Ethos in Sound Design for Brand Advertisement

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ABSTRACT

Traditionally advertising has aimed to influence purchasing by affecting beliefs about the consequences of consuming a product. With the rise of brand marketing, the focus shifted from products to brands viewed as symbolic universes endowed with values and meanings that circulate in the imagination of a society. The paper explores the use of sound in syncretic multimodal advertising product as a bearer of brand and rhetorical meanings. A conceptual framework is proposed that addresses this issues by integrating the perspective of Design Theory and Transmedia Storytelling. In this context, two different senses of Ethos emerged and are discussed. A selected set of video commercials produced by Lancôme in the period 1990-2010 is used as a concrete example to show how the proposed framework can be used to analyze how sound features have been consistently exploited to communicate symbolic meanings.

1. INTRODUCTION

The last decades have witnessed a profound transformation in the concept of Marketing that forced scholars to shift attention from products to brands. Traditional *product marketing* is aimed at emphasizing the intrinsic qualities of a product, service or line of products in order to increase sales. B*rand marketing* aims at communicating a constellation of brand specific meanings that could resonate with individuals and cultural values and support consumers' attachment [20]. In this context, a brand does not merely refer to the logo that is sticked to a product as a visual or aural label but more generally to " [...] a semiotic device able to produce a discourse, give it meaning, and communicate this to the consumer/user" or " a symbolic universe endowed with values and meanings that circulate in the imagination of a society" [22]. A characteristic property of a brand is that it may represent a *possible world* with its characters, locations, values and narratives [23].

This transformation - from product to brand - demands a similar evolution of the methods and tools that are currently used for the analysis and design of marketing products such as for example commercial clips, advergames, web sites. Indeed, existing approaches are still anchored to a concept of marketing based on product placement so are unsatisfactorily equipped for studying the role that meanings, communicated through various semiotic modalities, have in brand discourse. This is particularly challenged for the sonic components of syncretic works (i.e. multimodal objects) used in advertising. Research on sound objects (e.g. music, spoken text and effects) in marketing has a long tradition and applications including the use of sound in commercial environments to influence consumer's behavior [2], the development of jingles and sonic logos to support identification, recognition and differentiation of products and services [3, 9, 17]; the study of the many functions sound may play in audiovisuals [6]. Yet, despite valuable insights emerging from these studies we need a systematic approach to sound design for branding and new interpretive tools for studying how sonic components can be used in syncretic products together with other modalities to construct meaning and communicate the deep values and symbolic universe inscribed within a brand.

This paper puts forward the idea that in addressing these issues we could take some inspiration from different perspectives about the concept of *ethos* proposed within the fields of design theory, and transmedia storytelling.

In the following we shall exploit this possibility by using a semiotic perspective. The rationale is that Semiotics is concerned with the construction and communication of meanings (sense) so it appears as particular relevant for the goals of this paper. Complementary to cognitive theories that attribute the understanding of a multimodal work to the cognitive capacity of viewers, semioticians argue that works are *constructed* in ways that guide interpretation prior to handing over the task of understanding to viewer's cognitive capacity. In light of this, the present study aims to understand how sound designers may inscribe brand meanings within their works.

The paper is organized as follows. Borrowing from Design Theory, Section 2 discusses the role that symbolic artifacts, in general, and sound objects in particular, play as bearers of rhetorical arguments. Section 3 exploits the concept of transmedia storytelling to discuss the role of artifacts in building imaginary brand worlds. In section 4 we integrate these two perspectives by proposing a conceptual framework that can be used as a scaffolding for analyzing how sound objects can be used to communicate brand and rhetorical meanings. The framework is exploited in Section 5 for the analysis of the sonic components of a selected set of commercial clips by Lancôme. Finally, Section 6 draws some concluding remarks.

2. SOUND DESIGN AS A RHETORIC PRACTICE

Classical rhetoric is defined as the art and techniques of persuasion through the use of oral and written language. In a seminal paper published about thirty years ago on Design Issues [5], R. Buchanan claimed that designers build persuasive argumentations through the physical artifacts that they design and develop. He claimed that artifacts' persuasion comes through the manipulation of materials and processes of nature, not in language. The article suggests that the designer, instead of simply making an object or thing, is actually creating a persuasive argument that comes to life whenever a user consider or uses a product as a means to some ends. The persuasive argumentation inscribed within the artifact is based on three aspects of the artifact namely its Logos, Ethos and Pathos (thereafter, LEP). Briefly, Logos refers to technical rationality (i.e. the logic of artifact functioning and its relationship with goals and target users); Ethos refers to the artifact character/personality (i.e. a reflection of the designer or client identity) and Pathos refers to emotions expressed (or induced) including aesthetic pleasure. All these components co-operate to construct the persuasive argumentation.

We argue that a similar argument can be made for symbolic artifacts as well, and more specifically for sound objects.

In the field of multimodal systems and services the analysis proposed by Buchanan can be reformulated as follows.

Logos: for symbolic artifacts this concept should be extended to include - in addition to technical functionality - its communicative one. A marketing product plays the role of mediator between the intentions of the author/designer and the interpretation of the user. The efficacy of this mediation rests mainly on the *form* - intended here as a set of relationships - of the symbolic artifact and the appropriateness of this form to the communicative goal and the intended audience. Semioticians look at a symbolic artifact as a complex system of signs organized into several layers. As an instance, the Generative Model of meaning construction by Greimas [8] distinguishes three layers namely the textual, the discursive and the narrative one. In this context, form concerns both the internal structure of each layer and the structural and semantic links between layers. We claim that a marketing product such as, for example, a commercial clip exhibits a greater rhetorical logos if it is perceived as "fitting" the communicative intentions and target users and if it is internally syntactically connected and semantically coherent both within a single modality (e.g. sound track) and across modalities (e.g. sound and images tracks). Semiotic research provides several conceptual tools and methods that can be used to evaluate the global coherence of a symbolic artifact. The Theory of Metafunctions by Halliday [25] is particularly interesting since it provides a common schema for analyzing various kinds of meanings (i.e. the ideational, interpersonal and textual) across modalities and to assess their reciprocal consistency.

Ethos: this concept, as already said, refers to the capability of a symbolic artifact to evoke the identity and personality of the author, client or designer. Again Semiotics provides some conceptual tools to analyze this aspect. For instance, Enunciation Theory [8] introduces the concepts of *addresser* and *addressee* to denote the simulacra of the sender and receiver inscribed within a communicative product. Ethos regards the expression of the addresser - its character and personality (see for example [1]). The persuasive power rests in the possibility that the user/audience identifies herself with this character or take this character as an ideal to adhere to.

Pathos: it refers to the capability of the symbolic artifact to express or induce affective states such as mood, or emotions and pleasure (e.g. aesthetic pleasure, ludic pleasure) in the user/audience. In this case persuasion rests on the sensorial and cognitive involvement of the user. Several types of pleasure have been studied by scholars and different classifications have been suggested [7] that can be exploited for the analysis and design of this rhetorical aspect.

By summarizing, a symbolic artifact exhibits a persuasive argumentation if it is effective both from a technical and communicative point of view, if it expresses a clear identity or personality to which the user can eventually adhere to and if it is pleasurable to use and interact with, inducing emotions.

The concepts of Logos, Ethos and Pathos can be applied to a whole symbolic artifact as well as to its constituent modalities. More specifically, in designing the sonic component of a syncretic marketing product the composer or sound designer should put particular attention to the rhetoric argumentation inscribed within the sound object under development by appropriately deciding its form, character, and emotional aspects [19, 10]. Furthermore, she should ensure that these meanings are coherent with those evoked by the other modalities used in the artifact.

This LPE framework alone is not sufficient. It considers a symbolic artifact as a decontextualized object involving only the relationships among itself and the designer, or the user. It does not take into account the relationships existing among sound objects, the role played by these objects in brand discourses, their link with the imaginary world expressing brand values, their past history and time evolution. Therefore, another conceptual framework is needed which completes and interacts with the LEP one. This is the object of the following section.

3. SOUND DESIGN AS CONSTRUCTION OF NARRATIVE WORLDS

Narratives are important tools for knowledge communication. Humans are first and foremost storytellers, they cognitively process and communicate their lives as narratives; life itself is a narrative [4]. Consumers also organize their brand-related experiences in the form of narratives [22]. Narrative is the basic structure creating device for meaning production.

In analyzing brands as *possible worlds* we may draw on research done within transmedia storytelling. Klastrup and Tosca [12] proposed the following definition of *transmedial worlds*: "[they] ... are abstract content systems from which a repertoire of fictional stories and

characters can be actualized or derived across a variety of media forms". What characterizes a transmedia world is that audience and designers share a mental image of the "worldness" (a number of distinguishing features of its universe). The core elements that seem to define its worldness are: Mythos, Topos and Ethos (thereafter, MTE).

Mythos: it refers to the establishing conflicts and battles of the world, which also present the characters of the world. It may be considered as the backstory of all back-stories: the central knowledge one needs in order to inter-act or interpret events in the world successfully.

Topos refers to the setting of the world in a specific historical period and detailed geography.

Ethos refers to the implicit and explicit ethics of the world and moral codex of behavior, which characters in the world are supposed to follow. It is knowledge about how to behave in the world.

Translated within the brand marketing domain the Brand World has a mythos that is an abstract mental image or cognitive construct that can be isolated from specific realizations (such as specific video clips, adver-games, novels, serial, ...) and is shared by the audience with an interest in that world. It is used as the backstory for the construction of all stories embodied in the marketing product mix of the brand. These stories contribute to the diffusion of the Brand World and to its expansion. The *Topos* refers to the typical settings, mise en scenes, places and historical periods used in the Brand World. The *Ethos* refers to the values communicated to the audience. Each Brand selects a set of values (e.g. simplicity, truthfulness, modernity, friendliness) which represent its ethos; these values constitute the core of the brand identity and are fundamental to increase the company recognition (brand identity), to differentiate the company and its offerings from those of competitors (distinctiveness) and to create coherence within the current marketing portfolio and over time across different portfolios. Values are not explicitly enunciated by the Brand but are embodied within the stories told by its advertising products. They inform behaviors and thus the ethics of the Brand.

The MTE conceptualization expands and completes the LEP one. For the sound designer, it means that, in creating a sound object for a marketing product it is necessary to deeply understand the brand world, its mythos, topos and ethos and to be capable of translating these symbolic meanings - together with the rhetoric ones - into explicit sound features. In this way the sound object may be conceived as an effective component of the brand world and its discourses. Again, this process should take into account the meanings already inscribed within other modalities in order to ensure the global coherence of the symbolic artifact under construction.

4. AN INTEGRATED FRAMEWORK

Figure 1. illustrates the conceptual framework we propose to integrate the rhetorical and narrative issues discussed in the previous sections. To sum up:

- a brand defines its abstract world (Brand World) that can be described in terms of Mythos, Topos and Ethos (MTE);

- a brand marketing portfolio includes the collection of works created in a given time period to advertise single products, lines of products or the brand itself. Each work within the portfolio is an actualization (called Product World) of the Brand World and embodies a persuasive argumentation that can be analyzed in terms of Logos, Ethos and Pathos (LEP);

- each work in the portfolio is a multimodal object that uses several representational modalities (Mi) such as written texts, images, sound objects, etc. to communicate its meanings;

- in order to align with cultural and social evolution, a marketing portfolio may change over time.

The use of a bidirectional arrow between the Brand World and the Product World in Figure 1 is intended to underline the complex interrelationship existing between these concepts. In developing a specific marketing product (e.g. a commercial clip) the multimodal designer actualizes the Brand World by creating a new narrative that inherits the abstract features of this world. Her goal is also to produce a symbolic artifact that could persuade the audience through its logos, character and pathos. This process allows the designer to effectively manifest brand meanings and spread them within a community. In the meantime, the designer is able to enrich the Product World with new features that can take into account, for example, the social and cultural transformations. These features feed back the Brand World by expanding it in several directions e.g. by introducing new characters, values, stories. The extended Brand World can be used, in turn, as a basis for the development of new Product worlds and so forth. Each company should find an appropriate strategic compromise between the opposite requirements of brand identity permanence and innovation.
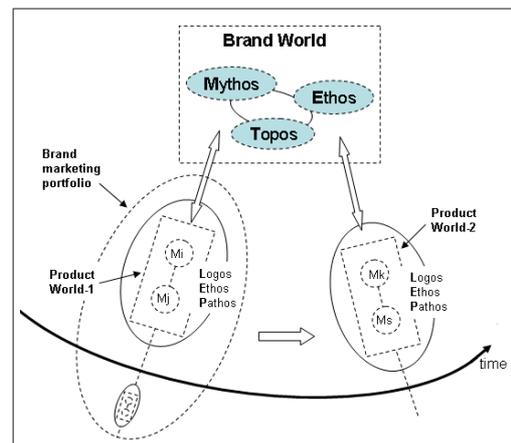

Figure 1. The conceptual framework proposed to integrate brand meanings and rhetorical argumentation.

It should be stressed that the construction of a brand is the result of a complex negotiation process that involve several actors: the company/firm in the first place but also the designers, sponsor, users, etc. Therefore, the efforts made by a designer to inscribe symbolic and emotional values within a product can be effective only if there is an interpretive cooperation by the user.

This integrated framework, in our opinion, could also be a suggestive representation of a musical genre (e.g. House Music). In this scenario there exists a "genre world" with its MTE characteristics (e.g. house and club culture). Musical tracks, in particular the ones considered milestones for the genre, can be seen, in analogy with product worlds, as works with their LPE features. They are part and developments of the genre world.

Looking again at Figure 1, from the perspective of the sound designer, several important questions arise, for example:

- Which aspects of a Brand World (i.e. MTE) and of rhetoric argumentation (i.e. LEP) can be effectively communicated by sound objects? How can we do it? In other words: which features of a sound object can be exploited to this end?

- How are narrative and persuasive cues co-deployed and organized together in the same sound object? We can envisage the existence of a strong relationship, for example, between the ethos (values, ethics) of the Brand World and the ethos (character, personality) of the marketing products represented by individual Product Worlds.

- How does the sound object co-operate with the other modalities (e.g. images, written texts) to evoke the global symbolic meanings associated to a specific marketing product?

- How do these meanings change synchronically from a marketing product to another belonging to the same portfolio and diachronically across different portfolios?

In order to address these questions we have to identify explicit sound design elements that could be used to communicate MTE and LEP meanings. To this end we draw on previous work described in [24]. In this work a method inspired by current practices of sound designers is proposed for analyzing a sonic object. The method distinguishes between two main perspectives: the perspective of the composer and that of the producer or sound engineer. Each perspective addresses a specific set of design features and characteristics of the sound object that could be exploited to communicate narrative and persuasive meanings. Table 1 summarizes the main steps of the method and their associated design features.

In the next section we shall use the method to analyze a collection of commercial clips representing an example of diachronic marketing portfolio. The analysis is mostly qualitative and empirical. The aim is to explore, by means of a concrete case, how MTE and LEP meanings could be inscribed within the sonic component of a multimodal object and how these decisions can be distributed between the composition and production phases of the sound design process.

5. A CASE STUDY: THE ROLE OF SOUND IN PERFUME ADV CLIP

The test bed includes a selected set of four narrative video commercials produced by Lancôme to advertise the Tresor perfume. The first one appeared in 1990, the last in 2010 and two in the meantime. All clips tell the story of an encounter between a woman and a man which is a common theme in perfume ads. The woman plays the central role, interpreted by glamorous actresses called 'The Muse' by Lancôme itself.

Main Analytic Phases	Steps and features
Phase I: the composer's perspective	1) *Genre Identification* (e.g. song, short form composition, sonic logo, speech) 2) *Theme and Motive Identification.* 3) *Accompaniment and Orchestration/ arrangement Identification* 4) *Instruments and Timbre Identification.*
Phase II: the sound engineer's perspective	1) *Analysis of dimensions of the sound mix[1]*: - frequency-wise balance of the mix (Tall) - sense of spatiality including reverberation and aural perspective (Deep) - panorama (Wide) 2) *Analysis of dynamics.* - loudness - pitch - tempo - envelopes of specific timbres

Table 1. Main steps of the analysis method with associated sound design features.

The Muses are Isabella Rossellini (Lancôme, 1990) [13], Ines Sastre (Lancôme, 2007) [14]; Kate Winslet (Lancôme, 2009) [15] and Penelope Cruz (Lancôme, 2010) [16]. We denote each clip by their initials IR, IS, KW, PC. Each clip includes both a short form composition (classical music) and a voice over (speech). In the following we shall focus only on the former genre. Design Format Analysis (DFA) [11] was used as the primary approach in the aural analysis of the brand's product portfolio. In the DFA process the four clips have been analyzed to determine which sound features they incorporate. Strong occurrence of a specific feature in a specific product can be marked, for example, with a black dot (scoring 2 points), and weak occurrence with a white dot (scoring 1 point). By summing up all the occurrences, design features and products can be ranked in terms of their importance for brand world recognition (e.g. the most typical feature), (Figure 2). We claim that repeated features across clips could be associated to the Brand world communication.

In addition the Semantic Differential Method [11] has been used to analyze, for each clip, the extent (we use a seven points scale) to which each sound feature is associated to the MTE and LEP characteristics. Figure 3 shows this analysis applied to the IR clip using the theme as the considered feature.

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[1] The term mix refers to audio material that is commonly organized into multiple tracks and edited within a DAW software (Digital Audio Workstation)
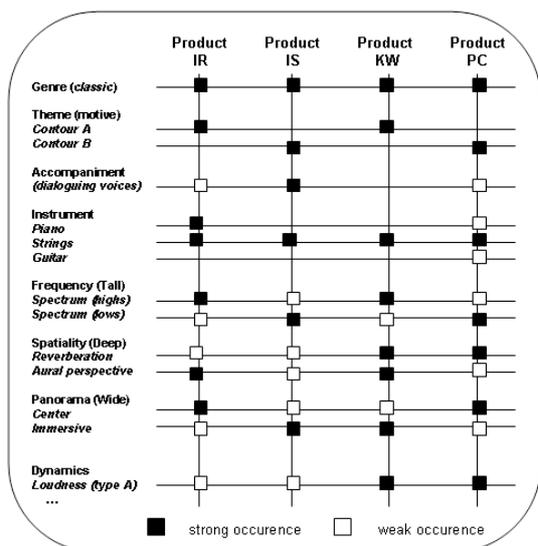
Figure 2. Application of Design Format Analysis was used as a primary approach in the aural analysis of brand portfolio.
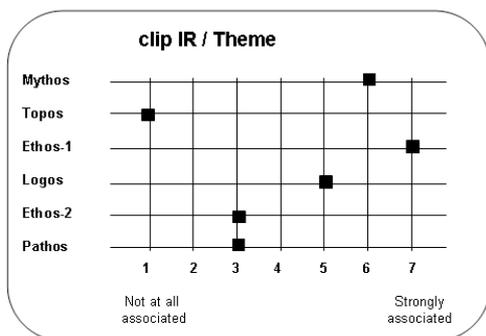

Figure 3. Application of the Semantic Differential Method was used as the primary approach in the analysis of MTE and LEP characteristics.

5.1 Narrative issues: the World of Lancôme

Lancôme stresses reliability, quality and expertise in the domain of beauty. Such qualities, belonging to the ethos, are projected onto its narratives in terms of an art of living with elegance and refinement. These are permanent values through all examined clips. The characters of the brand mythos are self conscious, middle to upper class women, living in everyday life situations and places, such as home, work and entertainment places. These kind of places represent the topos of the Brand World. The encounter with a man is also a typical theme of the Lancôme mythos.

The analysis of Lancôme clips shows the following results. In all commercials an easily recognizable theme is presented, which develops from the same motive whose notes play around the dominant and the tonic of the musical scale, providing a sense of stability and certainty. This musical idea is exhibited at the beginning of every commercial in order to immediately catch listener's attention and projecting her into the imaginative world of the Lancôme brand.

Let us make, now, some considerations and examples.

In Lancôme case study, the Brand World ethos is mainly expressed through the steps belonging to the composition phase. Concepts forming the brand world's ethos are known by the composer, who inscribes them in the sonic object by primarily crafting an 'ad hoc' theme and accompaniment/orchestration. Another consideration is that the choice of instruments and timbres is an intrinsic way to put some boundaries in the topos. In order to confine the brand world to European culture, exotic instruments have been avoided in Lancôme case study. The common choice of strings in all clips is related both to topos concepts, and to ethos values.

We stress the fact that this analysis is specific to the Lancôme case study. In the case of sound logos, or i.e. electronic compositions, MTE features are expressed by sound design procedures. In these scenarios composition is conceived in a total new way. Therefore, with respect to the method illustrated in Table 1 composition and production phases are often blurred, mixed together and linked by several feedback relationships.

5.2 Rhetorical issues: the Tresor perfume

As we have already told, the four clips in our case study represent an example of diachronic marketing portfolio. Each of them advertises the same Lancôme product (i.e. the perfume Tresor) but with a different character (rhetoric ethos). The character/personality associated to each product is linked to a specific type of femininity embodied by the Muse. In the following, we briefly pass through the four clips in order to show some examples on how these four different ethos have been realized through specific sound design choices.

In the IR clip theme is initially presented by piano and strings performing together, then the piano detaches from the strings and plays improvised figures in the foreground. This suggests an idea of independence, freedom, and autonomy which are characteristics of the ideal represented by Isabella Rossellini (ethos of the product). Abstractness, dream, universality are other aspects of this ideal, supported by a mix in which the spectrum bands commonly related to air and brilliance are emphasized. In this case, we can infer that concepts of the product's ethos are written into the sound object primarily by the peculiar role of the piano, design choice belonging to the composition phase, and by the peculiar mix, airy and high, created during the engineering phase.

In the IS clip, theme is organized in a free canon form and it is performed entirely by strings. Here, dialogue between the two voices playing the theme suggests complicity between the two characters of the story, namely the Muse and the man. Moreover, the two voices laying on the same sonic layer suggest a balanced relationship between the two roles. Here, the warm characteristic of the low end in the frequency spectrum, together with the wide panorama, give us a sense of concreteness, and embracing beauty. The ideal of femininity represented by Ines Sastre is that of a concrete, stable, and understanding woman. In this case, the choice of structuring the theme in a canon form (belonging to the composition phase), and the peculiar warm and wide mix (sound engineering phase), are probably the main design choices involved in

the task of expressing the ethos of this product.

In the KW clip a single voice, played by strings, exhibits the theme. The ideal of femininity represented is that of a concrete but emotive woman. This is supported here by the use of layered glittering sounds and effects aimed at stimulating excitement in the listener and involving him in the emotional state of the story characters. Again, we could infer that in this clip, the product's ethos has been written into the sound object mostly by sound design choices (transversal to composition and production phases), by adding in the mix and in the orchestration the above mentioned layers of effects, sampled sounds, and short twinkling musical figures.

In the PC clip dynamic characteristics, like instrument performance, together with the centrality of panorama in the mix, and the emphasized presence of instruments in the frequency domain, suggest us the ideal of a concrete and sensual woman whose beauty hits the viewer. Again, the motive and theme are still the same, but in this case, the determined and intense execution of musical phrases, together with energy concentrated in the centre of the mix, are probably design choices aimed to convey the specific ethos for this clip.

In the case that the performance had been programmed and not recorded live, those peculiar aspects of the performance would have been crafted by the sound designer or engineer during the production phase. Creating a mix with a strong directionality toward the listener, with noticeable energy concentration in the centre, is part of the engineering phase too.

Logos is related to the way brand world has been actualized in the four sound objects, and in the coherence existing between modalities - i.e. between what has been communicated by the visual modality and aural one. As an instance, the ideal of femininity expressed by the IR clip is supported also by the visual. The location of the narrative is an open, non-situated, abstract space; the Muse seems focused on herself; the social distance is high and gaze contact with the viewer is absent. All these features connote rational detachment and indifference. Analogously, the ideal of femininity communicated by the KW clip is supported visually by an open, unlimited, situated (in Paris), and public location. Distance, as measured by type and frequency of frame sizes, is lower than the previous clip; gaze contact is more frequent thus suggesting the search for a greater emotional involvement of the viewer.

Pathos refers to the capability of a sound object to express or evoke emotions. Of course this is subjective and depends on the listener; nonetheless, also the designer and its way of interpreting the design requirements plays an important role. Emotion potential is intrinsically present in the theme or motive built during composition phase. However, the choice of instruments and timbres, can affect emotion too. An example of this is the KW clip, where some sound layers, probably added and crafted during production phase, are intended to boost the sense of excitement in an explicit and 'physical' way.

Ethos, Logos and Pathos are related together. For example, pathos can be affected and enhanced by the logos of the object: dynamics in conjunction with orchestration choices can help driving the pathos in the way intended

by the designer. Table 2 summarizes the results obtained by analyzing the four Lancôme commercial clips.

Main steps of the analytic method	Brand world (MTE)	Rhetoric Arg. (LEP)
Phase I: genre identification	*topos, ethos*	*logos*
Phase I: theme and motive identification	*mythos, ethos*	*pathos*
Phase I: accompaniment and its motive identification	*ethos*	*ethos, pathos,*
Phase I: instruments and timbres identification	*ethos, topos*	*ethos*
Phase II: analysis of the dimensions of the mix	-	*ethos, logos*
Phase II: analysis of dynamics	-	*pathos, logos*

Table 2. Relationships between design choices and MTE and LEP concepts.

As show in the table the brand mythos has been mainly communicated through the choice of a specific theme and motive that recurring across marketing products act as a leitmotif. Topos is communicated through timbres and instruments (e.g. by exploiting meanings relating to sound provenance). In regards to this point, it seems to us that the use of a guitar in the PC clip is not completely appropriate. By referring to the nationality of the Muse (Penelope Cruz) it diverts the attention of the user to meaning and associations evoked by Hispanic culture instead of the Lancôme world. The ethos of the Brand world (i.e. values, brand identity) has been mainly communicated by composition choices.

As far as rhetorical aspects are concerned, the logos (form) is strictly related to the selection of music genre while the ethos - intended here as product character - depends on the selection of mix dimensions (namely, deep, tall, and wide) and thus is mainly addressed in the production phase. By selecting appropriate values for the mix dimensions it is possible to modulate sound perspective and as a consequence the distance between the sound and the listener, to give emphasis and salience to the sound, to support presence etc. all aspects that in the visual are expressed by an appropriate selection of cinematic characteristics (e.g. shot sizes, horizontal and vertical position of the mdp). Finally, pathos seems to be mainly related to the choice of theme and accompaniment and sound dynamics.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this paper was to explore how brand meanings and rhetorical arguments can be inscribed and communicated through the sonic components of syncretic multimodal marketing products.

The paper makes two main contributions.

First, we propose a conceptualization according to which the process of meaning construction has been articulated into two logical phases that, in practice, occur in

parallel. In the first phase, the main constituents of a brand world namely its mythos, topos and ethos (i.e. the imaginary world, its setting and axiology) are inscribed within the sound object. In the second phase, a rhetoric argumentation is constructed by deciding logos (e.g. form), ethos (i.e. character) and pathos (e.g. emotional expression) of a sound object. The framework also highlights two different senses of the concept of ethos in design for branding.

Second, we have tried to relate the above mentioned narrative and rhetoric concepts to specific sound design choices which have been structured according to composition or production processes. The aim is to relate intended meanings with specific sound features (genre, theme, motive, timbres, frequency balance, perspective, etc.). The selection of relevant features is inspired by current practices of composers and sound engineers [21], [18].

A test-bed constituted by a selected set of video commercials by Lancôme in the period 1990-2010, is used to explore how sound features have been consistently employed through the marketing mix to communicate brand meanings and the rhetorical argument. In multimodal objects meaning arises from the interaction of all modalities. Therefore, effective communication is achieved by a careful selection of MTE and LEP cues of verbal texts, images, and sounds components.

Unavoidably, the persuasive role of marketing products leads to the important theme of technological mediation and ethical issues [26]. Symbolic artifacts, just like all technologies, may affect the ways individuals perceive the world and act in the world. This raises fundamental questions about the ethical responsibility of designers and the necessity of design methods and techniques that could support a more mediation-aware approach to the development of new technologies and products.

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