
5-12-2014

A Methodological Framework for Projecting Brand Equity: Putting Back the Imaginary into Brand Knowledge Structures

George Rossolatos

University of Kassel, georgerossolatos123@gmail.com

Follow this and additional works at: <https://nsuworks.nova.edu/tqr>



Part of the [Quantitative, Qualitative, Comparative, and Historical Methodologies Commons](#), and the [Social Statistics Commons](#)

Recommended APA Citation

Rossolatos, G. (2014). A Methodological Framework for Projecting Brand Equity: Putting Back the Imaginary into Brand Knowledge Structures. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(19), 1-37. <https://doi.org/10.46743/2160-3715/2014.1231>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the The Qualitative Report at NSUWorks. It has been accepted for inclusion in The Qualitative Report by an authorized administrator of NSUWorks. For more information, please contact nsuworks@nova.edu.



A Methodological Framework for Projecting Brand Equity: Putting Back the Imaginary into Brand Knowledge Structures

Abstract

The aim of this paper is to outline a methodological framework for Brand Equity planning with structuralist rhetorical semiotics. By drawing on the connectionist conceptual model of the brand generative trajectory of signification (Rossolatos 2013a, 2013g) it will be displayed in a step-wise fashion how a set of nuclear semes and classemes or an intended semic structure that underlies manifest discursive structures may be projected by its internal stakeholders (i.e., a brand management team, an account planning team or a marketing research team) with view to attaining differential brand associations. The suggested methodological framework focuses on the strength and uniqueness of brand associations as integral aspects of a brand's equity structure and comprises a set of calculi that aim at addressing from a brand textuality point of view how associations may be systematically linked to their key sources with an emphasis on the ad filmic text. The propounded methodology is exemplified by recourse to a corpus of ad filmic texts from the major brand players in the UK cereals market. The argumentative thrust is intent on demonstrating that structuralist rhetorical semiotics is not only useful for analyzing/interpreting brand texts, but, moreover, for constructing and for managing them over time. This demonstration is deployed by adopting a synchronic/diachronic and intra (ad) filmic / inter (ad) filmic approach to the formation of brand associations that make up a projected Brand Equity structure, in the context of embedded product category dynamics.

Keywords

Brand Equity, Content Analysis, Multimodal Rhetorical Semiotics, BrandTextuality

Creative Commons License



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-Share Alike 4.0 License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-sa/4.0/).

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for awarding me a grant for my research in Brand Equity semiotics and multimodal advertising rhetoric and the reviewers of The Qualitative Report for their constructive comments.

A Methodological Framework for Projecting Brand Equity: Putting Back the Imaginary into Brand Knowledge Structures

George Rossolatos
 University of Kassel, Kassel, Germany

The aim of this paper is to outline a methodological framework for Brand Equity planning with structuralist rhetorical semiotics. By drawing on the connectionist conceptual model of the brand generative trajectory of signification (Rossolatos 2013a, 2013g) it will be displayed in a step-wise fashion how a set of nuclear semes and classemes or an intended semic structure that underlies manifest discursive structures may be projected by its internal stakeholders (i.e., a brand management team, an account planning team or a marketing research team) with view to attaining differential brand associations. The suggested methodological framework focuses on the strength and uniqueness of brand associations as integral aspects of a brand's equity structure and comprises a set of calculi that aim at addressing from a brand textuality point of view how associations may be systematically linked to their key sources with an emphasis on the ad filmic text. The propounded methodology is exemplified by recourse to a corpus of ad filmic texts from the major brand players in the UK cereals market. The argumentative thrust is intent on demonstrating that structuralist rhetorical semiotics is not only useful for analyzing/interpreting brand texts, but, moreover, for constructing and for managing them over time. This demonstration is deployed by adopting a synchronic/diachronic and intra (ad) filmic / inter (ad) filmic approach to the formation of brand associations that make up a projected Brand Equity structure, in the context of embedded product category dynamics. Keywords: Brand Equity, Content Analysis, Multimodal Rhetorical Semiotics, Brand Textuality

Introduction

This paper furnishes a structuralist rhetorical semiotic methodological framework for the projection of a brand equity structure, with view to reinstating the imaginary into brand knowledge structures.

In greater detail, this paper starts with an overview of the meaning of brand equity and the advertising text as a key source of equity. The argumentation proceeds with highlighting the relevance of a structuralist semiotic approach to the management of brand equity over time, while pointing out potential limitations in this undertaking. Then, the nine steps that comprise the propounded methodological framework are laid out. These steps which constitute parts of a feedback-looping and not necessarily linear process, consist of the projection of an elementary structure of signification as nuclear semes and classemes or core and peripheral associations in a projected brand knowledge structure; the designation of a brand master narrative; the segmentation of manifest discourse into narrative utterances; the demarcation of an ad text's surface discourse through verbo-visual semantic markers as pro-filmic elements; the outline of production techniques and rhetorical figures (and operations) as modes of connectivity among verbo-visual pro-filmic elements; the preparation of homological chains among surface discourse expressive elements (parallel structures) and the generation of isotopies. The process culminates in a set of semiotic brand equity calculi

(brand associative uniqueness, strength and linguistic value) which portray the interactions among salient equity variables from a brand textuality point of view. The proposed methodology is finally illustrated by recourse to the content analytic output from 62 ad filmic texts from the 3 key brand players (and the 13 highest ranking sub-brands) in the UK cold cereals market, by pursuing a segment-by-segment analysis.

Brand equity in a nutshell

“Brand Equity is a function of the level or depth and breadth of brand awareness and the strength, favorability and uniqueness of brand associations” (Keller, 1998, p. 87). “Customer-based Brand Equity occurs when the consumer has a high level of awareness and familiarity with the brand and holds some strong, favorable and unique brand associations in memory” (Keller, 1998, p. 50). “The definition of consumer-based Brand Equity does not distinguish between the source of brand associations and the manner in which they are formed” (Keller, 1998, p. 51). However, it is precisely the ‘modes’ whereby expressive elements as sources of Brand Equity are transformed into brand associations that determine the level of potential equity erosion or the degree of sustainability of Brand Equity. In essence, managing Brand Equity is indistinguishable from managing the ‘transformational grammar’ from expressive elements to associations, with the aid of structuralist rhetorical semiotics.

“Brand associations contain the meaning of the brand for consumers. The strength, favorability and uniqueness of brand associations play an important role in determining the differential response that makes up Brand Equity” (Keller, 1998, p. 93). Brand associations may be classified into three major categories, viz., attributes, benefits and attitudes (following Keller). Attributes may be distinguished in two categories, product and non-product related, denoting respectively the ingredients necessary for performing the product or service function and the aspects that relate to their purchase and consumption.

Benefits can be distinguished into three categories, functional, symbolic and experiential. Functional benefits correspond to product-related attributes, whereas symbolic benefits correspond to non-product related attributes, especially user imagery. Experiential benefits correspond to both product and non-product related attributes and reflect emotional aspects of brand usage. Attitudes concern overall evaluations of brands by consumers. Attitudes towards brands are the outcomes of attributes and perceived benefits. The level of ownability of brand associations by a brand, according to Keller, depends on three dimensions, viz. their strength, favorability, uniqueness (Keller, 1998, pp. 51-53).

Strength is a function of both the quantity of processing of brand related associations and the nature or quality of that processing. Strength of association is further complicated by the personal relevance of the information (or the ad text, in semiotic terms) and the consistency with which this information is presented over time. Uniqueness refers to the distinctiveness of brand associations that is associations not shared with other brands. Favorable brand associations are those associations that are desirable to consumers and are successfully delivered by the product and conveyed by the supporting marketing program for the brand.

In sum, brand associations consist of three main components, viz. attributes, benefits, attitudes and are evinced alongside three key dimensions, viz. strength, uniqueness, favorability. What seems to be lacking in Keller’s otherwise seminal account of how Brand Equity is built is the transformational grammar or ‘how’ brand elements may be selected in the first place, during the encoding phase of ad texts, and how they may be transformed into brand associations as a projected Brand Equity structure or an account of how ad expressive elements are transformed into associations and a way of addressing the distinction between

core and peripheral associations at the very initial encoding stage of ad expressive elements. “Although Keller (1993) and others assert that brand associations in a consumer’s mind are what a brand means, they do not examine in detail how associations are formed” (Escalas & Bettman, 2000, p. 246) in the light of its sources, such as advertising films.

The advertising filmic text as key source of Brand Equity

Advertising constitutes one of the principal semiotic modes whereby brand meaning is generated. “Traditionally, advertising has been a particularly powerful way of communicating a brand’s functional values, as well as building and communicating its emotional values” (De Chernatony, 2006, p. 6). “Advertising can influence Brand Equity in two ways. First, advertising can influence brand attitude, an important component of Brand Equity. Second, and more importantly, advertising can influence Brand Equity by influencing the consumer’s memory structure for a brand” (Edell & Moore, 1993, p. 96). “Advertising has become such a pervasive mode of semiosis in today’s advanced economies that it is now an essential way of knowing the world” (Mick et al., 2004, p. 26).

Advertising constitutes one of the major fields of applied semiotic research (Pinson, 1988). A plethora of considerably divergent approaches to the semiotic analysis of ad texts have been yielded by various scholars, some of which are cited in the following. Mick (1987) put forward a sketchmap for the analysis of the depth structure of ad films by drawing on rewriting or transformational rules (e.g., deletions, movements, mergers). “The story grammar enterprise, with its search for invariant story components and related transformational rules, is really a semiotic enterprise” (Mick, 1987, p. 272). Nöth (1987) delineated a multi-frame typological framework for ad texts, by drawing primarily on the distinction between inner and outer textual frames. “The outer textual frame contains formal indicators that distinguish the advertisement from the surrounding messages” (Nöth, 1987, p. 283). “The inner textual frame of an advertisement contains those content units which constitute the textual core message of a typical advertisement” (Nöth, 1987, p. 284). From an inner frame or core message point of view, further types of ads were identified, such as presentational, informational, classified, predicative, evaluative, hyperbolic, persuasive, prototypical. Floch’s (2001) analysis of print ads in the pharmaceutical category of psychotropic medication culminated in recurrent stylistic patterns in the form of twelve visual categories, viz., “clear vs. dark,” “shaded vs. contrasting,” “monochromatism vs. polychromatism,” “thin vs. thick lines,” “continuous vs. discontinuous lines,” “definite vs. vague planes,” “simple vs. complex forms,” “symmetrical vs. disymmetrical forms,” “single vs multiple forms,” “high vs low,” “layouts in conjunction vs layouts in disjunction,” “pictorial vs graphic techniques.” Danesi and Beasley’s (2002) approach to advertising textuality bears considerable resemblance to Greimas’s generative trajectory of signification as evinced in the distinction between surface and underlying textual levels. The underlying level is defined as “the hidden level of meaning of an ad text, also called the sub-text” (Danesi & Beasley, 2002, p. 42). The surface level is “the physically perceivable part of an ad text” (Danesi & Beasley, 2002, p. 42). The authors also identify surface textuality with the conscious, denotative dimension and the subtextual layer with an unconscious, connotative dimension (Danesi & Beasley, 2002, p. 129). Koller (2007) conducted a combined linguistic/visual analysis of multimedia/multimodal advertising of the HSBC bank by drawing on Kress and Van Leeuwen’s (2006) sociosemiotic concepts. “The visual analysis took into account the use of colour as well as layout features such as frames, vectors, angles, and arrangements and size of items. The linguistic analysis [...] looked at lexis (i.e., the keywords found) and at semantics in the form of key concepts” (Koller, 2000, p. 117). A similar approach to advertising interpretation by drawing on Barthes’s and Greimas’s

methods of textual analysis, complemented by insights about the structural elements of visual discourse in relationship to their intended effects as illustrated by Joly, Kress, and Van Leeuwen, was pursued by Cian (2012). By drawing on a print ad from Chrysler PT Cruiser and a textual semiotic conception of the advertising text as semiotic text, that is “a complex and multidimensional element, interwoven with its social, cultural, and interpretative reality, and not just a simple message” (Cian, 2012, p. 57), as put forward by Eco and Fabbri, the author further split the interpretative dimensions into visual (such as colors and lighting, composition and layout), and linguistic (headline, brand name, pay-off line). A more extensive application of the dimensions of the Greimasian semiotic square that sought to combine the usefulness (and strenuousness) of interpolating surface structural expressive units on the elementary semantic units of interlocking squares, as well as to demonstrate how homological chains may ensue from such an analysis was laid out in Rossolatos 2012b. White (2009) analysed the copy from TV, cinema, web, print ads that were included in Foster Lager’s IMC plan with view to culling which so-called “national signifiers” were employed (e.g., the payoff line “Down Under is on top”), as well as how stereotypical myths about Australians were dispelled in the ad discourse, by following a shot-by-shot analysis. Bertrand (1988) carried out a structuralist semiotic reading of four Black & White print ads in order to determine binary pairs of salient dimensions (e.g., dynamic/static, western/oriental; Bertrand 1988, p. 278) that may be recruited in order to furnish a reading grid, in Greimas’s terms, of the brand’s advertising; how depth structural elements of the brand’s semantic content (e.g., life and death) are reflected in surface structural chromatic categories (e.g., white and black) and verbo-visual expressive elements that partake of such categories (e.g., family photo, tunnel picture), but also how rhetorical figures, such as irony, in fact upset the stability of strict oppositions.

Keller (1998) identified the main brand elements as brand names, logos, symbols, characters, slogans, jingles, packages. Expressive elements such as characters, slogans, jingles are part and parcel of a brand’s textual edifice that is formed diachronically through the employment of various ad texts. Insofar as sources of Brand Equity, according to Keller, concern primarily how brand meaning is constructed through strong, favorable, unique brand associations and given that brand associations stem from signifying structures, made up of advertising expressive elements, we may infer that the semiotic discipline that is first and foremost concerned with the study of sign-systems, is particularly suitable for examining the ways whereby the encoding and decoding of brand meaning may be accomplished.

The role of advertising in building and maintaining Brand Equity has been extensively researched in the marketing literature ever since the 1990’s. The vast majority of analyses that have been offered in this stream pertain to the ‘decoding’ side of advertising and concomitantly to the already attained transformation of advertising expressive elements into brand image attributes, with an undue emphasis on the very encoding process of brand texts (see Solomon & Greenberg, 1993). Scholars in the advertising-related literature (e.g., Goldenberg & Mazursky, 2008) have made attempts at discerning “depth structures” of ad expressive elements, albeit against a non-semiotically informed conceptual background, while linking such “depth structures” neither to intended brand signification, nor to a brand’s semic nucleus as the essential correlate at the plane of content and in a product category-specific framework.

However, unless an associative structure is projected in the first place in such a manner that adjoins an intended semic universe to a selected expressive inventory, it is impossible to gauge and furthermore to manage to what extent the resulting brand associations in consumers’ minds do in fact derive from a brand’s communicated expressive inventory. To this end, the ensuing structuralist rhetorical semiotic methodology for projecting an intended Brand Equity structure aims at bridging this gap between what is

intended and what is perceived by the final consumer, with a focus on brand uniqueness and brand strength which are the main controllable dimensions by an internal marketing environment (given that favorability is strictly a function of the decoding process on behalf of the enunciatee or receiver of an ad message; cf. Baack, 2006 for a focused approach on the impact of advertising on brand associative strength).

Why is a structuralist approach pertinent to the construction and management of Brand Equity?

Structuralist semiotics still constitutes one of the dominant perspectives in the semiotic discipline. Despite its presumed onslaught with the advent of post-structuralism (Danesi, 2009; Dosse, 1992; Frank, 1989; Rastier, 2006) it is still practiced in the context of academic textual analysis, but also in applied semiotic approaches in the wider field of branding. It is regularly evoked as a dominant perspective in cinematic film analysis, and widely practiced in the interpretation of literary and cultural texts. Furthermore, time-hallowed structuralist semiotic conceptual constructs, such as isotopy, semes, redundancy, have been integral to semiotic rhetorical approaches, as evinced in Groupe μ 's seminal rhetorical semiotic treatises (cf. Badir, 2010; Rossolatos, 2014).

The “interpretivist movement” in marketing research, under which terminological rubric a whole host of paradigms have been sheltered (cf. Cova & Elliott, 2008; Rossolatos, 2014) favored an opening up of alternative research horizons, albeit in a context where due to a “battle of perspectives” some were abandoned before their full-blown benefits were allowed to be reaped. Such is the case with structuralist semiotics whose momentum was undercut perhaps far too hastily by its successor that is post-structuralism (see Rossolatos, 2013b). Somehow a few concepts from the vast conceptual apparatus of structuralist semiotics seem to have endured throughout this transition, such as the semiotic square, mainly due to its propagation by practitioners in marketing semiotics and to its intuitive accessibility for the purpose of planning alternative brand positioning routes (see Rossolatos, 2012b). However, as argued elsewhere (Rossolatos, 2012c), the piecemeal adaptation of the semiotic square in disregard of its operational role in the wider generativist approach to signification that was propounded by Greimas, coupled with considerable criticisms that have been launched against it by its originators (i.e., Rastier, 2006; see Rossolatos, 2013a), are likely to overshadow the conceptual richness of structuralist semiotics, its practical relevance to the construction and management of sign-systems, such as brands, but also its fruitful transformation from speculative conceptual panoply to methodologically pertinent framework.

The vantage point of Greimas’s epistemological edifice rests with a quest for the primary elements of signification. In the course of constructing his structuralist model, existing terms in the wider field of linguistics and semiotics were appropriated, redefined and operationalized (see Rossolatos, 2014 for an overview of key theoretical sources), while a whole host of new terms were coined in order to address the multiplicity of subtle theoretical and methodological nuances in such a holistic undertaking.

Greimas’s method, which appeared initially in the form of a semantic theory and was further elaborated into a full-fledged textual semiotic conceptual apparatus and methodology¹, concerns primarily relations and transformations. Brand meaning arises only through relations among signs, while it takes place through various transformations in different levels or strata [*niveaus*] of the so-called generative trajectory of signification.

¹ “Semantics differs from semiotics chiefly in its insistence on the description of meaning in natural languages, as opposed to all sign systems” (Nef, 1977, p. 20).

Insofar as Brand Equity points to the possibility of attaining higher brand value and given that brand meaning is the source of brand value (see Rossolatos, 2013e), then structuralist semiotics and particularly a generativist approach to the generation and management of brand meaning over time constitutes a most pertinent blueprint (Rossolatos, 2013a).

A principal reason why the Greimasian textually-oriented structuralist semiotic approach has not fared considerably well in its applied form to the sign system of brands or why it has tended to be applied in a piecemeal and occasionally particularly watered-down fashion consists in its complexity and its non-accessibility to scholars who have not been versed in the discipline. However, this is hardly a plausible reason for the abandonment of the perspective, especially given that marketing approaches to the formation of brand associations (see Rossolatos, 2013a for an overview of such approaches) are characterized by an equal or greater complexity, albeit stemming from a different perspective that is rooted in cognitive psychology (see Rastier, 2006 on the historical coincidence between the decline of structuralism and the emergence of cognitivism).

Now, the fact that structuralist semiotics is pertinent as a conceptual and methodological backdrop for edifying a semiotic approach to Brand Equity is neither bereft of the need for adaptations to the exigencies of the signs-system at hand, nor immune from limitations and potential criticisms (inasmuch as any perspective).

The first and foremost limitation of structuralist semiotics (as noted in Rossolatos, 2013a) consists in over-emphasizing oppositional pairs (both in terms of content and expression). In fact, this has been structuralism's battle-field and key point of criticism from post-structuralists (see Danesi, 2009). As noted by Greimas (and further criticized by Rastier, 2006; see Rossolatos, 2013a) there is absolutely no reason why a depth structure should be of oppositional form. At the risk of incurring a cataclysmic anathema on behalf of "hardcore" structuralists, but while respecting the very fundamental tenet of Greimasian structuralism (as an "after-shock" of very basic Saussurean tenets), viz. that relations have precedence over standalone signs in determining how sign-systems signify, I readdressed the time-hallowed trajectory of signification in a connectionist fashion (see Rossolatos, 2013a) in the context of my approach to the brand trajectory of signification, that is by positing a Brand Equity structure as an associative network of nodes and links among expression and content elements (see Figure 1 for an example of the application of such a connectionist approach with the aid of the content analytic software Atlas.ti 7).

This approach to brand signification, on the one hand, is closer to contemporary approaches in the marketing literature that seek to determine how brand associations are shaped in consumers' minds, while, on the other hand, it shows how a generativist approach to brand signification emerges dynamically through the interaction among the morphologically distinctive elements of the three strata of the trajectory, while bearing in mind that one of the major gaps in preceding attempts at applying the generative trajectory of signification consisted in not paying emphasis on how elements from the three strata interact and how elements from one stratum are transformed into another stratum's (with a different syntax) components (see Rossolatos, 2012c). Let it be noted that the generativist rationale that was adapted by Greimas from Chomsky was not intended to map out the inner machinations of natural language in general (which was the Chomskyan project), but to furnish a blueprint for managing textual spaces in a context-specific fashion.

The limitations of the original conception of the trajectory are further compounded in the case of the ad filmic text, with which we are concerned here, by the factor of multimodality or polysemioticity that is the incidence of more than one modes (and interactions among modes) whereby signification emerges. In this article I am focusing on verbal and visual modes and their interactions in the context of the ad filmic text as key source of Brand Equity.

However, the key limitation, or rather area for further research and scope for enrichment, of the original conception of the trajectory, consisted in an undue emphasis on the importance of rhetorical operations and figures as modes of connectivity among the strata of the trajectory, yet whose instrumentality was recognized by Greimas (particularly as regards metaphorical connectors) as ‘semiotic glue’ across the strata (see Rossolatos, 2013a). To this end a list of rhetorical figures was recruited (over and above rhetorical operations), with view to gauging how brand textuality actually emerges as an interplay between a brand’s semic universe and its surface discursive manifestations or ad expressive elements.

Moreover, even though peripherally tackled in this paper for the sake of minimizing complexity, the case of the ad filmic text calls for attending not only to elements that pertain to the form of expression, but also to the substance of the plane of expression as production techniques. This is an area where film semiotics and film theory have proven to be instrumental. Insofar as in the filmic text the materiality of the signifier is directly affected by the employed production techniques that impact on the mode of perceptual engineering with regard to the concatenation of expressive units, a holistic generativist approach to Brand Equity should address differential modes of signification also by allusion to production techniques and their combinations. Let this otherwise crucial aspect be put aside for the time being for the sake of reducing the complexity of the proposed methodological framework.

The issues of whether the trajectory may be applied consistently across brands, categories, ad films as key sources of Brand Equity and how are still pending. As remarked elsewhere (Rossolatos, 2012c), Floch, undoubtedly a seminal figure in structuralist marketing semiotics, although kicked off his *Semiotics, marketing and communication* (2001) with an exposition of the importance of the generative trajectory, he hardly applied it consistently as a holistic model for brand building throughout the multifarious projects that he undertook.

Moreover, Greimas’s *Maupassant* (1976) which constitutes his most representative attempt at showing how structuralist semiotics may be applied for unearthing the depth structure of literary texts, neither made use of the trajectory nor applied a consistent methodology for digging progressively from surface discourse to depth structures. It was more a methodological approach in the vein of what now constitutes common currency in qualitative research, that is grounded theory (see Strauss, 2003), while applying different concepts that were coined throughout his writings. In other words, there has been no consistent application of a full-fledged and a prioristic methodological framework that has been edified on structuralist semiotics and this lack of coherent framework has put off scholars who attempted to integrate dispersed insights in their reading strategies. However, and this is the other side of the same coin, the benefits of adopting a formal metalanguage for managing marketing phenomena has been emphasized in the marketing epistemology literature (e.g., Teas & Palan, 1997). As stipulated by Greimas in the opening part of his inaugural *Structuralist Semantics* (1966) which tackled issues of semiotic epistemology in a manner that is akin to the first part of Kant’s *Critique of Pure Reason*, his project consisted in an attempt to furnish fundamental conditions for the possibility of meaning, not in the context of a transcendental idealist account of understanding (while respecting the parallel with the Kantian project), but as linguistically immanent conditions of signification.

In sum, structuralist semiotics is more than pertinent as a conceptual and methodological platform for constructing a Brand Equity structure at the very encoding stage of projecting an intended Brand Equity structure as plenum of associations between ad expressive elements, a brand’s semic universe and rhetorical modes of connectivity. The project of applying or, rather, re-constructing, a methodological framework that derives from the humanities and that was designed primarily against the background of literary analysis to the social sciences (in which marketing research is embedded) is neither dissonant with the advances in marketing research that have been marked by progressive imports from

traditional humanities disciplines (e.g., hermeneutic approaches to a brand's diachronic development, see Hatch & Rubin, 2006) nor foreign to, especially, qualitative marketing research and practice. In the following section the details of the propounded methodological framework will be laid out, while bearing in mind the limitations and adaptation exigencies, as above noted.

Methodological framework for projecting a Brand Equity structure

The proposed methodological framework is embedded in a mixed qualitative/quantitative research design. Attempts at quantifying qualitative phenomena or at furnishing calculi that may account for how salient variables to understanding sign-systems interact in combinatorial schemes are not alien to semiotic research (see, for example, Peirce's formula for the quantity of information [Extension X Comprehension = Information; Nöth, 2012] and Souriau's "dramatic calculus" [Elam, 1987, pp. 77-79]). At the same time, the quantification of linguistic phenomena and the analysis of textual patterns through meta-analyses with the employment of techniques that range from simple frequency distributions to multivariate and reductionist statistical techniques (e.g., correspondence analysis, factor analysis) is standard practice in textual/corpus linguistics. In this respect, a mixed qualitative/quantitative research design that employs semiotic interpretation alongside a standard method for the quantification of qualitative phenomena of textual nature, such as content analysis (which is employed in the proposed methodology) is neither alien to the wider linguistics/semiotics discipline, nor dissonant with marketing research.

In terms of Brand Equity research, there is a vast literature and highly divergent methods for its conceptualization and operationalization in discrete product/service sectors, its relationship to advertising, its impact on the bottom-line (sales, market share, shareholder value; see Wood, 2000, Veloutsou et al., 2013 for an overview of approaches and Salinas 2009 for a strictly financial valuation related overview of methods). Methodological frameworks and data collection/analysis methods in Brand Equity research range from purely qualitative approaches (e.g., Blackston, 1995, Grace & O'Cass, 2002) to advanced econometric ones (e.g., Srivastava et al., 1998; Srinivasan et al., 2005). Each approach has its own merits and is geared towards answering different research questions.

The proposed approach is situated in the wider consumer-based Brand Equity (CBBE) paradigm that was put forward by Keller (1998, 2001), the basic tenets of which were described earlier. This research stream prioritizes modes of formation of brand knowledge structures in terms of brand associations (see Rossolatos, 2013a for a review of the relevant marketing literature on brand associations) which are edified on brand image attributes (or nuclear semes and classemes in Greimasian terminology) as *sources* of Brand Equity. As argued elsewhere (Rossolatos, 2014) brand image constitutes the outcome and not the source of Brand Equity. In these terms, from a semiotic point of view, a methodology that seeks to provide an understanding of how superior Brand Equity, as superior linguistic value that concerns the potential for a brand discourse to attain differentially superior modes of configuration/exchange among ad expressive elements and semes (see Rossolatos, 2013e) may be projected at the very initial encoding level of a brand text is bound to engage with the modes whereby a brand's semic universe emerges in the light of its figurative discourse.

As Greimas has repeatedly stressed (see Rossolatos, 2014) structures are primarily responsible for the organization of the imaginary. According to Keller, brand knowledge perspectives draw largely on cognitive psychology. However, "part of the challenge in developing mental maps for consumers that accurately reflect their brand knowledge is how best to incorporate multiple theoretical or methodological paradigms" (Keller, 2003, p. 600).

In the context of Keller's cognitivist approach there seems to be little space for the epistemic accommodation of the imaginary. In fact, imagination seems to have been dispelled from the epistemic dimension that the construct of brand knowledge structure seeks to encapsulate. Yet, even a fleeting look at seminal philosophical texts in the Western tradition, such as Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, suggests that the faculty of imagination constitutes an essential process in the formation of knowledge (and in the context of purely aesthetic contemplation, based on Kant's *Critique of Judgment*), between sensibility, perception and understanding. The suppression of this faculty in Keller's cognitivist approach constrains our ability to account for how brand associations are shaped in the light of a highly figurative discourse such as advertising. To this end, a structuralist semiotic approach that is intent on mapping the imaginary process of the formation of brand associations may prove to be an essential adjunct to an epistemic perspective that has been edified on cognitive psychological premises.

In contradistinction to employing structuralist semiotics as method for analyzing/interpreting ad texts *ex post facto*, this framework is proposed as methodological platform for constructing a Brand Equity structure in the first place and furthermore as a way for managing a Brand Equity structure over time. This focused orientation mandates the consideration of a strictly defined in specific product (or service) category terms as salient set as point of departure and hence presupposes its enactment against a clearly conceived market segmentation. This necessary condition (which merely reflects a fundamental principle of strategic marketing management) posits a very strict criterion on the method's applicability, as against semiotic readings of advertising texts that do not take into account either an intended positioning on behalf of brand players or enact readings against a corpus that is made up of ad texts from multiple brands in multiple categories.

Further to the above introductory remarks on the scope and aims of the proposed methodological framework for building Brand Equity with structuralist rhetorical semiotics, let us proceed with the exposition of the step-wise methodology. It should be noted that the employment of the descriptor step-wise does not imply that this is a linear process or a non-iterative one. On the contrary, this is a process that requires constant revision of earlier steps, as will be shown, as well as a reconsideration of earlier assumptions as we proceed towards higher levels of synthesis.

Progressive levels of synthesis take place in terms of synchrony/diachrony and intra-filmic/inter-filmic levels (see Rossolatos, 2013a, 2014), that is by reading each ad text initially as a standalone unit and then against the background of a brand's diachronically formed idiolect. The same procedure is repeated in terms of reading an entire product category's language diachronically, that is as formed through time by synchronically deployed ad texts from multiple brand players. The aim of this progressively synthetic reading is to produce local norms of a given product category's language, both in terms of content (that is semes), as well as expression (that is ad expressive units), but also, and even more importantly from a structuralist point of view, of modes of connectivity (i.e., rhetorical figures), as a category's local degree zero, against which individual brand deviations may be gauged.

Each of the nine steps of the proposed methodology addresses projected brand textual signification both on each stratum of a brand trajectory, as well as in terms of interactions amongst strata. The preparatory tables and intermediate calculi that are employed in different steps throughout the process aim at furnishing the essential building blocks that will feed into the resulting Brand Equity metrics. The adopted approach to the construction of a Brand Equity structure attains to add dynamism to otherwise static semiotic structures by displaying interactions among the morphologically distinct elements from the three strata (cf. Rossolatos, 2013a).

Step 1: Determination of a brand's elementary structure of signification

The first step consists in demarcating a brand's semic micro-universe as elementary structure of signification in terms of nuclear semes and classemes or core and peripheral brand associations respectively. This is the bottom-up route that is followed when constructing a brand structure in the first place. In the exemplification of the methodology in the next section a top-down procedure will be followed for extrapolating this semic micro-universe based on aired ad filmic texts. In any case, since the construction of a brand structure presupposes a salient set of competitive brands the two approaches (that is bottom-up and top-down) are inextricably linked.

Nuclear semes and classemes consist of attributes, benefits and attitudes (Table 1), that is primary and secondary brand associations, in line with Keller's model of brand knowledge structure or base and utopian brand values, according to Floch's terminology (cf. Rossolatos, 2012c, 2014).

Table 1: Determination of a brand's semic micro-universe.

	Nuclear semes	Classemes
Attributes		
Benefits		
Attitudes		

Step 2: Construction of a brand's master brand narrative

Elsewhere (Rossolatos, 2012c) it was argued that the direct applicability of the narrative functions and characters, and by implication of the Canonical Narrative Schema, employed by Propp, Greimas, Floch (among others) is contestable in the face of the particularities of branding discourse, while the need for accounting for how a brand's positioning statement functions canonically in the brand trajectory of signification was dealt with by adapting the canonical narrative schema in the form of a master brand narrative.

Insofar as the canonical narrative schema is a regulative principle, according to Greimas or a narrative algorithm² (as put metaphorically by both Rastier [1971] and Guiroud & Panier [1979]), while, allegedly, not all its components are universally applicable (e.g., Courtés [1991]), as well as given Greimas's own suggestion that the scope of modalities (and by extension the entire semio-narrative level) is open to enrichment (as practiced by Greimas and Fontanille in *Semiotics of Passions*), the canonical narrative schema is by default open to redefinition according to the particularities of the corpus and genre at hand.

A master brand narrative as canonical narrative schema concerns the textual institution of a set of background expectations about a brand. These expectations concern an anticipatory structure on behalf of the target audience as a recurrent depth structure in terms of its semic microuniverse. This step in the suggested semiotic Brand Equity planning methodology aims at translating a brand's positioning statement into the key morphological units at the semio-narrative level of the brand trajectory of signification, viz. into actantial figures. Given that the final reconstruction of the narrative utterances that make up the semio-narrative rendition of a brand's manifest discourse as ad filmic text may be effected only upon a consideration of verbo-visual expressive elements (that is an ad text's pro-filmic

² A narrative algorithm is more like an interpretative heuristic device, as "unlike an algorithm, a heuristic does not guarantee a solution, but it is the best strategy for solving the ill-defined problems characteristic of interpretation" (Bordwell, 1989, p. 138). Rastier (2005), while comparing between hermeneutics and AI, also subscribes to the position that it is impossible to furnish an algorithm that would account for interpretative semiotic constraints.

units), which will be tackled in the ensuing steps, this step involves translating the nuclear and classematic semes that were identified in Step 1 into actantial objects (or objects of desire).

Step 3: Segmentation of manifest discourse into narrative utterances

Having, thus far, determined a brand's semic micro-universe and singled out the semes that will be used as actantial objects in a string of narrative utterances, the methodological exposition proceeds with the segmentation of a brand's discourse that is of an ad filmic text, into narrative utterances (henceforth denoted as NUs). As with the previous steps, the segmentation will be addressed alongside the two key aspects of the semio-narrative level.

In crude terms, the segmentation of a narrative text (regardless of genre, e.g., literary, filmic) from a structuralist semiotic point of view aims at laying bare the text's internal organization, by imposing a logical structure on what appears on the surface, discursive level as loosely connected sequences. The semio-narrative reconstruction of a manifest text follows a different temporal order than the latter, in an attempt to elucidate how a subject is transformed through various actions by entering in relations of conjunction and disjunction with the object(s) of desire. A transformation may take place in any position within the manifest discursive text, while more than one transformations are likely to occur in the succession among various narrative utterances. The transformations which the subject undergoes at the semio-narrative level are equivalent to transitions among states-of-being from one temporal point (t) to another (t+1). The temporalization of a semic structure is mandatory for its *in vivo* deployment. "In order to be capable of manifestation, the logical category of content must be temporalized" (Greimas, 1976, p. 26). However, as Bordwell and Thompson (2008, p. 80) stress, especially regarding the deployment of filmic temporality, the succession of events as portrayed in the manifest plot are hardly ever equivalent to the temporal order of the actual story (also affected by production techniques, such as flash-backs and flash-forwards). In this sense, the temporal order of the story is always incumbent on the interpreter's reconstructive activity³. Hence, the reconstructed sequences, based on the semio-narrative logic, may, but do not necessarily coincide with the manifest flow of the text.

The semio-narratively reconstructed filmic sequences are equivalent to narrative programs (NPs) or, in the case of communications, narrative utterances (Nus), that is relatively autonomous narrative units ("abstract formulas used to represent action," according to Hebert, 2012, p. 92) that assume signification in the context of the entire text that englobes them.

The importance of segmenting a text into NUs/sequences lies with

- (i) the fact that it enables us to account for how transformations take place in the deployment of a text and hence reconstruct them at a semio-narrative level
- (ii) gauging whether certain syntagms, by virtue of their recurrence (even in a figurative mode) constitute invariable surface discourse elements, thus being amenable to constituting isotopies, in terms of stylistic and/or thematic isotopies (as will be shown in the ensuing steps).

³ "Such reordering doesn't confuse us because we mentally re arrange the events into the order in which they would logically have to occur" (Bordwell & Thompson, 2008, p. 80).

Step 4: Demarcation of an ad text's surface discourse with the determination of verbo-visual semantic markers as pro-filmic elements

In order to reconstruct a surface discursive text into salient NUs, we must have determined the manifest ad text's pro-filmic units. Pro-filmic elements constitute semantic markers that cater for a figurative text's coherence (which is complemented by syntactic markers of textual cohesion, in the form of rhetorical operations/figures and production techniques). In the case of the ad filmic text, semantic markers partake of identifiable figurative categories (e.g., actors, settings). Figurative semiotic categories allow for the interpretation of ad expressive elements, by providing orientation. Orientation is yielded by identifying pertinent markers in the text that correspond to the organizing categories. The orientation strategy with the employment of 'grammatical markers' that was suggested by Groupe μ (1970), in their first rhetorical treatise, was complemented by figurative markers (Groupe μ , 1992, p. 151) for the recognition of rhetorical deviations in figurative texts (by reference to which a figure may be recognized as being operative in a text; Rossolatos, 2013f). Pro-filmic elements constitute figurative markers which must be inventoried in order to account for a text's coherence and cohesion, and proceed with coining isotopies, as will be shown in the ensuing steps. The key differences between textual linguistic and lexical semantic approaches (e.g., Biber & Conrad, 2009; Cruse, 1986; Swanson, 2003) that explore issues of semantic coherence and syntactic cohesion and the proposed structuralist semiotic approach consists in the latter's

- (i) adopting principles of film grammar as its point of departure and methodological toolbox, as against standard lexical grammar (even though it does take into account lexicogrammatical rules), and hence adopting a textual segmentation rationale by drawing on verbo-visual filmic syntagms, rather than verbal syntagms
- (ii) by implication adopting a multimodal approach to semantic and syntactic markers, that is visual in complementarity to lexical items
- (iii) focusing not only on general grammatical rules for tapping semantic deviations and rhetorical transformations, but, even more importantly, local textual rules that pertain to brands' local degrees zero.

The pro-filmic elements constitute the basis for gauging isotopies and homologies (cf. Rossolatos, 2012c, 2014). The designation of pro-filmic units is essential in order to determine

- (i) which surface actorial figures in a manifest ad text function as subjects/actants at a semio-narrative level
- (ii) how objects of value as objects/actants are figuratively represented in surface discourse (let us recall that an actant, either object or subject, according to Greimas, may be represented in a text in any possible manner, either as a human actor or as a company or as an animal figure etc.)
- (iii) how pro-filmic elements function as markers of an ad text's local textual coherence, but also in order to enact the operations of reduction and redundancy in the structuration process that allow for the transition to the semio-narrative and elementary signification levels.

Step 5: Demarcation of an ad text's surface discourse with the determination of rhetorical operations and figures as modes of connectivity among verbo-visual pro-filmic elements

The purpose of this step is to show how rhetorical operations and figures may and should be methodologically incorporated in a semiotic model of Brand Equity and the ad filmic text as its key source. As a point of departure, let us draw a distinction between structuralist operations of transformation and rhetorical operations of transformation, while pointing out how they function in complementarity.

Structuralist operations are responsible for bringing about a text's structuration (Rossolatos, 2012c). The operations of redundancy, recurrence and reduction are particularly important as transition mechanisms from the surface discursive to the semio-narrative level. On the contrary, rhetorical operations of transformation determine *prima facie* the transformation of signification on a surface discursive level, while in the case of the ad filmic text they function as transition mechanisms among sequences or filmic syntagms or within the same sequence (or even shot), but also as ways of semantically (re)channeling the employed verbo-visual expressive elements.

Rhetorical figures may function both semantically and syntactically in the tropical configuration of ad textual pro-filmic elements, a point that was raised by Groupe μ (1970) ever since their first rhetorical treatise (see Rossolatos, 2014). For example, an asyndeton rhetorical figure that partakes of the suppression operation functions syntactically as a metataxis insofar as it suppresses grammatical co-ordination markers (e.g., and/and, or/or). Regardless of whether a figure functions semantically or syntactically in the context of a filmic segment or in the wider (global) context of an ad film, at its core it performs the role of a mode of connectivity among verbo-visual expressive or pro-filmic elements. Hence, rhetorical operations and figures are particularly important, on a first reading level and prior to considering and analyzing their function as connectors among the various strata of a brand trajectory, as modes of figurative connectivity among an ad text's key pro-filmic elements. The taxonomy of rhetorical operations and figures that is employed in this methodology were extensively laid out in Rossolatos 2013c and 2013d, so I shall refrain from citing them anew.

Step 6: Demarcation of an ad text's surface discourse with the determination of production techniques as modes of connectivity among verbo-visual semantic markers (pro-filmic elements)

In Rossolatos 2014 a parallel was drawn between dream-work and brand-work in the light of Freud's *Interpretation of dreams*, as well as Lacan's theory of the imaginary. Additionally, it was demonstrated how Greimas's key tenet regarding structures' mission in organizing the imaginary are echoed in film semiotic approaches, such as Metz's imaginary signifier (1982). The key processes of displacement and condensation involved in the dream-work find their way in the filmic text through certain production techniques, which must be addressed as aspects of the substance of the form of expression insofar as they affect directly the discursive organization of the ad filmic text. Hence, displacement is materialized through editing transitions between shots and condensation through lap-dissolves and superimpositions (see Ben Shaul 2007, p. 107; Stam et al., 1992, p. 60 with reference to Metz).

By incorporating in the applied methodological approach to the formation of brand signification at the discursive level salient film production techniques that pertain to the substance of the plane of expression as they affect the materiality of the elements of the form of expression we also attain to expand our account of modes of textual configuration, such as

demonstrating the effects of lap-dissolve on the operation of permutation and the rhetorical figures that fall under its umbrella.

Paying close attention to how signification emerges by manipulating the filmic text through various production techniques is particularly useful where a dream-like hyperreal setting is concerned, aimed at producing a sensory experience that transgresses embedded notions of time and space.

Advertising film production methods are directly pertinent to the emergence of brand signification, as they impact on the substance of the plane of expression⁴, while acting as facilitators for bringing about operations of rhetorical transformation (e.g., the production method of montage facilitates the rhetorical operation of adjunction). At a more fundamental level, production techniques are indispensable for the segmentation of a surface discourse ad text into pertinent units of analysis, as a necessary step to the reconstruction of a manifest discourse in semio-narrative terms. The rationale adopted in this methodology for the segmentation of ad texts consists in breaking them down into relatively autonomous filmic syntagms⁵ with the aid of content analysis and the content analytic software Atlas.ti 7 (as will be described in the ensuing section; see Rossolatos 2013c, 2013d), by analogy to the relative autonomy of NUs at the semio-narrative level. A filmic syntagm is deemed to be relatively autonomous insofar as it consists of pro-filmic elements that may be described in the same sense as a standalone propositional unit that describes the course of action in a manifest filmic plot.

The enrichment of the Greimasian structuralist approach to the generative trajectory by recourse to production techniques and rhetorical operations/figures attains to demonstrate the priority of relata over pro-filmic elements in maintaining brand textual isotopic coherence.

Step 7: Preparation of homological chains among surface discourse expressive elements (parallel structures)

Homologies constitute a preparatory step for coining isotopies (thematic and stylistic) and for tapping patterns of textual coherence (Rossolatos, 2012c). This step is not necessary in completing the Brand Equity trajectory process, but a heuristic mechanism that allows for deriving patterns of semantic coherence. Homological chains essentially are responsible for establishing analogical relations of similarity among ad filmic syntagms and key themes that run across a film's textual fabric, thus laying bare the latent iconic relationship between various textual segments, against the background of a brand's inner logic (or logico-semantic simulacrum in Greimas's terms).

According to Greimas, homologies do not pertain merely to comparisons in the form of oppositions and dissimilarities, but also to relationships of complementarity. Insofar as they apply to relationships of complementarity, they involve relationships of figurative similarity and by extension relationships of contrived iconic similarity between abstract concepts (semes) and verbo-visual expressive elements. These analogical relationships of similarity, as Rastier (1989, p. 61) notes, are 'qualitative' and rest with the reconstructive efforts of the semiotician. Insofar as textual coherence may be gauged through the existence of a set of structural homologies, then the internal coherence of an ad filmic text must

⁴ For a similar treatment of production techniques in the context of filmic language as pertaining to the substance of the plane of expression see Groupe μ 1970, p. 180.

⁵ This was also Metz's point of departure in the segmentation of filmic narratives: "The starting unit for Metz's classification of alternatives is what he terms the autonomous sequence. This is the filmic realization of what, on the narrative level mentioned above, can be described or is being constructed as a single 'episode' with some 'unity of "action"' (Bateman, 2007, p. 20).

manifest itself as a complex chain of intra-textual homologies that conjoin elements from different strata in the generative trajectory, such as by pairing sememes with lexemes or entire filmic syntagms with nuclear semes and classemes, but also actants. In such a manner one affords to establish a homological network of brand-related associations as a structurally inter-related whole (or a textual fabric, in Metz's [1971, p. 162] terms) or a homological matrix (Rastier, 1989, p. 61). It may also be argued that homological chains allow for unearthing parallel structures in a text, by attending to how distinctive multimodal expressive categories (by analogy to grammatical categories, employed for gauging the incidence of a parallel structure- cf. Kolln, 1999, p. 275- e.g., the repetition of adjectives in a syntagm), such as key visuals or key proxemic indicators or parasyonymic nouns are strung with distinctive classes of semantic content, that is nuclear semes and classemes.

Step 8: Generation of stylistic and thematic isotopies

In terms of correspondences between the figurative and the thematic or the discursive and the narrative levels, various combinations are possible, such as between two or more figurative elements and a single narrative element or between different complexes of figurative elements and different themes within the same text. Isotopies furnish a reading grid that allows for a homogeneous reading of a text (Greimas & Courtés, 1979, pp. 197-198) across the thematic/figurative axes. But what is the difference between this task and the task that was the focal point of the previous methodological step, other than that isotopic relations do not feature analogical structures? The answer lies in that homologies constitute a heuristic step and do not feature quantified relations, while the recruitment of the two main classes of degree zero of signification in the calculation of isotopies was not featured in the creation of homological chains.

The two dominant isotopic classes are defined as follows:

- (i) stylistic isotopies concern the frequency of recurrence of co-referring pro-filmic elements, where co-referentiality is defined under the aegis of general stylistic classes, e.g. different verbo-visual syntagms all portraying brand usage or different lifestyles that are related co-referentially to the projected brand image in an ad text
- (ii) thematic isotopies concern the correspondence of different verbal, visual expressive elements and/or entire verbo-visual syntagms to particular nuclear semes and/or classemes. The Brand Equity calculi involved in the quantification of isotopies, which will allow for gauging a brand's differential associative benefits and first mover rhetorical advantages vis-à-vis a projected equity structure will be laid out after the clarification of how degrees zero will be operationalized methodologically.

A general degree zero functions as an absolute point of reference for interpreting an ad text. It is produced through a comparison of a tropically semanticized filmic syntagm, where the plane of expression is made up of verbo-visual pro-filmic elements, and modes of connectivity as figurative syntax and production techniques, by reference to

- (i) grammatical rules
- (ii) genre rules
- (iii) cultural background expectancies.

Further to the delineation of the above three frames of reference as aspects of general degree zero that must be attended to in the determination of a rhetorical deviation, the following three semantic levels within the filmic text are addressed for gauging the incidence of rhetorical transformations against the background of a local degree zero:

- (i) the level of word/visual unit
- (ii) the level of individual filmic syntagm, comprising one or more verbal phrases and one or more visual units
- (iii) the level of an ad film's global semantic context (see Rossolatos, 2013d).

In terms of criteria for delimiting filmic syntagms or sequences, as Metz (1974, pp. 162-165) has shown, there is no such thing in the moving image as a priori clear-cut boundaries for their determination.

Step 9: Calculation of brand associative strength, uniqueness and linguistic value

This semiotic calculi of Brand Equity as linguistic value that are proposed in this methodology aim at quantifying

- (i) the strength of projected brand associations as thematic isotopies from an encoding point of view
- (ii) the uniqueness of the projected brand associations
- (iii) a composite index that is reflective of a brand's linguistic value as the semiotic counterpart of Brand Equity.

In line with antecedents in structuralist semiotical related methods of quantification of textual phenomena and specifically of isotopies (e.g., Rastier, 1989) with a focus on their weight and density, the following calculi are intended to account for how superior linguistic value emerges in ad filmic texts as a key source of Brand Equity.

The first calculus is reflective of the strength of projected brand associations with a focus on nuclear semic components that are inscribed in distinctive ad filmic segments' verbo-visual figurative expressive units, as the product of weight x density:

- (i) Brand associative strength= nuclear semic weight x nuclear semic density,

where weight is gauged by calculating the frequency of occurrence of nuclear semes across the various verbo-visual expressive units throughout filmic syntagms from a diachronic perspective (i.e., across the different ad filmic texts on an intra-brand level), while density is gauged by calculating the frequency of occurrence of nuclear semic attributes in particular verbo-visual expressive units as a ratio of the total diachronic incidence of each nuclear seme by the total number of segments making up each brand's filmic sub-corpus.

A brand's semic density is the sum of individual semes' density scores. Density, thus, caters for understanding how dispersed the occurrence of nuclear semic attributes is across figurative elements, which entails that the more dispersed a semic attribute across figurative elements (and hence less frequently recurring), the more likely brand textual coherence will be diluted in the face of a highly variable advertising discourse.

- (ii) Semic density= sum of individual semes' density scores on an intra-brand, diachronic level

The qualification of strength of projected brand associations, thus far, has taken into account only pro-filmic elements that are reflected in thematic isotopies, but not 'how' this internal mirroring in a brand as logicosemantic simulacrum has been effected. In order to account for this mode of brand structuration from a structuralist rhetorical semiotic point of view, we have to bring into the brand textual coherence picture the effect of rhetorical figures. Hence, the resulting isotopic scores must be adjusted by mode of figurative connectivity, in order to reflect more accurately the mode of each isotopic configuration. To this end, the product weight x density is divided by the ratio of total incidence of different rhetorical figures across a brand's ad texts' filmic segments that are employed in the corpus.

- (iii) Brand associative strength adjusted for density of rhetorical configurations= (brand 1...n nuclear semic weight x brand 1...n nuclear semic density) / (total incidences of figures / number of filmic segments making up the total number of each brand's ad films in the corpus)

The resulting figure is a more representative score, from the point of view that it combines structuralist textual metrics with rhetorical modes of textual configuration. It takes into account both pro-filmic elements and rhetorical relata.

The final calculus for brand associative strength consists of producing individual brand associative strength indices (adjusted for density of rhetorical configurations) within an inter-brand and diachronic framework as follows:

- (iv) Brand associative strength index (adjusted for density of rhetorical configurations) = (iii)/category average * 100

The second Brand Equity dimension from an encoding point of view in the light of the ad filmic text as key source of equity, viz. uniqueness of associations, is quantified by brand by examining to what extent the identified thematic isotopies differ from the rest brands that partake of the same product category. Difference may concern either the employment of a thematic isotopy that is only encountered in a particular brand's discourse, but also the relatively more 'compact' employment of a thematic isotopy by a brand, compared to its employment by competitors. In order to determine a total uniqueness score for each brand we must account in our calculus for both of the above uniqueness dimensions. To this end, we must compare the relative frequency of a thematic isotopy within the same brand discourse from a diachronic perspective, that is across a brand's total filmic segments (e.g., the relative occurrence of the nuclear seme /heart-healthy/ in a brand's discourse among other nuclear semic attributes). In order to accomplish this task the following formula is proposed, viz. producing a diachronic average score across individual isotopically recurring nuclear semes for each brand:

- (v) Uniqueness of brand association= average density score produced from individual nuclear semes' densities

Finally, comparing uniqueness scores across brands that have been produced with the employment of calculus (v) with the category average allows us to produce a uniqueness of brand association index for each brand.

$$(vi) \quad \text{Uniqueness of brand association index} = (v) / \text{category average} * 100$$

The final calculation consists in a grand score for each brand that reflects its linguistic value, as projected Brand Equity, which is calculated by adding the two brand related indices. This composite index is an indicator of each brand's linguistic value as projected Brand Equity:

$$(vii) \quad \text{Projected Brand Equity as linguistic value} = \text{brand associative strength index (iv)} + \text{uniqueness of brand association index (vi)}$$

Exemplification of the proposed methodology

The application of the proposed methodology calls for a mixed qualitative/quantitative research design, while employing a case-study research approach (Miles & Huberman, 1994). The qualitative aspect consists of semiotic interpretation, while the quantitative aspect in the employment of content analysis for quantifying the incidence of rhetorical figures and semes on intra and inter-brand, as well as on intra and inter-filmic levels, as will be demonstrated in due course.

For the purpose of exemplifying the proposed methodology a corpus of 62 ad films from the major brand players in the UK cereals market was recruited. Based on the Mintel 2012 UK cereals market report the concerned market is characterized by high penetration levels (90%) in the total population, as well as by frequent and regular usage patterns (which vary by brand and product variant). The market is dominated by three major manufacturers who account in total for 47% of the entire category's value-share. The thirteen brands that make up the corpus of this research, which also constitute the category's heaviest advertising spenders, are cited in Table 2.

Table 2. The brands that make up the corpus of this research

	Brand	Manufacturer
1	Kellogg's Corn Flakes	Kellogg's
2	Kellogg's Special K	Kellogg's
3	Kellogg's Rice Krispies	Kellogg's
4	Kellogg's Coco Pops	Kellogg's
5	Kellogg's All-Bran	Kellogg's
6	Kellogg's Crunchy Nut	Kellogg's
7	Kellogg's Frosties	Kellogg's
8	Weetabix	Weetabix
9	Weetabix Minis	Weetabix
10	Weetos	Weetabix
11	Cheerios	Nestle
12	Shreddies	Nestle
13	Shredded Wheat	Nestle

The selected ad films largely span a ten-year period (2003-2013), with an average of five films per brand. Each film was segmented into filmic segments with the aid of the content analytic software Atlas.ti 7 (see Rossolatos, 2013d for an extensive analysis of the process followed in ad filmic segmentation and coding). The segmentation of the filmic

corpus yielded an effective sample of N=321 segments (each segment constituting a primary analysis unit). Concomitantly, each segment was coded with one or more nuclear semes and classemes and with one or more rhetorical figures (see Appendix 2 for indicative output). As an example of the methodology that was laid out in the previous section, and prior to proceeding with the exposition of the main findings, I am citing the interpretive procedure that was followed in the discernment of semes and rhetorical figures in the filmic segments of an ad filmic text from Kellogg's Special K from the selected corpus (see Appendix 1 for filmic segments and transcript).

Interpretation of the Special K ad film

The key settings of this ad film consist of bedroom, kitchen, clubbing venue and reflect the interdependence between feeling good inside one's own home with one's own and feeling good in public occasions, such as a night-out with friends. The key actorial figure in the first two settings is a female actress, in her late 20s-mid-30s, who is a bit overweight, while the actorial figures in the public venue setting consist of her female group of friends, who are of equal age. The expressive unit of a pair of jeans functions as a visual marker of semantic coherence throughout the ad film. The semic universe of this Special K ad film comprises the nuclear semes /for women/, /makes you slim/ and the classeme /social acceptance/.

Table 3. Semic structure of the Special K ad film.

	Nuclear semes	Classemes
Attributes		
Benefits	/makes you slim/	
Attitudes	/for women/	/social acceptance/

Slimness constitutes the actantial object of desire, with which the enunciatee is summoned to conjoin herself in two separate NUs, where the first NU1= S2(Kellogg's)→ S1 (non-slim females 25-34yrs. old) ∧ (slimness), that underpins semionarratively the manifest discursive filmic segments 6_4-6_7, presupposes the initial state of disjunction with slimness (segments 6_1-6_3) NU2= S2 V (slimness). S1 is portrayed as being endowed with the 'being willing to' modality in segment 6_2 which is complemented by the modalities of being capable of and knowing how to (segments 6_3, 6_4) which are succeeded by the sanction of her successful inscription of the brand's narrative in the context of her social acceptance by her peer group (segments 6_6, 6_7). The above-noted semes recur isotopically in the following filmic segments as per Table 4.

From a rhetorical point of view, an ellipsis is noted in segment 6_3 (*see if you can again*), which omits verbally the verb 'become slim' that would complete the syntactic arrangement, yet which is implied by the respective interpolated visual unit that portrays the key female actress intending in front of her mirror to become slimmer. At the same time, the memorability of the brand's imperative *slim again* is enhanced by the employment of rhyme in the phrase *can again*. A visual pun is noted in segment 6_6 through a visual play between being fit and fitting in a group of friends (on a general degree zero level that functions against a cultural isotopy), facilitated, from a production techniques point of view, by alternating shots between the main female actress's walking down the stairs at a club in anticipation of meeting her friends and peer group members awaiting to accept their friend as being fit, thus befitting of being group member. Accolorance (i.e., repetition of same color; Rossolatos

2013d) is evinced from segment 6_3 onwards through the portrayal of the actress's wearing a red t-shirt which coheres with the visual identity of Special K. The pro-filmic element of jeans also functions anaphorically as a recurrent visual expressive unit throughout the film's segments, while, against the background of the film's wider thematic context that is established after having undergone a valorization of the object of desire as slimness from satisfying an individual aspiration to a goal of social acceptance, the imperative put forward by the narrator's voice-over *love your jeans again* may be read as a synecdochic function of jeans for one's entire self.

Table 4. Thematic isotopies of the Special K ad film (see Appendix 1 for the corresponding segments).

Segment	6_1	6_2	6_3	6_4	6_5	6_6	6_7
Nuclear seme /makes you slim/				X	X	X	X
Nuclear seme /for women/	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Classeme /social acceptance/						X	X

The synchronic interpretation of each ad film's structuration, in line with the propounded methodology, was followed by two progressive steps of synthesis

- (i) at an intra-brand diachronic level, that is spanning each brand's filmic sub-corpus
- (ii) at an inter-brand diachronic level, that is spanning all brands' filmic sub-corpora.

The following tables and map are cited herebelow as an example of the output pertaining to (i), in line with the Brand Equity calculi that were outlined in the preceding section.

Table 5. Thematic isotopies for all Kellogg's Special K ad films.

Segment	6_1	6_2	6_3	6_4	6_5	6_6	6_7
Nuclear seme /makes you slim/				X	X	X	X
Nuclear seme /for women/	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Classeme /social acceptance/						X	X
	7_1	7_2	7_3	7_4	7_5	7_6	
Nuclear seme /makes you slim/						X	
Nuclear seme /for women/	X	X	X	X	X	X	
	8_1	8_2	8_3	8_4	8_5	8_6	8_7
Nuclear seme /makes you slim/						X	
Nuclear seme /for women/	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Classeme /sexiness/						X	
	9_1	9_2	9_3	9_4			

Nuclear seme /for women/	X	X	X	X			
Nuclear seme /sexiness/		X		X			
Classeme /makes you slim/		X					
Classeme /social acceptance/				X			
	10_1	10_2	10_3	10_4			
Nuclear seme /for women/	X	X	X	X			
Nuclear seme /sexiness/			X	X			
Nuclear seme /taste/		X					

Table 6. Key Brand Equity metrics for Kellogg's Special K (brand associative strength and brand uniqueness).

Nuclear semes for Kellogg's Special K	Diachronic weight of isotopy for each nuclear seme across a brand's ad filmic sub-corpus	Diachronic density for each nuclear seme across a brand's ad filmic sub-corpus
/makes you slim/	7	0,250
/for women/	28	1,000
/sexiness/	4	0,143
/taste/	1	0,036
total no of filmic segments	28	
total incidence of rhetorical figures	37	
nuclear semic weight	40	
nuclear semic density	1,43	
Kellogg's Special K brand associative strength (see calculus i)	57,14	
Kellogg's Special K brand associative strength adjusted for density of rhetorical configurations (see calculus iii)	43,24	
Kellogg's Special K brand associative uniqueness (see calculus v)	0,357	

The diachronic semic-cum-rhetorical structure of Kellogg's Special K is displayed in Figure 1.

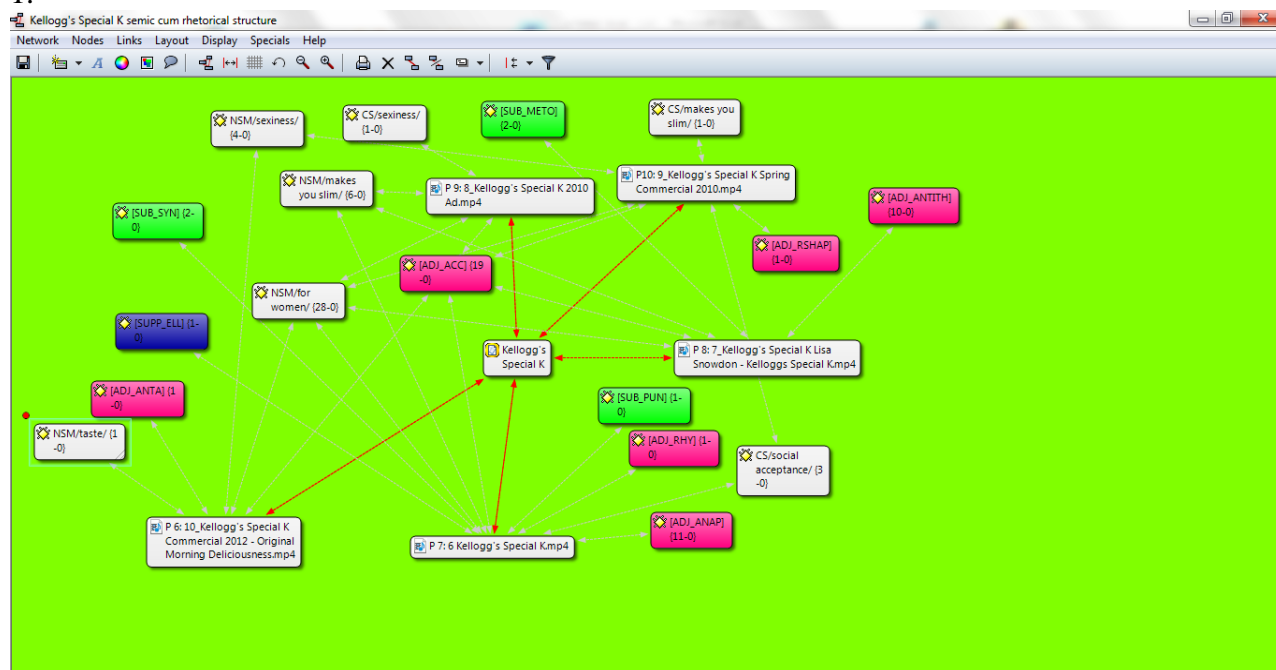


Figure 1. Semic-cum-rhetorical structure of Kellogg's Special K (Atlas.ti 7 output).

The preparatory tables (as per Tables 3 and 4) and the interim calculations of the Brand Equity calculi (Table 6) on an intra-brand level were finally synthesized across brands, thus yielding the results that are displayed in Table 7.

Starting from the bottom of the brand hierarchy, Coco Pops has the lowest linguistic value score (58), well below the category average (200). This is attributed to a low semic weight, which is caused by the low incidence of the nuclear semes that make up the brand's semantic universe compared to its total filmic segments. The already weak semic weight score is further aggravated by a high incidence of rhetorical figures compared to the brand's total number of segments which results in a low associative strength score. The low adjusted for the density of rhetorical configuration associative strength score is indicative of a highly rhetorically configured ad filmic discourse, coupled with a weak semic weight, which results in a low associative strength score. In other words, the nuclear semes that make up the brand's semantic universe are cloaked in a highly rhetorically configured discourse. The low associative strength score is further coupled with a low associative uniqueness score which is a function of the already noted low incidence of semes compared to the total number of filmic segments that make up this sub-corpus (as indicated by the division of the incidence of each seme across the ad films by the total number of filmic segments). This low incidence of semes throughout segments results in an overall low brand associative uniqueness score. In sum, if the brand were to claim the uniqueness of its propounded semic universe, it would be confronted with their weak incidence across filmic segments.

Table 7. Consolidated key Brand Equity metrics.

	total no of segments	total no of figures	brand associative strength adjusted for density of rhetorical configurations	brand associative uniqueness	brand associative strength index	brand associative uniqueness index	Brand Equity (linguistic value)
1. Kellogg's Breakfast cereals	35	21	34,71	0,110	81	39	121
2. Kellogg's Special K	28	37	43,24	0,357	101	127	229
3. Kellogg's Rice Krispies	32	30	20,83	0,195	49	70	118
4. Kellogg's Coco Pops	27	33	8,76	0,105	21	37	58
5. Kellogg's All Bran	25	25	40,96	0,213	96	76	172
6. Kellogg's Crunchy Nut	31	33	48,48	0,430	114	153	267
7. Kellogg's Frosties	15	6	24,00	0,400	56	143	199
8. Weetabix	37	35	109,83	0,419	257	149	407
9. Weetabix Minis	11	8	8,00	0,182	19	65	84
10. Weetos	20	33	35,03	0,243	82	87	169
11. Nestle Cheerios	19	28	104,14	0,474	244	169	413
12. Nestle Shreddies	21	27	25,04	0,248	59	88	147
13. Neste Shredded Wheat	20	14	52,07	0,270	122	96	218
Category average	24,69	25,38	42,70	0,28	100	100	200

The case of Weetabix Minis, even though not being fully representative due to a weaker sample size compared to the rest brands (i.e., only two ad films compared to the rest brands that feature five films) which by definition results in a reduced number of segments and hence in a minimized incidence of semes in segments that impacts on the semic weight score, displays a similar to Coco Pops weak semic weight and density that results in a low brand associative strength score. Even though Weetabix Minis does not share an equally loaded rhetorical structure as Coco Pops, as may be gauged by a higher adjusted associative strength score for density of rhetorical configuration, the weak semic weight, coupled with a weak uniqueness score result overall in a low linguistic value index.

Kellogg's Rice Krispies displays a high diachronic density score for its key nuclear seme /snappy, crackly, poppy sound/, which does not result in an overall high semic weight score in the light of a weak incidence of the rest semes that make up its semic universe compared to the total number of segments that constitute the brand's ad filmic subcorpus. The incidence of rhetorical figures is almost equivalent to the number of segments, which results in almost identical scores for associative strength and adjusted associative strength for rhetorical figures. This implies that the brand's semantic universe is highly rhetorically

configured, however, given the low incidence of the rest semes that make up its semic universe (with the exception of /snappy, crackly, poppy sound/), the adjusted associative strength score is significantly below category average. The dilution of the brand's semic core by virtue of its weakly manifested semes throughout the brand's ad filmic segments is also manifested in its below category average associative uniqueness index.

Kellogg's breakfast cereals' significant underperformance vis-à-vis the cereals category average in both associative strength and uniqueness terms is attributed to a frequent change of key messages throughout its variable ad filmic texts which results in a dispersed semic universe. With the exception of the invariantly recurring nuclear seme /for the entire family/ that boosts its overall semic weight score, the rest semes occur weakly across films, due to the aforementioned frequent changes in main message strategy. This change culminates in a significantly low uniqueness score. This is reflected even after the adjustment of associative strength for rhetorical configuration, which ameliorates the brand's score in the light of a low incidence of rhetorical figures compared to the brand's total filmic segments.

Nestle Shreddies has a satisfactory semic density score, insofar as the total incidence of the semes that make up its semantic universe exceeds the total number of its filmic segments. However, the exceedingly rhetorically configured textual fabric of the brand, as discerned by comparing the total incidence of figures to the total filmic segments, reduces the adjusted associative strength score. Coupled with a sizeable, but relatively dispersed semic universe, as gauged from the low incidence of the majority of the brand's nuclear semes, which dispersion is reflected in a low uniqueness score compared to the category's average, the brand is outperformed by other brand players.

Weetos' underperformance compared to the category average is attributed to an over-rhetorized diachronic filmic structure (33 incidences of rhetorical figures, compared to 20 filmic segments on an intra-brand level, but also to an average incidence of 25 figures on an inter-brand level), coupled with a sizeable, yet dispersed semic structure. These two issues are reflected in low adjusted associative strength and associative uniqueness scores.

Kellogg's All Bran appears to be facing the same issue as Kellogg's breakfast cereals, viz. a frequent change of messages across its ad filmic texts. Even though the brand's discourse is quite solid, as attested from its semic density score, the sufficiently weighted semic incidence on an intra-filmic level, yet dispersed on an inter-filmic one, results in an overall below average associative strength index.

Kellogg's Frosties has an above average associative uniqueness index (143), which is attributed to its focused communication strategy that revolves around two key nuclear semes that recur on average satisfactorily across its ad filmic texts. The main issue that withholds the brand's linguistic value from exceeding the category's threshold (index 199 vs 200) appears to be dependent on its considerably low number of filmic segments (15) compared to the category's average (24,69), which entails that even though its focused nuclear semes have a relatively satisfactory weight, they fail to translate into an above category average semic weight index. As a result, the overly low semic weight score bars the brand from attaining an above average linguistic value index, despite its above average uniqueness index.

The top performers in terms of projected Brand Equity, as evinced from their linguistic value indices, are Nestle Cheerios, Weetabix, Kellogg's Crunchy Nut, Kellogg's Special K and Nestle Shredded Wheat. In fact, Nestle Cheerios and Weetabix outperform competitors to a considerable extent, as their linguistic values exceed 400, while being positioned far from their outperforming competitors (whose linguistic value indices rest at below 300 levels). This excessive positive performance results in lifting the bar considerably for all other players. Let us take a closer look at the outperformers' success drivers.

Nestle Shredded Wheat displays an average associative uniqueness score (96), however its overall performance is boosted by an above average incidence of the key semes

that make up its semantic universe, which results in an above average solid semic weight. This performance is driven by an invariantly solid recurrence across films of two of its core semic components, that is /wholegrain/ and /simplicity/ which attain to consolidate the brand's semic structure in the face of more weakly recurring semes, such as /taste/, /keeping heart healthy/ and /flavor/. This positive performance in terms of associative strength is further augmented by an increased adjusted strength score for rhetorical configuration.

Kellogg's Special K performs positively primarily by virtue of its above average uniqueness index (127) which is attributed to its leveraging uniquely the seme /for women/, and moreover in a consistent fashion across ad films, which results in a boosted semic weight score, accompanied by the seme /makes you slim/. Despite the brand's overly rhetorically configured textual fabric (37 incidences of figures versus 28 filmic segments) that result in a reduction of the brand's adjusted associative strength, its superior positive performance in terms of uniqueness results in an above average linguistic value.

Kellogg's Crunchy Nut is also outperforming competitors by virtue of its associative uniqueness, as a result of a focused communication strategy that revolves around three nuclear semes which recur invariably across its ad filmic texts in a solid manner across segments, thus also resulting in an increased semic weight index. The brand's rhetorical structure is almost as solid (while comparing the number of filmic segments with the total incidence of rhetorical figures) as its semic weight which does not result in a diminution of the brand's associative strength after adjusting it for rhetorical configuration.

The considerably above average performance of Weetabix and Nestle Cheerios is attributed to almost identical factors, that is a focused communication strategy that is reflected uniformly and in a weighty manner across the brands' filmic segments, with the difference that Weetabix follows a more focused strategy than Cheerios (i.e., leveraging less semes), whereas Cheerios is employing more semes, but ensures that they recur equally solidly across filmic segments. The invariable recurrence of focused nuclear semes across the majority of the involved filmic segments, coupled with a balanced use of rhetorical figures compared to the brands' total number of filmic segments yields superior associative strength and uniqueness scores that catapult them to the apex of the category's projected equity performance.

The above calculi furnish a useful platform for comparing and contrasting among the key brand players' projected equity structure in a given product category by taking into account the interactions among the number of a brand's filmic segments, the level of invariant recurrence of a brand's nuclear semes across segments, the degree to which the recurring segments are uniquely reflected in the brand's communications, as well as the incidence and density of rhetorical figures in a brand's discourse. The assumption made while adjusting a brand's associative strength by the density of rhetorical figures is that there is an inverse relationship between semic weight and rhetorical density which entails that an incidence of rhetorical figures in excess of a brand's total filmic segments will tend to mitigate the brand's semic weight. This assumption derives from the criticisms that were launched in the light of research evidence against Mick and McQuarrie's inverse assumption that the more rhetorically rich an advertising message the more inviting it is in terms of the allocation of elaboration resources on behalf of enunciatees (cf. Rossolatos, 2014). The operationalization of this assumption in the propounded Brand Equity calculi, however, addresses the incidence of rhetorical figures in terms of quantity, but not quality. As was clearly found and discussed in the above interpretation of the resulting Brand Equity calculi and with reference to the underperforming brands in our corpus, when a brand's advertising strategy that is characterized by a dispersed semic structure and a low recurrence of nuclear semes across ad filmic segments is coupled with an overly con-figured textual fabric from a rhetorical point of view, tends to culminate in reduced associative strength, which is both

intuitively appealing and in line with the empirical findings from the marketing literature, as shown in Rossolatos, 2012a.

Nevertheless, from a qualitative and not quantitative point of view, and from a structuralist rhetorical perspective that prioritizes the importance of rhetorical relata over pro-filmic elements as indispensable connectives among the semic and surface discursive elements across a brand's generative trajectory, rhetorical figures do attain to differentiate brands and furnish differential figurative advantages. In order to discern how such advantages may be yielded to brands we have to consider the rhetorical structuration of the ad texts in our corpus in terms of brands and in terms of semes which constitutes an area for further research (also see Rossolatos, 2013d).

Conclusions

The proposed methodological framework and the involved Brand Equity calculi that were laid out in this paper aim at filling an important gap in the extant marketing semiotic, but also marketing literature concerning how a Brand Equity structure may be projected in the light of ad filmic texts as key sources at an encoding stage against the background of a salient set in a given product or service category. By drawing on a structuralist rhetorical semiotic conceptual apparatus, the above methodology sought to quantify the salient dimensions of brand associative strength and uniqueness, and, concomitantly, how linguistic value, as the semiotic counterpart of Brand Equity emerges in the face of a highly figurative discourse, such as that of advertising. The employment of a joint qualitative/quantitative research design that combines semiotic interpretation with the quantification capabilities of content analysis, and Atlas.ti 7 in particular, attains to address the exigencies imposed by this research approach. By following progressive layers of synthesis on intra, inter-brand, intra, inter-filmic levels on both synchronic and diachronic dimensions, the resulting output furnishes a platform for examining interactions among the elements that are constitutive of isotopies, in terms of both pro-filmic ad expressive elements and, even more importantly from a structuralist point of view, of modes of rhetorical connectivity among elements from the planes of expression and content, in an attempt to address which factors may hamper brands from attaining differentially superior associative strength and uniqueness.

The proposed methodology addresses brand structuration from a textual point of view. This approach is particularly useful for the ongoing management of brands as texts in the context of brand tracking surveys, as the assumptions that are made during the planning (encoding. projection) phase may be compared and contrasted with actual consumer response data that are collected in regular tracking survey waves, in terms, for example, of recalled ad expressive elements and the key image attributes (semes) that are recognized by consumers in the light of elements of a brand's expressive inventory.

The methodology involves the co-operation and agreement among key stakeholders in a Brand Equity planning process, such as brand managers, marketing researchers and account planners. It is intent on sensitizing these stakeholders as to the importance of adopting a micro-textual approach to Brand Equity management, by focusing in a minutely detailed fashion on how a brand's intended semic universe emerges in the face of its figurative discourse, while attending to ad films segment-by-segment.

The proposed methodological framework constitutes the backbone of a roster of adjacent qualitative and quantitative techniques for attending to the ways of ad textual configuration *qua* plenum of pro-filmic elements and modes of rhetorical connectivity and how such modes impact on the attainment of differential brand associations which will be exposed in future articles.

References

- Baack, D. W. (2006). *Brand association measurement and advertising's modification of association strength*. PhD. Thesis, Graduate School of Saint Louis University.
- Badir, S. (2010). Eléments pour une biographie du Groupe μ . *Protée*, 38(1), 9-18.
- Bateman, J. (2007). Towards a *grande paradigmatique* of film: Christian Metz reloaded. *Semiotica*, 167(1/4), 13-64.
- Ben Shaul, N. (2007). *Film: The key concepts*. New York, NY: Berg.
- Bertrand, D. (1988). The creation of complicity: A semiotic analysis of an advertising campaign for Black and White whiskey. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 4, 273-289.
- Biber, D., & Conrad, S. (2009). *Register, genre and style*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Blackston, M. (1995). The qualitative dimension of brand equity. *ARF Brand Equity Workshop* (also appeared in *Journal of Qualitative Advertising Research* Jul/Aug 1995).
- Bordwell, D. (1989). *Making meaning: Inference and interpretation in cinema*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Bordwell, D., & Thompson, C. (2008). *Film art: An introduction*. New York, NY: McGraw-Hill.
- Cian, L. (2012). A comparative analysis of print advertising applying the two main plastic semiotics schools: Barthes' and Greimas'. *Semiotica*, 190(1/4), 57-79.
- Courtés, J. (1991). *Analyse sémiotique du discours : De l'énoncé à l'énonciation*. Paris: Hachette.
- Cova, E., & Elliott, R. (2008). Everything you always wanted to know about interpretive consumer research but were afraid to ask. *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 11(2), 121-129.
- Cruse, D. A. (1986). *Lexical semantics*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Danesi, M. (2009). Opposition theory and the interconnectedness of language, culture, and cognition. *Sign System Studies*, 37(1/2), 11-41.
- Danesi, M., & Beasley, R. (2002). *Persuasive signs: The semiotics of advertising*. Berlin: Mouton.
- De Chernatony, L. (2006). *From brand vision to brand evaluation: The strategic process of growing and strengthening a brand*. Oxford, UK: Butterworth-Heinemann.
- Dosse, F. (1992). *Histoire du structuralisme Vol.II*. Paris: La Découverte.
- Edell, J., & Moore, M. C. (1993). The impact and memorability of ad induced feelings; Implications for Brand Equity. In D. Aaker & A. Biel (Eds.), *Brand equity and advertising* (pp. 195-212). Hillsdale, NJ: LEA.
- Elam, K. (1987). *The semiotics of theater and drama*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Escalas, J. E., & Bettman, J. R. (2000). Using narratives to discern self-identity related consumer goals and motivations. In S. Ratneshwar, D. G. Mick, & C. Huffman (Eds.), *The why of consumption: Contemporary perspectives on consumer motives, goals and desires* (pp. 236-256). London, UK: Routledge.
- Floch, J. (2001). *Semiotics, marketing and communication*. London, UK: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Fontanille, J. (2004). Textes, objets, situations et formes de vie. Les niveaux de pertinence de la sémiotique des cultures. *EIC (Rivista dell' Associazione Italiana di Studi Semiotici)*, 1-22.
- Frank, M. (1989). *What is neostructuralism?* Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

- Goldenberg, J., & Mazursky, D. (2008). When deep structures surface. *Journal of Advertising*, 37(4), 21-34.
- Grace, D., & O'Cass, A. (2002). Brand associations: Looking through the eye of the beholder, *Qualitative Market Research: An International Journal*, 5(2), 96-111.
- Greimas, A. J. (1976). *Maupassant: La sémiotique du texte*. Paris: Seuil.
- Greimas, A. J., & Courtés, J. (1979), *Dictionnaire raisonné de la théorie du langage*. Paris: Hachette.
- Groupe μ . (1970). *Rhétorique générale*. Paris: Larousse.
- Groupe μ . (1992). *Traité du signe visuel: Pour une rhétorique de l'image*. Paris: Seuil.
- Guiroud, J., & Panier, L. (1979). *Analyse sémiotique des textes*. Lyon: Presses Universitaires de Lyon.
- Hatch, M. J., & Rubin, J. (2006). The hermeneutics of branding. *Journal of Brand Management*, 14(1/2), 40-59.
- Hebert, L. (2012). *Dictionnaire de sémiotique générale*. Retrieved from <http://www.signosemio.com/documents/dictionnaire-semiotiquegenerale.pdf>
- Keller, K. L. (1998). *Strategic brand management: Building, measuring and managing brand equity*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Prentice Hall.
- Keller, K. L. (2001). *Building customer-based brand equity: A blueprint for creating strong brands*. Marketing Science Institute working paper.
- Keller, K. L. (2003). Brand synthesis: The multidimensionality of brand knowledge. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 29, 595-600.
- Koller, V. (2007). The world's local bank: Glocalisation as a strategy in corporate branding discourse. *Social Semiotics*, 17(1), 111-131.
- Kolln, M. (1999). *Rhetorical grammar: Grammatical choices, rhetorical effects*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Metz, C. (1971). L'analyse du film. In J. Kristeva & D. J. Umiker (Eds.), *Essays in semiotics* (pp. 502-515). Berlin: Mouton.
- Metz, C. (1974). *Language and cinema: Approaches to semiotics*. The Hague: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Metz, C. (1982). *The imaginary signifier*. London, UK: Macmillan.
- Mick, D. G. (1987). Toward a semiotic of advertising story grammars. In J. Umiker-Sebeok (Ed.), *Marketing and semiotics: New directions in the study of signs for sale* (pp. 295-318). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Mick, D. G., Burroughs, J. E., Hetzel, P., & Yoko Brannen, M. (2004). Pursuing the meaning of meaning in the commercial world: An international review of marketing and consumer research founded on semiotics. *Semiotica*, 152 (1/4), 1-74.
- Miles, M. B., & Huberman, M. A. (1994). *Qualitative data analysis*. London, UK: Sage.
- Mintel. (2012). UK cereals market report. London, UK: Mintel.
- Nef, F. (1977). Introduction to the reading of Greimas: Toward a discursive linguistics. *Diacritics*, 7(1), 18-22.
- Nöth, W. (1987). Advertising: The frame message. In J. Umiker-Sebeok (Ed.), *Marketing and semiotics: New directions in the study of signs for sale* (pp. 279-294). Berlin: Mouton de Gruyter.
- Nöth, W. (2012). *Charles S. Peirce's theory of information: A theory of the growth of knowledge and of symbols* (forthcoming).
- Pinson, C. (Ed.) (1988). Semiotics and marketing communication research. *International Journal of Research in Marketing*, 3/4
- Rastier, F. (1971). Les niveaux d'ambiguïté des structures narratives. *Semiotica*, 3(4), 289-342.
- Rastier, F. (1989). *Sens et textualité*. Paris: Hachette.

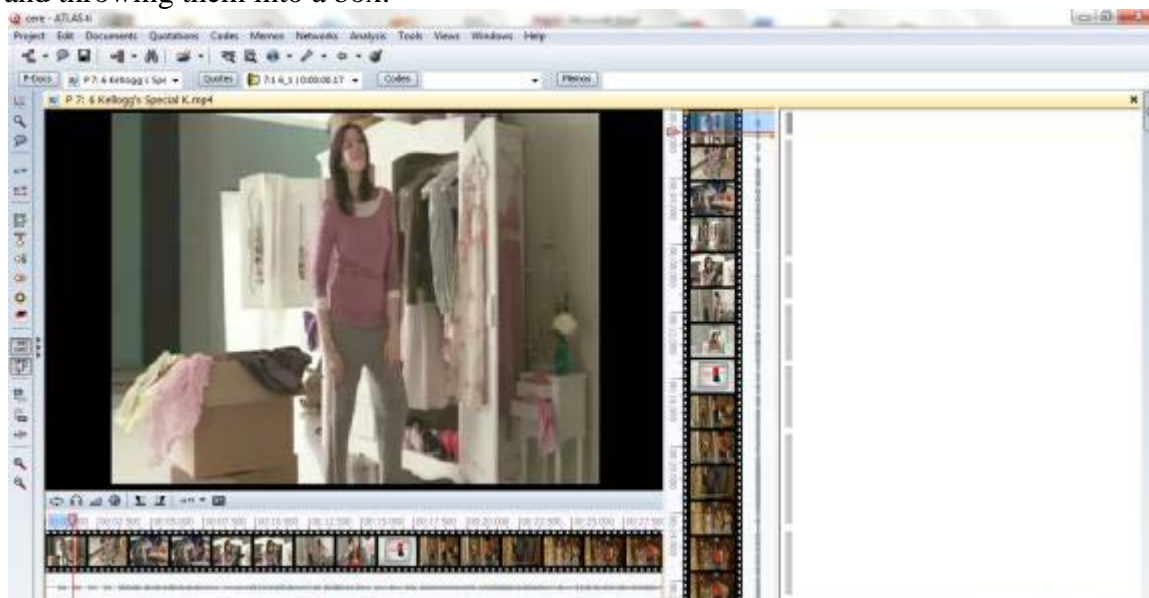
- Rastier, F. (2005). La macrosémantique. *Texto!* Retrieved from http://www.revue-texto.net/Inedits/Rastier/Rastier_Marcosemantique1.html
- Rastier, F. (2006). La structure en question. *Janus - Quaderni del Circolo Glossematico*, Vicence, Terra Ferma, 2006, pp. 93104 [Volume d'hommages a Eli Fischer-Joergensen, sous la direction de Romeo Galassi].
- Rossolatos, G. (2012a). Rhetorical transformations in multimodal advertising texts: From general to local degree zero. *Hermes: Journal of Language and Communication in Business*, 50, 97–118. Retrieved from <http://download2.hermes.asb.dk/archive/download/Hermes-50-8-rossolatos.pdf>
- Rossolatos, G. (2012b). Applications, implications and limitations of the semiotic square for analyzing advertising discourse and discerning alternative brand futures. *Signs: An International Journal of Semiotics*, 6, 1-48. Retrieved from <http://vip.iva.dk/sis/index.php?journal=signs&page=article&op=view&path%5B%5D=45&path%5B%5D=pdf>
- Rossolatos, G. (2012c). Applying structuralist semiotics to brand image research. *Public Journal of Semiotics*, 4(1), 25-82. Retrieved from <http://journals.lub.lu.se/index.php/pjos/article/view/8838/7937>
- Rossolatos, G. (2013a). Brand equity planning with structuralist rhetorical semiotics: A conceptual framework. *The Qualitative Report*, 18(90), 1-20. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR18/rossolatos90.pdf>
- Rossolatos, G. (2013b). Interpreting ads with semiotic content analysis. Semiofest, Barcelona, Spain, 31 May 2013. Retrieved from http://www.academia.edu/3633371/Interpreting_ads_with_semiotic_content_analysis-Semiofest_31_May_2013
- Rossolatos, G. (2013c). An anatomy of the multimodal rhetorical landscape of the world's most valuable brands. *International Journal of Marketing Semiotics*, 1, 73-125. Retrieved from <http://ijmarketingsemiotics.com/journal-contents-2/>
- Rossolatos, G. (2013d). //rhetor.dixit//: Understanding ad texts' rhetorical structure for differential figurative advantage. Amazon Press. (downloadable @ <http://bit.ly/17CfJaH>)
- Rossolatos, G. (2013e). On the textual economy of brand equity: Accounting semiotically for the difference between axiology and linguistic value. 11th International Conference on Marketing, Athens, Greece June 4th 2013. Retrieved from <http://www.atiner.gr/papers/BUS2013-0477.pdf>
- Rossolatos, G. (2013f). [Operationalizing Groupe μ's local and general degrees zero in the light of multimodal ad filmic textual analysis](#). 10th International Conference on Semiotics, Volos, Greece October 4th 2013.
- Rossolatos, G. (2013g). Brand equity planning with structuralist rhetorical semiotics: A conceptual framework. Proceedings of the 42nd European Marketing Academy conference, Istanbul, Turkey 4-7 June 2013.
- Rossolatos, G. (2014). *Brand equity planning with structuralist rhetorical semiotics*. Kassel: Kassel University Press.
- Salinas, G. (2009). *The international brand valuation manual: A complete overview and analysis of brand valuation techniques, methodologies and applications*. London: Wiley.
- Solomon, M., & Greenberg, L. (1993). Setting the stage: Collective selection in the stylistic context of commercials. *Journal of Advertising*, 22(1), 11-23.
- Srinivasan, V., Su Park, C., & Ryun Chang, D. (2005). An approach to the measurement, analysis, and prediction of brand equity and its sources. *Management Science*, 51(9), 1433-1448.

- Srivastava, R., Tasadduq A. S., & Fahey, L. (1998). Market-based assets and shareholder value: A framework for analysis, *Journal of Marketing*, 62(January), 2-18.
- Stam, R., Burgoyne, R., & Flitterman-Lewis, S. (1992). *New vocabularies in film semiotics*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Strauss, A. L. (2003). *Qualitative analysis for social scientists*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Swanson, W. (2003). *Modes of co-reference as an indicator of genre*. Berlin: Peter Lang.
- Teas, K. R., & Palan, K. M. (1997). The realms of scientific meaning framework for constructing theoretically meaningful nominal definitions of marketing concepts. *Journal of Marketing*, 61, 52-67.
- Veloutsou, C., De Chernatony, L., & Christodoulides, G. (2013). A taxonomy of measures for consumer-based brand equity: Drawing on the views of managers in Europe. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(3), 238-248.
- White, L. (2009). Foster's lager: From local beer to global icon. *Marketing Intelligence & Planning*, 27(2), 177-190.
- Wood, L. (2000). Brands and brand equity: Definition and management. *Management Decision* 38(9), 662-669.

Appendix 1

Kellogg's Special K transcript and filmic segments (screenshots from Atlas.ti 7; source: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3JCMolusVBk>)

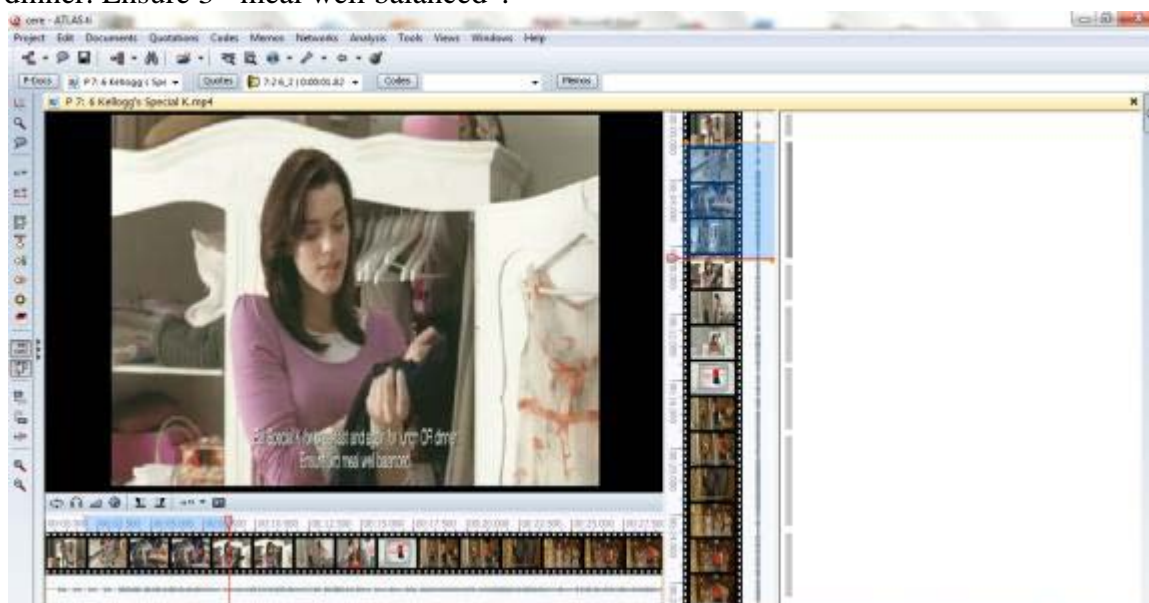
6_1 (Visual, Music). Female actress seen removing no longer fitting clothes from wardrobe and throwing them into a box.



6_2 (Verbal, Visual, Music). Female actress sitting on the floor in her bedroom going over old photographs and smiling at how 'fit' she used to be by drawing an imaginary line with her finger across the line of the blue-jean she wore on a photograph.

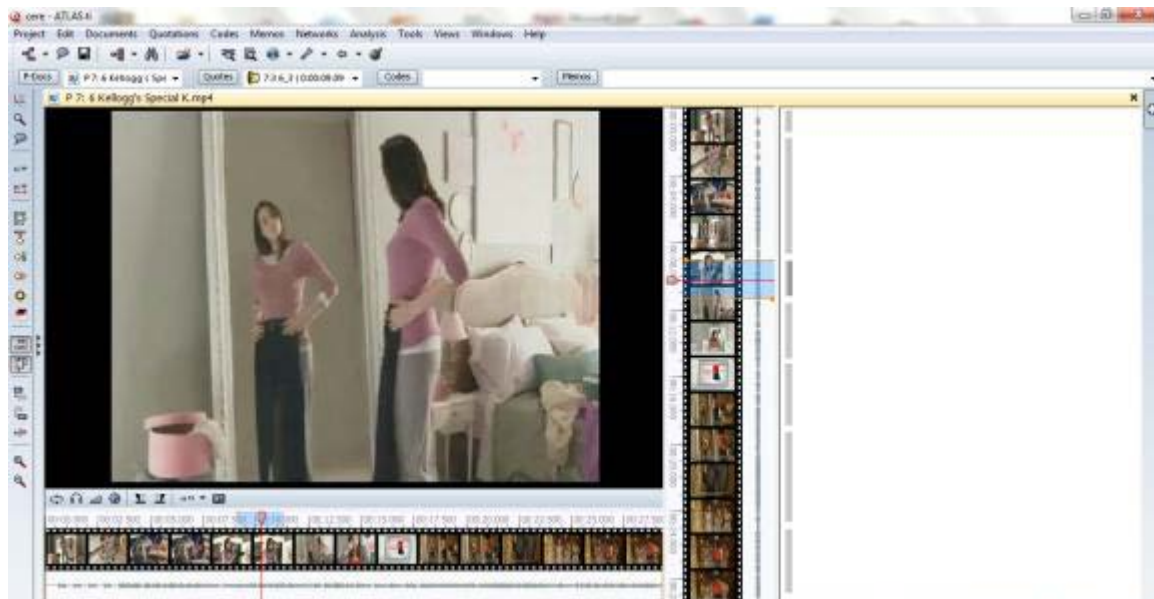
Voice-over: "Everyone has a pair of jeans they used to look and feel gorgeous in". Woman seen picking up this old blue-jean, staring at it and biting her lip (music lyrics repeating verbally 'bites her lip').

Super at the bottom of the screen: "Eat Special K for breakfast and again for lunch OR dinner. Ensure 3rd meal well balanced".

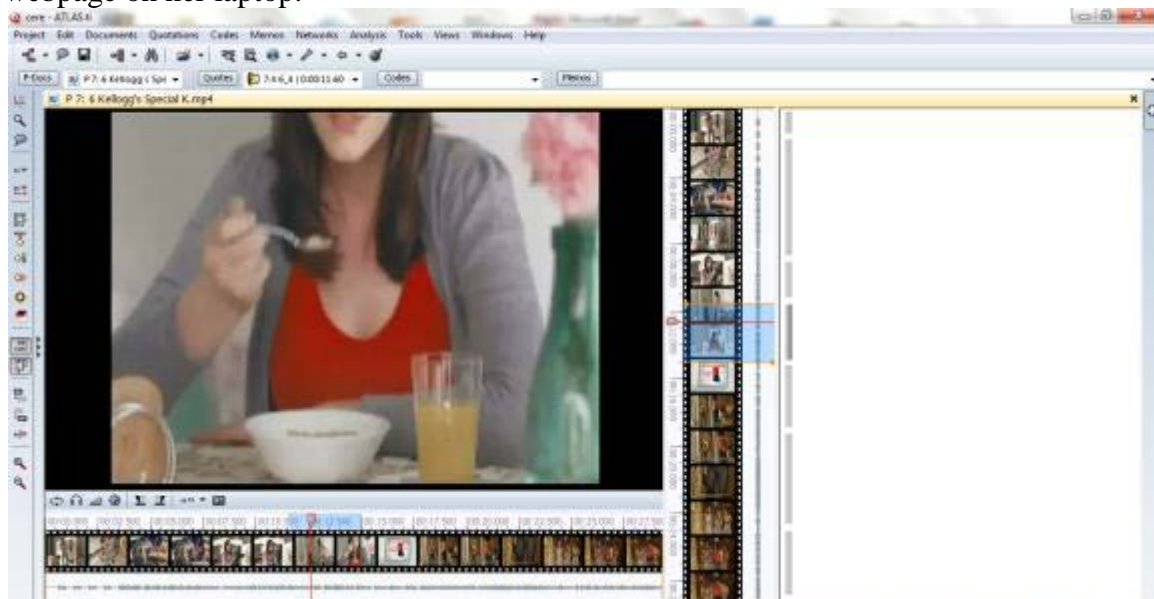


6_3 (Verbal, Visual, Music). Female actress in front of the mirror in sportswear gazing at herself while holding her old blue jeans.

Voice-over: “See if you can again in just 2 weeks with Special K’s free online personal plan”.
Super at the bottom of the screen: “Eat Special K for breakfast and again for lunch OR dinner. Ensure 3rd meal well balanced”.

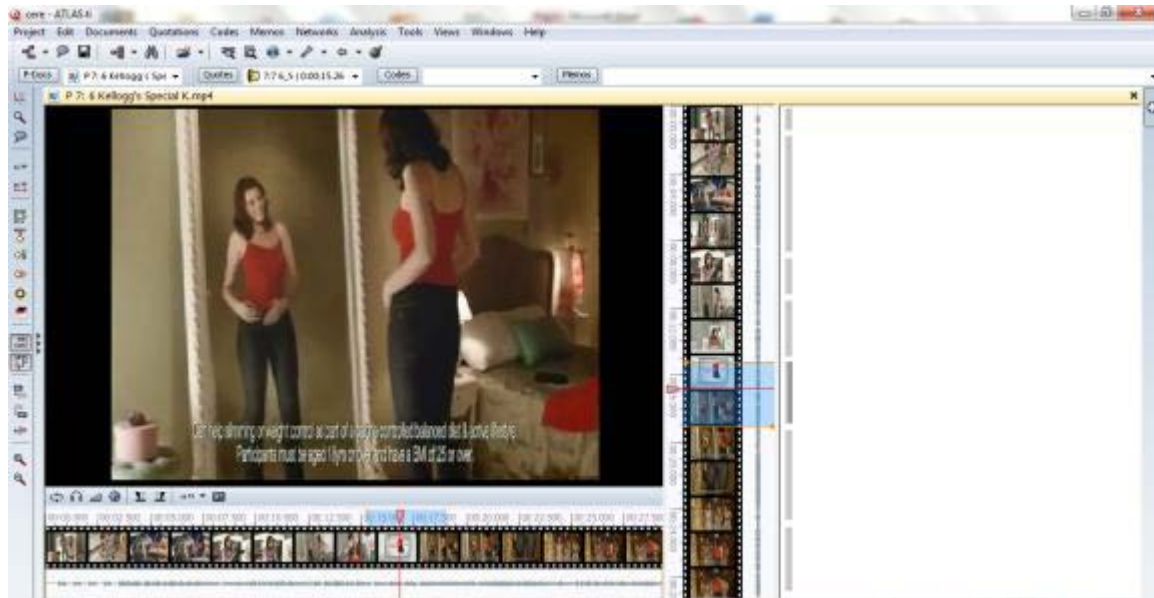


6_4 (Verbal, Visual, Music). Female actress seen eating cereals and looking at Kellogg’s webpage on her laptop.



6_5 (Verbal, Visual, Music). Female actress seen trying on old jeans (apparently after having lost weight) in front of her mirror and smiling.

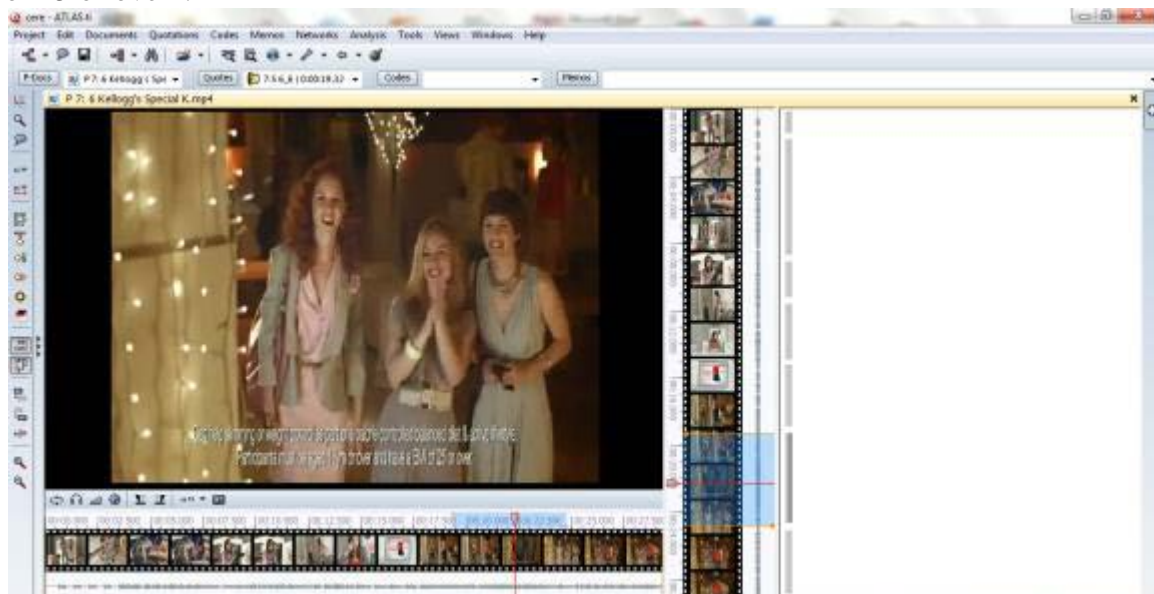
Super at the bottom of the screen: “Can help slimming or weight control as part of a calorie controlled diet & active life-style. Participants must be aged 18 years or over and have a BMI of 25 or over”.

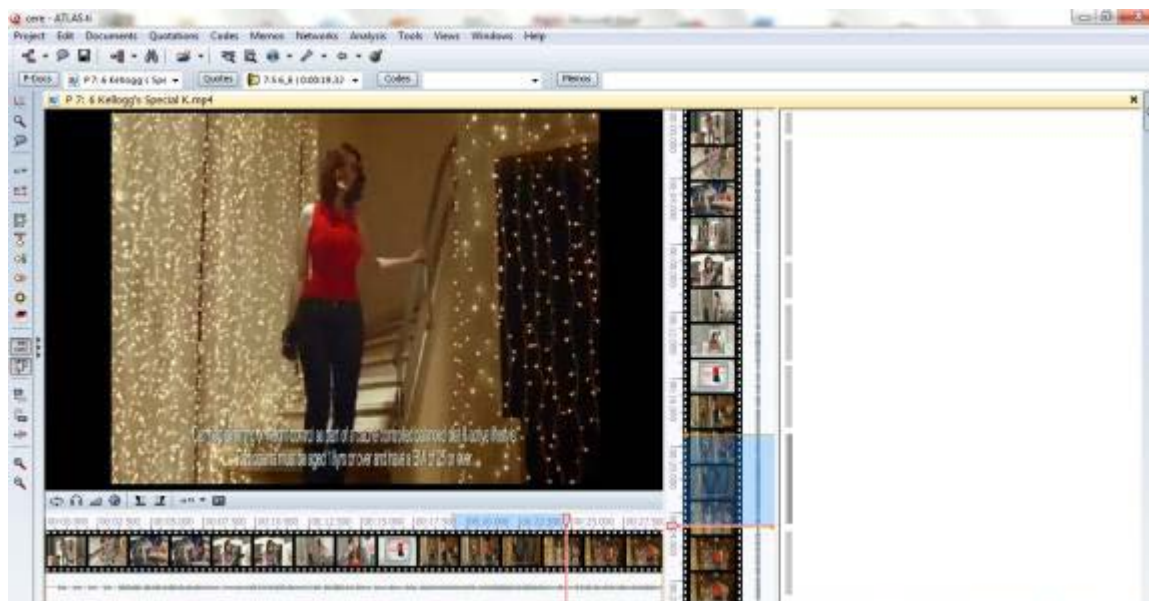


6_6 (Verbal, Visual, Music). Female actress moving downstairs and meeting female friends who congratulate her on her new slim looks.

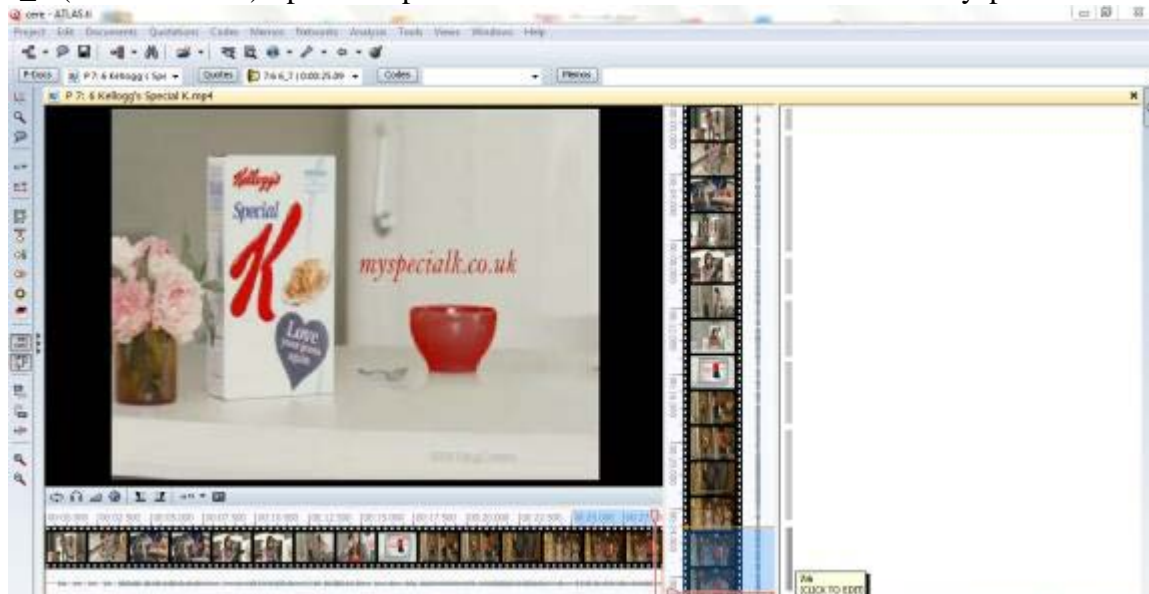
Voice-over: “Special K, love your jeans again in just two weeks”.

Super at the bottom of the screen: “Can help slimming or weight control as part of a calorie controlled diet & active life-style. Participants must be aged 18 years or over and have a BMI of 25 or over”.





6_7 (Visual. Music).Special K pack-shot with online address next to it: “myspecialk.co.uk”.



Appendix 2

Atlas.ti output of coded filmic segments with semes and rhetorical figures

Code: [ADJ_ACC] {35-0}

P 2: 2_Kelloggs Cornflakes Big Breakfast .mp4.mp4 - 2:2 [2_2] (0:00:04.05 [0:00:15.26]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION]

No memos

P 6: 10_Kellogg's Special K Commercial 2012 - Original Morning Deliciousness.mp4 - 6:1 [10_1] (0:00:00.29 [0:00:06.35]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/]

No memos

P 6: 10_Kellogg's Special K Commercial 2012 - Original Morning Deliciousness.mp4 - 6:2 [10_2] (0:00:06.95 [0:00:06.00]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/] [NSM/taste/]

No memos

P 6: 10_Kellogg's Special K Commercial 2012 - Original Morning Deliciousness.mp4 - 6:3 [10_3] (0:00:13.25 [0:00:12.00]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/] [NSM/sexiness/]

No memos

P 6: 10_Kellogg's Special K Commercial 2012 - Original Morning Deliciousness.mp4 - 6:4 [10_4] (0:00:25.55 [0:00:04.93]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_ANTA] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/] [NSM/sexiness/]

No memos

P 7: 6_Kellogg's Special K.mp4 - 7:3 [6_3] (0:00:09.09 [0:00:02.80]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_ANAP] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_RHY] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[SUPP_ELL] - Family: SUPPRESSION] [NSM/for women/]

No memos

P 7: 6_Kellogg's Special K.mp4 - 7:4 [6_4] (0:00:12.00 [0:00:03.03]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_ANAP] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/] [NSM/makes you slim/]

No memos

P 7: 6_Kellogg's Special K.mp4 - 7:5 [6_6] (0:00:19.32 [0:00:05.43]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_ANAP] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[SUB_PUN] - Family: SUBSTITUTION] [CS/social acceptance/] [NSM/for women/] [NSM/makes you slim/]

No memos

P 7: 6_Kellogg's Special K.mp4 - 7:6 [6_7] (0:00:25.09 [0:00:03.88]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_ANAP] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[SUB_SYN] - Family: SUBSTITUTION] [CS/social acceptance/] [NSM/for women/] [NSM/makes you slim/]

No memos

P 7: 6_Kellogg's Special K.mp4 - 7:7 [6_5] (0:00:15.26 [0:00:03.77]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_ANAP] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/] [NSM/makes you slim/]

No memos

P 8: 7_Kellogg's Special K Lisa Snowdon - Kelloggs Special K.mp4 - 8:2 [7_2] (0:00:05.23 [0:00:04.82]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_ANTITH] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/]

No memos

P 8: 7_Kellogg's Special K Lisa Snowdon - Kelloggs Special K.mp4 - 8:3 [7_3] (0:00:10.35 [0:00:02.44]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_ANTITH] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/]

No memos

P 8: 7_Kellogg's Special K Lisa Snowdon - Kelloggs Special K.mp4 - 8:5 [7_5] (0:00:15.64 [0:00:09.24]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_ANTITH] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/]

No memos

P 9: 8_Kellogg's Special K 2010 Ad.mp4 - 9:4 [8_4] (0:00:11.50 [0:00:02.74]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/]

No memos

P 9: 8_Kellogg's Special K 2010 Ad.mp4 - 9:5 [8_6] (0:00:17.75 [0:00:08.58]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [CS/sexiness/] [NSM/for women/] [NSM/makes you slim/]

No memos

P 9: 8_Kellogg's Special K 2010 Ad.mp4 - 9:6 [8_5] (0:00:14.36 [0:00:03.27]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/]

No memos

P10: 9_Kellogg's Special K Spring Commercial 2010.mp4 - 10:1 [9_1] (0:00:00.29 [0:00:08.07]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/]

No memos

P10: 9_Kellogg's Special K Spring Commercial 2010.mp4 - 10:3 [9_3] (0:00:13.52 [0:00:07.23]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [NSM/for women/]

No memos

P10: 9_Kellogg's Special K Spring Commercial 2010.mp4 - 10:4 [9_4] (0:00:21.12 [0:00:09.31]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[ADJ_RSHAP] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [CS/social acceptance/] [NSM/for women/] [NSM/sexiness/]

No memos

P15: 15_Kellogg's Rice Krispies.mp4 - 15:2 [15_2] (0:00:01.94 [0:00:06.47]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[SUB_METO] - Family: SUBSTITUTION] [NSM/energy/]

No memos

P15: 15_Kellogg's Rice Krispies.mp4 - 15:5 [15_4] (0:00:11.71 [0:00:02.64]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[SUB_METO] - Family: SUBSTITUTION] [NSM/energy/]

No memos

P15: 15_Kellogg's Rice Krispies.mp4 - 15:6 [15_5] (0:00:14.65 [0:00:04.29]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [[SUB_METO] - Family: SUBSTITUTION]

No memos

P16: 16_Kellogg's Coco Pops Coco Pops Moons and Stars - The Coco Pops Promise (British).mp4 - 16:1 [16_1] (0:00:00.16 [0:00:10.32]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [CS/modernity/] [NSM/high in fiber/]

No memos

P16: 16_Kellogg's Coco Pops Coco Pops Moons and Stars - The Coco Pops Promise (British).mp4 - 16:3 [16_3] (0:00:16.24 [0:00:08.00]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION]

No memos

P16: 16_Kellogg's Coco Pops Coco Pops Moons and Stars - The Coco Pops Promise (British).mp4 - 16:6 [16_5] (0:00:26.56 [0:00:08.16]) (Super)

Codes: [[ADJ_ACC] - Family: ADJUNCTION] [CS/modernity/] [NSM/high in fiber/]

No memos

Author Note

George Rossolatos is an academic researcher and marketing practitioner, with experience in advertising (JWT), marketing research (Research International/Millward Brown) and brand management (Colgate-Palmolive, Nestle, Weetabix, Cosmote). He holds a BA (Hons) in Philosophy from the University of Essex, an MSc in Marketing from Manchester Business School, an MBA from Strathclyde Business School and a PhD in Marketing Semiotics from the University of Kassel. He is the founder of the semiotics consulting agency //disruptiVesemiOtics// and editor of the *International Journal of Marketing Semiotics* (<http://ijmarketingsemiotics.com/>). Major publications include *Interactive Advertising: Dynamic Communication in the Information Era* (2002), *Applying Structuralist Semiotics to Brand Image Research* (2012), *//rhetor.dixit//: Understanding Ad Texts' Rhetorical Structure for Differential Figurative Advantage* (2013), *Brand Equity Planning with Structuralist Rhetorical Semiotics* (2012, 2014), plus numerous articles in trade and academic journals. His research interests rest with effecting inter-textual cross-fertilizations between marketing, rhetoric and semiotics discourses with an applied managerial orientation, also informed by disciplines such as phenomenology, deconstruction, psychoanalysis, anthropology, communication theory, cultural studies. Contact: georgerossolatos123@gmail.com

I would like to thank the German Academic Exchange Service (DAAD) for awarding me a grant for my research in Brand Equity semiotics and multimodal advertising rhetoric and the reviewers of *The Qualitative Report* for their constructive comments.

Copyright 2014: George Rossolatos and Nova Southeastern University.

Article Citation

Rossolatos, G. (2014). A methodological framework for projecting brand equity: Putting back the imaginary into brand knowledge structures. *The Qualitative Report*, 19(37), 1-35. Retrieved from <http://www.nova.edu/ssss/QR/QR19/rossolatos37.pdf>
