

Advertising and Social Networks

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Storytelling and Image in Brand Communication

Abstract: Storytelling has been used increasingly in brand communication, as it has proven to be effective in capturing the consumers' attention and creating brand personality in order to differentiate itself from the competition. Perceived as a rather "vague" concept (Gerber et al. 2013: 6), storytelling is the story of the brand, which uses emotions, through images, to make consumers adhere to brand values or purchase the product. Emotions mainly characterise the luxury brand communication, represented especially by perfumes and cosmetics. The promotion of these products is often carried out through celebrities, although studies on this strategy are contradictory, and the purchase of products is experienced as a cultural act. Our analysis focuses on an emblematic brand of the luxury market, CHANEL, for which the use of storytelling is considered a constant and whose story is built on the significant moments in Gabrielle Chanel's life and career. We aim to highlight the persuasive power of storytelling both in brand communication and in promoting the legendary perfume No 5. Due to the fact that communication and positioning are based exclusively on the type of stories for perfumery products, our goal is to analyse how the figure of the founder, Gabrielle Chanel, contributes to the brand story and transfers certain personality traits to it, thus managing to create emotion and make the brand desirable.

Keywords: storytelling, image, brand communication, emotional responses, star strategy, brand personality

1. Storytelling and the suggestive power of brands

The concept of *storytelling* in advertising became popular in the mid-1990s, but has its origins in 1910, when narratology appeared, a discipline which deals with the study of narrative techniques and

structures used in stories. Storytelling designates the brand story, but it is not confused with the story, yet it is based on it and involves communication objectives, a context and public target analysis, a strategy, and evaluation tools (Gerber et al. 2013, 11). The story can take multiple forms, being present in myths, legends, fables, fairy tales, histories, tragedies, dramas, comedies, pantomime, paintings, stained glass, film productions, conversations, etc. Conveyed through voice, text, images, gestures or a combination of them (Barthes 1996, 1), the story has a demonstrative rather than explanatory role, and its effectiveness depends on gravitating around a single idea, surprise effect, resonance with the public through concreteness, credibility conferred by its own reality and veracity, emotion triggering and transmission (Lamarre 2018, 23). Brands are often based on a story, built, in fact, on a promise made to consumers, and through this story a strong emotional connection is created with the target audience. Stories “sell”, make the products desirable and memorable, invite to dream and influence the purchase decision, and their great impact is explained by the high degree of ambiguity they contain, as a result of metaphorical and idealised presentation of situations or characters and, implicitly, of the multiple possibilities of interpretation through the prism of the individual meanings given to the world and life (Polletta et al. 2011; Csesznek and Coman 2020, 6). These stories can be based on *history telling*¹: the history of a company, its founder or the family from which he/she comes, the idea from which a company / a product started, the different stages of creating a product, etc.

Even though much has been written lately about storytelling, the concept seems insufficiently theorised scientifically. A pertinent comparison supporting our approach is that of Guillaume Lamarre, who considers storytelling to be like an iceberg. The visible part of the iceberg, with which the public interacts, is defined as the “method”, which includes the brand design (products, messages, content, i.e. brand experience) and expresses its personality. However, the sunken part is predominant, which supports the brand’s strategy and is based on its “vision”. The latter contains the notion of *insight*, which designates, in communication and marketing, “a form of idea, called by some revelation” and which represents the meaning we give to the in-depth understanding of a behaviour/use/habit of some users in order to be able to determine the need for a product/service on the market (Lamarre 2018, 54-55). The brand’s vision also defines its personality, makes it accessible

¹ <http://www.eclaireursdelacom.fr/storytelling-letat-des-tendances-avec-jeanne-bordeau/>. Accessed on: 17/12/2020.

and tangible, contributes to the differentiation from the competition, and its strategic formulation gives credibility and attractiveness. Both a charismatic personality of a brand and its character, which refers to the brand culture, inspires trust, which attracts loyalty to propaganda in favour of the brand (Kotler and Phoertsch 2011, 191).

Still found in the sunken part, according to the same quoted author, “mission” is above the vision. It gives the brand legitimacy and expresses the values which support the promise made to the public. Mission combines intuition and reason, ethos (which gives credibility to the speech, and pathos (which makes the speech be accepted by the public), tangible and intangible features, the actual usefulness of the proposed solution and the symbolic value of the product, “the story a consumer tells himself/herself during consumption”. The most precise wording of the mission facilitates storytelling, characteristic of “aspirational” brands (Lamarre 2018, 55-56). The power of a brand’s story lies in the fact that the story is part of the brand itself and helps the interested parties to believe in the brand’s vision and mission through the depth, credibility and significance of the message conveyed. In fact, a brand motivates its public target not only by inspiration and optimism, but also by preserving and amplifying tradition (Kotler and Phoertsch 2011, 114). Optimism results from appealing to physically attractive celebrities, but also from the use of humour, which make potential buyers smile, rejoice and experience pleasant emotions (Kotler and Phoertsch 2011, 302).

Through various studies, brought into discussion by Dan Petre and Dragoş Iliescu (2004-2005, 139-143, 147), it was highlighted that the different emotional content of emotional advertisements – humour, eroticism, warmth, suspense, etc. – often causes affective reactions, frequently positive, relatively similar. However, insignificant differences underlie the implementation and are implicitly reflected in the communication results of the advertising product, in terms of advertising and brand recognition, attitude towards advertising and brand, emotional responses of the receiving audience, etc. (for example, advertisements created around the concept of eroticism arouse more positive emotions than neutral ones, but they can sometimes negatively influence the emotional responses, attitudes and buying intentions of some consumers). In fact, in marketing and advertising, it has been commonly concluded that all types of emotional calls have a stronger impact on consumers than non-emotional ones. Emotions are often used to determine certain attitudes towards a brand or category of products (the consumer feels “good”, “comfortable” when thinking about the brand or products), to

bring a distinct benefit as a result of use of the brand/products and to increase the efficiency of the message transmitted. Awakening “feelings” or “states” and associating these experiences with the brand or product range form and maintain in consumers’ minds a number of clear and powerful representations:

“This can be done in two ways. On the one hand, the use of emotional material can lead to a direct association between the emotional reactions of the receptors and the references to the brand. [...] A second way is related to the special importance of consumers’ attitudes towards the advertising itself. The positive attitude towards the advertising message itself or towards the communicated brand is considerably influenced by its emotional load or by the atmosphere elements suggested by the creative execution (pleasant ambiance, happy characters, etc.)”.

According to the two cited authors, the emotional responses associated with the elements of brand communication aim to form a positive image which can lead eventually to a behavioural reaction towards the consumption and purchase of products. However, due to the fact that emotions are activated at different levels and that determining the right combination of emotions used in an advertisement is related to the characteristics of the message and the strategic objectives of a campaign, we cannot talk about strict rules of effective use of emotions, even if there are products more prone to promotion through emotions or consumption contexts with important implications in the choice of emotions used.

Thus, emotions and excellence characterise the field of luxury, represented mainly by the market of perfumes and cosmetics. These products meet, on the one hand, the hedonistic expectations of the public seeking the luxury of “pleasure” and, on the other hand, the expectations of status or what Jean Baudrillard (1996, 126) designates as “standing”, luxury meaning differentiation, social success, but also a landmark of quality (Roux 2009).

In the case of luxury products, communication strategies frequently appeal to the need for uniqueness and differentiation of the individual, and the model according to which it works is that of assigned learning (*Like – Learn – Do*), which favours the emotional dimension. Luxury brand communication often combines advertising, public relations and merchandising, resorting to *dream marketing*, in order to produce the obsessive desire to buy, which is experienced as a cultural act. Through the advertising communication of luxury brands, consumers’ participation

is indirectly requested, and the motivation in their purchasing decision is not about necessity, but about an inner force which leads them to a world of total freedom. This type of communication is specific to the symbolic connection between the brand and the manufacturing company, which is an important part of the architecture of luxury brands, because it builds consumer loyalty, involving them in the life of the brand and of the company, as partners. In fact, the personality and values of the brand are a reflection of the image and values of the company, whose continuous management is significant in brand communication. Luxury advertising campaigns often use celebrities. Their status is confirmed by the use of the respective brands, and, in turn, the brands convey their particularities through the stars' personality (Iliescu and Petre 2004, 115-118).

In recent years, it can be seen that the storytelling technique is constantly used in order to transmit the philosophy and values of luxury brands rather than to promote a product, which often appears in the background as part of a strong symbolic universe². At the heart of the action, we usually find a celebrity, who embodies the desire to achieve something.

Although studies on the use of celebrities in brand communication are contradictory (Chelcea 2016, 432-433), it has been resorted to over time, and continues to resort to *star strategy*, especially for perfumes, cosmetics or clothing, on the criterion of attractiveness/appeal, popularity and credibility guaranteed by the expertise of these personalities. Moreover, the promotion of perfumes is so often based on *celebrity endorsement* that brands are distinguished only by the surprise effect created by the choice of celebrity/actress/top model or the product transformation into a star. The use of celebrity endorsers is an asset for brands, because these characters attract attention and make people talk about them, thus contributing to an increase of the visibility and attractiveness of advertisements. In addition, it relies on the benefit of brands through an emotional transfer (namely, those who like the star will also like the brand promoted by him/her) and/or semantic (the brand becomes the bearer of symbolic and semantic attributes associated with celebrity). The choice of celebrity is made according to the goal. Thus, in order to seduce consumers and, at the same time, to surprise them, one can decide, for example, on a celebrity of the opposite sex to the target audience (as in the case of the promotion of the *Chanel N° 5* perfume by Brad Pitt), and, if the identification is sought, the choice of the celebrity

² <https://agence-uni.com/en-quoi-le-storytelling-pour-le-secteur-du-luxe-est-il-une-methode-efficace-pour-transmettre-sa-philosophie/>. Accessed on: 18/12/2020.

will be made according to his/her resemblance to the target audience or if he/she represents a model for it (Fleck 2015).

Attractiveness/appeal is generally related to the pleasant character of the communicator, the resemblance to the receiver and the physical beauty (Christmas 2008, 282-288). Regarding the ability to be delightful – which is called, in Anglo-American terminology, *likability* – this may be less scientifically investigated, although some studies highlight its effectiveness, and it would be enhanced by smiles and gestures. The effectiveness of similarity is proven by inducing positive emotional reactions and determining favourable cognitive responses, especially if the recipients have to make decisions with emotional or personal value. In connection with physical appeal, advertising starts from the assumption of the persuasive nature of beauty itself. A number of studies have shown that the use of young, tall, slender, bright and radiant “supermodels” in print or audio-visual advertisements can contribute, to some extent, to attitudinal and behavioural change and may be more important than any arguments.

Among the reasons which would justify the influence of physical appeal on attitudes, Dan Crăciun mentions: the probability that the attention of the receivers will be captured by an attractive communicator and, as a result, increase the chances of memorising the content of the message; associating physical appeal with the message, which results in a favourable evaluation; the tendency of people to identify themselves, to some extent, with attractive broadcasters and the feeling that they can raise their standard of living if they do what they suggest; self-confidence, smoothness and spontaneity given by the beauty of attractive individuals when addressing the public target (in this situation, the persuasive “agent” is not the beauty, but the fluency and charm with which the message is conveyed). The favourable change of the receiver’s attitudes is conditioned, more or less, by the effects of the communicator’s physical appeal.

First of all, attractiveness/appeal can lead to the formation of brand-friendly attitudes. Thus, certain perfume brands are bought due to the association of the products with some attractive models. Secondly, attractiveness/appeal can prove effective when wishing to capture the receiver’s attention. In many advertisements, the receiver’s attention is captured with the help of “amazing” models, which aim to convince him/her to buy the promoted product, using different persuasive strategies. Thirdly, attractiveness / appeal can influence the low involvement recipients’ decisions, which are hasty, based on peripheral stimuli, such as physical beauty. Fourthly, beauty can also be a central persuasive argument, when the nature of the product is in line with the

communicator's appeal (for example, cosmetics or *haute couture* clothing are more convincingly promoted by attractive models, thus aiming to emphasize elegance and a pleasing appearance conveyed by the use of those products).

Celebrity endorsement also raises a number of possible issues, meaning that the focus on the character can lead to ignoring the brand and the message conveyed. In addition, when the image of the celebrity is affected, the brand can suffer damage or confusion if several brands are promoted through the same star (Fleck 2015), which leads, implicitly, to the decrease of the character's credibility (Christmas 2008, 276). However, for star strategy to be effective, it needs a series of pre-tests and reflections on the potential repercussions on brand awareness and image, brand preference, intention to buy and recommend it (Fleck 2015).

One brand which consistently relies on storytelling as well as on story selling communication is Chanel. The visual identity of this fashion house is considered a model of coherence, which can be understood only by "the initiated" (Joannès 2009, 44), i.e. those who are familiar with the life and character of Miss Chanel, the brand founder.

2. Case Study: Chanel – coherence and consistency in brand communication

Our paper is based on the study of written social documents, as well as on the content analysis of unwritten social documents (Chelcea 2007, 511), to highlight the persuasive force of storytelling, both in terms of brand communication in the case of Chanel and at the level of promoting the brand-product image (*Chanel N° 5*).

It is considered that storytelling can be "any process of gathering information, research in the form of a story (biography, autobiography, oral history, narrative interview, etc.)" (Csesznek and Coman 2020, 6). From a sociological perspective, the theoretical approach to storytelling is a critical one (Csesznek and Coman 2020, 7), the analysis of stories and social contexts of their production, transmission or influence being done in order to understand, on the one hand, what works and what does not, and, on the other hand, to identify the advantages and limitations of the use of stories from a scientific point of view. For example, with the help of stories, important contents are easily transmitted, which can be of scientific relevance only if they are supported by quantitative data.

In the current context, in which mass communication involves the transmission of text, image and sound together, through devices connected

to a network, a new way of telling stories has intervened (Ciocan 2020, 127). It is about *transmedia storytelling*, “a narrative technique based on telling a story across different communication platforms”, used by many companies as a strategy to promote products, because it creates a strong link between brands and consumers (Gürel and Tiğli 2014, 36-37). In fact, the “old world” of storytelling bonds with the “new world” represented by photography, film and digital arts through the qualitative method called *digital storytelling* (Cersosimo 2019, 2, 4; Csesznek and Coman 2020, 12-13), through which the media elements are integrated in the ethnographic research. Whether it is about personal narratives (which refer to significant events in a person's life), *historical documentaries* (which help to understand the past by examining important events) or *informative narratives* (through which the public is informed about a certain concept or a certain practice), digital stories have a relevant impact on the public and facilitate communication between brands and consumers through emotional involvement (Roux 2009). The virtual world offers multiple possibilities to attract and inform potential customers, as well as to maintain and develop relationships with them, through innovation and creativity (Kotler and Phoertsch 2011, 149-151). Thus, an organisational site is a means of brand communication, although there is a misconception that the main purpose is to present a virtual catalogue. Unlike traditional approaches, the emphasis in the online environment is on the advantage of the rapid dissemination of the latest information and the simplicity of transactions which can be made anytime and anywhere. However, in addition to the functional benefits, a brand also offers emotional benefits, which are related to the consistency of the promise made, but also to the responses and reactions of customers about the brand.

The brand personality and everything which is known, spoken or thought about it results from its identity and image. *Identity* is the presentation of the brand, whose purpose is to shape a positive image in the public target's mind. In fact, the *brand image* is represented by the public target's perception of the company or brand and is formed by viewing advertisements, visiting company stores/organisational sites or interacting with the internal public (Drewniany and Jewler 2009, 53-54). The brand image reflects its legitimacy, which is given by the public recognition of organisational values, and, in a figurative sense, sums up the feelings and evaluations which contribute to *reputation* (Joannès 2009, 23). The latter is formed over time, based on general impressions of the brand image, and a good reputation often leads to brand loyalty,

which is often the core of a brand's *capital* (Aaker 2005, 64)³. A brand image may comprise an ideology in a few features containing at least one value, but it is essential that the brand image is focused on a simple graphic symbol – the logo. Thus, the monogram of the Chanel brand, consisting of the two “Cs”, illustrated by simple, solid and braided letters back to back, is considered by Alain Joannès “an unbeatable model of visual identity, seemingly disparate, but of unquestionable coherence”, as a result of the clues multiplied by Coco Chanel, which evokes her personality and certain aspects related to her existence (Joannès 2009, 26, 30, 44). This logo has not undergone significant changes over time and is characterised by the simplicity and integrity of the design, the elegance, richness and excellence given by the black colour of the letters, as well as by the uniqueness of its own type of writing, called “Chanel” also protected by copyright. The logo of the two “Cs” in the mirror appeared in 1925. In the early 1940s, the inscription “CHANEL” was added below, written in straight capital letters, and in the mid-1950s, the two “Cs” had were surrounded by a circle and the brand name moved over, resulting in the current shape⁴.



Figure 1.1. and 1.2. Chanel's logos⁵

³ Regarding the brand capital, David Aaker (2005, 68-69) claims that it is reduced when buyers are indifferent to the brand, and the purchase is actually made depending on features, price and facilities. Yet, a brand has considerable value, to which a symbol and slogan can contribute, when the brand continues to be purchased compared to other superior competing products in terms of features, price and facilities offered. Brand loyalty is unique, it cannot be transferred to another name or symbol without substantial disbursements and sales losses; it differs qualitatively from other important dimensions of brand capital in that it relates to user experience, while recognition, associations and perceived quality characterize brands that have never been used, but these three dimensions of brand capital can influence, in some situations, loyalty. In fact, all four dimensions of brand capital are interacting. For example, perceived quality is partly based on associations and even brand recognition, just as association with a symbol could lead to recognition.

⁴ <https://logos-marques.com/chanel-logo/>. Accessed on: 20/12/2020.

⁵ <https://logos-marques.com/chanel-logo/>; <https://www.brandsoftheworld.com/logo/chanel-0>. Accessed on: 20/12/2020.

This logo is wrapped up in mystery and legends. According to the official website, the two “Cs” braids could be the first letters of Coco Chanel’s nickname and name. In 1921, Gabrielle Chanel applied the first letter of her name, “C”, to the wax seal on the neck of the *Chanel N° 5* perfume bottle. In fact, the fashion designer signed with this capital letter on the books in her library. The doubling of this initial in a monogram became the logo of the Chanel House, which recalls, through the rounded shape of the letter, the geometric motifs, knots and braids in the stained glass windows of the Aubazine Abbey – a possible source of inspiration for the aesthetics of this brand. After the death of her mother, Gabrielle spent six years in the orphanage of this abbey. Coincidentally or not, Queen Claude of France used the two “Cs” woven as a badge on the sculptures in her apartments at the Blois Castle, and Caterina Maria Romula di Lorenzo de Medici signed her correspondence like this. The same two “Cs” of Catherine de Medici are also found on a fireplace at Chenonceau Castle, next to the coat of arms of King Henry II.

Moreover, braided “C” with green enamel and one with white enamel, which also refer to Caterina de Medici, were discovered at one end of a golden hairpin, during the rehabilitation works in the Henric IV neighbourhood at Fontainebleau Castle. The two braided “Cs” could also come from the emblem of the Crément Castle in Nice, located on its stained glass windows and arches. The castle was bought in 1923 by Gabrielle Chanel’s friend, Irène Bretz, and the emblem was noticed by the fashion designer during a stay at the castle, when she was working with Ernest Beaux on her perfumes in Grasse. Having her friend’s consent, the two “Cs” would have become the logo of the Chanel House. Finally, this logo would represent, in fact, Gabrielle Chanel and her great love, Boy Capel, whom the fashion house brought together, although their relationship was never made official⁶.

The visual identity of the Chanel brand displays strength and richness, which results, according to Alain Joannès (2009, 44-45), “from what Coco Chanel felt and wanted from each of the components. She extracted from certain aspects of her life values dispersed in the visual identity that unifies the brand”. It seems that among the Chanel symbols, the black and white suit jacket/coat is the most structured and harmonious. The list of brand recognition signs is completed by the bicoloured shoes, the mysterious symbol of the chain (which appears in necklaces, belts and bracelets and through which the fashion designer still

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<https://espritdegabrielle.com/mais-dou-vient-le-logo-chanel/>;

[https://logos-](https://logos-marques.com/chanel-logo/)

[marques.com/chanel-logo/](https://logos-marques.com/chanel-logo/). Accessed: 21/12/2020.

communicates, conveying the duality of captivity-consented union), white camellia (initially adopted as personal symbol of Coco Chanel and then transformed into the quintessence of the brand), shoulder bags and trousers (“inspired by Miss’s incursions in men’s clothing style”, through which women acquired the attributes of freedom), military uniform buttons, prints, much loved by designers, with animal, vegetable, tree motifs, as well as phantasmagoria-inspired jewellery. Since 1983, variations on the same theme have continued, which has contributed to the consolidation of the brand’s capital. To these signs, the legendary *Chanel N° 5* perfume can be added, which in 2021 will be celebrating its centenary and which is at the center of an “unauthorized” biography, published relatively recently, in 2019, by Marie-Dominique Lelièvre.

Chanel’s creations have recently been the subject of an impressive exhibition, with over 350 exhibits. The exhibition, entitled *Gabrielle Chanel. Fashion Manifesto*⁷, organised with the support of the Chanel Fashion House, is still ongoing, until 14th March 2021, at the Galliera Palace, the headquarters of the Fashion Museum in Paris, and the preparations have lasted for two years. The name of this exhibition is connected, according to one of the organizers, to the two important moments in Gabrielle Chanel’s life and career, in which she opposed the fashion of her time by introducing a radical vision – a new elegance for the modern woman⁸. On the occasion of Museum Night 2020, Galliera Palace adapted to the context of the COVID-19 pandemic and shared, on Facebook and Instagram, a virtual tour of this exhibition⁹, built on the technique of the interview and short stories which reveal the stages of creation, creative philosophy and brand values. Thus, the first part of the visit is dedicated to the beginning of Gabrielle’s career and the emblematic pieces of that period, a room is reserved for the “quintessence of Coco’s spirit” – *Chanel N° 5* perfume, and in the second part of the exhibition, there are the tweed suit jacket, the bicoloured shoes, the 2.55 quilted purse, fancy jewellery, etc., each piece on display being very well highlighted by the gloomy decor.

⁷ <https://www.chanel.com/us/about-chanel/the-history/2020/>;
<https://espritdegabrielle.com/gabrielle-chanel-manifeste-de-mode-au-palais-galliera-paris/>;
Guided tour of Gabrielle Chanel’s Exhibition/Galliera Palace:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPp6TD4vJZQ>. Accessed on: 22/12/2020.

⁸ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPp6TD4vJZQ>. Accessed on: 22/12/2020.

⁹ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zPp6TD4vJZQ>. Accessed on: 22/12/2020.

Important moments in the history of Chanel House are also highlighted in the 2017 communication campaign, *Insight Chanel*¹⁰. Based on storytelling, this campaign is designed as a book, structured in 30 chapters and includes short films with different themes (*N° 5; Marilyn and N° 5; Chanel and the Diamonds; The Jacket; Coco; Mademoiselle; Gabrielle Chanel; Coco by Karl; Chanel by Karl; The Lion; The Colours of Chanel; Paris by Chanel; Haute Couture; The Vocabulary of Fashion; The Self-Portrait of a Perfume; The Camellia; The Paradoxes of Chanel; Gabrielle, a Rebel at Heart; The Time of Chanel; Gabrielle, the Quest for Freedom; Gabrielle, the Pursuit of Passion; Deauville; Biarritz; Venice; Gabrielle Chanel Goes West; Masculine as her Muse; Gabrielle Chanel and the Arts; Gabrielle Chanel and the Cinema; Gabrielle Chanel and Dance; Gabrielle Chanel and Literature*). The video editing used is a compilation (Drewniany and Jewler 2009, 262), a female *voice-over* accompanies the narration, and each frame illustrates what is being said, in a solemn tone. The images follow one another quickly, the predominant chromatics are specific to the brand (white, black, beige, gold, red)¹¹, and the information is transmitted through a discourse similar to that in advertisements, which does not put so much emphasis on the intrinsic qualities of products, as for the idea that wearing or using Chanel products means “entering the aura of a legend” (Joannès 2009, 44), taking part in the history of the Chanel House and even borrowing some of the founder’s traits.

There is no coincidence that the *Insight Chanel* campaign begins with the story of *N° 5* perfume, which uses as a leitmotif the adverbial phrase “For the first time ...”, thus suggesting the uniqueness of the product. Through the sobriety of the bottle and the rigor of the label, the perfume reminds of the timeless distinction and elegance of Gabrielle Chanel’s creations and can only recall the classical notes (Julien 1997, 36). This minimalist bottle is a way of thinking, an idea (Lelièvre 2019, 20), and the simple name of the perfume is wrapped up in mystery. According to the exegesis, this name could come from the fifth bottle chosen by Gabrielle from the olfactory creations proposed by the perfumer Ernest Beaux¹², from the five children of the Chanel family, from the fifth constellation, of Leo, a sign under which Gabrielle was born, from

¹⁰ <https://www.chanel.com/no/about-chanel/the-stories/>. Accessed on: 23/12/2020.

¹¹ <https://inside.chanel.com/fr/colors-of-chanel>. Accessed on: 23/12/2020.

¹² <https://inside.chanel.com/fr/no5/video>. Accessed on: 23/12/2020.

the quintessence of alchemists or from Miss's lucky number who launches her collection on the 5th of the fifth month of the year¹³.

The positioning of the *Chanel N° 5* perfume was relied almost constantly on the grand standing personality (Julien 1997, 42). At the beginning, in 1937, the promotion was made even through the perfume creator (Amălăncei 2018, 87-88) and was based on its notoriety and prestige¹⁴. The perfume became legendary in 1952, when the young actress Marilyn Monroe was asked by a journalist what she was wearing and she answered "Just a few drops of *N° 5*". This statement was the subject of an advertising campaign only after about 60 years, in 2013, with the discovery of a recording of the actress, made by a journalist for the *Marie Claire* magazine, in 1960. Among the muses who became the image of perfume *N° 5* is Suzy Parker, Ali MacGraw, Catherine Deneuve, Jean Rosemary Shrimpton, Carole Bouquet, Estella Warren, Nicole Kidman, Audrey Tautou, Gisele Bündchen, Marion Cotillard. However, the strategy for promoting the perfume surprised, as we have already mentioned, by appealing to a male muse (actor Brad Pitt), thus joining the line of novelty, which is usually the basis of advertisements for *Chanel N° 5*. Twelve of these, only the 1973–2012 audio-visual commercials, were the subject of an extensive and interesting descriptive analysis (Briot 2015), which highlighted certain constants in the construction of the image of *Chanel N° 5* perfume over time: appealing to muses (there is an alternation of brunette celebrities – Carole Bouquet, Audrey Tautou – and blondes – Catherine Deneuve, Estella Warren, Nicole Kidman – but without being able to make a final classification in one or another of the female archetypes¹⁵, as well as the association of the perfume image with the story of successful women), an elitist and dreamlike universe, a certain reflection of the woman from the moment of promoting the perfume.

These constant features can also be identified in the next two audio-visual commercials of *Chanel N° 5* perfume, *The One that I Want* (2014) and *Be Part of What's to Come* (2020). According to the director of the commercial known as *The One that I Want*, Baz Luhrmann,

¹³ <https://espritdegabrielle.com/chanel-n5-unique-inimitable-absolu-au-parfum-determite/>. Accessed on: 23/12/2020.

¹⁴ https://inside.chanel.com/en/no5/campaigns/1937_no5. Accessed on: 23/12/2020.

¹⁵ To these, there are added Gisele Bündchen (blonde), in the 2014 commercial entitled *The One that I Want* (https://inside.chanel.com/fr/no5/campaigns/2014_no5_the_one_that_i_want. Accessed on: 23/12/2020) and Marion Cotillard (brunette), in the 2020 commercial, *Be Part of What's to Come* (<https://www.chanel.com/us/fragrance/n5-marion-cotillard/>. Accessed on: 23/12/2020).

director and of the 2004 *Chanel N° 5* commercial with Nicole Kidman, Gisele Bündchen plays a role very similar to her daily life, that of the modern woman, who feels fulfilled and confident in herself and as a surfer, and as a mother, with her child, and as a model, in her professional life, but also as a girlfriend, in a relationship full of romance¹⁶. The posture in which the female character appears at the beginning of the commercial (she is wearing a swimsuit and has a surfboard under her arm, on which the Chanel logo is found) is reminiscent of Gabrielle Chanel's avant-garde vision of freeing women from the constraints of clothing. In *The "Cast" backstage*, Baz Luhrmann explains why he chose Gisele Bündchen to be the new image of the *Chanel N° 5* perfume, insisting on the idea that it surprised the audience, because he managed to convey the emotion very easily.

The most recent advertisement focuses on the French actress and soloist Marion Cotillard, for whom this "mysterious, unique" perfume was love at first sight and about which she states that she associates it with crucial moments in her career¹⁷. The commercial presents, on a night background, a beautiful love story, whose action begins and ends on the Louis-Philippe Bridge in Paris. Dressed, initially, in the harmonious black-white combination, specific to the Chanel brand, the woman leans over the edge of the bridge and looks at the full moon, which invites her to dream with open eyes. Suddenly, she appears on the moon, among craters, where she is dancing, feeling free, dominant and happy, with a handsome young man. This time, she is wearing an elegant golden lace dress, reinterpreted by Virginie Viard after a masterpiece created and worn by Gabrielle Chanel. This information appears right on the official website¹⁸. The colour of the dress and the Moon, amplified by the night decor, is reminiscent of the perfume's glow, and the protagonist's gesture, made with the index finger and middle finger, to illustrate the partner's breathing (Figure 2.1) and directing it to the woman's neck (Figure 2.2) represent an olfactory suggestion of the unmistakable *N° 5*, which climaxes in a self-touching area where perfumes are frequently sprayed.

¹⁶ *The "Cast" backstage*, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zUmOsmI9zOg>. Accessed on: 23/12/2020.

¹⁷ *Harper's Bazaar* (Romanian edition), no. 97-98, December 2020 – January 2021: 103.

¹⁸ <https://www.chanel.com/cz/fragrance/n5-marion-cotillard/>. Accessed on: 24/12/2020.



Figures 2.1. and 2.2. Illustrative gestures¹⁹

At the end of the commercial, the woman reappears on the Louis-Philippe bridge, this time accompanied by her dance partner. The female character in the commercial reflects Marion Cotillard's personality, as the actress herself states: "This woman is partly me – a free spirit"²⁰.

The web page for this ad on the official website²¹ is built like a story within a story. Along with the commercial, there appear the perfume, a short film alternating frames from the commercial with snapshots behind the scenes, the actress's impressions on the Chanel Fashion House, the story of the dress, static images both from the commercial and from behind the scenes, and details about the protagonist's makeup.

We can see that, when promoting perfumes, the image is placed under the sign of rarity and is based on the consumer's sensitivity, to whom it is sold, along with the product, a dream, the idea of luxury and the illusion of belonging to an elite. Mariette Julien (1997, 12-13) states that the creation of a perfume is usually simultaneous with the preparation of its launch on the market and, therefore, its visual evocation is made, without smelling it, based on a verbal description, which mental images are associated with it. However, in order to promote an existing perfume, such as *Chanel N° 5*, the source of inspiration is the brand image by which the product is already differentiated on the market rather than the fragrance.

3. Conclusions

The signifying power of storytelling is essential in promoting luxury products, along with the dimensions of their symbolic value (Biot and De Lassus 2014: 131). The story of a brand is a very important stake because it helps to differentiate and position. In the case of the Chanel brand, storytelling revolves around the life and career of the founder of the Fashion

¹⁹ The images are screenshots of the web page where the advertisement appears.

²⁰ *Harper's Bazaar* (Romanian edition), no. 97-98, December 2020 – January 2021: 103.

²¹ <https://www.chanel.com/cz/fragrance/n5-marion-cotillard/>. Accessed on: 24/12/2020.

House, embodied, in one way or another, by celebrities of the moment, and it often relies on emotions, thus creating attachment to the brand.

In brand communication, a very important role is played by visual images, which have effects which are characteristic of a specific language and involve multiple challenges related to the meaning assigned by the receivers. Some images hardly manage to maintain attention, while others raise awareness and, after being seen, in time, they take the form of mental images, sometimes imprinted permanently in memory. These images can be compared to “projections that *move something* in the emotional receptivity” (Joannès 2009, 15, 18). In fact, it is about the impact, which can it positive or negative, precise and lasting, or about the performance of the image, the objective of communication through images being to awaken unique and memorable feelings. In addition to the sensations, emotions and information they evoke, images also contribute to a series of associations and mental resonances, and in advertising, they often have cultural reverberations and symbolic power, adapting to the collective imaginary.

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