, 54; see also Straw 1991). To those who interact with a 'local' scene,[9] it is connected with the level of vibrancy and diversity of active musical life in a place as measured against perceived activity elsewhere. A 'vibrant' scene is one in which a large number of people are active in making or listening to music and also one in which a diverse array of musics coexist. In contrast, a 'dead' scene is characterized by few opportunities to hear or perform music, and only a few musical styles are available to experience. Interviews conducted during my fieldwork indicate that, to Hillsong's musicians and participants, the 'sound' of Hillsong London reflects a cosmopolitan 'Euro-ness' that itself is a product of the diversity of the city's scene(s), and this diversity is understood in relation to what is felt to be a homogenous musical scene in Sydney.[10] An Australian worship leader who has been involved in Sydney-based projects outside of the church told me:

TW: I've been asking if there is a 'Hillsong Sound' and a 'London Sound', and you seem to think there is.

J: Yeah, I do. I think that I was hearing, like you said, some Green Day influences, almost some ska [on Hillsong London's first album]. And to me that's kind of indicative of England, where the punk movement originated. I feel like that was something that was really appropriate. I read an article in *Christianity Today* on contemporary worship music in which an American and a British person were having a conversation. At the end of this conversation, the British person turned to the American and said, 'Well, in Britain we're just not in love with our guitars as much as you are'. I think that the Euro sound is so much more open to electronica. I think they have a sense of that soul influence in London. There are a lot of different influences that are just not present in Sydney.

(Interview with author, June 1, 2011)

If the Euro-London and Austral-Sydney scenes do in fact 'produce' different taste publics[11] (Russell 1997), then it would follow that an effective worship song for Hillsong London's participants might be different from one for Hillsong Australia's participants. In this view, each group would

prefer songs written by its church's local writers and featuring on its own albums. However, when I asked Hillsong London's participants whether they preferred the worship music written by the Hillsong Australia musicians or the music written by Hillsong London's musicians, all admitted a preference for the former. This was expressed in separate interviews with Jason and Luke, two men in their early twenties who have been attending Hillsong London for five and six years, respectively:

> There's a lot of crossover between Hillsong London and Hillsong Australia, but most of the songs that I think are the better ones tend to be the Australian ones. Maybe it's just because I like the way Joel Houston writes.
>
> (Jason, interview with author, May 18, 2010)

> It's weird, because at London, a lot of the good ones we sing are actually the Australian ones. Most of the ones London has written recently haven't been, I don't think, as good. Faith, Hope, and Love was a very good album. Hail to the King wasn't quite so good.
>
> (Luke, interview with author, November 23, 2010)

In 2011, the decision was made to officially discontinue the Hillsong London recording line. Julie, the Hillsong London worship team member, attributed a difference in style to the reason that it stopped recording:

> The thing is: London tried to write their own music a couple of years ago and it didn't work. They didn't sell a lot of CDs, so they just said, 'Ok, this doesn't work'… Like Jorim [a Hillsong London worship leader] had a song on the new CD. They put it on the CD, but it's never sung in church. I don't know actually why this is. I have no idea. Because there are a lot of people who can write good songs here in London. But it's not attractive for the people. But I don't know why, actually. I think it's a certain style.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

Style was only part of a larger branding problem that Hillsong faced in relation to the London albums. The original intent behind the recording of Hillsong London albums was, as many of my interviewees suggested, to engage a European audience. However, this didn't work in the context of Hillsong's global branding strategy. According to a Hillsong staff member who is familiar with the church's decision to discontinue the Hillsong London product line, the albums were creating brand confusion:

> [The branding] got too confusing when people were presented with London Hillsong and Sydney Hillsong. Which one is Hillsong?
>
> (Interview with author, June 1, 2011)

Hillsong had a problem with 'who' it was. The London church is a brand extension of the Australian church, not the parent brand. Although Hillsong London's offerings were meant to be different musically, they nevertheless had to fit into Hillsong's overall image, which in part is constructed and maintained through product consistency. This is ultimately why the decision was made to discontinue Hillsong London albums, as Hillsong's general manager, George Aghajanian, told me:

TW: Could you tell me a little bit about why Hillsong London no longer records its own albums?

GA: I think we got to a point where we felt, as a church, we didn't want to fragment with albums coming out of every church around the world…. What had happened was: London had tried a few albums. Other places were saying, 'Maybe we'd like to record our own albums as well', and we really wanted to make sure that Hillsong, when it was represented worldwide, didn't have a variety of different sounds. We wanted to make sure that everything we did was ultimately distilled onto one or two really good albums and not three, four, five, six different albums from all over the world with all different types of sound. Because London has a very specific sound; Sydney's got a different sound; Paris would have a different sound, and Kiev[12] and so on. So what we wanted to make sure of was that the Hillsong name and the Hillsong reputation for worship was preserved while at the same time being inclusive with what was happening with songwriters around different parts of the world…. We came to the conclusion that we would have a 'United' label, so to speak…. so Hillsong United was one stream that we would maintain, because that's got its own momentum at the moment around the world and it's really strong. The second one would be our LIVE album, but that would be more and more our global expression of our church. So that's where our songwriters from London, our songwriters from Sydney, Stockholm, Cape Town, all contribute to make that the Hillsong 'global' sound.… And so we felt that that would always be the best that Hillsong had to offer the greater Church, because if you have five albums, that's sixty songs you've got to come up with versus two or three really powerful worship albums that would then be the best experience for the greater Church. And that was really the motivation behind it.

(Interview with author, September 28, 2011)

As discussed in Chapter 4, Hillsong's focus on consistency and quality is essential to the efficacy of its brand. By consolidating its musical output into its LIVE and United streams, it was able to maintain this. Additionally, the consolidation allowed it to refocus its narrative centre of gravity on Australia, reaffirming it and the Australian church as the centre of production of the music and the brand.

Part II – experiencing the 'Hillsong Sound'

Hillsong's creation story

The above discussion illustrates how imagined and essentialized ideas about people and places create mythological centres of production for a 'sound'. As Chapter 3 showed, 'creation myths' are important for the authenticity and efficacy of a brand. This was evident both in how Darlene Zschech's story provided an identity narrative and the way participants, such as Roy, interwove their takes on Hillsong's history with their own personal identity projects. The brand myth is the story through which the utopian brand promise is experienced. In Chapter 4, stories also played a prominent role in the brand's efficacy, as the Pentecost story provided a conceptual and spiritual framework within which church identity was created, performed, and experienced. All iconic brands have a creation myth/story, from Coca-Cola's beginnings as a patent medicine to McDonald's entrepreneur Ray Kroc's rise from milkshake machine distributor to hamburger impresario.[13] The creation myth is important because it anchors the brand in time and space, which allows its story to be easily understood and thus experienced by the consumer. More importantly, as noted above in the discussion of Bennett's 'Canterbury Sound', the creation myth both relies on and affords access to the larger mediated mythscape in which the 'sound' resides. Hillsong's creation story is well known, having been recounted endlessly by its leaders and in popular and academic accounts (e.g., Connell 2005, 319–29; Evans 2006, 94–96; Riches 2010, 6–16). Like most New Paradigm churches, Hillsong's story is one that centres on growth. However, this growth cannot be separated from its music.

It is often assumed that Hillsong has always branded itself through music, yet it did not officially adopt the moniker 'Hillsong Church' until 1999, as this story—here recounted by Senior Pastor Brian Houston—illustrates:

> We started it as 'Hills Christian Life Centre', and we started with just two conferences. There were three of us in the swimming pool on a Sunday afternoon. There was Jeff Bullock, Mark Zschech and myself. We were thinking of a name for the conference, and somewhere between the three of us we came up with that name. Hills is the name of the area!
>
> Then we started the praise and worship, and rather than just having 'Hills Christian Life Centre Live', I thought it would be good to produce the music under the name 'Hillsong' so that people wouldn't box it as just another church's music. Then we were travelling, and people didn't even know the name of the church. They kept getting the name wrong.
>
> In 1999, after my father resigned, we took over the city congregation, the Hillsong city has merged under one church, and that time is when

> we thought if we can't beat them join them. So everyone knew us as Hillsong Church, so that's when we started officially calling ourselves 'Hillsong Church'—just at the end of 1999.
>
> (Quoted in Clark 2004)

According to Houston's account, Hills Christian Life Centre had little choice but to change its name; the organization had been branded by its music. Hillsong's brand name thus has the advantage of arising organically from a set of strong associations. It combines musical associations with geographical, historical, and biblical ones into a gestalt. The Hillsong moniker is a combination of its 'birthplace'—the Hills district, where the Hills Christian Life Centre was founded—and the songs that it is famous for. In addition, hills also carry symbolic weight in Christian lore (e.g., the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus' death at Calvary, or nature imagery found in the psalms and Old Testament[14]). This was seen in Roy's quote in Chapter 3, recounted again here:

> I remember one night—I couldn't help but cry. Because I was listening to Christian music, and then when I searched for the composer and the church behind it, it was Hillsong. I was looking on the internet for Hillsong. I actually thought that Hillsong is a place in Australia! But I was told it's not a place in Australia. It's like David used to sing songs at the top of the hill. That's where they started creating the church, Hillsong.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

Recall from Brian Houston's story above that part of Hillsong's early branding problem was that people did not associate the music with the church. Roy's statement shows why this is important. After hearing the music, he was so moved that he felt compelled to search for its creator. He originally thought Hillsong was a geographical area and only later discovered it was a church. Notice also that Roy has integrated his own biblical understanding into Hillsong's creation myth: like David, Hillsong started making music on a hill (rather than the Hills district).[15]

The sacred associations of space and place that the Hillsong brand holds afford layers of meaning that relate to its sacred efficacy. This can be seen in Hillsong London participant Vicki's email response to questions I put to her about the differences between the Australian and London offerings on the *A Beautiful Exchange* DVD:

> TW: For the [*A Beautiful Exchange*] album in particular, but also for any album in general, how do you feel when you see or hear the London team play? How do you feel when you see or hear the Australian team play?
>
> V: I think the Australian part is lovelier, more unique and healthier spiritually. London is more of a crowd, and quite diverse, while Aussies are

> more homogenous, and after all, the outpouring of those heavenly songs came as a result of their faithful worship; we only got the piece of it. Those people have been worshipping over the years, even when the songs were not that 'tasteful', but for the sake of worshipping God. They have seen a breakthrough. We in London, on the other side, come from a revolution of the 70s, whatever, MTV hits; pop music. So it is purifying for our minds to get to sing massive music to God for free in the idol theatre—[the] Dominion. I think this was a cultural purification for me to experience—because Freddie M. was a symbol of our culture. So what is happening in the Dominion is a cleansing.... We know that the Spirit of God is different from the Spirit of this world. And Dominion is a bit of a fight for a territory in the hearts and minds of God's children raised in a pop idol culture.... Pop culture did what it was meant to do—it deceived the crowd/the general public into a new reality, but now it is our time to declare this reality a pure dominion of God.
>
> (Email exchange with author, July 13, 2011)

Vicki's understanding of Hillsong's music falls closer to the 'Christ against Culture' pole on Niebuhr's continuum (discussed in Chapter 3) than that of most of Hillsong's participants. However, her view is still informed by the associations between style, scene, and place that were detailed in the previous sections of this chapter and are held by many of those same participants. According to Vicki, Hillsong's Australian congregation is 'more homogenous' and also the product of an older and spiritually purer culture than that of London. In contrast, Hillsong London's congregation is more diverse, but its participants share an impure 'cultural' heritage. As will be discussed in the conclusion, this view is informed by a distinction between the 'sacred' and 'profane' that is a precondition for sacred experiences, and thus the evangelistic efficacy of Hillsong's brand. For now, I want to highlight that, for Vicki, Australia and London are geographical territories in a spiritual war, territories that are indistinguishable from the terrain of their inhabitants' hearts and minds. In this war, worship (music) is the weapon of choice, one that the Australian church has weilded to successfully conquer its homeland. In contrast, London is far removed from the centre of musico-spiritual production, a beachhead still to be reclaimed from the moral turpitude of profane popular culture:

TW: On the A Beautiful Exchange DVD, the first disc is—with one exception—filled with the Australian church's music, while London's worship is on the bonus disk. Why do you think this is?

V: Probably because they [Hillsong London's songwriters] are not that good yet. Which is not bad. But we need to worship God first. And we are not over this cultural worship. God is Spirit, and whoever worships Him does that in Spirit. I really think Hillsong London is a big help for

> the faith of the believers and for experiencing a genuine fellowship, but we are not yet there as to Spirit of Worship. We are still mixed with the spirit of this world and being in the Dominion is once again a testimony of that.… It is good to be there right now, because we are witnessing in a purifying way how people's lives have been transformed, but we want to see the battle won and find a hill of our own to worship. In Australia they are on a holy hill; we are still in the Dominion. Is not it obvious, by the symbolism God is using?
>
> (Email exchange with author, July 13, 2011)

For Vicki, the 'Hillsong Sound' coalesces in and becomes efficacious through the myths that surround Australia and London. Geographical spaces and features are imbued with layers of associations that transform 'Australia' into a narrative centre of gravity, a star around which the offerings that comprise the Hillsong brand universe orbit and from which they receive their energy. As seen in Roy and Vicki's responses, Hillsong's participants contribute to this constellation of mutually referential stories in the mythscape. Yet, as Chapters 3 and 4 showed, the places that comprise the Hillsong network also exist in a larger context of imagined people, places, and communities. In each of those contexts, the transformational and transcendent efficacy of the brand—in other words, the way that worshippers experience the brand in relation to their experience of God—is directly related to how the church positions itself within those contexts. Therefore, the final section of this chapter examines how participants experience music in relation to their imagined notions of Australia and London, and the 'local' participants, musicians, and music of each of these places.

Part III – London calling? 'Welcome Home'

For branding to work, people need to experience it. Hillsong's brand is largely (and often intensely) experienced through its music, in a variety of physical, social, and cultural contexts across and beyond its portfolio of places. As with most (popular) music, Hillsong's music is primarily disseminated and consumed through electronically mediated forms such as CDs, DVDs, MP3s, and streaming services. However, it is perhaps experienced most intensely in live ritualistic group settings, such as weekly worship services and touring events (which are presented as opportunities to worship rather than 'concerts'). The ascendancy of recording technology has created a situation where the mass-replicated copy has become the Urtext (Benjamin [1955] 2002). As discussed in Chapter 3, one of the reasons Hillsong focuses on consistent 'excellence' is so that inconsistency in musical presentation will not distract the participant's attention from God. Thus, Hillsong works to maintain fidelity to the recorded version in its live performances by standardizing the instrumentation and tempos of its

songs across weekly church services and, to some extent, its albums (Riches 2010, 104–35). While precise replication of the recorded version in live performance is impossible (and according to all of the worship leaders I interviewed, not desirable), ideally, a participant should experience little difference between the recorded and performed versions of any given song.[16] However, this aesthetic ideal is mediated by the interdependence of place and identity, which is equally, if not more, crucial to the construction of a 'sound' in the social imagination of those who engage with it. As Martin Stokes has noted, music 'is socially meaningful…because it provides means by which people recognise identities and places, and the boundaries which separate them' (Stokes 1994, 5). In Stokes' work on nationalism, music is used to articulate social imaginaries in the service of the ideological apparatuses that are used to construct and maintain the nation-state. As part of this process, these imaginaries cleave geography into distinct places that are defined as much by the people who live within them as they are by the physical landscape. Thus, geographical spaces become meaningful places to people both inside and outside them, in relation to perceptions of 'cultural traits'.[17]

When applying Stokes' observation to the 'Hillsong Sound', it should be emphasized that much of the efficacy of the branded experience of the music has to do with the connectedness that participants feel across the transnational Hillsong Network. Unlike nationalist uses of music, the 'Hillsong Sound' is heard within a discourse that emphasizes the church's ability to transcend boundaries rather than to erect them.[18] In the words of Brian Houston, 'We are a tiny church with a whole lot of people' (Vision Sunday video presentation; February 6, 2011). However, this is moderated by a 'local' discourse that posits each church location as the 'local church' of the individual participant. Thus, the 'Welcome Home' message that greets participants in Hillsong churches around the world simultaneously references both the Hillsong Network as a whole and the individual locations that comprise it; the 'Hillsong Sound' may be *heard* in churches around the world, but it is *experienced* in specific local contexts. For example, when asked if Hillsong London has its own 'sound' or 'style', a typical answer was this, given by Kimberly, a 28-year-old congregation member who hails from London:

> Our church plays everything faster and louder, which I guess is what you would expect from such a vibrant place [London].
>
> (Email communication with author, May 3, 2011)

As noted above, this is actually not the case: Hillsong worship teams use metronomes and standardized instrumentation to ensure that worship songs in performance are very close to the recorded version. The music in Hillsong London's worship services is neither faster nor louder than in Hillsong Australia's services.

In contrast, the Hillsong London participants whom I spoke to described Hillsong Australia, and its music, as more 'laid back' than their own. Eunice, a 28-year-old Bulgarian who has spent considerable time in both the London and Australian churches, understood this in terms of culture:

> There is a lot of overlap. I mean, you get into church and it's Hillsong church, bigger and all of that. But it's slightly different because it's adapted to the culture, the Australian culture, so everything will be a bit slower (laughs), from the songs to—well, everything will be slightly slower.
>
> (Interview with author, December 7, 2010)

Both Kimberly and Eunice's responses reveal that the perception of the location and the culture in which music is produced (and by extension the attributed cultural traits of the people who play it) influence the way people imagine and experience it. Although there may be a 'lot of overlap' between the cultures of the Australian and London churches, the difference in the tempos of life is perceived in the tempo of the music. The perceptions of the place in which the music is produced and its culture affect participants' experiences of the music's sonic elements. Hillsong London's sound is experienced as 'edgy', while Hillsong Australia's is experienced as 'laid back'. To manage its 'sound', then, the church must manage how the city 'sounds' to its congregation. This is done through storytelling—the management of the mythology that is central to the 'sound' and the brand efficacy.

Conclusion – (re)branding the city

July 19, 2009. Hillsong London's 6 p.m. service at the Dominion Theatre, London

> I have just found a seat in row H of the Dominion Theatre; front and centre at Hillsong London's 6pm service, which is known in the church as the most 'rocking' of the day's four services. The message 'Welcome Home' is displayed prominently on the screen at the back of the stage. As the lights dim to start the service, an ominous industrial groove replaces what had formerly been unassuming, ambient background music. The word 'London' flashes across the otherwise dark screen. London's iconic Tower Bridge appears for a moment, followed by a succession of momentary, jerky shots of Londoners (they are identified by London postcodes that flit about above their heads) going somewhere. Where?
>
> Gradually, the pace of the video accelerates as more active people populate the screen. The camera zooms out, revealing glimpses of London signifiers: here, a glimpse of a man handing out copies of the Metro newspaper; there, a red telephone box. As the visual stimuli increase, so

does the music's insistence. The silhouettes of the London Eye and Big Ben appear for a moment, and the screen goes dark again.

An instant later, we enjoy a bird's eye view of the Thames at sunrise. The sun shines into the camera, blinding us for a moment, before revealing that the glint is coming off the golden statue of Freddie Mercury that stands atop the Dominion Theatre's entrance. An instant later, we are inside. Shots of the theatre's busy lobby, filled with people that many of us in the congregation recognise as our friends (we may even see a shot of ourselves), appear in rapid succession as the music grows livelier.

For a third time, the screen goes dark. The music segues into a crunching, metallic guitar riff. A spinning globe appears, overlaid with the Apostle Paul's words: 'The Church is not peripheral to the world, the world is peripheral to the Church'. Ephesians 3:8–10 immediately follows, reminding us that: 'Through followers of Jesus like yourselves gathered in churches, the extraordinary plan of God is being known'. This scripture shares the screen with images of people from around the world who, while nameless, are recognizable by virtue of the 'ethnic' clothing they wear. They are soon juxtaposed with sweeping visions of a sea of raised hands, a scene typical of a large, exciting evangelical event such as a conference or service. Thus, the second half of the video situates London and the church in the larger evangelical Christian project of Church building. 'Church' is understood here not only as the local church, but also the church with a capital 'C': the global, borderless Body of Christ that incorporates all Christians. Locality becomes manifold, understood as a continuum ranging from the individual's body to the collective manifestation of the Body of Christ. The video, which began with a single word: London, ends with a single name: Jesus.

(Author's field notes, July 19, 2009)

This ethnographic vignette shows that, far from being a passive citizen, Hillsong London actively shapes the way the city of London, and thus the church and its music, is perceived by its members. By situating London in the context of a broadly evangelical Christian and specifically Hillsong worldview, the city becomes a character in the Hillsong's storytelling process. The semiotics of the video reflect much of the discourse that shapes the purpose and values of the church—the same purpose and values that inform all of the offerings, musical and otherwise, that construct the Hillsong brand.

Branding is a means of communication that is simultaneously specific and general; an effective transnational branded message adapts to a variety of cultural contexts while still retaining its core essence. The 'sound' of Hillsong's music is its branded message. Significantly, this 'sound' both constitutes and reflects a placemaking strategy, in which the physical and internet

spaces that the church occupies become mutually referential places in the Hillsong Network. In this network, the Hills campus is Hillsong's flagship location, the centre of production of the 'sound' of the pop/rock-based worship music that its participants favour and which is the recognizable calling card of the church. Although its 'sound' is largely considered 'Australian', this appellation masks the diversity among both Hillsong's participants and the church's (or its churches') music(s). The 'Hillsong Sound' is a social construct, a constantly evolving negotiation among participants.

Hillsong's 'sound' is also influenced by the music production process, which centres on the songwriters, songs, and congregation members of Hillsong Australia and also ensures the overall consistency of the Hillsong product. The standardization of objective elements such as tempo and instrumentation further ensures that this consistency is maintained across the range of its musical offerings and across its network. Yet, despite the objective consistency of Hillsong's musical offerings, participants experience the 'Hillsong Sound' differently according to the idiosyncratic associations they draw between the varied people and places that constitute the Hillsong network. As this chapter has illustrated, the imagined characteristics of Australia and London/Europe (and those who live in these places) exert a profound influence on the way Hillsong's participants experience the music. While there are undoubtedly differences between the two places and their respective participants, it is the mediated, essentialized ideas about each that complete the 'Hillsong Sound' and make placemaking effective in constructing the Hillsong brand. Hillsong's participants thus hear meaning in the 'Hillsong Sound' through the brand and vice versa. The 'sound' is the brand; they are the same experience.

Chapters 3–5 have progressively moved from the 'global' to the 'local' as sites of experiential, branded meaning-making. The following chapter arrives at the ultimate locus of experience, the individual. It will examine the brand's 'educational' function and the role of values and agency in embodying, and thus 'knowing', the Hillsong brand and its values.

Notes

1 *A Beautiful Exchange* was released on June 29, 2010, in the United States.
2 For Coca-colonization, see Wagnleitner (1994); for McDonaldization, see Ritzer (2010); for Disneyization, see Bryman (2004).
3 *Sound*. www.thefreedictionary.com/sound. Accessed April 27, 2012.
4 John Blacking described 'musical' sound patterns as 'humanly organized' (Blacking 1973), but this conception of 'music' might not be as cross-cultural as one might think. For example, Steven Feld maintains that, for the Kaluli of Papua New Guinea, 'there is no "music", only sounds, arranged in categories shared to greater or lesser degrees by natural, animal, and human agents…. No hierarchies of sound types are imposed, *no rationales constructed for differentiating human-made sounds from those of other sources*' (Feld 1984, 389; emphasis added).
5 Mozart, jazz, and Elvis, respectively.

6 Both physical and internet spaces can be branded places. As brand guru Martin Lindstrom has pointed out, though, one of the advantages that a physical branded space has over a virtual one is the potential to engage all five senses in the brand experience (Lindstrom 2005). For example, while a visitor to a Disney theme park can touch, taste, see, hear, and feel Disney's myriad offerings, a visitor to Disney's website is unlikely to have her sense of taste, smell, or touch titillated.

7 A full placemaking portfolio has a 'virtual' counterpart to each of the physical places just described (Gilmore and Pine 2007, 164). For example, Hillsong.com is the church's 'flagship site', which corresponds to its Hills Campus location, and its local webpages and social media platforms are internet complements to its experience hubs and major venues. Both physical and internet places provide access to the 'Hillsong Experience'.

8 www.christianscampus.com/2010/04/hillsong-london-jesus-is-remix2010.html. Accessed August 21, 2011.

9 As Stahl (2004) suggests, scenes can be 'virtual' and 'global' as well as 'local'.

10 I refer to Sydney here instead of Australia (as I have been doing) because, as will be shown in the following interview excerpt, interviewees often used the two interchangeably. Hillsong does have a church in Sydney. However, its flagship remains the Hills campus in the suburbs of the city. This is an example of the gravitational pull that the mythologies of some places exert in contrast to other, less 'branded', places.

11 'A music taste public is a social group comprising devotees of a particular type of music or performer (e.g., opera buffs, or Elvis fans) and a music taste culture is the set of aesthetic values they share (e.g., "Elvis is King")' (Russell 1997, 142).

12 It should be noted that Hillsong Kiev writes and produces its own albums and produces parallel product streams to those produced by Hillsong (e.g., the Hillsong Kiev Kids series). This highlights the role that language plays in brand translation. According to George Aghajanian, 'Remembering that the basis behind this is reaching people with the Gospel in song as well as in teaching, we take our worship experience, translate it, and release it into the Eastern European culture. That's why they've [Kiev] probably had a little more autonomy to do some of these albums, and London really hasn't. Because London, being in the English-speaking world, can contribute into our global expression of our worship. Kiev can't really because of the language issues' (Interview with author, September 28, 2011).

13 For an entertaining and well-researched history of the Coca-Cola company, see Mark Pendergrast (2000). For histories of McDonalds and Kroc, see Kroc and Anderson (1987) and Love (1995).

14 Thanks to Mark Porter for this point.

15 This is probably a reference to 1 Samuel 10:5 (see endnote 26, Chapter 3), but Roy may also be referring to 1 Chronicles 23:1–25:31, in which King David paid 4,000 singers and 288 musicians to worship God 24 hours a day. However, there is no mention in the Bible of David's tabernacle being on a hill and furthermore the topography of the Hills district—the area where the school hall in which the Hills Christian Life Centre was born is located—is rather flat (Tanya Riches; personal communication, April 24, 2012).

16 This is not to say that worship leaders do not have the freedom to deviate from the recorded form of the song in performance. The worship team is fitted with inner ears, through which they receive direction from the worship leader in how to shape the song according to the mood. For example, if the leader feels that a moment is particularly 'worshipful', he or she may choose to repeat a chorus, raise or lower the volume, and so on. However, most aesthetic elements

such as instrumentation (and therefore instrumentation's attendant elements such as colour, timbre etc.) and rhythm remain constant.

17 Those to whom these 'traits' are ascribed may or may not accept them themselves (e.g., Agawu 1995).

18 Although, as Chapter 3 showed, the opposite is equally true.

References

Agawu, Kofi. 1995. 'The Invention of "African Rhythm".' *Journal of the American Musicological Society* 48 (3): 380–95.

Anderson, Benedict. [1983] 2006. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Revised edition. London: Verso Books.

Appadurai, Arjun. 1996. *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions in Globalization*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

Askegaard, Søren. 2006. 'Brands as a Global Ideoscape.' In *Brand Culture*, edited by Jonathan E. Schroeder, and Miriam Salzer-Mörling, 91–102. London: Routledge.

Benjamin, Walter. [1955] 2002. 'The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction.' In *Illuminations*, edited by Hannah Arendt and translated by Harry Zohn, 217–51. New York: Random House Inc.

Bennett, Andy. 2002. 'Music, Media and Urban Mythscapes: A Study of the "Canterbury Sound".' *Media, Culture & Society* 24 (1): 87–100.

Blacking, John. 1973. *How Musical Is Man?* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Bryman, Alan. 2004. *The Disneyization of Society*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Chidester, David. 2005. *Authentic Fakes: Religion and American Popular Culture*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Clark, Andrew. 2004. 'Interview with HILLSONG Founder Brian Houston'. *Christian Today*, 11 August. www.christiantoday.com/article/interview.with.hillsong.founder.brian.houston/1257.htm.

Connell, John. 2005. 'Hillsong: A Megachurch in the Sydney Suburbs'. *Australian Geographer* 36 (3): 315–32.

Evans, Mark. 2006. *Open up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Feld, Steven. 1984. 'Sound Structure as Social Structure'. *Ethnomusicology* 28 (3): 383–409.

Feld, Steven. 1988. 'Aesthetics as Iconicity of Style, or "Lift-up-over Sounding": Getting into the Kaluli Groove'. *Yearbook for Traditional Music* 20: 74–113.

Feld, Steven, and Keith H. Basso, eds. 1996. *Senses of Place*. Santa Fe, NM: School of American Research Press.

Gibson, Chris, and John Connell. 2007. 'Music, Tourism and the Transformation of Memphis'. *Tourism Geographies* 9 (2): 160–90.

Gilmore, James H., and B. Joseph Pine II. 2007. *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Kroc, Ray, and Robert Anderson. 1987. *Grinding It Out: The Making of McDonald's*. New York: St. Martin's Paperbacks.

Holt, Douglas B. 2004. *How Brands Become Icons: The Principles of Cultural Branding*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business Press.

Hubbard, Phil, Rob Kitchin, and Gill Valentine, eds. 2004. *Key Thinkers on Space and Place*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Klein, Naomi. [2000] 2010. *No Logo*. 10th anniversary edition. London: Fourth Estate.

Klingmann, Anna. 2007. *Brandscapes*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

Lash, Scott M., and John Urry. 1994. *Economies of Signs and Space*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.

Lefebvre, Henri. 1974. *The Production of Space*. Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell.

Lindstrom, Martin. 2005. *Brand Sense: How to Build Powerful Brands through Touch, Taste, Smell, Sight and Sound*. London: Kogan Page.

Love, John F. 1995. *McDonald's: Behind the Arches*. New York: Bantam Books.

Negus, Keith. 1996. *Popular Music in Theory: An Introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Pendergrast, Mark. 2000. *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola: The Definitive History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company That Makes It*. New York: Basic Books.

Riches, Tanya. 2010. 'SHOUT TO THE LORD! Music and Change at Hillsong: 1996–2007'. Masters Thesis. University of Sydney, Sydney College of Divinity.

Riches, Tanya, and Tom Wagner. 2012. 'The Evolution of Hillsong Music: From Australian Pentecostal Congregation into Global Brand'. *The Australian Journal of Communication* 39 (1): 17–36.

Ritzer, George. 2010. *The McDonaldization of Society* 6. Sixth edition. London: SAGE Publications, Inc.

Russell, Philip A. 1997. 'Musical Tastes and Society'. In *The Social Psychology of Music*, edited by David J. Hargreaves and Adrian C. North, 141–55. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Sherry, John F. Jr. 1998. 'The Soul of the Company Store: Nike Town Chicago and the Emplaced Brandscape'. In *Servicescapes: The Concept of Place in Contemporary Markets*, edited by John F. Sherry, Jr., 109–146. Chicago, IL: NTC/Contemporary Publishing Group.

Stahl, Geoff. 2004. '"It's Like Canada Reduced": Setting the Scene in Montreal'. In *After Subculture: Critical Studies in Contemporary Youth Culture*, edited by Andy Bennett and Keith Kahn-Harris, 51–64. New York: Palgrave.

Stokes, Martin, ed. 1994. *Ethnicity, Identity and Music: The Musical Construction of Place*. New York: Berg Publishers.

Straw, Will. 1991. 'Systems of Articulation, Logics of Change: Communities and Scenes in Popular Music'. *Cultural Studies* 5 (3): 368–88.

Thornton, Sarah. 1995. *Club Cultures: Music, Media, and Subcultural Capital*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press.

Tragos, William G. 1998. 'International Branding.' In *Brands: The New Wealth* Creators, edited by Susannah Hart and John Murphy, 123–34. New York: Palgrave.

Wagnleitner, Reinhold. 1994. *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War*. First American edition. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press.

Wilk, Richard. 1995. 'Learning to Be Local in Belize: Global Systems of Common Difference.' In *Worlds Apart: Modernity through the Prism of the Local*, edited by Daniel Miller, 110–33. London: Routledge.

6 Learning to listen

Introduction

> I had a housemate…she had, I call it a gift, to look at a normal movie, and see the Jesus story in it. She just drew the parallels. And she would say that and all of us would be, 'yeah, I can see that now.' And sometimes you need someone to draw the parallel, because not all of us look through eyes that see God in everything. But if someone draws those lines for you, it's easier to see the connection. I didn't see *Avatar*. I don't know if I would have made that connection, but because somebody made the connection for me, I'll be watching it with a whole different viewpoint…as dots connected.
>
> (Helen; interview with author, June 15, 2010)

The preceding excerpt is from a conversation I had with Helen, a 30-year-old South African woman who had attended Hillsong London for about four years. We spoke a few weeks after Hillsong Senior Pastor Bobbie Houston had preached at Hillsong London. In her message, she used a scene from the movie *Avatar* to illustrate what Helen was describing above: that one could learn to hear God in everything.[1] Houston used a scene that contained the movie's theme song, Leona Lewis's 'I See You', a song in which the lyrics have considerable overlap with evangelical Christian language.[2] Helen hadn't seen the movie, but now she wanted to and was determined to experience it from a Christian perspective.

Sacred experiences often have to be sought; participants need to be in the right 'state of mind' that connects concomitant physical, mental, and emotional processes with embodied knowledge (Miller and Strongman 2002; Becker 2004; Jankowsky 2010). This takes 'work' on the part of the participant (DeNora 2000). Participants have to expect the experience (e.g., the 'branded' worship expectations of Geoff and Matt in Chapter 4), but they also often have to practice to achieve it; they have to discipline their minds and bodies in order to live a 'religious' lifestyle (Hirschkind 2001). In her book *Extravagant Worship*, Darlene Zschech notes that you must 'discipline your mind to agree with God's Word' (Zschech 2001, 137). This

chapter explores the role of the brand and branding in the development and exercise of 'discipline'. How might a participant like Helen use Hillsong's brand as a source of inspiration and discipline in constructing, maintaining, and experiencing the world through a Christian lifestyle? To what degree does she have the freedom to 'choose' her meaning, and to what degree is the meaning already prescribed—'branded'—for (or into) her? In short, what is the nature of 'branded discipline'?

Having moved through different layers of the Hillsong brand from the 'global' to the 'local', this chapter explores how the sacred is experienced and embodied individually as part of a branded 'education'. The previous chapters have shown that Hillsong provides the branded materials and context through which meaning is created. Importantly, space is left for participants to actively contribute to the construction of these meanings and, through doing so, build the brandscape. In his study of Australian music festivals, Nicholas Carah (2010) explores how brands seek to make themselves part of cultural experience by providing both the materials with which participants create culture and also the spaces and contexts in which they create it. Carah gives the example of the 2009 Virgin V festival, where fans were encouraged to take photos of their experiences in the crowd. These photos were uploaded in real time to the V festival's screens, websites, and the participants' own social media pages on YouTube, Facebook, and Flickr. According to Carah, these texts 'work[ed] as value-generating information commodities in several ways: as audience building content for Web 2.0 spaces, as texts that ratify the social experiences that unfold in brandscapes, and as advertisements for Virgin' (ibid, 54–55). The V festival set out to 'construct a mediated social space that harnesse[ed] the enjoyment of live music and engage[ed] the audience in social practices that mediate that enjoyment' (ibid, 55).

Carah's view of the brandscape as a space/place that directs subjects' agency towards brand building draws upon the Gramscian notion of cultural hegemony (Gramsci 1971; c.f. Anderson 1976). For Gramsci, ideologies and structures of domination are reproduced and naturalized through the everyday actions of actors in society. Hegemony is not explicitly imposed but instead works implicitly, relying on the agency of actors to reinscribe the social order and the ideologies that buttress it. This makes hegemony more totalizing than overt forms of coercion because, according to Gramsci, participants experience it as 'natural'. The difference between Gramscian hegemony and the 'brand hegemony' described by Carah is that, while Gramsci describes the proletariat as being largely unaware of their role in their continued domination, Carah acknowledges that participants in consumer culture are savvy and reflexive and understand that they are being 'used' to generate capital (cultural and economic) for corporations. Rather than resisting this, however, they are mostly resigned to it, preferring to focus on how they themselves can use the brandscape to produce their 'own' culture.

As culture becomes 'user-generated content' that is produced by willing (or at least resigned) participants, branding emerges as a form of 'discipline'. This discipline does not overtly *force* a particular mode of thought or action on an actor. Rather, it *directs* them through suggestions and associations that become embodied through participation and experience. On the one hand, participants are free to choose which brands they use and how they use them, deploying them as symbolic resources in a postmodern assemblage of identity (Belk 1988). On the other hand, the meaning of a brand is rooted in cultural associations that always already afford a limited range of meanings and uses (Lury 2004; Arvidsson 2006). The meanings engendered by and imbued in a brand are thus co-produced, arising through the interplay of structural and individual agency. In the brandscape, organizations and individuals derive value from and create value for one another through actions that are framed and directed by the brand.

Part I – ethical listening: lifestyle and learning to hear God

Music is used to structure experience in a variety of religious and non-religious contexts (Beck 2006). At Hillsong, for example, worship service sections are delineated by the kind of music (upbeat 'praise' or more relaxed 'worship' music) and whether or not the music is foregrounded or in the background. People use music in similar ways outside of the religious sphere. For example, Tia DeNora's study *Music in Everyday Life* details how people use playlists to structure their experiences of events such as yoga classes and romantic evenings (DeNora 2000).[3] Similarly, Michael Bull's study of iPod users focuses on how commuters sonically control their temporal and spatial experiences of the city, transforming the daily commute into a personal, sometimes transcendent experience (Bull 2007). What these seemingly disparate uses of music have in common is that they structure experiences as part of their individual lifestyles. Like the subjects of DeNora's and Bull's studies, Hillsong's participants also use music to set a mood or help pass time during their daily commutes. But this is done in relation to a lifestyle that is framed as worship (see also Chapter 3), and music is a means through which that lifestyle is constructed and maintained. For example, Debbie and her husband Neil, a couple in their mid-thirties who are members of Hillsong London, almost always have music on at home:

TW: So when do you have music on?

D: We have music all the time. The only time I don't have stuff playing is in the bath (we don't have speakers in this flat), and in the kitchen when I make food. But we try to keep that, because we both love music. Both of us feel that music just sets the tone. And that's also why, if there's something on the radio that I don't like listening to or that's making

me feel 'bleah', I just go and change it or just skip it, or I grunt and then Neil goes and skips it.

(Interview with author, July 18, 2010)

Debbie and her husband use music to create an atmosphere that is appropriate to the task at hand. It is an important part of many day-to-day activities. The omnipresence of music in Debbie's life becomes even more significant to the present discussion when it is viewed as a technology not just for structuring her everyday experiences but also for the development and maintenance of her lifestyle:

TW: So you listen to stuff that isn't Christian?

D: Yes. But I do like listening to Christian music more. Let me rephrase: I find, when I listen to Christian music, it's easier for me to connect with God. I find that when I've got the Christian music in my ears, then it's easy to focus on God. But when I don't listen to Christian music, then it's a lot harder to focus on God as my provider, and I'm more self-sufficient in general.... Sometimes I make a decision—like in the mornings, I get quite angry if I wake up with an alarm, because that disturbs me, puts me in a bad mood. So it's music that goes on. I prefer if it's the chilled out Colby Caillat[4] stuff, or praise and worship music in the morning and during breakfast because it gets me into that trusting him feeling and focus. Because I'm quite a task person, so for me it's quite easy for me to have a lot of stuff in my head that's pulling me away from trusting him. So I've already got that little Debbie sitting on my shoulder going: 'Oh you've got this and this and this and this and this to do' and I'm like, starting to get frantic in my head because I'm not even awake yet, so if I've got God stuff playing, it really helps me to remember that I believe in him, helps me almost to 'oh yeah', you know?.... But at lunchtime or in the evening, then I'm sort of into the day, and then it's cool, I can listen to whatever else.

(Interview with author, July 18, 2010)

For Debbie, meaning and efficacy are not found in the music *per se* but instead in its associations: Christianity frames how she uses and experiences music. Although the 'chilled-out' character of Colby Caillat is undoubtedly important, a more important element of Christian music is the teaching that is so strongly associated with it. Evangelical Christianity teaches unwavering trust in God; to worry about everyday things is natural, but this implies distrust in God's provision. Rather than try to control things, then, evangelical Christians are taught to adopt an attitude of trust in God in all aspects of life: when one 'lets go' and relies on God, good things happen. This message is associated with the music (and sometimes explicitly stated in the lyrics), and with it, Debbie reminds herself to approach life through God rather than through her own means.

During our conversation, it became clear that Debbie listened to a variety of artists other than Hillsong. Hillsong songs were part of Debbie's playlist, but she rarely listened to them at home, where she preferred a more acoustic aesthetic. In contrast, she told me that she valued Hillsong songs during worship services because their volume drowned out the voices of others—as well as her own. In contrasting the experience of a Hillsong worship service to those she attended growing up in South Africa, she revealed that Hillsong's presentation of worship afforded her the means both to participate in the service and also to concentrate on God:

T: So there's an element to the way the music is piped in…so you can't hear yourself singing.

D: Yes, exactly, and I can't hear other people singing as much, so I can't put people off, and I don't have to worry about being embarrassed, or I don't have to worry about interrupting somebody else. I just feel comfortable or I don't feel comfortable. So I've been back to South Africa a few times and gone to visit a few friends' churches. And each time I go to all their churches, and it's all the same: I want to get up and be involved, I want to say 'Yes!' and I want to clap and I want to sing loudly and I want to do what I want to do, but I'm VERY aware of the surroundings and what other people are doing. And that almost holds me back from just putting my hand up or clapping and getting involved.

(Interview with author, July 18, 2010)

It is interesting that, outside of church, non-Hillsong music is Debbie's preferred medium for connecting with God, while in the context of a service (and even in another church), she prefers Hillsong's music—or at least Hillsong's worship aesthetic. Ethnomusicologist Mark Porter writes that for many Christians, maintaining boundaries between corporate rituals and individual rituals is an important way of understanding the 'continuum' of sacred experiences that they seek in their everyday lives (Porter 2017, 81–104). For Debbie, different contexts demand different styles, but the goal is ultimately the same: to experience the sacred.

In contrast to Debbie, other Hillsong participants seek the electric aesthetic of the church's worship music both inside and outside of church services. For example, Waî is a 30-year-old film student who works as a delivery person for a Vietnamese restaurant (where I interviewed her). She uses Hillsong's music to get herself going before work:

W: So, you know, all their songs are awesome…they give you such vavavavoom! You wake up in the morning and you listen to them and you're like, 'oooh!, I'm on a roll!' On those days when I'm on the way here and I don't really want to work, I put it on, pump up the volume, and I'm like 'yeah, I'm going!' By the time I get here, ask these guys—like, I'm bubbly anyway, but they're like: 'Woah, you've got energy'!

(Interview with author, October 16, 2010)

For Waî, as well as for others I interviewed, Hillsong's music is an integral part of the experience of her everyday life. Like Debbie, the aesthetic dimension is important, but ultimately secondary:

TW: Ok, so what is it about the music that does that?
W: There's something about [the music]—it just explains a lot about God…. It just really tells you about who God is and what Jesus did. Wow, it's genius. It really is. You listen to the songs and your heart just starts to shake. I just feel happiness when I listen to that album.

In this second quotation, Waî clarifies that the 'energy' she gets from the music, which she first attributed to the volume, actually resides in the associated teachings:

TW: Is it the lyrics that do the explaining?
W: Well, yeah…. OK, so you were at Team Vision Night,[5] right? When [Hillsong Worship Pastor] Peter Wilson preached about the meaning of communion, and then they played 'A Beautiful Exchange'? It's like, then I *knew*.

For Waî, the teaching and the music accrue meaning in relation to the totality that is the Hillsong brandscape. Hillsong provides the branded material: the music, the teaching that is associated with the music, and also the context in which the music is experienced. However, it is Waî who seeks out the experience, engages with the music in the moment, and ultimately forms the meaningful associations that give the music and the brand its 'power'.

Debbie and Waî's uses of music in their everyday lives, while individualistic, are both directed towards the maintenance of an evangelical Christian lifestyle. Debbie uses Christian music to relax and trust in God's provision. In contrast, Waî uses the music's message to get up and go. The end result of both women's musical use is 'educational'—there are biblical lessons in the music that can be used in everyday life. These lessons are partially learned and experienced through engagement with Hillsong's branded resources—the music, but also the associated preaching, books, podcasts, team meetings, connect groups, and so on. In other words, they listen to Hillsong's branded music in order to experience the world as Christians.

Both Debbie and Waî use music to create what anthropologist Charles Hirschkind (2001) describes as an 'ethical soundscape', which is both an environment and also a 'cultural practice through which the perceptual capabilities of the subject are honed' (Hirschkind 2001, 623–24). In his study of the ways devout Muslims listen to recorded sermons in Egypt, Hirschkind highlights how listeners seek to achieve a specific emotional state of being, a state in which they can 'properly' understand the meaning of the sermon beyond the intellectual level and also within the prescribed limits of a pious Islamic lifestyle. Importantly, this state involves the total being, acknowledging the concomitance of the mental, physical, and emotional elements

of embodied experience. For Hirschkind's collaborators, in order to 'hear with the heart' (ibid, 624), the 'proper sermon audition demands a particular affective-volitional response from the listener… as a condition for "understanding" sermonic speech' (ibid). Through directed 'ethical listening', listeners seek to 'construct their own knowledge, emotions, and sensibilities in accord with their models of Islamic moral personhood' (ibid, 640).

Hirschkind's ethnography corroborates the view that it often takes 'work' on the part of participants in order to achieve a sacred experience and that the expectation of, or at least the desire for, that experience often plays an important role in achieving it. In the Pentecostal context, for example, it has been shown that 'the stronger the expectation and desire for "religious experience" and a change in one's own spirit through singing and worship, the greater the likelihood that these manifestations will come to fruition' (Miller and Strongman 2002, 15; see also Spilka et al. 1996). Emotion drives the experience, but participants must first *know* how to evoke the emotion.

This knowledge is learned through a mix of socialization, enculturation, and acculturation—in a word, education.[6] Judith Becker likens the progression of a trance ritual to a story that produces a 'habitus of listening' or a 'script' that is followed (Becker 2004, 82). Writing about Sufi ceremonies, she notes: 'Musical emotion, musical feeling, and movement in the listener changes both its form and its intensity as the script progresses. The affect of the script, when fully acted out, is the ultimate joy of a direct and personal knowledge of Allah' (ibid). This 'script' is 'public, situational, predictable, and culturally sanctioned' (ibid, 84). She explains:

> Within each of these scripts, musical, behavioural, and emotional events will occur within a certain predictable frame. Simultaneously, each individual event will be unique and nonrepeatable. All have developed habits of mind and body in response to specific musical events. These habits are acquired throughout our life experiences of interaction with others in similar situations.
>
> (ibid, 85)

Brands also provide scripts: a prescribed way of approaching something the same way over and over again, no matter where the interaction takes place (albeit with concessions to local cultural norms). This is most apparent in interactions with service brands. The experience of ordering a coffee at a Starbucks anywhere in the world, for example, is almost the same. One knows not only what to expect in terms of the quality of the product but also how to order: including knowing how the queue forms, the specialized language, and where to find the milk and sugar. Although there will always be 'local' variations, for Starbucks, one should ideally be able to order 'a tall skinny soy latte' in any of its locations around the world without knowing the language of the host country because the coffee chain has its

own 'native' brand language and ways of doing things. Through repetition, participants have *learned* how to do things the Starbucks way. They have been enculturated to the Starbucks brand.

Corporate (en)culture(ation)

Both Debbie and Waî 'know' Hillsong's brand culture; through their participation in Hillsong's brandscape, they have learned the norms, language, and perhaps most importantly the values that form the basis of the church. One reason that organizations engage in 'organizational' or 'corporate' branding is that it increases the efficiency (i.e., the speed, reach, and fidelity) with which ideas and information can be disseminated throughout an organization and beyond (Moor 2007, 78–82). An organization is more likely to succeed in achieving a goal if its participants are focused on that goal, understand it well, and are motivated to work towards it (Aaker [1996] 2010, 135). A brand's stakeholders are also its semiotic material: organizational participants who are fully 'branded' are therefore valuable because they clearly communicate the brand's purpose and values to themselves, other members of the organization, and 'outsiders' as well. Thus, the benefit of cultivating a strong corporate culture, defined as 'a set of norms and values that are widely shared and strongly held throughout the organization' (O'Reilly and Chatman 1996, 166), is clear: it puts all participants 'on the same page'. They live the corporate culture—it is their lifestyle.

When speaking of a large evangelical Christian organization such as Hillsong Church, the term 'corporate' takes on several overlapping and interrelated meanings. In consumer culture, the term is usually first associated with being 'of or belonging to a corporation' (i.e., a business entity). However, it is also defined as 'done by or characteristic of individuals acting together; "a joint identity"; "the collective mind"; "the corporate good"'.[7] These latter definitions are closer to the evangelical Christian conception of 'corporate' and are especially close to the concept of the Body of Christ, which was explored in Chapter 4. Furthermore, 'corporate worship' (the worship that happens in group settings rather than individually) is considered to be a fundamental part of the evangelical Christian experience. In the context of corporate worship, communication is both a 'horizontal' exercise among fellow worshippers and a 'vertical' or one-to-one connection with God.[8] The horizontal element can be understood in terms of education; corporate worship is one of the activities through which participants become acquainted with the ritual flow[9] and the normative gestures involved in the service (Ingalls 2008, 175–258).[10] It is also where the discourses that frame the event are put into action. The horizontal element provides the knowledge needed for the vertical element to be realized. In other words, corporate worship is an activity through which a church's 'corporate culture' is cultivated, transmitted, and experienced.

Corporate culture is produced through education and participation. A strong corporate culture begins from a clear understanding of an

organization's purpose and values. For many organizations, this is expressed in a mission statement. Hillsong's mission statement is:

> To reach and influence the world by building a large Christ-centered, Bible-based church, changing mindsets and empowering people to lead and impact in every sphere of life.[11]

Part of the way Hillsong seeks to realize its mission is through its worship music, which, as noted above, is associated with the discourses that frame the experience of it. Worship can thus be seen as a technology through which Hillsong's purpose and values become embodied. Since its musicians often facilitate worship, the church works to instill its corporate culture in all of its worship team members. This begins with understanding exactly what is meant by 'worship', which at Hillsong is a lifestyle (Zschech 2001, 31–33). Because corporate culture radiates outwards from an organization's core participants, Hillsong's leadership goes to great lengths to instill proper intentions in the culture of its worship team. Notions of 'worship' and 'purpose' are therefore constantly in the forefront of worship team members' thoughts. This was expressed by Hristo, a 19-year-old drummer at Hillsong London who is originally from Bulgaria and studies music at a London conservatoire:

> It's not only the music but the fact that when we as musicians are part of the worship team, we don't just go out to have a performance, but we go out on stage focused on God and on leading people into worship. *So the music is not the most important thing; the message of Jesus Christ is the most important thing.* I think it's important for the people who lead worship to understand that before they can lead a congregation into worship.
>
> (Interview with author, February 13, 2011; emphasis added)

Hillsong's worship team is primarily made up of volunteers, who, while often trained in music, may not initially be the 'specialists' in the specifics of Hillsong's church culture that its leaders are. Therefore, a considerable amount of effort is put into educating its members in what proper worship is and what the team members are there for. Julie, a 30-year-old Belgian who sings on the worship team at Hillsong London, expressed this during a conversation we had at the Starbucks around the corner from the church. During our conversation, Julie admitted that wanting to perform on stage was part of the reason she auditioned for the worship team. However, once on the team, she quickly changed her mindset:

> A lot of people start on the worship team, especially if they do music, to get on stage and be seen. The reason I say that is that you're on the team, and you live with the team, and you change your mindset really easy. At a certain point you get it, that it's not about you. It's not about

> your career, it's not about your minute of fame: it's about God. That's why you worship. That's also why [Hillsong] always put the same people in the front, because those people know why they're there, and not for the wrong reason. They put a lot of emphasis on it. And you grow in it; I grew in it. Because I was a Christian for five months [when I joined the worship team], so I didn't have the context. But you develop it… they put a lot of emphasis on the right reason for being on stage.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

Julie started as part of the backup vocalist group, which performs offstage and is piped into the house mix. After spending time with the team and learning the accepted way of thinking, she was 'promoted' to the front, where she now appears regularly. Julie is following the 'educational' path that sees vocalists move from the back of the house to front line to worship leaders, ensuring a consistent line of worship leaders in terms of both availability and consistency in training and values. The team functions as a teaching group that helps instill and reinforce both broadly Christian and Hillsong-specific values and ways of thinking. Importantly, this is primarily done through extramusical activities. For example, as Hristo relayed to me, most of the weekly worship team rehearsals are not focused on music, rather:

> At rehearsal we get together and there are different talks…about worship. Different guys talk to us and encourage us. The past few weeks, we've been studying the Biblical Finance book.[12] We have team vision nights where the idea of it is just if some people do not quite understand why they're doing something, just to help them understand.
>
> (Interview with author, February 13, 2011)

Hristo told me that less than half of a worship team rehearsal is dedicated to rehearsing for the upcoming service. In Hillsong's profoundly musical culture, the music itself is not seen as the most important factor in worship. It is the understanding of why the musicians are doing what they are doing that is seen as the critical element in the music's efficacy. Crucially, this is disseminated through seemingly tangential topics like finance. In other words, the church promotes the idea of a fully evangelical Christian lifestyle that becomes 'branded' into the music.

The worship team experiences of Julie and Hristo begin to illustrate how Hillsong's brand educates and how its participants work to absorb and utilize that education. The brand becomes a self-referential system that perpetuates itself through participants' desire to live a Christian lifestyle. The brandscape is the value-laden frame in which participants orient their actions, but it is also constructed through their actions. As Julie and Hristo noted above, the first step to worship as a lifestyle is to understand why one does things. But understanding the 'why' is not the same as being able to

put it into action. Like Hirschkind's collaborators mentioned above, Julie and Hristo have had to practice in order to achieve the full integration of mind/body/spirit. In other words, they have had to embody the Hillsong brand to 'truly' understand it.

Part II – embodying the brand

Once worship team members understand why they are on the platform, they must also understand 'how' to worship. As representatives of the Hillsong brand, worship leaders and team members are semiotic material in the Hillsong brandscape. Like Darlene Zschech in Chapter 3, they are symbols of Hillsong's corporate values and are charged with communicating those values to other participants. A simple example of communication in the worship context is the way a musician raises her hands during a song, a common practice among evangelicals that is a 'visual [marker] of the act of worship' (Ingalls 2008, 180). In ritualized situations, inexperienced participants will often imitate the postures and movements of experienced ones (Becker 2004, 119–21), and Hillsong's musicians are viewed as 'experts' in worship. When they raise their hands, others follow suit, as participants have been socialized to understand that the adoption of this posture equates to worship—not just the act but also the intentions and meanings that go along with it.

The awareness that postures and actions convey internal states is evident in the following statement by Roy, who sings backup on Hillsong London's worship team and was also quoted in Chapter 3:

> You should set an example where people can emulate. So they must see in you the message of the songs. So it's about relating to them, being able to really cause them to worship the Lord.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

A cursory reading of this might imply that a worship leader could simply lift his or her hands and, by 'appearing' to worship, incite others to 'really' worship (Adnams 2013). After all, business writers such as James Gilmore and Joseph Pine (2007), performance theorists such as Jeffrey C. Alexander (2006), and philosophers such as Charles Taylor (1991) and Charles Guignon (2004) have all argued that authenticity is performed and ascribed. However, these authors are not arguing for a postmodern denial of authenticity: they all acknowledge that while authenticity is difficult to communicate, it is ultimately about being true to the inner experience of one's self. According to Hillsong's worship leaders, one actually needs to be worshipping in order to lead others into worship. As Roy put it:

> You have to really be worshipping God first. You have to be in the right spirit, because you won't be able to lead people if you're not.

> So—our ministry is a Christian ministry. We minister first to God. And you will feel inside if you are able to touch the heart of the Lord. After that, God will just anoint your worship. And that is how people will see the glory that is in you. And they will just follow. That will cause them to follow you and usher them into the presence of God. You simply have to focus yourself first to God. Like I said, you have to be praying about the songs. You really have to pray and condition your mind and your body, because once you are prepared, then people will see.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

The conditioning of mind and body that Roy is describing above is a form of self-discipline, the goals and manifestations of which are learned through education and exposure to a corporate set of values. But the church cannot 'force' this education upon participants. If one does not open up to, accept, and then put into practice what is being offered, learning will not occur; participants must seek the (self) knowledge they need for sacred experience. According to Roy, this takes preparation and discipline:

> It takes preparation [to lead worship]…. You should be able to not just listen to the songs, you really have to understand what they mean, and how we should be able to relay that message to people. I think you have to meditate over the songs and pray. And you simply have to ask the Lord to prepare you spiritually and physically so that on the day of service, you will be able to answer the presence of God…. I discipline myself; like the day before, I don't usually talk about anything. I just lay in my bed and just worship and pray and meditate. And I don't talk that much. It's part of my discipline. It's really asking the Lord to just anoint you, you know? Because you just have to do your part and God will do the rest.
>
> (Interview with author, February 6, 2011)

Over the course of my fieldwork, my interlocutors routinely claimed that in order to 'really' worship, certain conditions needed to be present. For example, Roy had a Saturday routine that put him in the right mindset for Sunday's service. Others described having a favourite song or place that put them in the frame of mind they needed to be in to fully concentrate on God. For worship team members, who are simultaneously worshippers and facilitators of worship, the need for certain conditions to be in place to really worship is sometimes problematic. On the one hand, they need to be engaged in worship to be leading others into it. On the other hand, the worship team's job is to afford participants the opportunity for a sacred experience through their onstage performances and must also concentrate on the technical aspects of performance in order to deliver the level of 'excellence' that, as discussed in Chapter 4, is a key part of Hillsong's brand

identity. When watching the Hillsong London team in action, one might notice that either the backing guitarist or one of the keyboard players has a microphone but never sings into it. Occasionally, this musician will say something into it that is audible only to the other musicians on stage who are wearing inner earpieces. This is the real 'worship leader' (as opposed to the lead singer) who directs the musicians through each song. As discussed in Chapter 5, although many of the elements of the music are standardized, the musicians also have room to regulate the flow of the service in real time, reacting to the 'mood' of the congregation or one of the pastors. Worship leaders I spoke to said that they try to gauge 'where' the congregation is. They may, for example, repeat a chorus if they feel that it is particularly resonant at that moment. Similarly, they may bring the volume down if Head Pastor Gary Clarke seems ready to say something (particularly during the altar call).

The conflicting demands of 'worship' on the one hand and 'performance' on the other are a source of tension for Julie, the worship team member whom I quoted in the previous section:

> You have to worship, but at the same time you have to think about everything. Because, like the guys who are on the frontline, they have their ear, and Dave Kennedy (one of Hillsong London's worship leaders) is always speaking in the microphone. They hear it, so he's always giving instructions to the musicians, to the singers. So you have to focus on your own voice; you have to focus on Dave; you have to focus on the crowd. So it's a lot of things you have to think about. And still you have to worship. So yeah, it's quite tricky.... I find it hard to worship while I'm singing [onstage]. If I'm just in the crowd, no problem. When I'm backstage or onstage, you always have to think about your pitch and the lyrics, what's going to happen, where are they going to start the song, how it's going to end, how the intention is. So it's more like—it's not a job, but—it's actually doing a job.
>
> (Interview with author, July 22, 2011)

I received similar responses from other worship team members, who would go on to say that this became less of a problem with practice. However, Hristo claimed to have the opposite experience:

> I find it a lot less distracting when I'm actually playing rather than when I'm in the congregation. I don't know why, but I find it less distracting.... I think one of the things is because I'm a drummer, and when someone else is playing, I will always either have a critical ear out, or, the 'I like this' ear out. I think it's just a musicians' thing. It's not terribly distracting, but I find that I'm way more focused and there's fewer things to distract me when I'm playing myself.
>
> (Interview with author, February 13, 2011)

The worship team members I interviewed faced different challenges in attaining flow (Csikszentmihalyi 1990; c.f. note 9 of this chapter) and employed different strategies to overcome them. However, all of these strategies were informed by the understanding that worship was part of a *lifestyle*, as articulated by Hristo:

> Worship is not just songs that you sing; it's your life, really—a way of life. I guess that during a song somebody has to say 'let's bring it down' doesn't necessarily mean that your worship is being interrupted. Even if it is, I don't see why it needs to take hours or a period of time to get back into it. I think it's just a quick snap back into it. Because we are worshipping with our instruments. You don't stop playing just to listen to them. Even though you're not entirely focused on what you're doing, you are still automatically giving worship.
>
> (Interview with author, February 13, 2011)

For Hristo, the act of playing the drums on Sunday is not necessarily 'set apart' from everyday life. The idea of an evangelical Christian lifestyle contradicts the functionalist anthropological perspective of religion, which posits it as a 'special' activity. Based on the responses above, it would seem that the apparent contradiction is resolved through a larger worldview, a lifestyle that frames worship as a holistic way of being in the world. In the Hillsong context, it is the brand that is the frame; it provides both the cultural resources that participants use to direct their actions and the cultural contexts within which those actions accrue meaning. Put another way, the brand is educational material, and branding is the education that underpins the preparation for, and ultimately is part of, a worship lifestyle.

Part III – doing the work to embody the brand

Although brands are 'educational', they are only educational to the extent that consumers engage with them. The reason that Hillsong invests so much energy into inculcating its musicians into its corporate culture is that, once that culture is successfully established among its core participants, it is likely to radiate outwards to other stakeholders. But those stakeholders are equally, if not more, responsible for their in/enculturation into the church's brand community. The brand does not say 'You must'. Rather, it suggests that 'You may!' (Arvidsson 2006, 8). In other words, Hillsong can train its musicians all it wants, but in the end, its participants have to immerse themselves in the brandscape.

Part of Hillsong's brand is communicated through 'leading by example', but those examples are contextualized through discursive media, such as the recorded sermons, books, videos, and podcasts, that are available at the church's resource centre and online. These resources afford participants opportunities for self-directed learning, which they integrate into their daily

lives. For example, several interlocutors told me that they listen to podcasts during their commutes, in a manner similar to that described by Michael Bull (2007). This is also what Darlene Zschech recommends in her book *Extravagant Worship* (2001):

> If keeping your thoughts in line with God's Word is difficult for you, then I suggest that you listen to teaching tapes.... I have listened to hundreds of hours of Bible teaching[13] to re-educate my inner woman while commuting.
>
> (Zschech 2001, 149).

Taking the act of educational listening outside of the Sunday service further integrates the act of seeking Christ in everyday life. Like Hirschkind's Muslim collaborators, who also listened to tapes while going about their everyday lives, Hillsong's participants do the work of self-transformation. Dele, a 32-year-old finance officer and Christian rapper, explained this:

TW: This 'learning to listen', is that something you just came upon?

D: It's something I discovered. Because it used to be that I would go to church and be like, 'hmmm, I'm not feeling it. Somehow the worship today didn't bring God's presence in'. That's true sometimes. But sometimes it's you who was expecting a key change or expecting (the worship leader) to take it to another level and he just sang the song plain and simple, and you were expecting some skills or expertise or something. So it was you who wasn't worshipping. So it taught me that: to just go in there and keep your heart open and go for it and just worship God. Hillsong definitely taught me that.

(Interview with author, August 21, 2012)

The language Dele uses to describe how he 'learned to listen' reveals a confluence of structure, discourse, and agency in his learning process. Dele begins by claiming that he 'discovered' how to worship (or at least the correct way to think about worship) in order to achieve a sacred experience. Although the worship team is tasked with leading the experience, he notes that there may be a disconnection between the team's intention and the participant's expectation. The participant may expect the worship leader to do something and not have that expectation fulfilled. As noted earlier, the expectation of a sacred experience is often an important element in achieving it. This is why evangelical Christians speak of 'inviting the Spirit'. However, there is also an interactive element within the structure of the service, as was clear in the O2 event described in Chapter 4. Furthermore, one of the tasks of the worship team is to respond to the 'mood' of the participants. Worship leaders *afford* participants the opportunity to worship by facilitating the worship service and providing examples of how to worship. However, they cannot 'make' a participant find God. Dele describes having

to 'keep your heart open and just go for it', implying that the onus of the experience ultimately lies with the participant, not the worship team. This work is also the most important aspect of the branding process. By working to elevate his focus from an expectation of what chord will come next to the expectation of an encounter with God, Dele is able to own a personal experience that has been shaped by Hillsong's corporate culture. In other words, Dele discovered the experience, but the Hillsong brand suggested where he should look to find it.

Dele is aware of this. Indeed, he confirms that Hillsong 'taught' him how to worship:

> I actually learned to separate the love for the music from actually worshipping God. There are some songs that we sing [at Hillsong London] that I'm not really fond of; they're just not my favourite. I'd never listen to them on my iPod or whatever. So [attending Hillsong London] taught me to do that.
>
> (Interview with author, August 21, 2012)

This statement is interesting, given that musical preference is one of the key factors in absorption (Russell 1997; Zillman and Gan 1997). Listeners are more likely to engage with songs they like than songs they don't like. Furthermore, to like something is to feel *a priori* well disposed towards it, so it is already more likely that the meanings and values associated with it have been or will be accepted. Yet, as Dele notes above, Hillsong has taught him to separate his love of the music from the act of worshipping. He has learned to put God first, which is the basis of Hillsong's brand positioning. For Dele, this is an ongoing educational process, something that became apparent as our conversation continued:

TW: How long have you been at Hillsong now?
D: Nearly four years.
TW: Has your worship experience evolved or changed?
D: It's become broader. My taste for stuff to get me into a place of worship has broadened; it's wider. There was a time when, you know, certain songs wouldn't do it for me. I mean, it used to be I heard Darlene Zschech and I wouldn't jump on any of her CDs—I still won't! (laughs). It just wasn't for me, you know? But I learned to appreciate it more, and if I went to a conference or concert where she was there, I'd be like 'yeah'!
(Interview with author, August 21, 2012)

Even after several years at Hillsong London, Dele won't listen to a lot of Hillsong's songs—especially the older Darlene Zschech songs—because he doesn't really like them. Yet he claims that he can worship to them. This suggests that, although music is an integral part of Hillsong's brand and branding, it is ultimately the gestalt of the Hillsong's communications that

infuses the brand with educational and spiritual efficacy. Hillsong's brand communicates the *knowledge* of 'how' and 'why' of how to live a Christian lifestyle; it is embedded in the Hillsong brand through teaching and experienced every time it is associated with an action.

Conclusion – the brand as a form of governance

The brand is as an information management device. As discussed in Chapter 1, branding condenses and streamlines flows of information among an organization's various internal and external stakeholders. As a technology of information management, then, the brand is implicated in the content and expression of corporate culture. However, as noted above, this management is not 'Taylorist'; it does not impose a set of meanings or actions directly 'from above'. Rather, it is '(post)Fordist'; it works by interacting with participants' already-held values. Branding is subject to the agency of stakeholders, but it also harnesses it. This was apparent in my conversation with Dele:

> What I like about Hillsong is that it gives you the opportunity to actually worship….There's enough space to actually worship and not get up in the vibe. Sometimes there's nothing going on and you're still worshipping! And that's when you realize that you are really worshipping and you're not getting carried away [with the music]…. [At] Hillsong, you get to a place where it's not even about the people, you just have space and time to worship. Everything slows down during that transition from praise into worship. There's not a lot happening, but you're just ready and prepared. It's quiet. A lot of people say that that's all done to get people—if it is, it works. Do you know what I mean? It really works. Because it gives you time and space to think about what you're doing and actually worship.
>
> (Interview with author, August 21, 2012)

The space that Hillsong creates is important. On the one hand, Dele is referring to the moments in worship music that are characterized by pedal tones and suspended chords—moments that are meant for personal reflection. But on the other hand, his comment also suggests an awareness of the 'space' that branding creates for each participant to make the brand her own *place* (space made meaningful—see Chapter 5); in other words, I suggest that Dele is talking about the Hillsong brandscape, the space/place in which branded meaning and values are co-created and (re)inscribed through experience.

Drawing from information already 'in the world', a brand anticipates certain kinds of meanings and thus affords certain kinds of actions and associations (Arvidsson 2006, 124–27). Arvidsson notes that brands 'provide part of the context in which products are used' and furthermore 'work by

enabling consumers, by empowering them in particular directions' (ibid, 8). Of course, one can see the irony in Arvidsson's use of 'empower': his point is that brands exercise control by harnessing participants' agency and the human need to create common social experiences. In other words, he is pointing out that in the act of making the information, meanings, and associations provided by the brand their 'own', they are embodying the worldview associated with the brand.

This chapter has discussed how Hillsong's participants *use* the brand to experience and embody the discourses and values associated with it. In the final chapter, then, I focus further on the *instrumentalization* of the brand. Hillsong's music and brand have *transcendent* and *transgressive* potential that is grounded in understandings of the 'sacred', 'profane', and 'mundane'. Hillsong's participant stakeholders use the brand to draw connections between these conceptually separate—but dialogically dependent—worlds and, in doing so, activate the spiritual efficacy—the 'power'—of the Hillsong brand.

Notes

1 Message delivered by Bobbie Houston during the 1pm service on May 30, 2010, at the Dominion Theatre.
2 For example, the first two verses and the chorus are:

> (Verse 1)
> I see you
> I see you
> Walking through a dream
> I see you
> My light in darkness breathing hope of new life
> Now I live through you and you through me
> Enchanting
> (Chorus)
> I pray in my heart that this dream never ends
> I see me through your eyes
> Living through life flying high
> Your life shines the way into paradise
> So I offer my life as a sacrifice
>
> (Verse 2)
> I live through your love
> You teach me how to see
> All that's beautiful
> My senses touch your word I never pictured
> Now I give my hope to you
> I surrender

3 Tellingly, the build-up and warm-down periods during exercise classes that DeNora documents follow a similar trajectory to those of evangelical worship services.
4 Colby Caillat is an American singer/songwriter. She does not claim to be Christian or to write Christian music. However, like Helen at the beginning of

this chapter, at least some Christians 'hear' Christian themes in her music (e.g., Judy 2014; c.f. Porter 2017, 59–81).

5 During my fieldwork, Team Vision Night was a monthly meeting of leaders and volunteers from the teams that collectively 'ran' many of the church's activities. Like most of Hillsong's activities, the meeting centred on preaching and worship. However, they also served the 'practical' purpose of helping participants understand their roles in working towards the church's goals.

6 Berry (2007) describes 'enculturation' as a process through which 'the individual acquires appropriate values and behaviors by learning what the culture deems to be necessary.... The end result (if enculturation is successful) is a person who is competent in the culture, including its language, its rituals, its values, and so on' (Berry 2007, 547). According to Berry, this learning process is not necessarily 'deliberate or didactic' but rather 'learning without specific teaching'. In other words, enculturation occurs through the individual's day-to-day interactions with his or her parents, peers, and other members of his or her 'primary culture' (ibid, 546–47). This stands apart from socialization, which refers to 'the process of deliberate shaping, by way of tutelage, of the individual' (ibid, 547). A third concept, acculturation, is essentially a mix of enculturation and socialization. Acculturation occurs through 'contact with other peoples belonging to different cultures and exhibiting different behaviors' (ibid). While enculturation may be thought of as *cultural* learning, acculturation is more accurately described as *culture* learning, which 'refers to the process of acquisition of features of [a] new culture, sometimes as replacements for the attitudes and behaviors that have been lost [gradually, usually during prolonged lack of contact with the primary culture] but often in addition to them' (ibid). To some degree, all three processes are involved in Hillsong's branding and vary depending on the individual in question. For example, a child born into or brought up in an evangelical Christian family will be more enculturated than acculturated, whereas a convert to Christianity will be more acculturated than enculturated. (Importantly, most conversions happen between closely related traditions. For example, it is far more likely that someone will convert from Methodism, Catholicism, or even Judaism to Pentecostalism than from a tradition further removed, such as Islam or Buddhism (Beit-Hallahmi and Argyle 1997). Also, belief is arguably mostly enculturated, whereas the specific knowledge that frames belief (e.g., the names of the books of the Bible) is specifically taught, a socializing process.

7 www.thefreedictionary.com/corporate. Accessed November 25, 2012.

8 See, for example, Evans (2006, 8–23 and 55–57).

9 Two influential accounts of transcendent experiences are 'flow' (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) and 'peak experience' (Laski 1962; Maslow [1964] 1994). As described by Schouten et al. (2007), flow is the 'total absorption in an activity' that is 'achieved through intense, focused engagement in the mastery of an activity' (ibid, 367). Most importantly, 'flow produces a state of transcendence, a suspension of temporality, a sense of separation from the mundane, and a sense of unity with some higher plane of experience' (ibid). A related experience is the 'peak experience'. Flow is achieved through the individual's own concentration on a task. In contrast, peak experiences 'seem often to originate from outside the individual and to transport that person to unexpected emotional heights' (ibid, 358). Like flow, peak experiences often lead a person to feel 'intimately connected with some large phenomenon, such as nature, humankind, or the infinite' and are often implicated in a variety of religious experience such as ecstasies, revelations, or conversions (ibid).

10 It is not only in ritualized worship settings that the gestures and flow of the service are learned. As Simon Coleman (2000) suggests, the performance and discourse of evangelical Christianity circulates in a highly mediated web of

global preachers, conferences, and products that help perpetuate a 'global, charismatic "consciousness"' that is 'not merely a set of ideas, but also engagement in certain physical and material activities, including the development of a spiritually charged aesthetic that encompasses ritual movements, media consumption, linguistic forms and aspects of the internal environment' (Coleman 2000, 5–6). In other words, evangelical Christians learn what evangelical Christian practice should 'look' and 'be' like not only through direct participation in events such as worship services but also by engaging with other types of media, such as video recordings of worship services. The ubiquity of these videos, circulated on DVDs and internet sites such as YouTube, serves to perpetuate a 'global evangelical Christian' aesthetic that encompasses the visual and aural dimensions of the events (e.g., the lighting and flow of the service), participants' bodily actions (e.g., raising their hands or speaking in tongues), and the 'internal' manifestations—the actual meanings that engender and are derived from the experience.

11 *Our Vision*. www.hillsong.com/vision. Accessed June 23, 2019.

12 Mark Lloydbottom (2010) *Biblical Finance: Reflections on Money Wealth and Possessions*. Crown Financial Ministries. Copies of this book had been distributed to everyone in the church who had attended Lloydbottom's appearance as a guest preacher a few months earlier.

13 Not all of the material on offer at Hillsong's resource centre is directly produced by the church. For example, books by prominent pastors such as T.D. Jakes, Joseph Prince, and Joel Osteen are often for sale, as well as material from a particular service's guest speaker. However, this material is still 'branded' in that it is part of the larger associational web of pastors and media from which Hillsong's brand meaning is drawn. Additionally, because it is being sold at Hillsong's resource centre, it carries the Hillsong 'seal of approval'.

References

Aaker, David A. [1996] 2010. *Building Strong Brands*. London: Pocket Books.

Adnams, Gordon. 2013. '"Really Worshipping", Not "Just Singing"'. In *Christian Congregational Music: Performance, Identity and Experience*, edited by Monique Ingalls, Carolyn Landau, and Tom Wagner, 185–200. Farnham, UK: Ashgate.

Alexander, Jeffery C. 2006. 'Cultural Pragmatics: Social Performance between Ritual and Strategy.' In *Social Performance: Symbolic Action, Cultural Pragmatics, and Ritual*, edited by Jeffery C. Alexander, Bernhard Giesen, and Jason L. Mast, 29–90. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Anderson, Perry. 1976. 'The Antinomies of Antonio Gramsci'. *The New Left Review* 1(100): 5–78.

Arvidsson, Adam. 2006. *Brands: Meaning and Value in Media Culture*. New York: Routledge.

Beck, Guy L., ed. 2006. *Sacred Sound: Experiencing Music in World Religions*. Waterloo, Canada: Wilfrid Laurier University Press.

Becker, Judith. 2004. *Deep Listeners: Music, Emotion, and Trancing*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Beit-Hallahmi, Benjamin, and Michael Argyle. 1997. *The Psychology of Religious Behaviour, Belief and Experience*. London: Routledge.

Belk, Russell W. 1988. 'Possessions and the Extended Self'. *Journal of Consumer Research* 15 (2): 139–68.

Berry, John W. 2007. 'Acculturation'. In *Handbook of Socialization: Theory and Research*, edited by Joan E. Grusec and Paul D. Hastings, 543–58. London: Guilford Press.

Bull, Michael. 2007. *Sound Moves: iPod Culture and Urban Experience*. London: Routledge.

Carah, Nicholas. 2010. *Pop Brands: Branding, Popular Music, and Young People*. New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Coleman, Simon. 2000. *The Globalisation of Charismatic Christianity*. 1st ed. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Csikszentmihalyi, Mihaly. 1990. *Flow: The Psychology of Optimal Experience*. New York: HarperPerennial.

DeNora, Tia. 2000. *Music in Everyday Life*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Evans, Mark. 2006. *Open Up the Doors: Music in the Modern Church*. London: Equinox Publishing Ltd.

Gilmore, James H., and B. Joseph Pine II. 2007. *Authenticity: What Consumers Really Want*. Boston, MA: Harvard Business School Press.

Gramsci, Antonio. 1971. *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, edited by Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. London: Lawrence & Wishart.

Guignon, Charles. 2004. *On Being Authentic*. London: Routledge.

Hirschkind, Charles. 2001. 'The Ethics of Listening: Cassette-Sermon Audition in Contemporary Egypt'. *American Ethnologist* 28 (3): 623–49.

Ingalls, Monique. 2008. '"Awesome In This Place": Sound, Space, and Identity in Contemporary North American Evangelical Worship'. Dissertation. University of Pennsylvania.

Jankowsky, Richard C. 2010. *Stambeli: Music, Trance, and Alterity in Tunisia*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Judy, Logan. 2014. 'Colbie Caillat Speaks the Truth of Romans 12:2'. *Cross Culture* (blog). http://thecrossculture.org/2014/08/25/colbie-caillat-speaks-the-truth-of-romans-122/.

Laski, Marghanita. 1962. *Ecstasy. A Study of Some Secular and Religious Experiences*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press.

Lloydbottom, Mark. 2010. *Biblical Finance: Reflections on Money Wealth and Possessions*. Knoxville, TN: Crown Financial Ministries.

Lury, Celia. 2004. *Brands: The Logos of the Global Economy*. New York: Routledge.

Maslow, Abraham H. [1964] 1994. *Religions, Values, and Peak-Experiences*. New York: Penguin Books.

Miller, Mandi. M., and Kenneth. T. Strongman. 2002. 'The Emotional Effects of Music on Religious Experience: A Study of the Pentecostal-charismatic Style of Music and Worship'.

Moor, Liz. 2007. *The Rise of Brands*. Oxford, UK: Berg Publishers.

O'Reilly, Charles, and Jennifer A. Chatman. 1996. 'Culture as Social Control: Corporations, Cults, and Commitment'. In *Research in Organizational Behavior* 18, edited by Barry. M. Staw and L. Cummings, 177–200. Middlesex, UK: JMI Press.

Porter, Mark. 2017. *Contemporary Worship Music in Everyday Musical Lives*. London: Routledge.

Russell, Philip A. 1997. 'Musical Tastes and Society'. In *The Social Psychology of Music*, edited by David J. Hargreaves and Adrian C. North, 141–55. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Schouten, John W., James H. McAlexander, and Harold F. Koenig. 2007. 'Transcendent Customer Experience and Brand Community'. *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 35: 357–68.

Spilka, Bernard, Kevin L. Ladd, Daniel N. McIntosh, Sara Milmoe, and Carl O. Bickel. 1996. 'The Content of Religious Experience: The Roles of Expectancy and Desirability'. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion* 6 (2): 95–105.

Taylor, Charles. 1991. *The Ethics of Authenticity*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Zillmann, Dolf, and Gan Su-lin. 1997. 'Musical Taste in Adolescents'. In *The Social Psychology of Music*, edited by David J. Hargreaves and Adrian C. North, 161–87. Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Zschech, Darlene. 2001. *Extravagant Worship*. Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers.

Conclusion

On June 26, 2012, Robin Hicks posted an article on the Australian media and marketing website Mumbrella that claimed Hillsong was 'Australia's most powerful brand' (Hicks 2012). In it, Hicks lists some keys to Hillsong's success, including, 'the music brand Hillsong United', 'customer acquisition', 'messaging and language', 'the service (brand experience)', and 'brand story'. Marketers often look to Hillsong as an exemplar of (church) branding (e.g. Casidy 2018). But offerings alone do not inspire devotion, and in the conclusion to her article, Hicks points towards a deeper reason for Hillsong's 'power':

> And let's be clear. The Hillsongers I have met, or who know [sic] through other people, are not brainwashed members of some cult. They are normal, intelligent people who have *bought into a way of living. A brand*. The difference between the Hillsong brand and others is that it is not just part of their life, like a Qantas flight or a Tim Tam. *It is their life.*
>
> (Hicks 2012, my emphasis)

Claiming that the Hillsong brand, or any brand for that matter, is anyone's *life* verges on hyperbolic; it is more accurate to say that, for Hillsong's stakeholders, the brand is an important part of their *lifestyle*. Hillsong's brand is not only a collection of media but also a medium through which its stakeholders practice and embody their faith. In other words, Hillsong's stakeholders *use* the brand to experience themselves as Christians 'in and of the world'.

This book has suggested that Hillsong's branding is a powerful organizational and communicative tool that leverages the vernacular of the consumer culture to 'add value' to both the church and to the experiences of its participant stakeholders. Hillsong's participants use its branded offerings to construct and maintain a lifestyle. In this regard, Hillsong is no different than most other brands. In this conclusion, then, I want to unpack what makes Hillsong's brand so 'powerful' for many of its stakeholders.

Worship, branding, music, and lifestyle

Part of the answer is, of course, 'the music'. Hillsong's brand is inextricably tied to its songs, which have for more than 20 years set the standard for the evangelical Christian worship music genre. This book has focused on the role of music in Hillsong's branding process. However, I want to suggest that the efficacy of Hillsong's brand is ultimately found not in the music but in the *worship* it facilitates. Broadly speaking, Hillsong's participants experience worship as two kinds of activities. The first are those activities considered 'sacred' and set apart from everyday life, such as corporate worship services or special events like the Pentecost festival discussed in Chapter 4. The second kinds of activities are those that make up the 'mundane' experiences of everyday life, such as those discussed in Chapter 6, in which worship is experienced as a lifestyle. The sacred and the mundane are concepts that frame the experience of worship, but their dialogical dependency means they are often not neatly separated in practice—as Mark Porter writes: 'The expected presence of God in Sunday worship lies on a continuum with the experience of divine presence…within the quotidian events of the week' (Porter 2017, 71).

In his study of the relationship between congregants' musical lives within and outside of church, Porter observes that the conceptual distinction between 'communally-expressed religion or spirituality and everyday (secular) life or individuality is a familiar, if sometimes problematic one, there being a much greater potential for inter-relation and overlap than it, strictly speaking, suggests' (ibid, 82). For Porter, the concepts of 'sacred' and 'mundane' are important because they inform how worshippers frame their worship activities and experiences: for some, it is important to maintain rigid boundaries between 'the church' and 'the world', while for others, the spheres mutually enrich one another (ibid, 59–104). In both cases, worshippers' experiences of music as sacred or otherwise are bound up in the dynamics of ritual separation. Porter notes that, in churches that employ an 'elevated' style of sacred music (e.g., organ-based hymns), this dynamic is 'deliberately cultivated, with the sacred space of the service intentionally set apart symbolically and aesthetically from the world of everyday life' (ibid, 82). However, the use of popular worship music, at least to some extent, inverts this logic, instead establishing 'a closer connection between the sacred worship of the service and the activities of daily life' (ibid, 83). I suggest that Hillsong's brand works in a similar manner in that it facilitates worship-as-lifestyle: participants *use* the Hillsong brand to frame their activities and experiences in ways that transcend and transgress the boundaries that circumscribe the spheres of the sacred and mundane, in the experience of *worship as everyday life*—a way of living both 'in and of the world'.

In their discussion of Religious Popular Music, sociologists Keith Kahn-Harris and Marcus Moberg (2012) employ the categories of the 'transcendent', 'transgressive', and 'instrumental' to conceptualize how

participants use popular worship music to achieve sacred experiences. For Kahn-Harris and Moberg, transcendence and transgression are experiential and conceptual categories grounded in immanence and materiality and are furthermore closely associated with the 'sacred' in that they imply a dividing line between the profane world and another one (c.f. Culianu and Burgdoff 2005). But while transcendence and transgression are similar, they are not the same: transcendence is understood as a feeling of separation from the everyday material world, while transgression is felt to 'temporarily suspend or invert the rules of everyday life' (Kahn-Harris and Moberg 2012, 88). At least in Christian thought, then, transcendence is a quality associated with a 'disembodied' experience, while transgression is associated with an 'embodied' experience; one 'floats over', while the other 'moves through'.

Transcendence and transgression are qualities often associated with popular music (e.g., Friskics-Warren 2005). Transcendent experiences are perhaps most strongly associated with psychedelic drug culture of the 1960s (e.g., Boyd 2007), and this continues with modern genres such as electronic dance music (e.g., St John 2006). But popular music is also associated with the transcendence of social and cultural barriers and stereotypes. For example, Holly Kruse (2002) writes that, although rock music is usually portrayed as a mode of male expression, as a transcendent art form, it enables both musicians and critics to offer feminist readings, thereby resisting and ultimately overcoming the hegemony of the male-dominated press. Kruse's conception of transcendence is close to the idea of transgression in that it is understood in relation to cultural and social boundaries. But unlike transgression, which is temporary, Kruse understands popular music as transcendent in that it can not only overcome but also permanently transform normalized cultural and social demarcations.

Kruse's close association of transcendence with transgression underscores the fact that popular music is more often associated with the latter than the former, and this is important for understanding the power of popular music in relation to worship. From blues to jazz to rock to punk to metal to hip-hop, almost every genre of popular music has at some point ignited a moral panic because it transgressed against the dominant social norms and values of the time. Christopher Partridge (2014) suggests that underlying these panics is the Christian understanding of sin. For Partridge, the cultural force of the story of the Fall and the narrative of sin and redemption shapes Western lifeworlds (for Christians and others), and in doing so, it 'provides the backdrop to the Dionysian spirit of popular music' (ibid, 64). Popular music's urge to transgress against social and cultural norms is thus always-already present in Christian Worship Music, but rather than leading participants into the profane world (as its critics suggested during the Worship Wars) for Hillsong and most other New Paradigm churches, it points participants towards the realm of the sacred.

Hillsong's brand and worship music, then, are infused with transcendent and transgressive potential because they articulate faith in 'the contested spaces of the modern world' (Partridge 2014, 5), especially those in popular and consumer culture. These are the spaces in which, as noted in Chapter 1, Hillsong's iconic brand does its work: in articulating faith, it also *articulates* (in Stewart Hall's use of the term—see Grossberg 1986) the sacred to the profane. Kahn-Harris and Moberg suggest that this articulation activates a second set of 'mundane' logics. For Kahn-Harris and Moberg, the use of popular music in worship by Hillsong and other New Paradigm churches is a 'worldly' activity that is 'guided by means-end rationality that disciplines and governs the bounds of desirable outcomes' (Kahn-Harris and Moberg 2012, 91; c.f. Habermas 1984; Weber 1991). In other words, popular worship music is produced and consumed specifically with the goal of affording worshippers embodied sacred experiences and, therefore, should be considered an 'instrumental' tool that worshippers use to ground the sacred 'in the world'.

Hillsong's brand is therefore 'powerful' because it is the medium through which its stakeholders instrumentalize the logics of the transcendent and transgressive and, in doing so, connect the poles of the sacred, profane, and mundane that demarcate the experience of worship. In this process, Hillsong's music acts as an 'associative enhancer of communication' (Brown 2006, 1) that sounds simultaneously at multiple registers in the brandscape. Hillsong's brand is, following John Blacking's definition of music, a 'humanly organized sound' (Blacking 1973): it is a system that organizes information and provides meaning in participants' lives, and in doing so, it 'adds value' to both the group and the individual's experience of it. For the members of Hillsong church, the brand is imbued with power because it is the medium through which the creation, maintenance, and *experience* of the (Christian) self is realized.

With this in mind, I suggest Hillsong's experiential religious brand is what anthropologist Birgit Meyer calls a 'sensational form'. Based on her observations of media use in Pentecostal worship in Ghana, Meyer posits a 'paradox of immediacy': as an immediate spiritual experience is realized repeatedly through a medium, the medium begins to transcend its materiality and becomes 'invisible' through social processes. Furthermore, as the medium is repeatedly used as a vehicle of transcendence, it becomes 'authorized', that is, imbued with spiritual efficacy:

> It is via particular modes of address, established modes of communication, and authorized religious ideas and practices that believers are called to get in touch with the divine, and each other. Sensational forms do not only convey particular ways of 'making sense' but concomitantly tune the senses and induce specific sensations, thereby rendering the divine sense-able, and triggering particular religious experiences.
>
> (Meyer 2008, 129)

For Meyer, the paradox of immediacy in Pentecostal media is that the more the medium becomes 'invisible' (i.e., spiritually efficacious), the more 'realizing' the experience depends on its being visible. Following Meyer, I suggest that Hillsong's brand functions in this way. Hillsong's brand is a medium that instrumentalizes the familiar communicative practices and logics of consumer culture to afford participants ways to actively engage in sacred experiences. In doing so, the brand becomes a necessary precondition for those experiences. 'Form' and 'content' do not exist in opposition; rather, 'form is necessary for content to be conveyed' (Meyer 2011, 30).

When I began my study of Hillsong in 2011, I was curious about how its brand 'added value' to the worship experience. Did worshippers, I wondered, 'find God' more easily or have a more intense worship experience when engaging with Hillsong's brand? I think the answer, at least for some, is 'yes'. For the stakeholders of religious brands such as Hillsong, the brand renders powerful experiences. I suggest that the power of these experiences creates a 'virtuous circle': as participants use the brand to facilitate a transcendent experience of God, the brand 'adds value' to the worship experience. As the brand does this, it accrues value as an anointed object, which in turn provides value in terms of human, economic, and social capital—what Andrew Mall (2018) calls 'worship capital'—for Hillsong's brand.

In his book *Shopping for God: How Christianity Went from in Your Heart to in Your Face*, James Twitchell writes, '…awakenings are an increase in religiosity because of new innovations in storytelling…' (Twitchell 2007, 45). While Twitchell is speaking of the 'Great Awakenings' that occurred in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, his observation about storytelling resonates with the evangelistic intentions of modern branded churches such as Hillsong. Branding's 'modern turn' was predicated on the belief that the 'crowd' was easily influenced and controlled by the stories marketers told in their messages. However, in the twenty-first century, those stories are increasingly created and amplified by communities of individuals. Hillsong's brand is the medium through which it tells its story, the story of God, and also the medium through which its stakeholders tell their own stories. Through these stories, affective ties are formed and strengthened, and devotion is expressed and experienced. If religious awakenings (great and small) are increases in devotion, Hillsong's brand is one such awakening.

References

Blacking, John. 1973. *How Musical Is Man?* Seattle: University of Washington Press.

Boyd, Joe. 2007. *White Bicycles: Making Music in the 1960s*. London: Serpent's Tail.

Brown, Steven, and Ulrik Volgsten, eds. 2006. *Music and Manipulation: On the Social Uses and Social Control of Music*. Oxford, UK: Berghahn Books.

Casidy, Riza. 2018. 'The Rise and Rise of Hillsong, and What Other Australian Churches Should Learn from Them'. *The Conversation*, August 26, 2019. theconversation.com/the-rise-and-rise-of-hillsong-and-what-other-australian-churches-should-learn-from-them-94487.

Culianu, Petru, and Craig A. Burgdoff. 2005. 'Sacrelidge'. In *Encyclopedia of Religion vol. 12*, edited by Lindsey Jones, second edition, 8010–17. Detroit: MacMillan Reference USA.

Friskics-Warren, Bill. 2005. *I'll Take You There: Pop Music and the Urge for Transcendence*. New York: Bloomsbury Publishing.

Grossberg, Lawrence. 1986. 'On Postmodernism and Articulation: An Interview with Stuart Hall'. *Journal of Communication Inquiry* 10 (2): 45–60.

Habermas, Jürgen. 1984. *The Theory of Communicative Action, Vol. 1: Reason and the Rationalization of Society*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

Hicks, Robin. 2012. 'Hillsong - Australia's Most Powerful Brand'. *Mumbrella*, July 26. mumbrella.com.au/hillsong-australias-most-powerful-brand-104506.

Kahn-Harris, Keith, and Marcus Moberg. 2012. 'Religious Popular Music: Between the Instrumental, Transcendent and Transgressive'. *Temenos* 8 (1): 87–106.

Kruse, Holly. 2002. 'Abandoning the Absolute: Transcendence and Gender in Popular Music Discourse. In *Pop Music and the Press*, edited by Steve Jones, 134–55. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Mall, Andrew. 2018. 'Worship Capital: On the Political Economy of Evangelical Worship Music'. *American Music* 36 (3): 303–26.

Meyer, Birgit. 2008. 'Media and the Senses in the Making of Religious Experience: An Introduction'. *Material Religion* 4 (2): 124–34.

Meyer, Birgit. 2011. 'Mediation and Immediacy: Sensational Forms, Semiotic Ideologies and the Question of the Medium'. *Social Anthropology* 19 (1): 23–39.

Partridge, Christopher. 2014. *The Lyre of Orpheus: Popular Music, the Sacred, and the Profane*. Oxford, UK and New York: Oxford University Press.

Porter, Mark. 2017. *Contemporary Worship Music and Everyday Musical Lives*. London and New York: Routledge.

St John, Graham. 2006. 'Electronic Dance Music Culture and Religion: An Overview'. *Culture and Religion* 7 (1): 1–25.

Twitchell, James B. 2007. *Shopping for God: How Christianity Went from in Your Heart to in Your Face*. New York: Simon & Schuster.

Weber, Max. 1991. 'The Nature of Social Action'. In *Weber: Selections in Translation*, edited by Walter Garrison Runciman, 7–32. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Index

Note: Page numbers followed by "n" denote endnotes.

anointing 40, 87, 90–94, 96, 161, 176
authenticity 62, 76, 79–92, 95, 103, 109, 129–31, 139, 160

branding language 10–12
brand: definition of 20–21; experience of 7, 13, 19–29, 38, 40; as media 12, 19, 27–29, 50–52, 172–76; origin of 21–22; social functions of 19–29
brandscape 5, 13, 40, 49–50, 128, 151–52, 175

celebrity 8, 13, 32–35, 49, 61–63, 69, 76, 79–88, 94, 96
Christian Culture Industry 4, 63, 75, 79, 87–88, 94, 95n5
Christ and Culture 77–78, 141
consumer culture 3–5, 8, 10–12, 19–21, 24, 27, 29, 35, 38, 40, 51, 59, 65, 75–79, 94, 151, 157, 172, 175–76
creation story 127, 139–140

discipline 150–52, 161, 175; *see also* governance

embodiment 5–6, 12, 26–28, 40, 49–53, 81–82, 87, 90, 109, 111, 115, 146, 151–66, 172–76
experience: importance of 9, 19–29, 35, 117–118; *see also* sacred, experiences
Experience Economy 25–28; *see also* Religious Experience Economy
expectation 5, 76, 102–03, 112–13, 115–16, 120, 150, 156, 164–65, 168n9, 173

fans 6, 11, 55, 80, 86–90, 113, 130, 135, 147n11, 151

governance 27–28, 166–67, 175

Hillsong Church: brand experience 38, 51, 143, 172; brand identity of 13–14, 38, 60–64, 102–12, 116–17, 161–62; brand mythology of 14, 38–40, 127, 139–44, 147 (*see also* creation story); origins of 36–38, 47; brand promise of 76, 94, 102, 139; as a brandscape 13, 40, 50–60, 69, 155, 157, 159–60, 163, 166, 175; brand values 13, 69, 71n26, 75–76, 79, 82–87, 92, 95n9, 120, 145, 157–61, 166–67; corporate culture of 113, 157–60; description of 47–49; as an iconic brand 13, 19–20, 38–40, 93, 106, 139, 175; as a lifestyle brand 4, 86, 102, 120–21n2; as a music-led brand 66–69
Hillsong Sound 14, 60–61, 106, 127–46
Houston, Bobbie 37, 47, 51, 54, 56, 82, 150, 167n1
Houston, Brian 11, 13, 36–38, 42n19, 47–48, 51, 54, 56–58, 60, 64–65, 68, 69n1, 82, 85–86, 95n9, 139–40, 143
Houston, Joel 59, 61, 63, 79, 97n27, 133, 137

instramentalization 5, 167, 173–76

lifestyle 2–5, 8, 36–40, 49, 51, 58, 76–78, 84–87, 102–03, 106, 120–21, 150–59, 163–66, 172–73

marketing: critical and practical perspectives of 4–6
megachurch: definition of 2, 52–53
mundane *see* 'sacred and mundane'

New Paradigm 2–3, 8, 10, 19, 30, 32, 34–35, 40, 48, 53, 60, 64, 67, 103, 106, 139, 174–75

participation 9–10, 31, 69, 101–103, 107–109, 114–115, 120, 152, 157
placemaking 127, 131–32, 145–46
profane *see* 'sacred and profane'

Religious Experience Economy 12, 19, 29–35

sacred: experiences 2, 50, 93, 141, 150–56, 161, 165, 173, 175; and secular 4, 8–9, 13, 37, 69, 75–81, 94, 173; and profane 15, 77–78, 94, 141, 167, 174–75; and mundane 15, 38–39, 167, 173, 175
Shout to the Lord 39, 61, 82, 85–86, 105
style 52, 59, 65, 102–20, 129–43

transcendence 7, 14–15, 34, 49–50, 76, 93, 111–15, 128, 133, 142–43, 152, 167, 168n9, 173–76
transgression 15, 93–94, 167, 173–75

utopia 42n12, 76, 93, 102, 108–109, 112, 120, 122n16, 139

value added 5, 15, 20, 40, 79–80, 96n17, 175–76
values 4–5, 7, 10, 19–21, 39, 51, 75, 80–81, 86, 92–94, 96n23, 103, 107, 109, 111–12, 116, 146, 165, 168n6, 174
values (corporate) 7, 20, 25, 42n12, 76, 80–81, 102, 112, 116–17, 128, 157–61
values (personal) 20–21, 90, 102–06, 166
values (Christian) 39, 41, 58, 77–79, 86, 122n16

Zscech, Darlene 39, 76, 79, 81–87, 105