

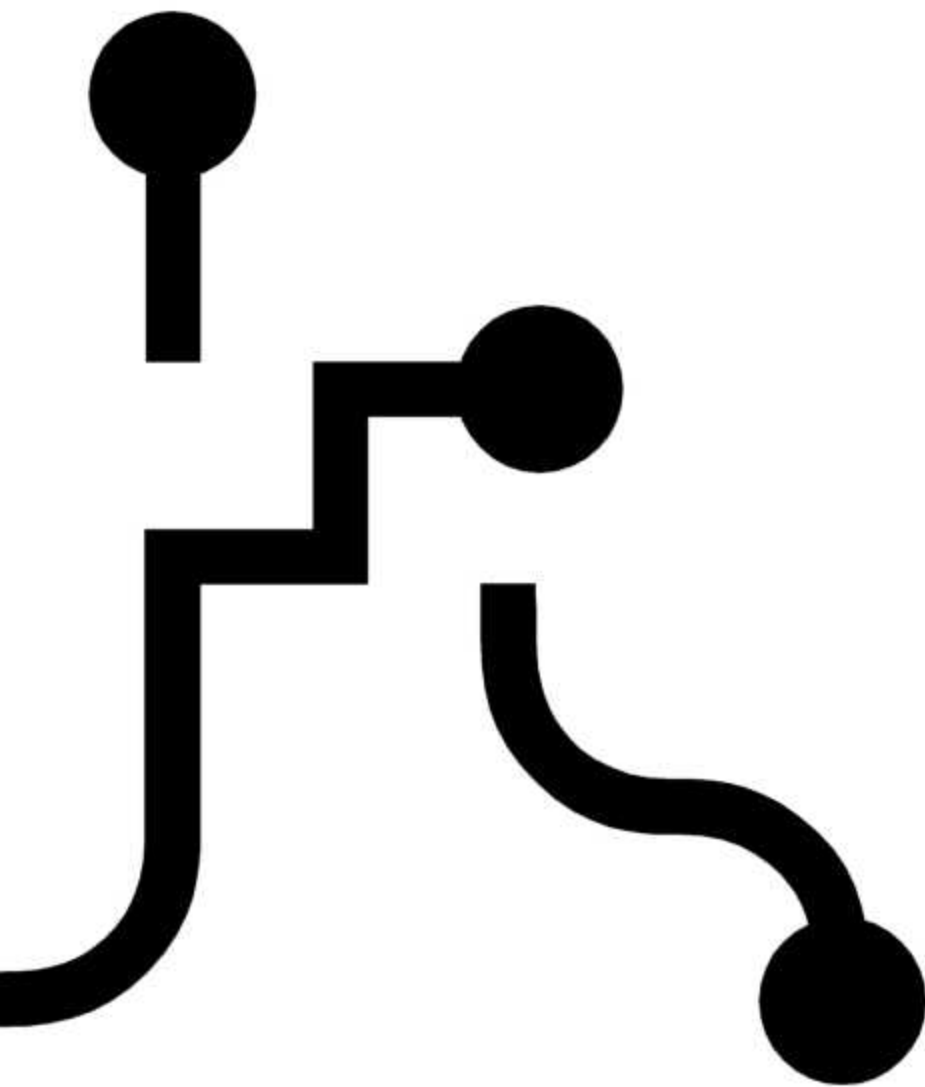
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Editorial

Almost three years have elapsed since the official release of the International Journal of Marketing Semiotics. During this period we have witnessed an increasing interest in multidisciplinary research between marketing and semiotics from scholars whose primary affiliation rests with either side of this far from irreconcilable divide. Admittedly the unique territory that the International Journal of Marketing Semiotics has been consistently trying to consolidate, at the intersection between marketing and semiotic research, has proven to be a demanding task. Occasionally novel brand propositions that are born in the centre of Venn diagrams are burdened with the vagaries of the 'stuck in the middle' phenomenon. Thankfully this has not been the case with marketing semiotics thus far. This is also confirmed by the significantly greater number of marketing semiotic submissions to the 12th World Congress of the International Association for Semiotic Studies compared to 2011. In line with our vision and mission statement of furthering the discipline, we are particularly glad to bring you the second volume of the International Journal of Marketing Semiotics.

The issue opens with an innovative contribution by Angela Bargenda in the field of what might be called (given that this is a nascent research field) architectural brand semiotics (not to be confused with the standard term brand architecture in branding research). The article addresses a significant opportunity gap in the traditional conceptualization of brand identity concerning the contribution of architectural aesthetics in the construal of an overall customer experience with a focus on the branding of financial services' retail outlets. Bargenda's semiotic analysis demonstrates how olfactory, spatial, optical, auditory, gustative and tactile signs function synesthetically with view to engendering a multi-sensory brand universe that gives rise to a distinctive corporate personality. At the same time, the analysis demonstrates lucidly how architectural branding elements attain to harmonize the spatial experience with a wider socioeconomic and cultural framework, thus transforming mundane financial exchanges into symbolic and cultural capital. Furthermore, by incorporating a multimodal rhetorical analysis in the wider semiotic framework the author points to how architectural branding elements attain to balance the background, functional expectancies from a banking retail outlet

with the aesthetic requirements that are part and parcel and at the same time enriching of a unique urban environment. The managerial implications are highlighted with respect to the increasing economic importance of aesthetics in the generation of symbolic capital for financial services and semiotics as a potent methodical roadmap for achieving superior benefits to this end.

The second article, by George Rossolatos, aims at laying the foundations of a cultural branding model that is edified largely against the background of Lotmanian semiotics. Despite the fact that cultural branding, from a marketing literature point of view, by now constitutes an entrenched research field in the wider CCT stream, no cultural branding models have been furnished in marketing semiotics. While recognizing the considerable theoretical and practical benefits that may be reaped by capitalizing on the conceptual richness of Lotman's prolific writings on textual/cultural semiotics, the author puts forward the model of the brandosphere, as the branding equivalent of the seminal concept of the semiosphere. By placing relevant concepts from the vast Lotmanian cultural semiotic inventory in a branding context, with an emphasis on the notions of cultural centre vs. periphery, levels and units of semiotic analysis, semiotic modeling, among others, an attempt is made to integrate insights that were borne out mainly through Lotman's engagement with literary texts (and to a lesser extent with cinematic ones) in a set of concrete guidelines and research directions. The model of the brandosphere is in line with the author's consistent attempts at laying bare the scholarly contributions that may be made in the extant literature by adopting a wider brand textuality perspective, amidst an intellectual climate that has been increasingly preoccupied with arguing for the textual constitution of cultural identity. As an attestation of the massive opportunities in terms of the empirical applications of the brandosphere the paper focuses on the nascent research field of user generated advertising. The pursued argumentation is intent on demonstrating the benefits that may stem for account planning and brand management while attending to how brand discourses are textually co-conditioned (rather than co-created), an analytical output that is expected to emerge on multiple levels by comparing and contrasting brand initiated with user generated advertising. Ultimately, the brandosphere is intended as a model for managing a brand's share of cultural representations, in complementarity

to a brand's market share, which is mandated even more forcefully in an economy that is progressively driven by intangible benefits and values.

The ensuing contribution by Richard Tressider explores how the language of hospitality is shaped in contemporary marketing communications. By adopting a social semiotic conceptual framework for mapping the social and cultural significance of hospitality, while drawing on the multimodal discourse of three restaurant websites, the author demonstrates how consumer experiences and anticipated benefits that are related to hospitality are shaped and conditioned by brand discourses. In essence the consumption of a hospitality experience is incumbent on a sign-economy or, as the author puts it, by vectors that connect consumers with texts. While deconstructing the language of hospitality Tressider demonstrates how the gustative code relates to wider cultural codes, but also, how the aesthetics of taste (gustative or otherwise) cohere with and are reflective of socioeconomic structures. Moreover, the analysis unearths the inextricable relationship between product and service aspects that are integral to the brand promise of the scrutinized restaurant websites which are edified, in turn, on mythical and iconic codes. The implications of this semiotic reading are extended to encompass how meaning is guided or signposted by a set of visual and textual marketing conventions that are invested with exchanges of cultural capital and expressions of identity, reaching up to sacral dimensions.

The volume concludes with a dual Peircean, structuralist reading of a single Nutribalance print ad by Sharon Schembri and Eliane Karsaklian. By singling out which ad expressive elements are central, from an enunciator's point of view, in conveying intended brand meaning, the authors report findings from primary qualitative research that are suggestive of two interpretive avenues whereby consumers either align their take-out of the concerned ad with the brand owners' intentions or 'miss the point' altogether. The benefits of combining semiotically informed research frameworks for answering the same research questions in terms of enhancing credibility are highlighted, while the significance of semiotics for applied advertising research is stressed in terms of furnishing robust interpretive frameworks for systematically segmenting and methodically portraying consumer narratives.

George Rossolatos

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