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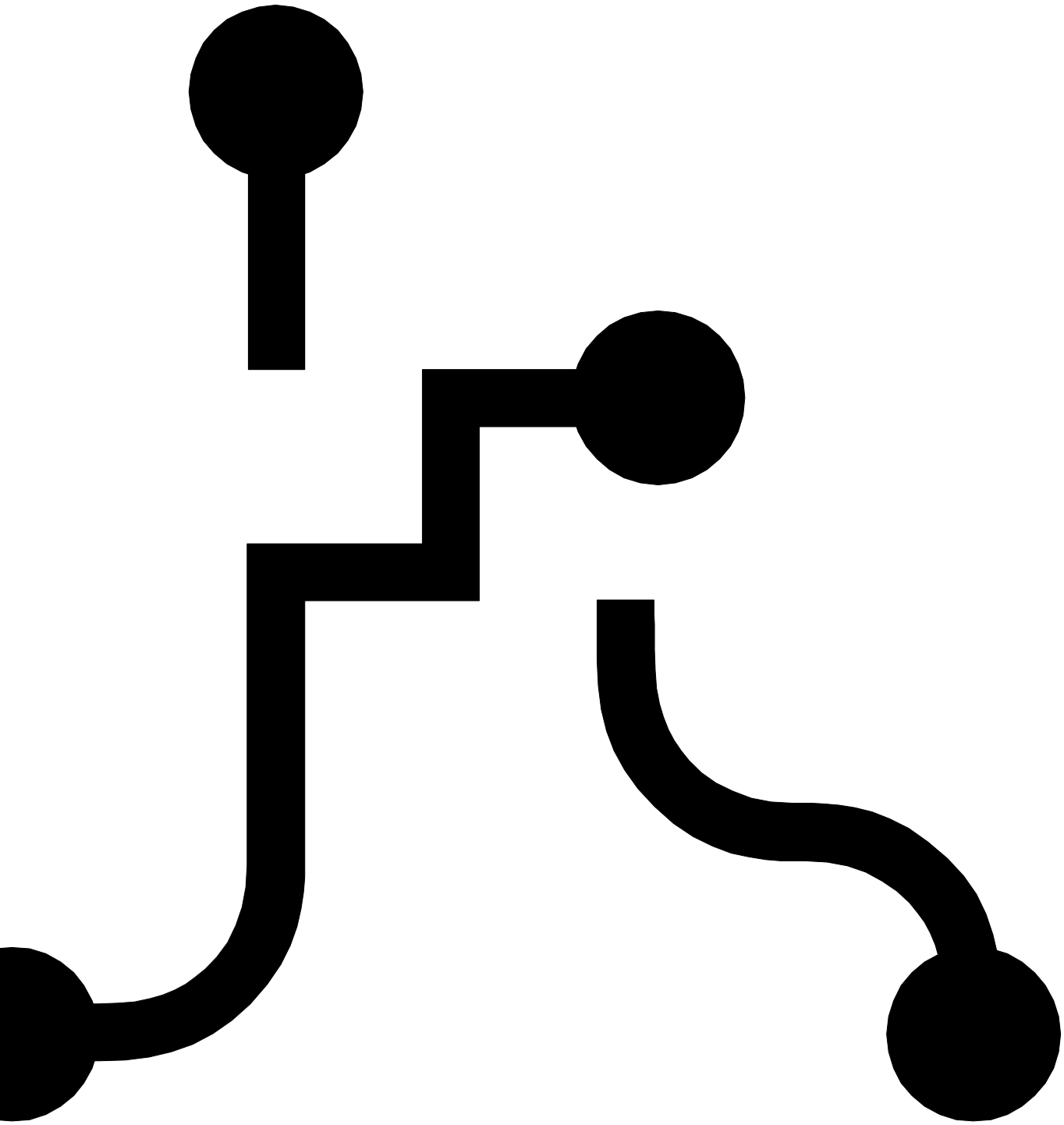

Editorial

The past year has been quite semiotically intensive, as I have been almost fully immersed in the editing of the Handbook of Brand Semiotics (forthcoming in 2015 from Kassel University Press). The editing of the Handbook turned out to be a particularly edifying experience, both in terms of engaging dialogically and at great length on various topics that are currently on top of the semiotic research agenda with the colleagues who generously offered to participate in this project, as well as in terms of obtaining a clear picture as to why (academic) brand semiotic research (if not, more broadly speaking, marketing semiotic) has not been advancing at a comparable rate to advances in the distinctive schools of thinking in the wider semiotic discipline and to the proliferating perspectives from the humanities and the social sciences that have been making inroads in consumer cultural research.

Notwithstanding that you may read a fuller (yet, still introductory) account of the latter problematic in the introductory chapter from the Handbook of Brand Semiotics that is hosted in this Volume of IJMS, there is merit in going through some of the key points that are discussed therein.

The first issue identified in an attempt to scrutinize the reasons behind brand semiotics' relatively stagnant status over the past years concerns the dominant perceptions among marketing researchers as to what is semiotics and how it has been and may be used in marketing research. These perceptions have been consolidated on the grounds of a couple of standard reference papers (which I shall not mention in this instance) which, somehow, have attained to become catapulted to 'gatekeepers'. The issue is that semiotics in these papers has been treated as a uniform paradigm with very basic concepts that stem from at most two dominant schools of thinking (structuralist and Peircean). Subsequently, the perceptual barriers that have been established around semiotics have forced it to a constant recycling/regurgitation of basic concepts in empirical research. This has been compounded by marketing journals editors' reluctance to publish new thinking in the involved stream, especially when such thinking, and quite oxymoronically so, references semiotic sources with much greater accuracy than is the case with the second-hand importation of semiotic concepts to consumer research by a select few authors (whose works have almost monopolized the marketing semiotic landscape).

The truth is, as most semioticians would readily acknowledge, that semiotics is far from a uniform discipline, while its conceptual panoply is as rich as the majority of established disciplines. Hence, the relative under-representation of semiotics in (academic) branding research is not attributable to a stagnant theoretical landscape, but to the reluctance on behalf of an academic community to re-cognize evident advances.

The second issue concerns the frequent employment of the generic descriptor marketing semiotics. Its use is justifiable as an umbrella title for a journal, such as the one you are currently reading, but not for a research paper that should be positioned more succinctly in specific streams. Marketing has evolved into a highly fragmented and specialized discipline, inasmuch as semiotics, and hence, the term marketing semiotics is a catch-all phrase that is as vague and vacuous as any generic descriptor. At this stage we should be talking about specific branding, consumer research and other marketing related areas and how distinctive semiotically informed perspectives may contribute in advancing the marketing discipline, inasmuch as about new areas that currently constitute the mainstay of other disciplines.

The third issue and quite compelling challenge rests with the fact that 'marketing semiotics' is by definition an inter-disciplinary research field. This presupposes that interested scholars are or are willing to become versed in the relevant literature from specific streams in both semiotic and marketing disciplines. Unfortunately, cross-fertilizations between the two disciplines are not automatically realizable, as significant epistemological and ontological discrepancies are bound to emerge that require elucidation prior to proceeding to an empirical research stage. This consideration often poses additional constraints to the publication potential of semiotically oriented research, as the extra work that is required in terms of conceptual elaboration may result in manuscripts that are well in excess of an acceptable length. However, this is hardly the main source of potential frustration. The main reason and most validly so for disgruntlement lies with the fast-foodization of consumer research and the repeatedly noted tendency to allocate in published research disproportionately larger space to the empirical, rather than the conceptual part. This is further compounded by the fact that marketing journals are largely aversive to purely conceptual papers, which merely propagates cyclically the reasons why seriously informed by semiotic perspectives semiotic research is not easy to publish in mainstream marketing journals. Thankfully the above are not an issue with the International Journal of Marketing Semiotics which has

been and continues to be particularly receptive to inter-disciplinary perspectives, both as regards empirical, as well as purely conceptual research.

Pursuant to these preliminary considerations which are further elaborated in the Introduction to the forthcoming Handbook of Brand Semiotics, Volume III of the International Journal of Marketing Semiotics, although slimmer than the previous two volumes, mainly due to lagged submissions that resulted in 'excess stock' for Vol.IV, at the expense of this Volume, hosts two research papers that converge, utterly coincidentally, on semiotically inflected Critical (Discourse) Analysis. Although their core lies with a critical analytical approach, the adopted conceptual platforms are quite divergent and very interestingly so, as the hosted papers have been informed and enriched by as varied perspectives as critical rhetoric, Lacanian psychoanalysis, sociosemiotics, multimodality and Bakhtin's notion of chronotope.

The first paper, by Kevin Marinelli, is situated in the broader stream of cause-related marketing which it seeks to extend through a branch eloquently tagged as 'civic branding'. By examining two cause-related marketing campaigns of Starbucks within a critical-semiotic framework, it is argued that traditional theories of argumentation and ethical consumption fail to illuminate the burgeoning sophistication of ethical branding. Civic branding attempts to untie the problematic "cash nexus" of ethical consumption and interpellate branded citizens rather than ethical consumers. It displaces the ethical commodity with a sense of direct civic engagement, while also exploiting logics of Desire by perpetually enticing individuals back to the well of civic brand identification.

The second paper, by Per Ledin and David Machin, actually constitutes the continuation of their Chapter that is featured in the Handbook of Brand Semiotics. Their paper (in the same vein as the respective Chapter, but with a different focus as regards semiotic resources and modes) adopts a CDA perspective in tackling Orebro university's (Sweden) rebranding that was introduced in 2011 and continues until today. By extending CDA to MCDA, that is multimodal discourse analysis, they set out to examine the multimodal representation of space in key rebranding documents and how this representation coheres ideologically with the wider marketing objectives behind the rebranding initiative. Ultimately, the adopted MCDA perspective presents a unique take on how a university as brand is shaped in terms of goals, and how such objectives are reflected in internal branding documents that may be aligned with actual perceptions and practices within the represented organization.

George Rossolatos

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Tweaking ethical consumption: Civic branding in Starbucks cause-related marketing

Kevin Marinelli

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This paper began as a chapter in his doctoral dissertation, titled *Fashions of Righteousness: The Rhetorical Production of Ethical Consumption*, defended in 2013 at the University of Georgia. He extends immense gratitude to Roger Stahl for his warm guidance over the project. He also wishes to thank the members of his doctoral committee: Barbara Biesecker, Celeste Condit, James Hamilton, and Edward Panetta.

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Abstract

This paper investigates the rhetorical production of citizenship within contemporary models of ethical branding. Specifically, it examines two cause-related marketing campaigns of Starbucks within a critical-semiotic framework, by drawing on Kenneth Burke's concept of Identification and Jacques Lacan's concept of Desire. I argue that traditional theories of argumentation and ethical consumption fail to illuminate the burgeoning sophistication of ethical branding, which I label civic branding. As I illustrate in this paper, civic branding attempts to untie the problematic "cash nexus" of ethical consumption and interpellate branded citizens rather than ethical consumers. It displaces the ethical commodity with a sense of direct civic engagement, while also exploiting logics of Desire by perpetually enticing individuals back to the well of civic brand identification.

Keywords: ethical branding, cause-related marketing, citizenship, ethical consumption, Starbucks.

0. Introduction: From ethical to civic branding

The past decade of consumer cultural research is defined in part by the ubiquitous upsurge in consumer activism and ethical consumption. Individuals now encounter a plethora of ethical commodities and services, ranging from hybrid automobiles to organic clothing, free-range farming, no-logo t-shirts, and fair-trade coffee, not to mention the resurgence in local farmers' markets and community-centered thrift shops. As activists educate consumers on the social, cultural and environmental impacts of their purchases, culture industries train consumers to perpetually reflect upon their ethical-consuming personas. "Go green," "buy local," "eat organic," "make trade fair," "support independent music," and "keep *our city* weird" are just some of the imperatives headlining contemporary commercial discourse. Increasingly fewer areas of consumption remain safely detached from apparently ethical decisions and/or issues of public controversy (see Lewis & Potter 2011; see also Soper & Trentmann 2008).

Today's intense demand for responsible consumption has in turn created a lucrative market (Nichols & Opal 2005). Corporations engage in fierce initiatives of social responsibility and cause-related marketing, branding themselves as world stewards, committed to making good before making a profit. Indeed, almost all marketers today and many consumers appear to participate in some form of philanthropy or civic action, making ethical consumption nearly impossible to avoid. Put another way, consumer culture is steadily consuming the realm of civic engagement (see Bauman 2008).

This paper investigates the rhetorical production of citizenship within the marketing semiotics of the coffee giant Starbucks. I chose Starbucks primarily because it has been an innovative brand-marketing leader over the past two decades. Then, coffee consumption is uniquely and historically linked to civic engagement. Given its controversial division of labor in the developing world, the

penetration of urban cityscapes by a handful of coffee distributors, and the historical connotation of the coffee house as a haven of public discourse, coffee consumption remains a significant site of ethical consumer culture and an important artifact of cause-related marketing and ethical branding (see Ehrenhalt 2013: 38; see also Ellis 2004: 185-206; Hates 1999; Habermas 1991: 32-59; Wild 2005; and Vogel 2006: 1-2). Specifically, this paper will examine Starbucks' voting campaign of 2008 and the Create Jobs for USA Fund of 2011. I argue these initiatives demonstrate a noteworthy development in ethical branding, which I label *civic branding*. Civic branding goes beyond the semiotics of traditional ethical branding, by displacing ethical narratives and philanthropic initiatives with a sense of direct civic engagement for the consumer. Further, it does not attempt to establish a corporate ethos so much as to invite consumers to participate in the ethos of civic brand identity. I begin my analysis with a literature review of prominent theories of ethical consumption. I then draw on Kenneth Burke's theory of Identification and Jacques Lacan's concept of Desire to consider ethical branding as a site of civic recognition. I situate this literature in the context of Starbucks civic branding. Specifically, my analysis critiques Starbucks' attempt to situate itself outside what Constance Ruzich calls the "cash nexus" of the third space, effectively reinscribing the commercial-public binary into a field of pure civic engagement. I conclude with a brief commentary regarding the political and theoretical implications of civic branding.

1. The status of ethical consumption

Despite widening consensus regarding its scope and significance, theorists differ in their attempts to conceptualize ethical consumption as a cultural practice. While some extol it as an innovative vehicle for social change and corporate resistance (see, for example, Turcotte 2011; Harold 2004; and Lasn 1999), others remain skeptical regarding both its effects and motivations (see, for example, Potter 2010). The situation is complicated by the recent confluence of ethical consumption and brand marketing. Ethical branding shifts attention from the relationship between consumers and commodities to that between consumers and the more nebulous brand dynamic. As Lury (2004) explains, the brand is a precarious interface between the consumer and the corporation that perpetually keeps the brand "objective" just beyond the consumer's grasp. Likewise, many argue, ethical branding functions to disproportionately redirect ethos and political autonomy from the consumer to the brand entity, thereby disempowering ethical consumers in the process. According to Bertilson (2014), the ethical brand is ultimately nothing more than an oxymoron. Similarly, Giesler & Veresiu (2014) recast the socially informed, ethical consumer as an articulation of neoliberal governance regimes. Walz et al. (2014) rethink ethical consumption from a sacrificial practice aimed at social change to a hedonistic experience of "thievish joy." According to the authors, ethical consumers operate under no misguided pretense of changing the world through their purchases. Instead, individuals merely pretend to believe the ethical brand narrative, while simultaneously deflecting responsibility onto the brand itself. Lehner & Halliday (2014: 24) endorse a guarded optimism, noting that while ethical brands "have become retailers' favored tool to introduce sustainable consumption," there remains considerable risk in letting

brands redefine social causes to accommodate their corporate interests. In the light of these realities, Wilson & Curnow (2012) illustrate how many consumer activists are beginning to circumvent ethical brands altogether, favoring direct engagement with their regulating bodies, such as the Fairtrade Foundation.

Others remain steadfast in their optimism. Arvidsson (2014) rejects the cynical aversion to ethical branding in favor of an affective model of entrepreneurship. Arvidsson (2014: 123) argues ethical brands facilitate an economy "where value and virtue coincide" within an entrepreneurial subject. Similarly, Pezzulo (2011) re-contextualizes ethical consumption from a policy oriented endeavor to a vital means of communal affect and civic engagement. Wilson and Curnow (2012) argue that consumer activists are motivated neither by naïve aspirations of social change nor by a hedonistic joy of self-esteem, but by a feeling of solidarity with the exploited and the marginalized. Still, the circulation of criticism appears to outweigh its endorsements.

The dominant criticism of ethical consumption appears to stem from a general skepticism concerning the public aspirations of private entities. Thus, the largest obstacle to ethical branding appears to be the corporate brand itself. Many scholars—and increasingly many consumers—remain unconvinced that profit-driven, corporate brands can facilitate significant social change. In turn, brand marketers are compelled to combat such skepticism—and the cynical consumer it fosters—in their efforts to vie for the loyalty of ethical consumers and consumer activists alike. As argued in this paper, the most sophisticated forms of ethical branding today function by reinscribing the ethical brand outside the cash nexus, thereby facilitating a sense of direct civic engagement with the ethical consumer.

The proliferation of ethical consumption is perhaps best explained by Sassen's (1999) theory of economic citizenship. In the light of the corporate encroachment of public space and an increasingly privatized global economy, Sassen (1999: 112-113) predicted individuals would begin to explore alternative avenues of civic engagement, e.g., ethical consumption. As financial institutions such as the World Trade Organization (hereafter WTO) and International Monetary Fund (hereafter IMF) begin to play increasingly larger roles in regulating public policy, she predicted, many citizens would opt to lobby these non-governmental organizations instead of their elected officials. Mathieu's paper poignantly foreshadowed the historic Seattle protests of December 1999, where both the WTO and Starbucks became targets of public criticism. The events would have a profound impact on the burgeoning phenomena of both economic citizenship and cause-related marketing, particularly for Starbucks.

Mathieu (1999) offers one of the earliest rhetorical critiques of Starbucks ethical branding. Mathieu situates the ethical brand narrative within Sassen's framework of economic citizenship. She argues the narratives help interpellate ideological subjects, i.e., consumers, by inducing a form of *scotosis*, or selective blindness, encouraging consumers to remain "thinking and acting within the frames offered" (Mathieu 1999: 115). The narratives translate needs such as "I am sleepy" into the need for gourmet coffee or, more specifically, "a doppio almond espresso ristretto from Starbucks" (Mathieu 1999: 118). Alternatively, Starbucks also creates ethical narratives illustrating its good will, thereby translating the desire to help the poor into that same need for gourmet coffee (Mathieu 1999:

122-123). All of these narratives cooperate to "justify themselves, their products and the economic system" (115). Eventually, consumption and civic engagement become two sides of the same coin.

Mathieu's focus on ethical narratives reinforces the rationalist paradigm of rhetorical criticism. Historically, critics have treated advertising as a form of argumentation, which can be discussed in the argumentative model outlined by Stephen Toulmin (1957): claim, evidence and warrant. Advertisers persuade consumers that a purchase is worthwhile (claim) based on verbal or visual statements about a particular commodity or service (evidence), which are presumably desirable to the potential consumer (warrant). For example, *Buy this soap because it is stronger, and stronger soap will make you cleaner, which will make you smell prettier*, and so on. Gradually, cultural critics developed more sophisticated theoretical frameworks, by drawing on branding, psychoanalysis, semiotics, simulacra, symbolic capital, etc. Interestingly, however, critiques of ethical consumption appear stuck in the model of rational argumentation outlined above. For example: *Buy this product (claim) because it supports a good cause (evidence), which will make you feel better as a citizen-consumer (warrant).* Although the framework is useful to consider the interpellation of citizen-consumer subjects, it ultimately fails to address the rhetorical production of brand marketing.

Lury (2004: 3) defines the brand as "a set of relations between products (or services) in time". Contemporary brand marketing became popularized in the mid-80s as innovative companies began to emphasize brand image over product functionality (Lury 2004: 58). This strategic marketing shift dramatically changed the landscape of consumer culture, particularly concerning practices of conspicuous consumption (see Veblen 1994). From a Lacanian perspective, the logic behind brand marketing is that of Desire. Marketers do not so much rationally "persuade" consumers to purchase commodities as much as "invite" them to find recognition by participating in a fantasy world of cultural values—the brand dynamic. Still, the brand "objective," as Lury calls it, is never attained, thereby perpetually fueling the need to consume. Rhetorically put, brand marketing favors identification over argumentation. According to Kenneth Burke (1952), humans induce each other to action not through rational argumentation, but through a process of *Identification*, the point at which separate interests are mutually joined (Burke 1952: 55-59). The prospect of Identification is made possible through the process of *Consubstantiality*, the practice of being with one another. Whereas absolute Identification is ultimately impossible, as the two parties remain substantively distinct, consubstantiality functions as the perpetual commitment to overcome difference. We may think of ethical marketing as the commercial practice of consubstantiality. Marketers exploit the consumer need for recognition/identification by offering a host of consubstantial practices, none of which can satisfy the consumer's Desire. As Lury explains, "[T]he brand is not a matter of certainty, but is rather an object of possibility" (Burke 1952: 2). Although the brand objective remains perpetually out of reach, consumers are allowed to temporarily connect with it through material purchases. Thus, we may consider the commodity as a physical placeholder of the elusive brand objective—what Burke calls consubstantiality, or what Lacan (2004) calls the objet petit a. I argue the elusiveness of brand marketing, coupled with the disappearance of civic space outlined by Sassen, is precisely what fuels the logic of civic branding.

Before moving forward, let us consider some exemplary statements regarding the dominant critique of ethical branding. Mathieu (1999: 122), for example, explains: "The advertisement of [Starbucks'] donation practices, as well as a health-care package available to part-time employees at its retail stores, allows Starbucks to create a reputation as an ethical, global-friendly coffee purveyor". Similarly, Potter (2010: 123) describes ethically branded water as "the linking of ethical associations to already existing brands". Scrase (2011: 65) observes, "an important element to Fair Trade has been the stories of its social and community successes that accompany the marketing of its products". Keywords here include, "reputation," "associations," and "stories." In other words, companies sell themselves to consumers based on ethical narratives and other classical appeals. Such critiques function to reinforce the classical model of argumentation, and specifically the Aristotelian notion of ethos, outlined above.

Harold (2004) provides a valuable alternative. In her paper, "Pranking Rhetoric: Culture Jamming as Media Activism," Harold draws a distinction between "culture jammers", on the one hand, and "pranksters" on the other. Jammers, she explains, attempt to overturn the system, sometimes by force and at other times through mockery. In either case, they oppose the system by exposing its contradictions in the hope of overturning it. Perhaps the most notable example of culture jamming is Kalle Lasn's *Adbuster's Magazine*, which features satirical ads poking fun at corporate consumer culture. Pranksters, by contrast, comprise a small contingent of consumer and media activists who do not attempt to overturn the system so much as play within it, pushing its boundaries to their extremes and ultimately rearranging them. They engage in a form of "rhetorical jiu-jitsu," which utilizes the logic of consumer culture to their advantage, rather than oppose them directly (Harold 2004: 191). In this way, pranksters "reconfigure the structures of meaning and production on which corporate media and advertising depend" (Harold 2004: 209). An example of pranking would be to post a nonsensical advertisement in the white pages, that is neither genuine nor satirical, but instead calls into question the form and function of advertising itself. In doing so, pranksters reinscribe the commercial-public binary into a larger textual field and renegotiate the power dynamic between corporations and the public. Whereas culture jammers reinforce the dominance of commercial culture by opposing it, pranksters blur the boundaries between the public and private spheres altogether.

Pranking rhetoric offers a valuable lens through which to consider the evolution of cause-related marketing. We may consider civic branding an attempt to prank, or "fold," the private-public binary by playing with the logics of corporate social responsibility and civic engagement. Traditional models of corporate philanthropy and ethical narratives only reinforce the private-public binary by emphasizing the corporate need to give back to the community. Civic branding, by contrast, reinscribes the private-public binary into a larger textual field of civic engagement. Instead of crafting consumption and civic engagement as two sides of the same coin, civic branding aspires to melt the coin into singular practice.

2. Starbucks "ethical marketing" history

Coffee consumption has long occupied an important space in public culture. Historically, the coffee house provided the primary material space for civic and intellectual discussion (Cowen 2005; Hattox 2002; Habermas 1991). Yet, by the mid-90s, controversy began to surround the coffee house itself, as corporate chains, most notably Starbucks, began to permeate their urban environments. Many perceived Starbucks as bullying its independent competitors out of business, while also sterilizing the once authentic "third space" of the coffee shop. Criticism percolated as consumers learned the economic exploitation of cheap labor that undergirded coffee production in the developing world. Civic unrest came to a head outside the WTO summit in Seattle 1999, where ten thousand protesters flooded the streets to voice their concerns with unrestrained global capitalism (Meyer 2009: 45-46). Although the WTO bore the brunt of the protests, NGOs were not the only targets. Corporations such as Starbucks, GAP and Nike became brand metonyms for the dark side of global capitalism (Thomas 2000: 158). Iconic images of brick-smashed storefronts became a haunting reminder of public frustrations, exercised ironically by some of Starbucks' ideal clientele—civically engaged youth with disposable income—and exercised ironically in Seattle, Starbucks' birthplace (Meyer 2009: 43). In turn, the Seattle protests compelled Starbucks into the foray of ethical consumption and engage in a swift onslaught of cause-related marketing campaigns by the turn of the 21st C.

In 2000, a few months after the Seattle protests brought media visibility to the social and economic realities of global capitalism and Starbucks' participation in this process, Starbucks teamed with TransFair and the Fairtrade Labeling Organizations International (FLO) to begin purchasing a limited amount of fair-trade certified coffee (Starbucks 2008). By many accounts, the gesture helped bolster the coffee behemoth's fledgling public persona. Yet in 2001 Starbucks developed its own ethical sourcing guidelines, CAFE (Coffee & Farmer Equity), making it difficult to independently evaluate its measures (Starbucks 2012a). For example, while a 2008 article revealed that only 6% of Starbucks' sales were fair trade certified (Hickman), Starbucks nevertheless bragged that 86% of its coffee was CAFE verified in 2011 (Starbucks 2008b). While Starbucks also boasts about being the largest purchaser of fair trade coffee, the statistic is arguably less impressive relative to its size as the world's largest coffee proprietor. Nevertheless the company did make a number of significant changes to its coffee production. In 2004, it opened its first Farmer Support Center in San Jose, Costa Rica. Starbucks then switched to an environmentally friendly paper cup in 2006 (Starbucks 2012a). Two years later, it was forced to increase its cause-related marketing after receiving a firestorm of criticism for allegedly wasting significant amounts of water in its UK cafés (Sweeney 2009). These programs and campaigns would ultimately culminate in the 2008 Shared Planet Initiative, still practiced today.

The Shared Planet Initiative comprises a host of environmentally and economically philanthropic programs, operating in both Starbucks cafés and its international sourcing centers. Ethos Water, for example, donates five cents of every bottle sold to its water, sanitation and hygiene-education

programs across the globe, having thus far provided over six million dollars in support of regions where Starbucks coffee is produced (Starbucks 2012c). Starbucks launched its RED credit card in 2009, which contributes to the RED Foundation, dedicated to fighting the spread of AIDS in Africa (Starbucks 2012d). Thus, it is difficult to find a global issue Starbucks has not addressed over the past decade. Additionally, Howard Schultz remains one of the most politically outspoken CEOs today. In 2012, Shultz even inserted the Starbucks brand into the national debt controversy, encouraging baristas from the Washington DC area to write "Come Together" on all of their cups the day before the "fiscal cliff" deadline on the final week of December (Eidelson 2013). Schultz also sponsors and occasionally guest hosts the MSNBC talk show *Morning Joe*. Perhaps one of the most controversial issues embarked by Starbucks was U.S. unemployment, as evidenced by its Create Jobs for USA Fund in 2011, that is examined in the second part of my analysis. Indeed, no area of public discourse appears outside the realm of Starbucks civic engagement.

The ethical narratives of Starbucks have garnered significant scholarly attention over the past fifteen years. Still, its innovative rhetoric of civic branding demands further investigation. In the following analysis, I critique the discourse of civic branding in the Starbucks voting and jobs campaigns. I make three claims: First, Starbucks does not merely appeal to pre-existent ethical consumers (Geisler and Veresiu 2014). Drawing on a Lacanian framework of Desire, I argue Starbucks interpellates a citizen-consumer-subject whose civic recognition may be found in the Starbucks brand. Second, by drawing on Ruzich (2008), I argue Starbucks designs its campaign outside the cash nexus to assert itself as a genuine civil servant rather than merely a philanthropic corporation. Third, I argue these strategies function to construct a Starbucks-civic-brand identity in which the brand itself becomes the ethical-consumer-citizen's ultimate objective and source of civic identity.

3. Coffee for Voting

In October 2008, one month before a U.S. presidential election of monumental proportions, Starbucks engaged in a provocative campaign. Those entering their coffeehouse on Election Day would receive a free cup of coffee after simply telling the barista she or he had voted. No purchase necessary, no strings attached. One the on hand, the gesture of good will emulated a long tradition of political candidates treating their voters and staff to a cup of coffee after a hard-fought campaign (Trent, Friedenberg & Denton 2011: 327-332). On the other hand, it demonstrated a provocative rhetorical shift in Starbucks ethical branding. Starbucks marketed its initiative through a one-minute television ad, an unusual choice given its scarce use of commercial advertising (see Schultz & Yang 1997: 248). The brand typically favors savvy product placement over direct commercial engagement, perhaps speaking to the sophistication of the Starbucks brand and its ideal consumer. The strategy is especially common for high-end retailers who view the outlet of the advertisement as a reflection of the brand itself. The voting commercial is not an artless aberration from its proven marketing formula, however. As I will discuss below, Starbucks' typical un-involvement with commercial advertising helps facilitate the public spirit of its endeavor.

The one-minute commercial features only a written text. The entire message is set against a simple gray backdrop, which only the most distinguished consumer will recognize as a patented trademark of Starbucks. The image is accompanied by an abstract piano solo, which reaches crescendo at the precise moment the ultimate purpose—as well as Starbucks' authorship—of the advertisement is revealed. Through an anonymously written script, the Starbucks (2008a) advert begins:

> What if we ALL CARED enough to vote? Not just 54% of us, but 100% of us? What if we CARED as much on NOV. 5th as we care on NOV. 4th?
> What if we CARED ALL of the time the way we CARE SOME of the time? What if we CARED when it was INCONVENIENT as much as we CARE when it's CONVENIENT? Would your COMMUNITY be a better PLACE? Would your COUNTRY be a better PLACE? Would our WORLD be a better PLACE? We think so, too.
> If you CARE enough to VOTE, we CARE enough to give you a free cup of COFFEE (Period replaced by the image of a Starbucks coffee cup).
> Come into STARBUCKS on NOV. 4th, tell us you VOTED, and we'll PROUDLY PROUDLY (in even bigger font) give you a TALL cup of brewed COFFEE on us.
> You & Starbucks: It's BIGGER than coffee. (Spot ends with an image of the Starbucks Coffee logo).

The message communicates citizenship rather than coffee. It thrives on civic engagement rather than consumption. It also goes beyond the attempt to interpellate citizen-consumers. To fully appreciate the public quality of the message, one must consider that the ad circulated during campaign season, when television viewers are bombarded with political messages throughout the evening and the week. Individuals grow accustomed to televised messages interpellating them as citizens rather than consumers. The dynamic allows Starbucks to minimize its commercial presence. Its signature name and iconic siren logo do not appear until nearly the end of the commercial, which, only then, do individuals recognize as a commercial. The ad aims to interpellate a public citizen exhorted to vote, rather than an ethical consumer exhorted to purchase. The notion of ethical consumption is eclipsed by the prospect of pure civic engagement. The ideal audience is not an ethical consumer at all; s/he is first and foremost an engaged citizen. Consumption becomes an afterthought—literally a reward—for civic engagement rather than one's vehicle. As Harold (2004: 196) contends, Starbucks "folds" the advertisement into the form of a public service announcement.

Additionally, Starbucks constructs a framework of civic engagement that is intentionally vague. As Lury (2008: 15-16) explains, brand marketing thrives on abstract and ambiguous discourse. Rather than utilize specific narratives to exhort consumption, marketers must situate the brand within a fantasy world of cultural values to which individuals can aspire. Likewise, the voting initiative defies narrative discourse. It refuses even to entice individuals with the promise of philanthropy. The text opens with a provocative question: "What if we all cared enough to vote?" The question then quickly transforms into a series of new questions regarding citizenship and community. No substantive answers are provided.

It offers more questions than assertions. Viewers are left with only a vague sense of citizenship embodied by the Starbucks brand. It utilizes ambiguous concepts such as CARE, COMMUNITY and PLACE alongside those of VOTING and STARBUCKS. In effect, Starbucks does not so much link itself to a charitable cause as much as it *becomes* civic engagement. Whereas traditional cause-related marketing typically situates the purchase as a means to philanthropy, Starbucks treats civic action as an avenue into the Starbucks brand. Civic engagement becomes the brand-objective.

Non-traditional presentation reinforces the ad's alternative form. With no actors or spokespersons present, the entirely written text appropriates the zine-screen aesthetic of a bare-budget social advocacy group (Dunn & Farnsworth 2012: 136-137). Nor does the text appear in the traditional linear, top-down, left-right format. Instead, words appear from all directions on the screen, interrupting old sentences to form new ones, often contradicting the meaning of the previous sentence by adding or changing a word. The playful sequences and disruptive presentation of the message synecdochally reinforce the campaign's ultimate aim to disrupt and subvert the traditional cause-related marketing formula. It also disrupts the linear logic of ethical narratives typically situated within cause-related marketing campaigns. Even the Starbucks name appears as an unexpected surprise to the otherwise public message.

Above all, the voting initiative facilitates Starbucks' stake as an authentic "third space," originally theorized by Ray Oldenburg. In his seminal work, *The Great Good Place*, Oldenburg (1989) argues that third spaces are necessary to the maintenance of civic discourse in a democratic society. Shultz (2011: 278) remains vocally committed to protecting the sanctity of the third space, where people are invited to stay and converse, rather than consume and leave. Still, not everyone is convinced. In "For the Love of Joe: The Language of Starbucks," Ruzich (2008) turns to Oldenburg directly:

> . . . [T]he development of an informal public life depends upon people enjoying one another outside the cash nexus. Advertising, in its ideology and effects, is the enemy of an informal public life. It breeds alienation. It convinces people that the good life can be purchased. (as cited in Ruzich 2008: 11)

Ruzich argues the cash nexus precludes Starbucks from operating as a genuine third space. Starbucks may appear a harmless community center, but at the end of the day it is just another corporation interested in profit over people. Interestingly, Ruzich's article also appeared in 2008, the same year as the featured ad.

I argue the 'Voting' campaign demonstrates a sophisticated attempt to untie the cash-nexus dilemma. By drawing on Harold (2004: 191), the ambiguous branding initiative aims to reinscribe the commercial-public binary into a "larger textual field" where individuals are invited to challenge the proper roles of corporations and social activists. While this may not officially move the Starbucks Corporation outside the cash nexus, it nevertheless helps reinscribe the Starbucks brand into the realm of civic engagement for many consumers. Specifically, the absence of a cash transaction allows for the emergence of Starbucks as a "civic brand," a nebulous site of public signification lacking any specific, tangible or political content. Unlike commodities and causes, which are localized and temporalized,

brands appear to transcend time and space (Lury 2004: 44). The brand is nowhere and everywhere all at once. Whereas a cup of fair-trade coffee or a bottle of Ethos Water is spatially and temporally constrained by a specific narrative, the voting initiative is abstract and elusive as it eternally absorbs civic engagement into brand signification.

The voting initiative raises the stakes for ethical branding. In many ways, it functions as an implicit response to the dominant critique by scholars such as Ruzich. The campaign appears to be well aware of Ruzich's (1999) cautionary remarks to ethical consumers:

> Consumers who patronize the chain should examine the in-store language for what it is—an advertising campaign, which to be successful must have an element of truth, but which, like all advertising, should be scrutinized and recognized as a high-stakes effort to manipulate, persuade, and sell. (Ruzich 1999: 440)

In the light of Ruzich's warning, Starbucks carefully refrains from advertising, persuading and selling. Instead, it folds the traditional binary of ethical consumption into a new form of civic-brand engagement, devoid of commodities and cash transactions.

To summarize, the Starbucks 'Voting' campaign indicates a transition in ethical branding from the construction of ethical narratives to the construction of direct civic engagement experienced as brand identification. It undermines the dominant critiques leveled against ethical consumption. It also makes it increasingly difficult for consumers to determine where commercial culture ends and where public culture begins. By removing the ethical commodity from the equation, Starbucks effectively reinscribes the commercial-public binary into a field of civic discourse embodied by the brand itself. Voting becomes a sign of Starbucks, and Starbucks becomes a sign of civic engagement. According to the logic of civic branding, there is little distinction between the two.

4. Create Jobs for USA Fund

In 2011, Starbucks ventured into a new realm of civic engagement as it attempted to tackle the economic recession. Specifically, the coffee purveyor invited individuals to donate five dollars to its Create Jobs for USA Fund, established to help fight unemployment and boost the American economy in the wake of the 2009 recession. The initiative came at a precarious moment for the nation's economy, as the unemployment rate had reached over 10% for the first time in 26 years (Goodman 2009). The fund was particularly cavalier in its attempt to engage a sensitive and partisan political issue. Whereas corporations typically choose non-divisive causes to obviate public controversy, Starbucks chose public controversy as its site of civic engagement. In this Section, I critique the Create Jobs campaign by advancing my three initial claims. First, Starbucks aims to interpellate citizens rather than ethical consumers. Second, Starbucks continues to move outside the cash nexus, this time by removing the ethical commodity rather than cash. Third, these dynamics cooperate to reinscribe the commercial-public binary into a flattened field of civic engagement. I situate these rhetorical strategies within Lacan's theory of Desire and Burke's concept of Identification.

Starbucks announced its Create Jobs campaign through a provocative television commercial, adopting a similar aesthetic to that of its voting initiative three years earlier. Accompanied by classical music and set against a zine-screen backdrop, a written text begins to unfold. Again, Starbucks hides its authorship until nearly the end of the ad. Against a red canvas with a white, cartoonish sketch of the United States placed center, a statistic in blue writing appears (bold font is used here to demarcate where Starbucks employs a deep blue):

> 8.3 % OF US REMAIN OUT OF WORK. TOGETHER WE CAN CHANGE THAT. SMALL BUSINESS: IT'S THE BACKBONE OF AMERICA'S WORKFORCE. WHEN IT GROWS JOBS GROW. AND WE HAVE AN IDEA THAT CAN HELP. DONATE $5 TO THE CREATE JOBS FOR USA FUND AT A **STARBUCKS** OR CREATE JOBS FOR USA.ORG. YOUR DONATION WILL GO INTO A FUND TO CREATE AND SUSTAIN SMALL BUSINESS JOBS IN COMMUNITIES ACROSS AMERICA. YOU'LL GET A WRISTBAND TO SHOW SUPPORT. **THE STARBUCKS DONATION** HAS DONATED $5 MILLION TO SHOW OURS. ALL OF US **WORKING TOGETHER**. INDIVISIBLE.

Interestingly, neither coffee nor consumption is mentioned throughout the ad. Instead, the commercial fosters a sense of national identity through the incorporation of American colors and the collective rhetoric of "us" and "we." Zine-screen aesthetics reinforce the tone of a grassroots activist campaign, while the durable, circular wristband functions as a symbol of American indivisibility. On one level, the message is clearly designed to induce a sense of American pride and empowerment facilitated by the Starbucks initiative. It also appears to perpetuate the traditional, philanthropy model of ethical consumption, where consumers are encouraged to donate to a given cause. On a deeper level, however, I argue the commercial fosters a provocative civic-brand identification that cannot be reduced to the traditional narrative appeals of ethical consumption.

First, Starbucks forges a new narrative in which the citizen-subject is split and forced to re-establish its ego through Starbucks brand identification. We may view the narrative from within the framework of classical dramatic structure: exposition, climax and resolution Starbucks exposes the issues of unemployment and economic stagnation. The ad eventually reaches its climax as Starbucks offers a solution to the problem. The resolution is the utopic implication of Americans working together. Interestingly, the perspective shifts at the turn of each stage in the drama. In the exposition, the pronoun *we* denotes an American public struggling to find work. There is a shared collective identity. The tone quickly changes, however, in the climax of the ad. The text continues, "We have an idea." At this moment, the universal *we* is broken into two groups, *we* (Starbucks) and *you* (the individual). For the first time, Starbucks distinguishes itself from the down-and-out audience. The schism functions to fuel the audience's desire for civic-brand recognition, which is ultimately offered in the resolution.

From a Lacanian perspective, the schism is analogous to the mirror stage of development, at which point the subject first recognizes itself and its environment as distinct from one another (Lacan [1966] 2006: 75). The double recognition is mutually constitutive. It is also twofold in that it produces

an independent subject on the one hand, but, on the other, it also produces a lack, insomuch as the subject will now perpetually attempt to restore the rift into its previously singular identity, the restoration of the subject and its Other. Lacan refers to the production of this lack as Desire. Although Desire cannot be fulfilled, as restoration is ultimately impossible, individuals will attempt to fill the void of the Other with endless finite objects, what Lacan calls the *objet petit a*. Here the work of George Rossolatos and Margaret Hogg (2013) proves especially valuable. In their recent examination of the consumption of music commodities, the authors supplement hedonistic theories of consumption with a Lacanian reading of jouissance. They explain, "In the case of jouissance consumption, subjectivity yields to a loss of selfhood through a ritualistic act of fusion with others" (17). In turn, the theoretical framework moves "from perspectives which presuppose the existence of distinctive egos towards an approach that prioritizes 'fusion' and 'communion' among consumer-group members" (29). Similarly, I argue, jouissance consumption is a vital component of civic branding.

In the jobs initiative, Starbucks consciously distinguishes itself from the ethical-consumer subject. The Starbucks brand of civic engagement is inserted into the realm of the Other, forcing the ethical-consumer subject to struggle for recognition through the objet petit a of the donation. Starbucks then distinguishes itself further by noting its $5 million opening gambit, a number impossible for most Americans to match. In this way, Starbucks both severs the citizen-subject from its collective identity and simultaneously offers itself as the only viable path to restoration. The prospect of restoring the collective American *we* is made clear in the resolution of the ad. Through "your donation," the individual *you* is provided an opportunity to rejoin the American *us,* once again, "Indivisible." In Burkean terms, the donation functions as a practice of consubstantiality with fellow Americans. Still, the subject is prohibited from full identification. The Starbucks brand appears more American than the American citizen subject, as evidenced by the deep blue used to distinguish its name from the rest of the text. The prospect of reestablishing American indivisibility is offered only through brand participation. Interestingly, as Raymond Williams (1977) observes, the term *individual* originally connoted one's indivisibility from his or her larger social collective (161). Here Starbucks appears to exploit both connotations, capitalizing on the individual-social split, while alternatively offering the wristband as a method of consubstantiality or, for Lacan, the objet petit a. It is just as much a drama of personal identification as a drama of employment.

Second, the narrative functions to reinscribe the commercial-public binary further outside the cash nexus. Individuals are never solicited to buy or consume. Rather than donate commercial proceeds, Starbucks establishes a separate fund. It even employs a .org address, repositioning the brand alongside independent charities as opposed to charitable corporations. The form of the campaign is parallel with its voting counterpart. Yet, whereas the voting campaign highlights coffee consumption devoid of capital, the Create Jobs campaign highlights capital devoid of coffee. Money is exchanged in the form of donations rather than proceeds. The distinction is crucial for Starbucks to distinguish itself from traditional corporate philanthropists and establish itself as a genuine civil servant. The public nature of the campaign is reinforced by the explicitly public nature of the issue it addresses.

As opposed to many corporate causes, national employment is a specifically public issue. Likewise, the interpellated subject transforms from an ethical consumer into civic servant.

According to Lacan, Desire takes form through acquisition of the *objet petit a*. In ethical consumption, the *objet petit a* typically takes the form of an ethical commodity. Yet, as we have already illustrated, the presence of an ethical commodity would only undermine Starbucks' attempt to remove itself from the cash nexus. Thus, Starbucks replaces the ethical commodity with the cause wristband. Cause wristbands are typically associated with philanthropic agendas outside commercial culture. Perhaps most notable is Lance Armstrong's Livestrong Foundation, fighting cancer. Other causes include fighting smoking, breast cancer, AIDS, racism, and bullying, among others. Wristbands are typically awarded/purchased upon donation to a given cause, each cause organized by color. The popular practice has merited both praise and blame. While generating charitable donations on the one hand, it also arguably reduces these charities to fashionable signifiers, on the other. It also casts a shadow of impropriety regarding the use of proceeds (see Pineda 2012). For better or worse, cause wristbands have become an icon of civic engagement, as well as an important visual metonym for many social causes.

By appropriating the cause-wristband, Create Jobs blurs the boundaries between ethical brands and nonprofit organizations. Replacing the ethical commodity with a cause-related wristband, Starbucks rejects the corporate model of philanthropy in favor of direct public action. In turn, Create Jobs appears almost completely outside the nexus of commercial culture. Starbucks also distinguishes itself from other corporate funds, such as the Ronald McDonald Foundation. Whereas the latter relies on donations typically taken in the form of change at the end of a commercial transaction, the Create Jobs Fund requires no commercial transaction whatsoever. The purchase of the wristband is carefully separated from the purchase and consumption of coffee altogether.

To summarize, Create Jobs extends Starbucks' endeavor into the realm of civic engagement by folding the logics of ethical consumption into the practice of citizenship. Through a host of semiotic devices, Starbucks preempts dominant critiques of ethical branding in its continued effort to untie the cash nexus in which it is implicated. It displaces philanthropy with social/political action, the ethical commodity with the cause-wristband, and the ethical consumer with the interpellated citizen. Finally, it exploits the logics of human Desire to perpetually entice individuals back to the well of Starbucks brand identification.

5. Conclusion

This paper aimed to illuminate the rhetorical production of citizenship within the semiotics of Starbucks civic branding. It illustrates an important shift in ethical consumption from the construction of ethical narratives and commodities toward the brand marketing of civic engagement. As evidenced by its respective coffee and jobs campaigns, Starbucks remains an innovative leader in cause-related marketing. The brand aims to push the boundaries of ethical-consumer culture and reinscribe the commercial-public binary into a flattened surface of civic engagement. Yet, by pushing discursive

boundaries, Starbucks also narrows the scope of its citizenship. To borrow from Mathieu, Starbucks facilitates a mode of scotosis where consumer-citizens must strain to see citizenship outside the framework of brand marketing. Through a sophisticated deployment of initiatives, Starbucks complicates the traditional criticism leveled against it. Furthermore, it incorporates innovative visual devices such as zine-screen aesthetics to foster a sense of grassroots activism. Starbucks removes the ethical commodity to situate itself outside the cash nexus and assert its coffeehouse as a genuine public (third) space. It aims to interpellate branded citizens rather than citizen-consumers. Above all, it thrives on consumer Desire as opposed to rational argumentation, inviting citizens to participate in a civic-brand dynamic they can never fully grasp. In light of these innovations, Starbucks forces rhetoricians, semioticians and consumer-cultural theorists to reevaluate some of our basic assumptions regarding the rhetorical force of ethical branding. In doing so, we may further combat the scotosis of consumer culture.

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The semiotics of modernist space in the branding of organisations: A multimodal critical discourse analytic approach*

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Abstract

It is common to find the extensive use of modernist type space in corporate branding: across visual designs of documents; in images that show clean airy spaces; and in building design. In this paper, we look at this use of space as a communicative tool in the rebranding of Örebro University in Sweden, as it was reorganized around marketized principles. By drawing on the perspective of Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis, we examine the semiotic use of space in externally and internally targeted documents, with a view to showing how this plays an important role in connoting, both to the public and internally to staff, a very specific set of priorities, processes and employee identities. By using Bakhtin's (1981) concept of the chronotope we show how space is fused with time. In these documents time tends to be highly compressed and erases the more complex and inter-related details of long-term, and deeply inter-connected activities both within the university and in society at large. While this might ultimately be detrimental to the core mission of a research/education institution, it serves the purpose of communicating the effectiveness of the university brand's transition.

Keywords: MCDA, chronotope, rebranding.

0. Introduction

In this paper we are interested in the use of space in modernist corporate-style visual design as an important semiotic resource for communicating the process of re-branding, and for indicating what kinds of identities and actions are part of that process. By using Multimodal Critical Discourse Analysis (MCDA), we carry out an analysis of multimodal texts introduced as part of the re-organization and re-branding of Örebro University in Sweden. Across these documents, from outward targeted promotional material to inward targeted Vision documents, there is a notable over-determination of modernist space. This is found in the layout where visual and linguistic elements sit isolated from other elements by spacious white borders. It is also found in photographs which are free from clutter, and that often depict large airy interiors. A number of scholars working in multimodality have carried out more systematic semiotic analyses of the meaning of space and borders in visual design (Van Leeuwen 2005; Machin 2007) and in images intended for such corporate use (Machin 2004). In our analysis, we draw on this work. We show how the semiotic use of space in corporate branding can be sketched by connecting it to its role in legitimizing and naturalizing the discourses that underpin universities' marketization. To this end, we also draw on Bakhtin's (1991) concept of chronotope, which suggests that space is fused with time. In these documents, time tends to be highly compressed and erases the more complex and inter-related details of longer term and deeply inter-connected activities both within the university and in society at large. As we show, this plays an important role in legitimizing marketization.

1. The branding and marketization of universities

Since the 1980s a new form of public management, adopting principles from the private sector, has been spreading across Europe (Mautner 2014). This involves various initiatives presented as remedies for problems with quality, efficiency, transparency and mounting costs in the public sector, which comprise one part of the marketization of the public realm. As has been argued, this is a way whereby public institutions such as universities can operate effectively and become optimally aligned with the needs of the public and society, while using terms like “accountability” and “value for money” (Ek et al. 2013; Mautner 2014). This shift has entailed universities around the world re-structuring and rebranding around principles of increased outputs, competitiveness, customer-orientation and market relevance.

At an organizational level, these changes have involved shifts in the priorities and work processes of employees. Whereas formerly work was defined in accordance to professionally agreed upon standards (Hall 2012), under the new system a new kind of manager manages from a distance using principles drawn from the private sector, while not sharing necessarily the local expertise of particular professional groups (Waring 2009). In this new regime, employees follow institution-wide strategies governing all parts of their work and identity and continually report back to management. Such monitoring language is implemented across the working environment in the recruitment process, in team meetings and in regularly supplying information about outputs, targets, strategic plans and their facilitation (Kärreman & Alvesson 2004). In sum, this shift entails that work processes in research and teaching are treated as commodities which can be measured and outputs increased.

In terms of the CDA perspective, which is largely endorsed in this paper, a number of key observations have been made as regards the ways that universities communicate and present themselves in this new regime. Our own observations seek to contribute specifically to this discussion.

Fairclough (1993) first observed this shift in university recruitment ads, arguing that language showed that higher education institutions had turned into businesses trying to sell “goods, services, organizations, ideas or people” (p. 14). Other scholars have since pointed to the way that universities, academic leaders and higher education research, in promotional material and on websites, were increasingly using words imported from the corporate sector: buzzwords like ‘entrepreneur’ and ‘entrepreneurial’ (Mautner 2005) or ‘human capital’, ‘innovative’, ‘competitive’, ‘globally engaged’ and ‘enterprise’ (Morrish & Sauntson 2010; Holborow 2013).

Discourse analysts have also observed important shifts in the way that universities have been presenting themselves visually. In prospectuses and on websites we find uses of color, photographs and space that resemble commercial brochures (Teo 2007), and that address readers in a casual but trendy voice. Photographs are used to create a more personal form of address, oriented to presenting students as customers who will acquire a degree, where university is more of a 'lifestyle',

rather than about study and learning (Zhang and O'Halloran 2013). These objectives appeared to be replacing any claims to fostering an educated citizenship (Mautner 2014).

What we explore in this paper is how the use of modernist space in university documents communicates discourses both outwards to the public, but also inwards to employees. This analysis allows us to render more manifest the ways whereby the marketization of universities seeks to shape and limit professional identities and practices, as well as furnish an understanding of the communicative techniques deployed to this end.

2. Conceptual framework and methods of analysis

We draw on a set of analytical tools from MCDA (Machin and Mayr 2012; Machin 2013) in addressing our research objectives. This is a form of critical linguistic analysis that encompasses visual representations and design, using a specific set of concepts first introduced by Kress & van Leeuwen (2006). Central to this kind of analysis is the notion of discourse. Here, the broader ideas communicated by a text are referred to as discourses (Fairclough 2003; van Dijk 1993). These discourses can be thought of as models of the world (Foucault 1977) and can include participants, ideas, values, goals, and settings (van Leeuwen & Wodak 1999).

In MCDA, texts are analysed as regards lexical, grammatical and other semiotic choices in order to reveal the underlying discourses and the power relations that sustain them. In other words, we ask here, in what ways do these university documents represent participants and actions? What kinds of social relations do they seek to establish, naturalize and legitimize? Whose interests do the models of the world that are represented in the texts support? The ultimate purpose of MCDA is to reveal and challenge such representations (Machin and Mayr 2012).

In the case of Örebro University's rebranding as part of a shift to market principles there is a need, on behalf of the management, to establish, naturalize and legitimize shifts in identities, definitions of priorities, processes and types of social relations. As we will show in due course, this must be understood as a multimodal process, where, we argue, space plays an important part. In MCDA, a range of tools are used for examining the details of semiotic resources such as images, shapes, colours and space. We present these tools as the argumentation progresses in each section. We also draw on the concept of 'modality' from Kress and van Leeuwen (2006), and the semiotics of space in composition from Machin (2007).

The analysis in this paper, or how we understand space, is influenced by Bakhtin's (1981) theory of the 'chronotope' – literally meaning 'time-space'. The chronotope is a concept used to study narratives in literary works, which emphasises the inter-connectedness of spatial and temporal relationships as a key to understanding the kinds of world view, identities and values conveyed in novels. Scholars have argued that there is considerable scope for the concept's application to

discourses such as cinematic, law (Valverde 2015) and organizational studies (Lorino 2010). Here, we show how this concept can contribute usefully to a MCDA endeavor.

Bakhtin (1981) identified different treatments of time and space in different genres, from which he produced a typology of chronotopes. One example is the chronotope of the road, which is characterized by random encounters between people of diverse social backgrounds who bring their own biographical accounts to social interactions. Another example is the chronotope of the idyll as found in romantic novels of the late 18th century. Idyllic time, Bakhtin describes, is "a time saturated with its own strictly limited, sealed-off segment of nature's space" (p. 103). The idyll, he adds, "does not know the trivial details of everyday life" (p. 227). An historical chronotope, in contrast, can be dense on references to elements that point to social, political and cultural landmarks. The point is that a chronotope reflects certain types of world-views, emotions, values and, therefore, identities. In this sense, the concept relates closely to that of discourse, but calls us to rethink the way whereby time and space are interwoven in representations.

Our analysis is informed by the fundamental idea that time must be perceived and given meaning in space, and that space has temporal qualities since a movement in space is also a movement in time. Moreover, Bakhtin (1981: 189) notes that "space, or "a locality" can be viewed as "the trace of an event, a trace of what shaped it". We look at how particular types of space and time are combined into symbolic worlds in which only certain values, identities, pasts and futures can legitimately take place. We put special emphasis on the semiotics of space, which in our documents is visually over-determined and laden with symbolic values. We relate space to time and to what actors are doing, or can do in specific temporal points.

3. Discussion of findings

The rebranding of Örebro University began in 2008 with the arrival of a new management and senior administration. At the time, there was increasing pressure by the government to enhance cost efficiency in universities and to demonstrate how they are serving the market's and society's needs. New national league tables were to be established, measuring teaching quality and research output. Örebro University was one of the newest universities in Sweden, upgrading from a high school in 1999. Part of the key brand message was to represent the university as modern, fast growing and fast moving, and to distance itself from an identity of being merely a young university with a high school tradition.

The new brand was established in 2011 and was called "Vision 2016." A new visual identity was coined communicating what and who the university is and aims to be until 2016. The central document from 2011 is a vision document called "Vision, Goal and Strategies for Örebro University", produced in both Swedish and English, which constitutes the university's statute, the reference point for all university work. Also, a Graphics Manual was produced to ensure that the new brand was systematically communicated. Our analysis starts with these two documents, which gives us the opportunity to look at the basic semiotic principles and elements employed. As part of Vision 2016,

new publications including promotional brochures in Swedish and in English were produced in 2012, and a new university magazine was released in 2010 (called *Örebro Universitet Magasin;* see http://www.oru.se/Nyheter/Örebro -universitet-magasin/ for all editions). We continue our analysis with the magazine's multisemiotic resources. Finally, we analyze a promotional film that was produced in Swedish in 2011 for the university, called "Studera vid Örebro universitet" (available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NG3Z3DauYkM)

4. Vision 2016: Basic semiotic principles and elements

We begin with the cover of the main document, Vision, Goals and Strategies for Örebro University from 2011, produced in A5-size with 8 pages, as shown in Figure 1. This document is predominantly targeted to all university employees.

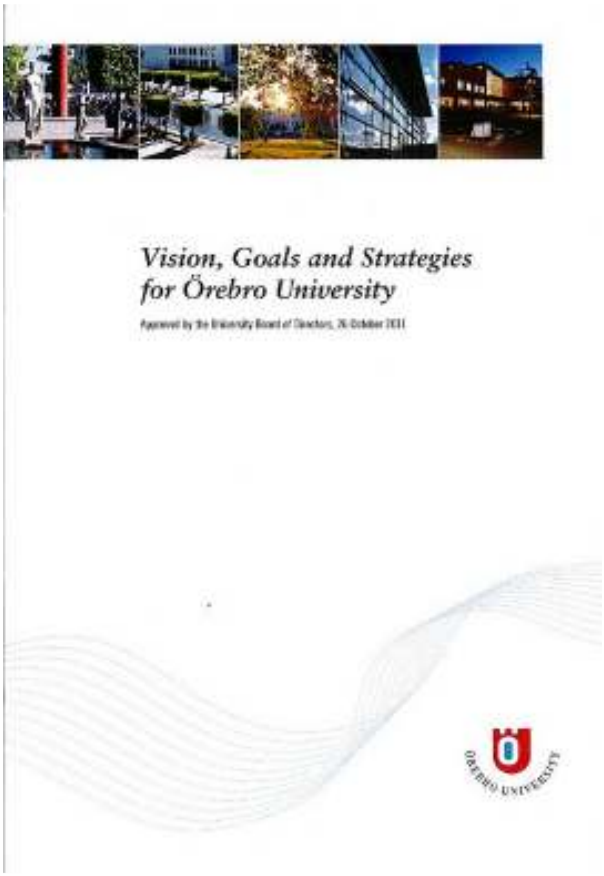


Figure 1: The cover of "Vision, Goals and Strategies" of Örebro University from 2011.

The cover displays many of the semiotic principles that underpin the branding materials. We find bright photos at the top of the design where buildings are depicted, mostly in outdoor scenes. The university, and more exactly its buildings and statues, are related to elements of nature (water, trees and sky), in a harmonious environment.

Furthermore, the photos are boxed, and are co-ordinated or linked in vaguely specified ways. They are surrounded by borders that at the same time separate and bring them together, so that they emerge as parts of a latent order. As we will see, this is highly important for the visual design of our data.

The page composition is dominated by empty space, a feature that recurs throughout the document's pages and which characterizes all of the documents of the rebranding initiative. What is encountered, we suggest, is an over-determination of space. Van Leeuwen (2005) and Machin (2007) argue that the use of spacing and borders in visual compositions are related to elements and features that are represented either as separate units or as related. The degree of flow around a page and of connection between its elements can be indicated by framing or by empty space. This is key to understanding how elements can be presented as ordered, isolated or co-ordinated with others in vaguely specified ways.

At the bottom of the page we find two important design elements, blue wavy lines that run across the cover and over the logotype. We make a few comments on these prior to proceeding with the examination of space in greater detail, as they relate directly to the Graphics Manual, which gives clear instructions as to how design elements should be used.

An important task of the university's rebranding was to update the graphics profile in a modern Graphics Manual. The Manual is introduced on the first page by the Vice-Chancellor, who presents the core of the mission statement: "Örebro University is a prominent university with a broad scientific base, the courage to review and the ability to evolve." Here "prominent", "scientific", "courage" and "evolve" are keywords. Throughout the Manual different elements are related to the values of the mission statement. The Manual explains that the blue wavy motif represents "the flow of knowledge". The wave is, as Figure 1 shows, light with a mild blue colour. It runs through space, and therefore also signifies movement in time, and can be interpreted as expressing graphically what the vice-chancellor in his Introduction calls a "modern, forward-looking university".

It is the task of the logotype, the Manual says, to establish a proud history (see Figure 2). The red shield is explained as heraldic, as a modern version of the medieval university mark and seal, and symbolises, thanks to its tower-like apex, the medieval castle that stands in the middle of the city of Örebro. This visual resource affords connotations of heritage and prestige – the university is "prominent", as the Vision states. The difference between the standard logotype to the left and the one to the right, is that the latter should be used on formal occasions and feasts. This is signalled by another traditional university symbol, the laurel wreath.

Figure 2: The standard logotype of Örebro University is displayed on the left-hand side, whereas the one used for formal occasions, with the traditional symbol of the laurel wreath, is displayed on the right-hand side (source: Graphics Manual).

The Manual also explains the colours' symbolic meanings. Blue signifies reflection and rationality, which are traditional values of the university, echoing its "scientific base", while red stands for emotions and directness, thus connecting the university to "courage", that was mentioned in the mission statement. The additional colours stated in the manual are sober and include grey, black and gold (which is the colour of the laurel wreath).

The Graphics Manual is very specific about the kinds of images that should be used in university documents and how these are to be used. The Manual states that the portrayed people should preferably be "active", which is formulated as: "think pride, quality and community spirit". In the Vision document, the inside cover is typical of the university's visual approach, which features regularly spacious communal areas and the staircase motif.

Figure 3: The inside cover of the Vision, Goals and Strategies document of Örebro University (2011), featuring a visual of a staircase that recurs across branding documents (cf. Figure 12).

The staircase connotes movement, and the possibility to ascend. We see people going up and down the staircase, but through motion-blurring. This connotes “movement”, “mobility”, “lack of stasis” and “lightness”. It also suggests a captured moment. And many of these images suggest a frozen moment, isolated from ongoing activities. This staircase is also important as it depicts a roomy and unconfined area in a modernist building. The material used for the railings is transparent, also suggesting openness. The colors are muted, and the white walls of the building stretch over to the white borders of the paper.

The staircase construes space in a symbolic way which can be related to Bakhtin’s (1986) chronotope of the road, associated with random encounters and facilitating meetings between people from different backgrounds. But unlike the road chronotope, where travelers stop in encounters, people in staircases are on the move, anonymous, and largely goal-oriented, albeit in undefined ways. Time is thus construed as a near future, as if a certain and deliberate activity must be attended to. In other words: spatial proximity, that is connoted by persons’ moving toward different destinations in the building, encodes temporal proximity.

Modality is also key to understanding the modus operandi of these images in design. Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) argue that representations appear in different modalities or ‘truth claims’. Naturalistic modality is the truth of what we see. An example would be a photograph of a building

where it appears as we would have seen it had we been there. As regards modality, the images in the university documents tend to be not entirely naturalistic representations, because of the use of colour saturation and low focus in the backgrounds that appear to be more or less out-of-focus. A motif in which the naturalistic modality is comparatively high is when the university is linked to environment and nature, as in the photos in Figure 1.

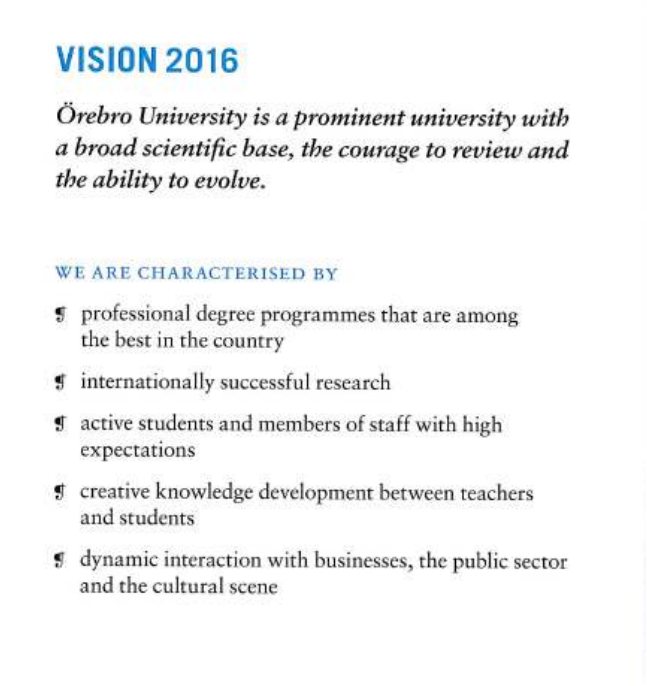
Technical modality is technical truth based on logic. So, for example, an architectural drawing shows the technical construction of a building, not the building as it meets the eye. This is an abstracted truth which shows the core details.

Sensory modality is the truth of the senses. So, for example, an impressionist painting claims to represent the truth of the senses. Children's toys could be described as having high sensory modality due to colours being simplified and saturated to highlight their sensory experience.

In the university's branding materials we find both a reduced naturalistic modality and increased sensory and technical modalities. Images have reduced backgrounds or no background at all. Details are reduced, and the clutter of everyday life has been removed. Here we shift to a sense of technical truth, where everyday life has been artificially stripped to a minimum. The white walls of the building merge smoothly with the page border, thus conveying a sense of tidiness and logical ordering. We also encounter the sensory modality in high levels of lighting, suggesting slight overexposure, connoting optimism, and creating a clean look. We find sensuous, saturated colors which can be used to coordinate images with other design elements. Blurring is often used – the sensory effect of movement - as does creative cropping, thus affording 'interesting' and more dynamic views. In this manner, images do not document everyday life in the university, but symbolize ideas and values about university life.

5. Vision 2016: The mission statement

The Vision document begins with the mission statement, which is often repeated at the beginning of other documents. As Figure 4 shows, it is rendered in bullet-points form, and hence writing has been broken down into separate units that are listed as parts of an alleged logical order. This modality is clearly technical.



VISION 2016

Örebro University is a prominent university with a broad scientific base, the courage to review and the ability to evolve.

WE ARE CHARACTERISED BY

- professional degree programmes that are among the best in the country
- internationally successful research
- active students and members of staff with high expectations
- creative knowledge development between teachers and students
- dynamic interaction with businesses, the public sector and the cultural scene

Figure 4: The mission statement, called Vision 2016, from the document "Vision, Goals and Strategies for Örebro University" (2011).

The technical modality co-exists with a more sensory modality, as in the combination of the colors blue for rationality and red for emotions, also expressed in buzzwords. We have already pointed to "courage" and "evolve" in the core statement on the top of the page; in the bullet points we find adjectives like "active", "creative", "dynamic", "successful".

The assertion that buzzwords are part of a technical order may be substantiated from the use of a repeated grammatical pattern. Each bullet point is a nominal group with an initial modifier, most often a buzzword, to the head noun (in italics): "vocationally-oriented *programs*", "internationally successful *research*", "active *students and staff*", "creative *knowledge*", "dynamic *interaction* ". We also find many postponed modifiers as part of quite long nominal groups, such as (head nouns in italics):

vocationally oriented
programs
belonging to the country's best

dynamic
relationship
with society, business and cultural life

In this manner, everything becomes part of the same logic, even though the processes and the concepts they contain are vastly different.

It is also important for our analysis to think about the kinds of participants and how they act in time and space in these documents. In the above bullet points these actions are

represented in abstract form through the use of nominalizations, such as “training”, “research”, “expectations”, “knowledge development”, “collaboration”. In nominalizations, process verbs are represented as nouns. So a process situated in time and space, like “we know”, “we knew” or “we should have known”, is replaced by the noun “knowing”, by a thing. Fairclough (2003) argues that in language nominalizations are one way of concealing agency, temporality, causality and social relationships. Likewise, we encounter formulations such as “creative knowledge development between teachers and students” which gives little information in terms of real targets, strategy, or about who should precisely do what. Nevertheless, it allows terms like “creative” and “knowledge development” to be freely used as part of connoting “moving forward”, “improving”, “becoming more successful”.

As regards the involved chronotope, we can think of the way that connotations of “moving forward” and buzzwords that suggest “energy” and “working together” function in a way that is dislocated from the actual interrelations between actions and from clear descriptions of who does what. We could, in contrast, imagine a chronotope where a clear connection to historical, social and political issues would exist, where the actual reasons for the recommended changes would be clear, as in a densely represented historical chronotope.

The bullet-list with the identical nominal groups suggests order, a world that consists of separate, discrete components of equal importance. The list claims to present the core details of a process. What goes on in the university is reduced to a bare outline for technical purposes. But it conceals how the different processes are connected. For example, how does “internationally successful research” work alongside the need to have more “vocationally oriented programs”?

We encounter the use of bullet-lists throughout the university documents. Often they are arbitrarily numbered, also connoting some kind of ranking or quantification. They are free from the clutter and complexities that characterize actual processes, which is also true of the images. This is part of the way time is simply represented, a time that can move rapidly forward.

Important in the way this list is represented is the over-determination of space. In Figure 4 all elements are set in generous space. Metaphorically we can say that the mission statement enjoys the luxury of space and room to breathe. In this sense, space itself can suggest importance. By analogy, if we look at the writing on commemorative inscriptions, there is often emphasis on the space between the lines.

Various authors working in multimodality have offered models for interpreting the function of space in visual compositions (van Leeuwen 2005; Machin 2007) that were mentioned in passing earlier. We expand on these models here to enhance our understanding of this over-determination of space and how it relates to time.

There is a high degree of metaphorical associations from the thickness and strength of boundaries in the physical world to borders and dividing spaces in visual compositions. So, in a visual composition two elements could be separated by a thick black border, which might suggest that they are of a very different category, that they are unrelated. A thinner border, on the contrary, or one delineated by a dotted line, might connote a lesser degree of segregation (Machin and Polzer 2015). Elements can also be segregated by empty space without borders. In this case, the elements on either

side display similarities, but also differences since they are kept apart. There are no boundaries to cross, only space, and hence no segregation.

Applying these observations to the compositions in Figures 1 and 4, we may discern that there is extensive separation through spacing. The images at the top of Figure 1 are the exception as they sit together, separated by framing. In Figure 4 the use of space is extensive and affords to separate the bullet points and the graphical elements. This is a clean, uncomplicated space, free from clutter. Even in Figure 3 space is both open and ordered, not in the least since the white walls of the building continue into the page borders.

The chronotope of moving ahead is represented spatially in the staircase movement motif in Figure 3. In this manner, the university is seen to be forward-looking, in an ordered and tidy space, where no clutter hinders this movement. Kress (2010) and Machin and Mayr (2012) have critically addressed this construction of 'looking forward'. It is never made explicit why looking forward is good. It is part of a discourse where 'innovation', 'change', 'the new' and the 'fast' are valued in themselves, whereas 'established knowledge', 'steadily and thoroughly developing ideas', 'traditions of scholarly practice' are not valued.

In this chronotope, processes are represented as abstracted from persons and from their complex interrelationships, as well as from wider socio-political matters. This is a form of space and time that has no history. It is a kind of time with an emphasis on constant movement. The only connection to the past or to history is connoted by the symbolic and abstracted meaning of the castle in the logotype in Figure 2.

6. Photographs in the university magazine

We now shift our focus to examine the images that are used in the university magazine, distributed both outwards to the local community and inwards to academic, administrative and technical staff of the university. The magazine contains short success stories about the staff's research activities, teaching innovations or involvement in the local community. The use of space in the magazine's layout is over-determined. For example, in Figure 5 we see how different stakeholders (management, academic, administration and students) participate in the university's Vision. The photograph and the accompanying text for each stakeholder are overlaid on clean, uncluttered, empty space. Each photograph and accompanying text are of the same size, suggesting equality, while, just like the bullet points in the vision statement, they are presented as individual, yet easily comparable components. This layout metonymically represents the parts of the university, again through a technical modality that suppresses complex variations in interests, roles and interconnected processes.

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Figure 5: Photographs and space with technical modality in the university magazine.

In Figure 6 we see the cover of the magazine. As in every edition, the “flow of knowledge” wave is displayed at the top of the cover. We find the characteristic low naturalistic modality, with sensory high key lighting and saturated colours which resonate with the logo. The blurred background allows the iconic, in-focus, microscope to function as a visual metonymy for "research". The blue color is, as above mentioned, coded in the Graphics Manual as a signifier of reflection and rationality, which coheres with the portrayal of the woman in the laboratory who is reading. Reading is an uncommon activity in our data, but we can note that the woman performs it while standing, maybe taking dictation or writing laboratory experiment notes, before moving to the next task. Overall, these modally "less real" images render brand values less directly anchored in the everyday reality of university life, while at the same time representing them as technically simplified. The sensory modality also construes the laboratory as if it were energetic and open, not in the least since the “flow of knowledge” wave blends with the sunlight that enters the laboratory from the window, thus blurring the distinction between inside and outside.

This representation of research is important. On the one hand it simplifies. But on the other, it allows space to be represented in a way that avoids closure, confinement and slow pace (usually required in research). Instead, it connotes openness and portrays dynamism and movement through an individual who makes a short stop and checks a list or takes notes before moving on. Once again, the time perspective seems to be focused on the near future, of moving on to the next task. We, thus, obtain a symbolic representation of what research at Örebro University amounts to.

Figure 6: Sensory modality on the cover of the university magazine.

How participants are represented in the magazine and what they are depicted to be doing, or not, is also important for the brand and directly related to our observations on space and time. One striking feature is that we find mainly images of individuals, often in close-up, or extreme close-up, as seen in Figures 7 to 10. These images include academic staff, management, students and ex-alumni. In terms of van Leeuwen's (1999) observations on the representation of social actors, here we find high degrees of individualization and personalization. University staff, including lecturers and management (Figure 7), are represented not as distant and distracted intellectuals, but as intimate and warm. This is a work environment of 'openness', realizing a visual identity of both customer orientation and transparency. Academics are not remote and self-absorbed, but communicative. We notice that the lecturer in Figure 12 has stopped moving on the staircase and now is sitting down in order to communicate with the viewer. In order words, openness and interaction are so important as being on the move and being determined to achieve.

Figure 7 **Figure 8** **Figure 9** **Figure 10**

It is also important that the individuals in Figures 8-10 look directly at the viewer, while engaging him. The exception is Figure 7, portraying a manager, who is looking beyond the viewer, into distant space,

over which she seems to have more control than, for example, the lecturer sitting down at the staircase. Kress and van Leeuwen (2006) differentiated between what they called "image acts" that photographs can perform. Where a person does not look at the viewer we can say this is an "offer image". It offers information for us to consider. Where a person does look at the viewer we can say that this is a “demand image”.

7. A promotional film selling education

The branding of Örebro University included short promotional films that were created against the background of three symbols: packs, balloons and bulbs. Packs signify availability and choice, but also, by virtue of their arrangement, tidiness and orderliness in space; balloons, by virtue of moving towards the sky, eternal space; and bulbs enlighten spaces, either through optimism or illumination where once there was ignorance.

We now look at the most widely disseminated of the commercial films, produced in 2011, in which educational programmes are displayed as separate rectangular boxes, as seen in Figure 11. Choosing an educational program is portrayed in a manner akin to picking up a packaged product. The film starts with a blue rectangular pack labelled “Örebro University”. The camera, then, zooms in, while moving from bottom to the top. The movement is dynamic, connoting that the university moves upwards, to success. The supers read (in translation):

17 000 students
600 teachers and researchers
140 professors
800 elective courses
60 educational programs
30 advanced level courses

On the one hand, this appears to be an informative commercial. On the other hand, the use of numbers points to the importance of quantification, measuring and logic, connoting that this is a neat, ordered institution where success is carefully calculated. After 5 seconds the scenery changes to the one we see in Figure 11. The camera moves into a sort of infinite space, a locality that has no tangible walls or limits. It zooms in and moves through the packs, thus advancing in space and time. In this image it is clear that space and time have no end, as the packs are endless. As with the abstracted processes set in space in the mission statement, here the courses exist as independent, each holding its own space (they might as well have been represented as books on a shelf), that is like the vast borders that surround the mission statement. Collectively, they are arranged in a vast, isolated space, which separates them from the outside world, illuminated by bright, optimistic light and free from

clutter. It is worth noting that the packs in the foreground carry the names of courses such as nursing, teaching-training and psychology which appear more directly linked to the job market.

Figure 11: Educational programs are represented as boxes in an infinite bright space.

After 20 seconds, and until the end of the film, the scenery changes to moving photos. Photos are shown in all kinds of constellations and arrangements. Sometimes the photos move forward towards the viewer, sometimes they move in a circle, and sometimes they are ordered with depth so that the camera zooms in and moves forward in infinite space. In Figure 12 we see an example of zooming in two photos. The photograph on the right shows people in blurred motion, moving on open-plan staircases – a larger version of that analysed earlier in Figure 3. The photograph to the left shows three students engaging in both studies and interaction, where the woman facing the camera appears to be enjoying herself. Foregrounded in the images, again, are the large common spaces, and moments of convivial interaction among a small group's members. Importantly, these images, which move in exciting and dynamic ways, are placed in an open space without boundaries. This is a shiny space with reflective, polished, glossy surfaces, suffused with a soft, yet bright saturated light.

Figure 12: An example of moving photos in the promotional film.

As regards modality, although some of the photographs in the sequence appear to be of naturalistic modality (even if highly stylised), there is a high sensory quality to the way that colour and lighting are used to contextualise them, and the way their movement is used to signify ideas and values. The lack of clutter points to de-contextualisation and abstract modality. And the decontextualized setting allows the unrelated images, as in the boxed design of the vision statement, to be juxtaposed in unspecified ways. In the film, too, this is a reality segregated from wider social and historical factors, and free from complexities, where people are on the move, dynamic and largely happy. Again, we find a sense of the chronotope of the idyll. Idyllic time is "a time saturated with its own strictly limited, sealed-off segment of nature's space" (Bakhtin 1981: 103). As in the idylls of the Romantic novels and poems, this is a space rich in the sensory. While we see the images in Figures 11 and 12, we hear a male speaker:

> 83% of the students who decide to study at Örebro University find a job within a year after the end of their studies. Better results than you can find across Swedish universities. Some say it is due to our experienced teaching staff. Some say that it is due to the outstanding research we have developed. We believe it is because the people who apply to the University of Örebro share our high ambitions.

This is a typical university promotional statement. It contains buzzwords such as "better results", "excellent research", "high ambition". It departs from a quantification, "83%", and has a classic three-part structure, connecting ""Some say", "Some say"" and "We believe" – all of the voices giving praise to the university. As has been observed in the CDA literature, promotional statements foreground success factors like financial and job payoffs and university rankings, but are uninformative as regards issues of study, of the way knowledge can challenge and aid in critical thinking or in fostering a more humane citizenship (Machin and Mayr 2012). Of importance for us here is that we encounter the same lack of causality and interconnectedness as in other documents. How does research relate to students finding jobs? In fact, at the time of writing this article, over 60% of staff were on part-time contracts and were teaching 70% of their time. Staff were required to attract external funding to generate research. This was an unacknowledged problem at the university. Across the promotional documents, and in those generated for internal use such as strategy and appraisal documents, we find the same level of abstraction as to how parts interconnect, and with regard to how agents are linked to processes. However, as some management scholars observe, the management priorities and the requirement for quantifying and auditing eventually obscure and even replace the actual ongoing practices of organisations (Power 1997). Priorities shift toward promotional activities and ensuring that the vision, strategies and targets, however abstract, are being met (Alvesson 2014).

8. Conclusion

In this paper, our aim was to understand the over-determination of space in university rebranding documents. The use of analytical tools from MCDA allowed us to dig into verbo-visual language and

grammar and to analyse aspects of visual design such as spacing and modality. All along we have reflected on how space, in the Bakhtinian sense, also communicates time, and the kinds of social relations, identities and actions are performed as chronotopic representations, that is fused time-space.

The way space is represented in the examined multimodal documents resembles considerably Bakhtin's "road chronotope", in the sense that it allows for encounters and interactions between different people. But here the meeting place is most often modernist and lavish common areas, where people often go up and down staircases. However, the construction of time is not like the road chronotope where people bring their past and join each other on the road. In the university documents, in contrast, people without a past are interacting, but not for long since they are on their way to new tasks. Bakhtin (1981: 224) also speaks of an idyllic chronotope which can include "family" or "craft work", where there is a limited, decontextualized and romanticised historical iconography. This also appears to be the case in these documents where researchers, teachers and students are brought together in tidy and ordered spaces, smiling and enjoying each-others' company in personal interaction – where their actual social relations are suppressed. But there are no large groups or collectives, and once again, time is limited and everyone must be ready for change.

From a critical perspective, which lies at the heart of MCDA, what our analysis reveals is that space is constructed in a marketization discourse, based on market success. It reproduces a short-term horizon in which market success is measured and profits must increase. Here, we encounter the over-determination of space, and the luxury of space. The open spaces, the staircases etc., connote a world in which individuals are constantly on the move, ready for change and working to optimize success. There is a vast openness of space that suggests possibilities for growth and market success. It is a space that the management claims to technically organise, control and monitor. As we have seen, this means that the actual nature of the interconnected world is distorted and suppressed. However, it serves the purpose of communicating the effectiveness of the brand's transition wonderfully and plays an important role in making this discursive shift difficult to challenge. As Power (1996) indicates, it is clear that an employee complaining about these shifts, does so purely out of selfish interest and a misjudged fondness for an outdated and inefficient way of operating.

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Handbook of Brand Semiotics: Introduction

George Rossolatos

Kassel University Press 2015

Semiotics has been making progressively inroads into marketing research over the past thirty years. Despite the amply demonstrated conceptual appeal and empirical pertinence of semiotic perspectives in various marketing research streams, spanning consumer research, brand communications, branding and consumer cultural studies, there has been a marked deficit in terms of consolidating semiotic brand-related research under a coherent disciplinary umbrella with identifiable boundaries and research agenda.

The Handbook of Brand Semiotics furnishes a compass for the perplexed, a set of anchors for the inquisitive and a solid corpus for scholars, while highlighting the conceptual richness and methodological diversity of semiotic perspectives.

Written by a team of expert scholars in various semiotics and branding related fields, such as John A. Bateman, David Machin, Xavier Ruiz Collantes, Kay L. O' Halloran, Dario Mangano, George Rossolatos, Merce Oliva, Per Ledin, Gianfranco Marrone, Francesco Mangiapane, Jennie Mazur, Carlos Scolari, Ilaria Ventura, and edited by George Rossolatos, Chief Editor of the International Journal of Marketing Semiotics, the Handbook is intended as a point of reference for scholars who wish to enter the House of Brand Semiotics and explore its marvels.

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The Handbook of Brand Semiotics, actively geared towards an inter-disciplinary dialogue between perspectives from the marketing and semiotic literatures, features the state-of-the-art, but also offers directions for future research in key streams, such as:

- **Analyzing and designing brand language across media**
- **Brand image, brand symbols, brand icons vs. iconicity**
- **The contribution of semiotics to transmedia storytelling**
- **Could transmedia storytelling turn out to be what IMC forgot (i.e., the message)?**
- **Narrativity and rhetorical approaches to branding**
- **Semiotic roadmap for designing brand identity**
- **Semiotic roadmap for designing logos and packaging**
- **Comparative readings of structuralist, Peircean and sociosemiotic approaches to brandcomms**
- **Sociosemiotic accounts of building brand identity online**
- **Multimodality and Multimodal critical discourse analysis**
- **Challenging the omnipotence of cognitivism in brand- related research**
- **Semiotics and (inter)cultural branding**
- **Brand equity semiotics**

1.1 Memoirs of a long overdue project

This Handbook has been a wonderful journey all along; a journey into the vast self-looping fields of tautology. How else could someone speak of Brand Semiotics without at the same time being cognizant that at least one of these two words could be dropped without changing the intended meaning? Let me restart and rephrase: This is a Handbook of Signs' Signs. But is this repetition a typo? Or does it reveal an underlying difference within the self-sameness of the '*tauto*-' that precedes and conditions 'logos' in a *tauto*-logy? Is the repetition of the word Sign an unadulterated recurrence of 'its' first incidence? Peirce would assure us that this is far from the matter of *fact*. Or, that the fact as foregone incidence is always different from 'its' initial condition that spurred the second as re-marking of a presumed first. Resuming: This is a Handbook about *firsts* and *seconds*, about brands as signs as marks and re-marks in a Cultural (dis)Order where the Same may only be affirmed through infinite refractions. Brands are mirrors whereby selves are impossibly recuperated as seconds or refractions of the echoing first. And maybe a bit more…

The American Marketing Association assures us that a brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods or services of one seller or a group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". Surely there is nothing flawed about this definition. It is just that it is too functional for semiotics and far *two* removed from the actual role performed by brands in cultural economies that are regulated by a Stock Market of signifiers, signifieds, symbols, icons, expressive units, elements of the plane of content. Insisting that this definition includes the word 'sign', and hence is an attestation of the very semiotic foundation of branding would be a far *two* easy and simplistic comment in the face of how brands have been and may be conceptualized through clear and distinct semiotic perspectives, and, concomitantly, how they may be managed. This Handbook, then, is not a "reference point" for scholars interested in brand semiotic research (who may be said, *otherwise*, to constitute our primary target group), but a symbolic gesture for research to come, while retracing brands as repetitions of firsts that are bound to be absent from any second, third and so on Volume may be produced in an attempt to encapsulate them.

We, that is the contributing authors of this Volume, would like to think of this endeavor as a set of memoirs of a long overdue project, a project that has not been finalized precisely because it never kicked off as it should have: which explains, pretty much, why this Volume is not a reference point, but a retracing of foundations that have been laid long ago, yet which have not been recorded as such, and, hence, remain un-re-cognizable by a scholarly community. Our task, then, is to re-port on these foundations, that is on the semiotic foundations of branding research as re-marks of what has

already been laid, yet not re-ported as such, with a view to forcing the *seconds* and *thirds*, that are bound to follow, to return to the suppressed re-marks *on* unreported foundations that make up this Volume.

1.2 The scope and aims of this Handbook by way of debunking 4 popular myths about brand semiotics

Against the background of these "pre-cursory re-marks", then, it may be worthwhile to resume this Introduction by dispelling some popular myths about brand semiotics, thus positioning the Chapters that make up this Volume on a firmer ground with regard to their intended contributions.

Myth no.1: What can semiotics teach us about how brands work in an era of highly technologically advanced perspectives such as neuro-marketing?

Debunking myth no.1: First and foremost, questions in academic research are hardly ever framed in such generic terms. Second, I can hardly recall of any discipline (or, more aptly, perspective from a discipline) among the plethora that have made inroads to branding research (from cultural anthropology to symbolic interactionism) that has been burdened with the onerous task of providing answers in the face of ever more fanciful comparisons between as distant disciplines/perspectives as neuro-marketing and brand semiotics. Notwithstanding that the 'neuro' prefix has been attached to semiotics (inasmuch as anywhere), and without having the least intention in this Introduction to explore the robustness of such amorous attachments, suffice it to point out that the real problem in such comparisons is not the perspective with which semiotics has been 'chosen' to compare, but the treatment of semiotics as a uniform discipline, rather than a multivocal landscape with as many variegated and clearly differentiated perspectives as sociology, anthropology, politics, etc. The uncritical devaluation of semiotics lies precisely in its treatment as an over-loaded mass noun: that semiotics, and by extension brand semiotics, is one amorphous mass of concepts that merits being referred to as such. This is the myth that merits debunking behind the manifest expression as above formulated, and, subsequently, a key objective of this Handbook: to restore the conceptual richness of semiotic perspectives that have been proliferating since the beginning of the last century in the 'intentional horizons' of branding researchers, while justifying why such distinctive conceptual apparatuses are still relevant for various streams within the broader field of branding research.

Myth no.2: Semiotically informed research about brands may be undertaken regardless of relevant advances in the marketing discipline.

Debunking myth no.2: It should become very clear that claiming to be conducting branding related research regardless of advances in the marketing discipline (where this research field was born and has been steadily flourishing over more than 100 years) is like claiming to be conducting bio-semiotic research without knowledge of biology. This myth may be attributed to linguistically oriented research output against the background of interpretive excursions in advertising language that, for some reason, has been identified, overwhelmingly so, with branding. This is due, on the one hand, to the fact that advertising is the most manifest interface between a brand and its audience, and, on the other hand, to a lack of literacy on behalf of researchers who have been propagating this unsubstantiated myth about the more or less clearly segregated research fields of advertising and branding in the marketing discipline. This does not imply that such silos pay heed to the actual relationship between branding and advertising, but that conflating these two research fields without having undergone a process of explicitly challenging why they should be viewed as being inter-dependent (which, occasionally, tends to be forgotten in published research), is an attestation of ignorance, rather than of correctly informed positioning of a research piece. In broad terms, when someone is laying claim to be conducting branding research within the marketing discipline, he is probably referring to areas such as brand image measurement, brand/corporate/employee equity, brand architecture, brand extensions, brand portfolio management, corporate branding, and a whole host of adjacent fields that may be gleaned by looking attentively into the pre-coded research categories in journals, such as the *Journal of Product & Brand Management*. In contrast (where, more pertinently, we should be talking about complementarity), when someone is laying claim to be conducting advertising research from within the marketing discipline, he is probably referring to fields such as moderating factors that may influence advertising effectiveness, different sorts of appeals of ad messages, differences among variably defined target-groups in responses to ad stimuli, experimental designs aiming at demonstrating the relative impact of creative/executional elements on salient response criteria (e.g., likeability, intention-to-buy, recommend, etc.), and many more that would require a book in their own right to detail. Does this imply that the branding related research fields are, in principle and in essence, cut off from advertising research fields? Not at all, and it would be absurd to make such a claim, both in theory and, even more so, in practice. The point of convergence between these two streams, anyway, is most notable in the by now recognized research field of Integrated Marketing Communications (Schultz et al. 1992; Schultz and Schultz 2004; Kitchen and De Pelsmacker 2005; Pickton and Broderick 2005; Kitchen and Schultz 2009). What is alarming, though, and, moreover, a key reason for perhaps considering semiotic perspectives as being 'antiquated' in the

light of advances in as diverse and micro-segmented research fields as those indicatively referred to in the above, is the pretension of semiotic accounts to be offering nuanced accounts of branding-cum-advertising phenomena, where, in fact, they merely offer (far *two*) macroscopic accounts of very specific research areas that are constantly scrutinized from considerably microscopic perspectives within the marketing discipline. And this pretension is the outcome of ignorance which works to the detriment of brand semiotic research. This is a very sensitive point that can only be addressed superficially in this Introduction. At least, it should be rendered clear that if someone wishes to conduct robust brand semiotic research, then the active engagement with the extant marketing literature is inevitable. We have tried to incorporate this dual view on brand semiotics as extensively as possible in this Handbook, that is by engaging dialogically with the marketing literature, although, admittedly, there is still ample scope for semiotic concepts to gain a foothold in discrete branding (and consumer research) fields. Again, a key objective behind the collective endeavor at hand has been to provide extensive input to interested scholars about the state-of-the-art in specific brand semiotic fields, however premised on the more foundational objective of consolidating what has been thus far a considerably fragmented stream. Surely such a consolidation may not be accomplished in a single Volume, but requires ongoing effort and persistence by committed scholars who are eager to carve new research horizons, rather than ruminate/recycle basic concepts. It is precisely in such a forward-thinking and moving milieu that this Handbook is situated.

Myth no.3: Brand semiotics has been terminally squeezed ever since Floch's applications of Greimasian structuralism. Beyond a string of basic and substitutable (from other disciplines, such as anthropology, sociology, psychology, communication theory, cultural studies) concepts bestowed to the marketing discipline from key structuralist thinkers and Peirce, there is not much left to contribute to branding research.

Debunking myth no.3: Resuming the "pre-cursory re-marks" and, thus, hopefully justifying what may have come across to some readers as a self-complacent and deconstructively inclined involutionary path to the silent and genealogically suppressed underpinnings of the meaning of 'brand', the fact that advances in specific semiotic schools have not been reflected in branding research simply points to the absence of re-cognition (on behalf of a scholarly community), and not to the subject matter that screams for re-cognition. It is not so much a case of not being blatantly obvious that a handful of gatekeepers have been, perhaps not intentionally, slowing down the rate whereby semiotic research might have been applicably reflected in a timely fashion in marketing research, as why marketing journals have been unwilling to catch up with such advances. This is far from a simple topic and by no means one that may be even scratched in this Introduction. Nevertheless, a topic that must be expressly stated as thoroughly as possible as it points causally not to inertia or unwillingness

on behalf of researchers who may have flirted with brand semiotics, only to abandon the ship in the face of closed doors from major journals and blatantly biased and uninformed feedback, but to 'social forces' that have silently impeded such advances from being adequately reflected in marketing research. It is at least unacceptable that despite proclamations on behalf of marketing journal editors about openness to inter-disciplinary research, the majority of papers that have been appearing, even as scarcely as is the case, in marketing journals, are informed by second-hand adaptations of introductory semiotic concepts, while, in instances where innovative thinking has been evidently promoted in inter-disciplinary research between marketing and semiotics, editors' feedback has tended to discredit such endeavors by recourse to empty signifiers such as 'jargon' or 'too technical for marketing researchers and not very relevant'. The 'jargon' *jargon* may be effortlessly rebutted by posing the following question to the concerned 'citizen': Could you fly an airplane by calling the engine Popeye and the cockpit billiard table (provided, of course, that such idiosyncratic antonomasias are in fact idiosyncratic and not shared by a social group)? In the most likely scenario that the 'citizen' will not affirm this probability, then it is equally evident that by refraining from renaming a biplanar approach to signification as strawberry fields forever one is merely safeguarding the integrity of an evoked perspective, rather than seeking to tell a bedtime story. Not only is this an utterly un-scientific attitude, but demonstrable of a state-of-affairs where a positivistic 'wall of research' has become an omni-devouring Leviathan that seeks to devalue the advances that are constantly being achieved in various semiotic perspectives by confining the acceptable scope of brand semiotic research to compulsory repetition. In short, it is not that semiotic schools have not been advancing, and that such advances are not relevant to branding research, but that such advances have been cunningly left un-re-cognized. This is another crucial area where this Handbook seeks to contribute, that is to re-ignite interest among scholars by drawing on standard concepts and applications in brand semiotics (for the sake of consolidation and historical continuity), however balanced against advances that have been taking place over the past thirty years, either as regards new semiotic schools of thinking, or new perspectives and concepts in existing semiotic schools of thinking, that have passed under the radar of the marketing discipline. This frail balance, as we progressively came to realize while composing this Volume, might be aggravated by shifting attention partially towards latest advances, while leaving groundwork terms relatively unaddressed. Again, the decision as to what level constitutes "groundwork" is highly dependent on each researcher's familiarity of and expertise in both discrete semiotic perspectives and branding ones (from a marketing point of view). Some readers may be aggravated because they would expect basic terms, such as 'sign' or 'commutation test', to be defined (anew), while others may experience grievances precisely because they would expect such terms to be common places among the readership. This is even further compounded by the fact that we are

appealing to an inter-disciplinary audience, that is both to semioticians and to marketing researchers. Far from laying claim to having discovered this much craved golden mean (which may also be read as a flawed and not-that-golden positioning strategy of 'being stuck in the middle'), we made a conscious decision to, at least, refrain from re-stating very basic terms, in line with our fundamental belief, as per the above, that such ruminations should be avoided at all costs. Hence, the reader should not expect to find extensive expositions of basic terms and concepts, such as what is a sign, or what is denotation/connotation, for which there are ample introductory references.

In a similar fashion, significant semiotic advances and brand semiotic research that have been produced locally (where by 'localization' I am referring to research produced within specific state boundaries), in non (natively) English-speaking contexts, has largely passed unnoticed from the top 50 marketing journals. We strongly believe that bringing such advances to the limelight of attention will at least stimulate interested researchers to delve further into the massive conceptual armory that has been produced by distinctive semiotic schools of thinking over the past thirty years and which awaits its due fair-share in branding research.

Myth no.4 (and meta-branding mythopoeia comes to a preliminary close at this point): Brand semiotic research is applicable only in packaging, brand naming, logos and advertising design.

Debunking myth no.4: Again, this is the outcome of semiotic perspectives' enforced territorialization in strictly demarcated research fields in the broader marketing discipline. Semiotic perspectives are fully equipped with specific and mutually exclusive (hence meriting being called 'schools of thought') epistemological and ontological premises. Only a handful of basic concepts have been applied in branding research thus far, and in a very constrained fashion. In reality, conceptual models and constructs in all branding and advertising related fields may be edified purely on semiotic concepts. Even more encouragingly, semiotic schools of thinking have been edified on the core premise and promise of an inherently inter-disciplinary orientation, starting with Saussure's vision of semiology's constituting a branch of social psychology up to Hallidayan Systemic Functional Linguistics that has been proven to be particularly well suited for inter-disciplinary applications in conjunction with variegated social sciences and humanities perspectives in addressing distinctive social practices.

We anticipate that by opening up the conceptual horizons of distinctive semiotic schools to branding related research fields in this Volume, scholars will be motivated to explore facets that not only have not been lying dormant all along, but, on the contrary, have been thriving in all sorts of disciplines, but marketing.

1.3 Chapters' overview

Pursuant to the above re-marks as re-cognition of brand semiotics' relative un-recognizability in the wider branding literature, let us proceed with an overview of the Chapters that comprise this foundational Volume.

In **Chapter 2**, Gianfranco Marrone and Dario Mangano recruit a wide gamut of largely structuralist concepts for analyzing the advertising language of brands in three product categories, that is cars, sports and sparkling water. Their analyses are premised on concepts and methods from structuralist semiotics, mainly of Greimasian persuasion, but also as developed by post-Greimasian (and contemporary to Greimas) scholars, such as Eric Landowski. It merits noticing that Landwoski, a student of Greimas, developed his own branch of sociosemiotics (cf. Landowski 1989) by drawing on Greimasian concepts (not to be confused with the sociosemiotic branch that grew from Hallidayan systemic functional linguistics) which constitutes one among many answers that have already been provided to critics of structuralist semiotics who have been drawing one—sidedly on strucuralism's binarist reductionism, and regardless of the perspective's far richer theoretical, methodological baggage and breadth and depth of applied research. The sociosemiotic extension of Greimasian structuralism is one among the various advances of which brand semioticians should be aware, highly under-rated due to the (recurrently relevant) lack of re-cognition by the brand semiotic community (which also holds in the case of the Anglo-Saxon branch of sociosemiotics as we shall see later on). Not only structuralist semiotics has spawned a sociosemiotic branch, but Anglo-Saxon sociosemiotics, contrary to popular misconceptions, shares fundamental epistemological assumptions with structuralism, most notably as regards their mutual constructivist orientation: "Language does not merely refer to pre-existent entities, but names things, thus construing them into categories; and then, typically, goes further and construes the categories into taxonomies to provide a theory of human experience" (Halliday and Matthiessen 2006: 29).

Each part of Marrone and Mangano's analyses focuses on a specific concept and method of analysis. In a bottom-up reading, they draw on almost a century's worth of advertising materials from the two dominant players in the Italian sparkling water market (Ferrarelle and Lete) in order to show how Floch's universal axiological map may be applied, in continuation of Floch's (1990) seminal reading of car advertising. Importantly, in terms of a most insightfully contributing territory for structuralist brand semiotics, the authors highlight how the concerned brands become valorized communicatively through the narratives they employ in different parts of their history. The diachronic evolution of the valorization of these two brand discourses, then, is plotted on a set of interlocking axiological squares.

In their reading of sports shoes brands advertising, they still dwell on brand axiology, while shifting perspective. Instead of looking into the diachronic evolution of brand axiology through multiple ad executions on an intra-brand level, they adopt an inter-brand viewpoint. This perspective culminates in plotting the distinctive axiology espoused by each of the four key brand players in the concerned category on the respective four territories of the universal axiological map.

Finally, by adopting a trans-media storytelling approach, they examine how different ad texts in different media (print, TV ads) complement each other in the deployment of different phases of Renault Clio's narrative. Most remarkably, the fresh and vibrant interpretive procedure they follow, in a sense simulates the abductive hypotheses that consumers tend to form while synthesizing stimuli (or, more aptly, expessive units) both from the same, as well as across ad texts, thus, in a way, responding to Eco's call for abandoning the standard communication model proposed by information theorists, insofar as "what one calls "message" is usually a *text,* that is, a network of different messages depending on different codes and working at different levels of signification" (Eco 1979), while latently assuming a reader-response theoretic, and far from linear decoding, approach to "message" elaboration that "highlights the role of the recipient as a co-creator of meaning" (Stern 1994: 10).

The trans-medial synthesis of this expressive inventory, coupled with the progressive abductive elimination of hypotheses about their semantic content, eventually shapes up the brand's discursive universe. Indeed, it is like Marrone and Mangano play the role of 'talking heads' where they are 'overhearing' consumers' inner stream of consciousness as it stretches over a noematic horizon.

Chapter 3, by Xavier Ruiz Collantes and Mercè Oliva, constitutes the most varied and multi-disciplinary contribution to this Volume, by virtue of the sheer complexity and the disciplines involved in the subject matter it tackles, that is narrativity approaches to branding. The Chapter is divided into five Sections, starting with an overview of storytelling perspectives on brand communications that have been largely developed from within the marketing discipline. The authors critically discuss these perspectives based on the degree to which they have sufficiently incorporated and operationalized the rich and multifarious heritage of narratology. The second Section dwells on the narratological, so to speak, prong of Greimasian structuralist semiotics, while emphasizing the role that the mid-level (semio-narrative) stratum performs in the generative trajectory of meaning, alongside integral components such as the actantial model and the canonical narrative schema. The implications of the structuralist semiotic approach to narrativity for the construal of brand identity are extensively addressed in the face of relevant studies from Greimas's time until today. In this context, a critical eye is cast against piece-meal adaptations of the Greimasian trajectory, which mitigates the possibility of reaping full benefits from its full-fledged adoption as a blueprint for managing holistically brand

meaning, rather than a toolbox with 'apps' on demand. Moreover, the authors consider the as yet unexplored in a branding context concept of 'passion' that was developed in Greimas and Fontanille's *Semiotics of Passions* (1991), which is not reducible to either the 'emotional' side of a brand structure (e.g., emotional benefits) or to emotive appeals of ad messages. It should also be noted that developments in structuralist semiotics have been made in directions that address issues of discursive grammar, such as Fontanille's *Semiotics of Discourse* (2006) and his generative trajectory of the plane of expression (cf. Fontanille 2007, 2010), which have not gained as much popularity as other developments in the discourse analytic research stream. Again, such advances in structuralist semiotics have hardly been reflected in brand semiotic research and constitute significant untapped opportunities going forward.

It merits noticing at this juncture that narrativity, according to Greimas, is primarily a mode of organizing and accounting for human action, a fundamental tenet that reflects the sociosemiotic orientation of Greimasian structuralism. And Greimas (1989), but also Courtés (1991), have illustrated amply how social practices as varied as the preparation of a basil soup based on a recipe and a funeral oration, may be organized in a chain of narrative programs that manifest a latent canonical structure which permeates invariably literary texts inasmuch as ordinary practices (whence stems the adoption of a pan-textualist approach in social theorizing).

As mentioned earlier, despite *en masse* proclamations about the abandonment of structuralism across diverse disciplines in the humanities and the social sciences, largely due to a disillusionment with the perspective's proclivity for binarist reductionist readings of social/textual phenomena, and in the light of post-structuralist advances, it has survived and mutated both in semiotics, but also in marketing. For example, as noted in Rossolatos (2014), Keller's cognitivist model of brand knowledge structures has inherited basic assumptions of structuralism, such as the formation of brand-related memory as varying layers of abstraction amongst hierarchically structured components, albeit 'structured' in different to binarist modes, such as according to the popular (in branding research) associationist rationale of connectionism (see Rossolatos, Chapter 12, this Volume). Thus, it is not a matter of structuralism's abandonment, but of a change of rhetorical locus by dint of a shift in researchers' focus from textual structures to structures of the mind (cf. Rastier 2006) which is not really a disjunction, and even less a paradigmatic shift, but an instance of re-framing and re-contextualization. As noted by Stephen Brown in *Postmodern Marketing 2* (1998: 154): "Let's be honest…marketing is a structuralist academic discipline, or semi-structuralist at least". What are the implications of this shift from structures of the text to structures of the mind? Some of them are described in Table 1.1.

Table 1.1: Differences between semiotics and marketing in the light of the shift from structures of the text to structures of the mind

	Semiotics	**Marketing**
Minimal units of analysis	Elements of the expression/content planes, abstracted from any sensory substratum	Stimuli as sensory manifold
Memory formation	Concept formation is not the outcome of mental processes, but of habituation in social/cultural practices in distinctive domains that endow perception with meaning. The subject is the outcome of discursive practices and not discourse the outcome of a cognizing subject.	Cognitive psychological paradigm emphasizing mental processes (attention, selection, perception, concept formation [brand associations])
Interaction among units of analysis	Gestaltic: the interaction among expressive units produces a meaning effect in excess of the additive impact of individual modes/semiotic resources	Atomistic-additive: decomposable into individual units whose relative additive impact on memory formation and brand aasociations may be measured and accounted for through cognitive processing mechanisms
How meaning is produced in the face of the interaction among modes	Through embeddeness in textual structures, demonstrable with the aid of tools such as system network maps that combine the planes of expression with content	Through the spreading activation of nodes/links in the mind/brain
Other epistemological assumptions	Meaning is produced through the interaction of social actors in situated social settings; dependence of the individual on group meaning-making practices; signs over signals (stimuli)	Meaning is produced through the distributed processing of stimuli in the brain- the individual is an information processing unit; signals (stimuli over signs)

	Interpretive outlook that seeks to account for ad hoc meaning structures, not necessarily replicable; highly context dependent semantization	Explanatory outlook that presumes the replicability of quantitative findings

The differences highlighted in Table 1.1 are far from sufficiently nuanced as regards specific semiotic schools of thought and marketing research strands. Rather, they are intended as thought-triggers regarding fundamental issues that are bound to emerge while translating terms from one discipline into those of a dominant perspective of the other (i.e., cognitive psychology), in which instances (e.g., McQuarrie and Mick 1999: 40) assumptions about a latent isomorphism between sensory stimuli and expressive units should be placed under the epistemological microscope and approached with caution prior to incorporating them uncritically in experimental research designs (whose output may still turn out to be validating ill-formed assumptions). It is precisely such subtle details that should be attended to while opening new conceptual and empirical horizons in brand semiotic research, rather than regurgitating basic concepts that are reflective of a very small portion of the prolific output of key semiotic thinkers such as Greimas. And this call for attention to conceptual detail is also made by Ruiz Collantes and Oliva in their attempt to highlight that the Greimasian conceptualization of narrativity is far richer both in conceptual terms and as regards the scope of potential applications in branding research than has been realized until now.

In the third Section, Ruiz Collantes and Oliva scrutinize the psychoanalytical and anthropological origins of archetypical and mythic perspectives in branding research respectively. Myths and archetypes constitute an integral aspect of cultural branding (cf. Holt 2004), and, hence, are bound to attract increasing attention as this research stream grows. By pursuing a grass-roots approach that features not just a discussion of brand storytelling models that have been edified on the Jungian psychoanalytical model of archetypes, but, most importantly, of aspects of the Jungian theory that have eschewed the attention of researchers, they open up new horizons in the theory's applicability to brand identity and personality creation. At the same time, the occasionally uncritical perpetuation of the innatist aura that surrounds archetypes (inasmuch as any myth of origin) in the marketing literature, is critically addressed with reference to the Jungian theoretical contours. This should be extended to any endeavors that set out to reify metaphorical constructs, such as the

unconscious, and to transform them from heuristic principles and rhetorical topographical mechanisms, into innatist and localizable canonical structures.

In the fourth Section, the authors extend their focus to encompass how consumers employ narratives while building their relationships with brands, by drawing on the disciplines of anthropology and cognitive psychology. In this context, they discuss the popular strategy of anthropomorphism, while explaining how the narratively mediated consumer understanding of their relationship with brands has resulted in the common place that advertising that tells stories is highly effective. “As cultural constructions, these stories are full of mythic archetypes; they make use of culturally familiar symbols and carry along mythic meanings reflective of cultural values” (Kniazeva and Belk 2014: 46). The final Section engages in a critical comparison between the various approaches that were laid out throughout this Chapter, with an emphasis on the relative merits of narratively informed semiotic research.

In **Chapter 4** Carlos A. Scolari explores the challenges that lie ahead for branding research in the light of advances in the burgeoning field of transmedia storytelling. The concept of transmedia, in broad terms, surely is everything but alien to branding. The concept and the philosophy of Integrated Marketing Communications (IMC) that constitutes the (marketing discipline’s) antecedent- at least in outline- of what became widely known (in the media studies ‘sister’ discipline) as transmedia storytelling, was put forward in 1992 by Schultz et al., and, ever since has become entrenched in the marketing vernacular as standard research currency (cf. Kitchen and Schultz 2009; Rossolatos 2013). The fundamental hypothesis of IMC is that the maximization of the synergistic effects among media in an integrated brand communications plan will lead to enhanced bottom-line results. This simple hypothesis is coupled with considerable levels of complexity in practice that are over and above media planning considerations. IMC is a ‘holistic’ (that is more comprehensive than usual) and iterative brand planning methodology that is particularly relevant in a fragmented mediascape characterized by proliferating and decentralized communicative touch-points across various technological platforms. The major difference and at the same time area of indispensable ‘synergy’ between transmedia and IMC is that whereas the latter considers mostly media budgeting, buying and performance monitoring aspects under the rubric of ‘integration’ (with message performing a recognized, yet operationally more peripheral role), the former considers media and message structure as equally important (albeit not considering media from a marketing-related media planning point of view). Moreover, transmedia storytelling, by virtue of integrating theoretical components from disciplines such as semiotics and narratology for managing the transformations of the narrative ‘fate’ of TV series, cinematic films, or advertising personae, is by definition more minutely attuned to the exigencies of what is called in IMC lingo message integration.

Another critical area of complementarity concerns the increased consumer empowerment in a participatory media cultural setting, in which context, as noted by Scolari, consumers have become prosumers, while actively participating in a narrative process by providing new texts that expand the transmedia narrative world. In these terms, we are not concerned merely with maximal integration in a brand-controlled environment where media have been planned a priori to work in a synergistic fashion, but with integrating potentially dissonant narrative elements (compared to brand intentions) in a non brand-controlled environment where prosumers' imaginary dictates the potential meaning directions towards which an initial story or set of stimuli (expressive units) may be channeled.

By imagining the market as a symbolic space where each company tries to establish its own storytelling and values, Scolari envisions transmedia storytelling as a useful tool for positioning a brand and retaining customers by offering a set of shared values. In this context, new brand communications vehicles emerge, while existing ones are redefined. The transmedia perspective actively urges brand management to think 'message' first, in terms of the inter-textual embeddednes of brand messages. This perhaps dissonant with IMC's priorities radical shift in perspective (at least as we know it) turns out to be a most potent resource for invigorating and re-thinking bottom-up how specific brandcomms vehicles work. A remarkable example in this direction is reverse product placement as a commercial form of paratextuality, as discussed by Scolari. This notable shift becomes a full-fledged U-turn if we consider, from a transmedia point of view, that whereas in traditional communicative vehicles, such as product placement, brands appear in films, for example, in strategically pre-planned arrangements, in a media convergent culture films *are* the brand. In other words, the transmedia storytelling perspective urges brand planners to shift attention from what associations consumers form of a brand to how a brand culture is situated and constantly transformed in a wider cultural milieu that is populated by artefacts that inform its narrative universe and which are no more directly controllable by a centralized team. The above are illustrated by recourse to vivid case-studies from *Lost* to *Harry Potter* and from *Batman* to the *Matrix*.

A peripheral field in (marketing) branding research, but of paramount importance for what has been considered until now as brand semiotics, is the area of logos design. In **Chapter 5**, Francesco Mangiapane explores facets of logo design from various structuralist semiotic angles. The Chapter kicks off by situating brand identity and logos as expressive manifestations of brand identities in a wider textuality paradigm. As against a conservative, sign-orientated perspective according to which "logos are examples of legi-signs or symbols […] agreed, general typifications" (Lury 2004: 65), a textuality-orientated perspective views logos as integral cultural artefacts of a brand's evolving narrative in inter-textual relationships that are multi-layered and deeply articulated in a cultural software. The pursued analytical path is aligned with the general mission of this Handbook, that is to consolidate the

state-of-the-art and to move forward by considering more recent advances. Hence, the analytic draws on and extends Floch's insights from his seminal book *Visual identities*, by examining the figurative constitution of competitive brands, such as Apple vs. IBM, McDonald's vs. Burger King, McDonald's vs. Slow Food. The offered analyses indicate that in order to unearth the design rationale of logos we must first understand the competitive dynamics and the language system that makes up each product category. Thus, the analysis of the first competitive pair demonstrates that the two leading computer manufacturers built their logos through a reversal of their plastic traits. By adopting a more expansive angle, the analysis shows that the logos of the largely oppositionally placed in both design and axiological terms McDonald's vs. Slow Food reflect two opposing *forms of life,* fast versus slow food that are, in turn, reflected in the wider retail environment of the competitive food chains. This mandate for semiotic coherence as a prerequisite for building and maintaining brand identity urges us to consider logos as synaesthetic machines that translate different aspects of a brand's aesthetic identity from one sensorial mode to another. Post-Flochian advances are extensively reflected in Mangiapane's design roadmap, while considering the 'sensorial turn' that has been taking place in structuralist semiotics ever since the release of the *Semiotics of Passions* (1991) in the analysis of the sensory appeals of Apple's different logos by following the emotional relational paths prescribed in Boutaud's communication model.

Chapter 6 deploys alongside a similar structuralist semiotic path, while Ilaria Ventura considers packaging design issues, as an essential complement to the analysis of logos design that preceded it. The expository path follows a similar rationale to Chapter 5, by applying and vividly discussing semiotic concepts in various areas of packaging design through specific case-studies. The main line of thought that permeates the entire Chapter is that packaging, over and above the functional tasks it is summoned to accomplish, performs an indispensable communicative function. Thus, packaging merits being considered a brand communications vehicle in its own right. Packaging does not simply envelope objects, but translates products in different expressive substances that furnish a communicative contract with consumers, a meaning proposal that is embedded in value-based exchanges. By situating the role of packaging design for brand identity within a wider context of cultural signification, Ventura recruits time-hallowed concepts, such as Greimasian semi-symbolic structures, in order to demonstrate how salient design categories at the plane of expression, such as typeface, graphics, colors, texture, shapes, that have been classified under the ubiquitously applicable tripartite schema of chromatic, eidetic, topological categories, are variably drawn upon by competitors, often in markedly oppositional manners (as also shown in the case of logos, in Chapter 5) with view to carving a distinctive identity. The interpretive methodological framework adopted by Ventura features three categories from Greimasian semiotics for analyzing objects of value, viz. *configurative, taxic and*

functional. Moreover, the relative benefits of employing the evoked semiotic perspective are highlighted in terms of managing diachronically the communicative function of packaging, rather than obtaining an isolated snapshot of how design variables interact syncretically in the communication of the intended brand values. The way brand values, in turn, are communicated through brand packaging, or their mode of valorization, is illustrated by drawing on Floch's universal axiological map, as already shown in Chapter 2.

Chapters 7-9 address in different ways and by engaging with various perspectives the subject of multimodality that has become a priority research area in social semiotics, but also in discourse analytic strands over the past years.

In **Chapter 7** John A. Bateman ventures into a thorough comparative re-reading of Floch's seminal case-study of the NEWS cigarette print ad from three semiotic angles, that is from the original structuralist one, from a Peircean point of view, and from a sociosemiotic one. The main objective behind this re-reading lies with highlighting the comparative advantage of adopting a sociosemiotic perspective, inspired by Hallidayan SFL, in addressing methodological issues that are identified in the other two semiotic schools of thought. By offering thought provoking analyses of the concerned ad, Bateman issues a plea for enhancing the robustness of traditionally interpretive semiotic analyses by bringing to the forefront of attention methodological issues of reliability and replicability. According to the avowed sociosemiotic perspective, what is identified as lacking from Floch's otherwise most insightful analyses is a methodical roadmap for analyzing and building brand communications. Thus, although it is recognized that a structuralist perspective does address issues of multimodal interaction and semantic coherence among the expressive units of NEWS' verbo-visual structure, these considerations are not grounded in a robust methodological framework. Due to the absence of such a framework issues of replicability and reliability that plague semiotic analyses are bound to remain unresolved. Consequently, Bateman outlines a framework for addressing artefacts (including brand discourses) in variable and inter-locking levels of abstraction, comprising issues of genre, media, metafunctions and modes.

Still within a sociosemiotic/multimodality terrain, but with a different thematic orientation, Kay L. O'Halloran, Peter Wignell and Sabine Tan in **Chapter 8** furnish an in-depth analysis of the diachronic evolution of Curtin University's brand identity, involving various rebranding attempts and addressing distinctive student segments, as fleshed out in different web-site designs. The offered multi-semiotic analysis adopts a methodological framework that is underpinned by the authors' multimodal analytics software. By segmenting the verbal and visual resources utilized on the university's successively revised websites into navigation zones, with a focus on the landing page and on key pages that are hyperlinked either visually or verbally with the landing page, the authors

scrutinize how different meanings are afforded alongside the four main sociosemiotic metafunctions for distinctive student segments. This particularly nuanced analytical approach is informed both by traditional systemic functional linguistic concepts (e.g., Halliday 1978; White and Martin 2005), as well as by their multimodal extensions (e.g., the various ways whereby the web-site visitors' gaze is engaged through distinctive spatial arrangements of key visual elements, *pace* Kress and van Leeuwen 2006). In addition to the university's web-site as integral brand identity multi-semiotic resource, the authors furnish an in-depth analysis of the university's logo, again from a diachronic point of view, while highlighting how different meanings are afforded before and after a rebranding process.

By opening up the boundaries of multimodal semiotic research to critical discourse analysis (CDA), Per Ledin and David Machin, in **Chapter 9**, examine at length the fascinating case of the Orebro University rebranding. In line with the mission and the fundamental premises of CDA, that is to demonstrate how sociocultural practices are shaped through discursive practices and how the latter are inscribed in textual practices (Fairclough 1993: 98) with an ulterior motive to unearth institutional chains through textual chains and how power relationships work in sustaining such institutional/textual chains, multimodal discourse analysis (MCDA) examines multimodal textual structures with view to unearthing the latent discourses that undergird their coherence and cohesion. MCDA is informed by CDA, which by now has been firmly entrenched in discourse analytic approaches to organization studies (Fairhusrt and Putnam 2004), inasmuch as by sociosemiotics, and particularly by Kress and Van Leeuwen's grammar of visual design. Ledin and Machin delve extensively and intensively into a wide gamut of multimodal texts that were designed in the context of the university's rebranding, for both internal and external stakeholders, such as the Vision brochure, the university magazine, strategic planning documents. By casting a critical eye on the employed semiotic resources in the selected texts, they lay bare how the intended changes in the identities and roles of the academic staff are represented and re-imagined. In this process of 're-imagining', which the authors call re-contextualization, where MCDA's contribution shines forth at its most conspicuous, massive gaps open up between actual and feasible social practices and how they are envisioned through discourses that tend to level off inequalities and irreducible differences, primarily of qualitative nature. The selection of visuals and particular expressions, their specific modes of arrangement and co-ordination, their presentation in varying degrees of modality (from realistic to technical), are shown to constitute a multimodal rhetoric that communicates directly management objectives in such a fashion as to render these objectives shareable among all stakeholders within the examined organization. Ultimately, the adopted MCDA perspective presents a unique and quite compellingly so take on how a university as brand is shaped in terms of goals, objectives and how such objectives are reflected in internal branding documents that may and may not be aligned with actual perceptions and practices

within the represented organization. These gaps are critically brought to the surface by the MCDA perspective.

Semiotic cultural analysis constitutes the focus of **Chapter 10** by Jennie Mazur. By adopting an inter-cultural perspective on brand communications, Mazur demonstrates lucidly how IKEA managed to take by storm its intended target-audience in the German market by leveraging its concept of "not really" Swedish swedishness. While drawing on Sonesson's model of Ego, Alter and Alius culture and on an extensive list of analytical categories for dissecting ad texts, she demonstrates how the company's indubitably clever advertising strategy built on embedded cultural mores, but also invented a notion of swedishness. It is this invented notion of swedishness, along with a set of novel stereotypes that was subsequently recognized, and most effectively so, by the brand's intended audience in Germany, and through which it attained to become entrenched in the existing consumer ethos through a humorous and occasionally self-ironic discourse. An intensive analysis of 48 IKEA commercials are reduced to three communicative territories that correspond to different phases of the deployment of the brand's communication strategy in the German market. The analysis highlights, most interestingly, how the invented stereotypes in IKEA's ad films not only managed to catapult the brand to a leadership position in the German DIY market, but to create a whole new ethos, including the adoption of the cultural practice of throwing Christmas trees off windows during St. Knut's day.

Chapter 11 is still situated in the broader cultural branding territory, while seeking to disentangle the concept of brand image from a non-semiotically informed spider's web. In this Chapter, George Rossolatos draws on the multifariously defined and operationalized concept of iconicity while addressing critically definitions of brand image that have been offered by marketing scholars. This cultural bend, in conjunction with the concept's semiotic contextualization, are aimed at dispelling terminological confusions in the either inter-changeable or nebulously differentiated employment of such terms as brand image, symbol, icon, as well as at addressing the function of brand image at a deeper level than a mere construct that is operationalized in quantitative studies of purchase drivers. This shift in focus is dovetailed with a critical turn from the cogito-centric view of the consuming subject through the cognitivist lens of the AI metaphor as decision-making centre at the origin of largely conscious meaning-making, in favor of a psychoanalytically informed approach that considers figurativity as an essential process whereby brand image is formed. In these terms, brand image is intimately linked to brand images as figurative multimodal expressive units and rhetorical tropes, as figurative syntax, that are responsible for shaping an idiolectal brand language, as well as to distinctive levels of iconicity as textual condition of possibility of a brand language. In order to understand the role of iconicity as fundamental condition of brand textuality, rather than just a procedure for spawning brand images, the discussion is contextualized in a wider framework involving the culturally situated

source of brand images, how they become correlated with brand image concepts and how correlations between brand images and brand image result in brand knowledge structures (Keller 1998). This opening up of the discussion on iconicity is enacted against the background of the Brand Imaginarium which involves: (i) a critical engagement with the dominant cognitivist perspective in branding research that prioritizes individual memory in brand knowledge formation, through a cultural branding lens that involves two additional types of memory, viz. communicative and cultural (ii) a critical engagement with the cognitivist perspective on brand knowledge formation that prioritizes conscious processing of stimuli (as 'brute facts', rather than as already semiotized expressive units) in a cognitive mechanism from which the faculty of imagination has been expelled, by restoring the importance of imagination in brand knowledge formation, and, concomitantly, by showing that the highly figurative language of brands may not be researched thoroughly unless imagination is posited anew as processing correlate (iii) the adoption of an expansionist approach to the role of the imaginary in brand knowledge formation, from cognitive (or psychic) faculty, to a more sociologically inclined process of inter-subjective mirroring, and concomitantly as imaginary social significations (Castoriades 1985) that are shared by culturally conditioned and habituated subjects that engage in meaningful cultural practices, rather than individual processing monads. Brakus (2008) contends that despite interpretivist consumer researchers' recognition of cognitivism's limitations in the application of a mechanistic step-by-step view of the information-processing paradigm, they have not provided viable alternatives that might explain marketing phenomena. The generalist orientation of this counter-critique notwithstanding, the Brand Imaginarium is intended as an outline in lieu of a more comprehensively formulated 'viable alternative', while taking on board Levitt's dictum that imagination is the starting point of success in marketing (cf. Brown and Patterson 2000: 7).

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