

A Semiotic Perspective on Fashion Films and Brand Ethos: The Case of Hermès' *La Flânerie*

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Abstract

Contemporary literature perceives fashion films as a hybrid communication genre. However, the semiotic mechanisms through which luxury brands construct and transmit their ethos via fashion films remain underexplored. This paper argues that fashion films serve more than just promotion. They are symbolic devices that articulate a luxury brand's ethos and propose new consumer-brand relationships. Drawing on the Greimas School of Semiotics, specifically Rastier's interpretative semantics and Floch's semiotic square of consumer values, the paper analyzes *La Flânerie* by Hermès (2015). The analysis reveals how the film combines values of playfulness, nonchalance, and the "art of slowness" with Hermès' traditional codes of craftsmanship and heritage. The fashion film enables Hermès to articulate a broader socio-aesthetic and ethico-philosophical vision. This paper contributes to the literature on luxury branding, fashion communication, and semiotic approaches to brand analysis, showing how a fashion film offers a distinctive media form for a luxury brand to update its values, redefine luxury, and strengthen consumer relationships.

Keywords: Fashion Films, Luxury Branding, Semiotics, Interpretative Semantics, Semiotic Square.

1. New Media and the Luxury Industry: Exploring the Role of Fashion Films

The rise of new media has contributed to the development of fashion films, a new genre that proposes interesting perspectives for fashion and media (Mouratidou, 2022; Buffo, 2023; Gorman, 2024; Noris & Cantoni, 2024). Fashion films have nowadays expanded within the luxury fashion industry and have evolved into a powerful communication tool, offering luxury brands an innovative medium to

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express their narratives and values (Díaz Soloaga et al., 2023; Martín-Ramallal & Ruiz-Mondaza, 2024; Noris & Cantoni, 2024). This article studies how the value systems of luxury brands are articulated within fashion films. It also examines how fashion films create a deeper emotional connection with consumers, while enhancing their brand identity in a more holistic way than traditional communication media, such as advertisements or fashion shows.

To understand the structure of meaning of fashion films, this article analyzes the Hermès film *La Flânerie* (2015) for the Spring-Summer collection 2015. The analysis draws on the Greimas School of Semiotics (Greimas et al., 1989; Brown, 1985; Champagne, 1984), also called the School of Paris. In particular, *interpretative semantics* (Rastier, 1987; Rastier, 1997) helps to better understand the textual mechanisms of fashion films as well as the interpretative operations. In addition, Jean-Marie Floch's semiotics (2001; 2005), and more specifically the *semiotic square of consumer values*, helps explore the integration of fashion films within the value system of the brands.

The existing literature on fashion films highlights their promotional and communicative characteristics. Fashion films are either studied as audiovisual branding vehicles (Díaz Soloaga, 2016; Díaz Soloaga et al., 2023), as digital communication formats within luxury marketing (Martín-Ramallal & Ruiz-Mondaza, 2024; Noris & Cantoni, 2024), or as aesthetic and transmedia phenomena (Uhlírova, 2013; Berry, 2012). However, the internal structures of meaning that fashion films use to construct, organize, and transmit a brand's broader ethos have not yet been explored. Similarly, while semiotics has been applied to fashion photography, advertising, and brand identity (Anido Freire, 2014; Chalevelaki, 2007; Chalevelaki, 2025; Floch et al., 2001; Barthes, 1990), its application to the fashion film genre as luxury brands' evolving digital communication strategy remains underdeveloped.

This paper addresses the following research question: *How can a luxury brand use fashion films to articulate its brand ethos, restructure its value systems, and propose new forms of consumer-brand relationship in the digital communication landscape?* This question is addressed through an in-depth semiotic analysis of Hermès' *La Flânerie* (2015), applying the two aforementioned complementary frameworks from the Greimas School of Semiotics: Rastier's interpretative semantics, to trace the film's trajectory of meaning, and Floch's semiotic square of consumer values, to map the brand's value system and its evolution.

The paper makes three contributions to management and marketing scholarship. First, it advances the semiotic analysis of brand communication, and at the same time, it offers a transparent and transferable methodological framework for future studies, by demonstrating how interpretative semantics and the semiotic square of consumer values can be applied to the fashion film genre. Second, it contributes to luxury brand management by showing how heritage brands such as Hermès can strategically use fashion films to renew their value proposition and remain relevant to contemporary digital audiences. Third, it contributes to the emerging literature on digital luxury communication by reframing fashion films as central semiotic instruments that help brands construct meaning, shape consumer identity, and cultivate long-term relational loyalty. Together, these contributions position semiotic inquiry as a productive lens for brand management, luxury marketing, and digital communication research.

In sum, this article conceptualises fashion films as semiotic structures through which luxury brands reorganize and renegotiate their value systems. This is a conceptual framing that distinguishes this contribution from previous ones, which view fashion films as aesthetic branding content.

2. From Fashion Films to Semiotic Analysis: A Review of Literature

2.1 Fashion Films: Definition, Genre, and Historical Origins

Fashion films constitute a hybrid audiovisual genre that has progressively established itself as a distinctive tool of brand communication over the past two decades (Díaz Soloaga, 2016; Berry, 2012). Del Pino & Castelló (2015, p. 18) offer a widely cited definition: Fashion films are “a form of short films, at the service of a brand, characterised by a communicative style in which the beauty and extremely careful aesthetics of the message predominate over the product and/or the brand itself.” What separates fashion films from conventional advertising is precisely this subordination of direct commercial logic to aesthetic, experiential, and narrative ends. Rather than persuading consumers to purchase a specific product, fashion films aim to build experiences, cultivate the aura of the brand, and foster emotionally resonant relationships with viewers (Jódar-Marín, 2019b).

As Suzy Menkes observed at the emergence of this genre, high-budget fashion films bring “emotion and visual excitement to branding for the YouTube generation” (Menkes, 2010). The genre encompasses a wide spectrum of audiovisual content. At one end are ‘auteur productions’ conceived as art cinema objects in their own right. The term refers to films or media where the director has a dominant creative control, effectively serving as the primary “author” (Sarris, 2008) and examples include David Lynch’s *Lady Blue Shanghai* (2010) for Dior, Roman Polanski’s *A Therapy* for Prada (2012), or Tom Ford’s feature film *A Single Man* (2009). At the other end are experimental and conceptual video works, such as Nick Knight’s *SHOWstudio* (2005). Khan (2012) further distinguishes fashion films that are focusing on brand narrative from those with more esoteric, non-narrativised, and conceptual-artistic aims, while Berry (2012) positions the genre at the intersection of advertising and art cinema.

The historical precursors of fashion films can be traced to the early twentieth century, when short films produced by photographers and creative directors served primarily as commercial aids for fashion houses (Uhlírova, 2013; Leese, 1991). It was only at the beginning of the twenty-first century that the genre acquired a distinct identity, clearly separating itself from both advertising and the fashion show format. This transformation was driven by a convergence of two forces: the growing aspiration of fashion brands to communicate their core values through richer and more culturally resonant media, and the digital disruption of the communications ecosystem, which opened new possibilities for expression that print and runway formats could not replicate. The result was a genre whose aesthetic, sensory, and narrative properties (Jódar-Marín, 2019a) made it uniquely suited to communicating identity rather than product. The following section examines how luxury brands in particular have exploited these properties.

2.2 Fashion Films and Luxury Brand Communication

Within the luxury sector, fashion films have taken on a communicative significance that goes beyond their general promotional function. This is because luxury brands operate within a distinctive symbolic economy. On one level, the fashion industry is one of the most economically significant industries globally (Zhang et al., 2024), and digital technologies have become strategic instruments for luxury brands to reach and engage with targeted audiences (Díaz Soloaga et al., 2023). On another level, luxury is intrinsically associated with the extraordinary, with dreams, creativity, and emotion. To sustain this aura, luxury brands tend to present themselves as sacred environments: their iconic products function as cultural equivalents of the holy grail, and retail spaces serve as temples in which loyal consumers enact organized rituals (Dion & Borraz, 2015). Fashion films extend this logic into the digital realm, functioning as a form of symbolic initiation. They reveal the inner world of luxury houses and create a sense of intimacy and complicity with the viewer.

Beyond sacralization, luxury brands reinforce their association with the inaccessible and the priceless through a process scholars have termed *artification*: the transformation of commercial objects and practices into art (Massi & Turrini, 2020). Fashion films are particularly well suited to this process. By emphasizing the creative, innovative, and aesthetically elevated dimensions of the brand, fashion films displace the commercial and financial logic that would otherwise dominate the brand encounter. This aesthetic elevation contributes to memorable consumer experiences and to the cultivation of long-term brand loyalty, though the precise mechanisms of this relationship remain an empirical question requiring further investigation (Zha et al., 2025). At their most effective, fashion films operate at the intersection of brand communication and cultural production, offering luxury brands a medium for constructing a coherent, emotionally compelling, and artistically legitimized identity (Anido Freire, 2014; Díaz Soloaga, 2016).

The strategic deployment of fashion films by luxury brands has, however, occurred against the backdrop of a broader and still-contested debate about the relationship between luxury and the internet. Scholars such as Kapferer and Bastien (2012) have questioned whether the democratizing and mass-accessible character of online platforms is compatible with the exclusivity and elitism that define the luxury value proposition. Critics of digital diffusion argue that the open nature of digital channels risks diluting the aura that is central to luxury brand identity. Proponents counter that digital media can be wielded as an instrument of selective seduction, as a means of attracting discerning audiences and amplifying, rather than diminishing, a brand's intrinsic values (Díaz Soloaga et al., 2023). The evidence from brand practice suggests that luxury houses that have embraced digital communication strategically have successfully repositioned and strengthened their brand identity (Noris & Cantoni, 2024; Martín-Ramallal & Ruiz-Mondaza, 2024), using fashion films as a mechanism for reaching younger, digitally native consumers (Prensky, 2001) without abandoning their foundational brand codes. In this sense, the fashion film emerges as a digital extension to luxury identity, rather than a threat, a vehicle for renewing the brand's value proposition while preserving its semiotic heritage.

2.3 The Active Spectator and the Limits of Existing Research

The communicative power of luxury fashion films is inseparable from the transformed role of the spectator in the digital media landscape. Drawing on Manovich's (2005) concept of «permanent presence», which refers to the constant renewal and recirculation of content in digital environments, fashion films introduce a productive tension between fashion's constitutive ephemerality (Lipovetsky, 2017) and its new digital persistence (Berry, 2012). This tension is resolved, in part, through the active role that digital navigation assigns to the viewer. Across both narrative-driven and more experimental or conceptual fashion films (Berry, 2012; Khan, 2012), the viewer is no longer a passive recipient of a commercial message. The digital consumption of content shapes reading modalities in fragmentary and discontinuous ways: viewers constantly move between content, seeking entertainment and meaning simultaneously (Díaz Soloaga, 2016). The spectator becomes an interpreter rather than a receiver of a pre-packaged brand argument, by constructing meaning from the film's aesthetic, narrative, and symbolic elements.

This shift in the spectator's role has significant implications for how we understand fashion films as communication objects. Existing scholarship has made important contributions in describing the promotional and aesthetic dimensions of fashion films. Studies have positioned them as audiovisual branding vehicles (Díaz Soloaga et al., 2023), as digital communication formats within luxury marketing (Martín-Ramallal & Ruiz-Mondaza, 2024; Noris & Cantoni, 2024), and as aesthetic and transmedia phenomena (Uhlírova, 2013; Berry, 2012). However, the internal architecture of meaning that fashion films activate has not yet been examined, along with the semiotic mechanisms through which the film constructs, organizes, and transmits a luxury brand's broader system of values. Knowing that fashion films are “experiential” or “artified” does not explain how they achieve this effect, at the level of signs, isotopies, and value structures. Similarly, while semiotic approaches have been productively applied to fashion photography, advertising, and brand identity (Barthes, 1990; Floch et al., 2001; Anido Freire, 2014), their application to the fashion film genre as a luxury brand's evolving digital communication strategy remains underdeveloped.

The active spectator, who reads, interprets, and co-constructs meaning from the film, is precisely the kind of subject that a semiotic analysis is equipped to theorize. It is this gap between what existing literature has described and what it has not yet explained that motivates the analytical approach adopted in this paper.

2.4 Semiotics as the Analytical Framework

The complexity and multimodality of fashion films, with their combination of moving image, music, narrative structure, and brand symbolism, calls for an analytical method capable of decoding the underlying structures of meaning they produce, beyond their surface content. Semiotics, defined as the science of meaning and its production (Macias-Muñoz, 2014), offers precisely such a framework. Unlike content analysis, which catalogues visible elements, or rhetorical analysis, which focuses on persuasive strategies, semiotics attends to how meaning is constructed relationally through the interaction of signs within a text, and through the interpretative operations that the text asks of its reader.

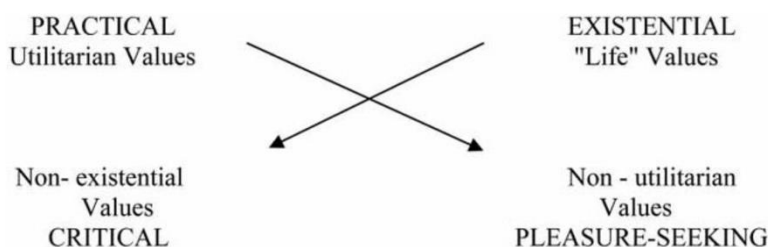
This paper draws on the Greimas School of Semiotics (Greimas et al., 1989; Brown, 1985; Champagne, 1984), also known as the School of Paris, rather than on the Saussurean semiological tradition associated with Barthes' *Fashion System* (1990). The distinction is methodologically significant. Semiological analysis treats signs as discrete and autonomous entities, with one sign corresponding to another in a linear fashion, whereas the Greimassian approach treats meaning as produced through the dynamic interaction of signs within the global context of a discourse. The text as a whole determines the meaning of its individual elements; the local sign is interpretable only in relation to the network in which it is embedded. This relational, context-sensitive logic is particularly well suited to the analysis of audiovisual texts such as fashion films, in which visual, acoustic, narrative, and figurative elements continuously affect one another.

Two complementary frameworks from within this tradition are employed. The first is Rastier's interpretative semantics (1987, 1997; Chalevelaki, 2008), which provides the tools to trace the "trajectory of meaning" across a text through the identification of semes (minimal units of meaning), semic molecules, and isotopies (recurrent semic patterns that create semantic coherence). Central to this framework is the distinction between **inherent semes** (stable, dictionary-level attributes that belong to a sign regardless of context) and **afferent semes** (context-activated, culturally variable attributes that are added by the surrounding elements or by cultural convention). The analysis process includes identifying which semes are **actualized** (brought into focus by the text) and which are **virtualized** (neutralized or suppressed). This framework is particularly suited to the narrative and figurative dimension of *La Flânerie by Hermès*, allowing the analyst to move systematically from individual signs to the global semantic structure of the film.

The second framework (Figure 1) is Floch's semiotic square of consumer values (1988; 2001; 2005; Mazzalovo, 2012), which maps the value orientations articulated by a brand's communication onto four relational poles. These poles are organized along two axes: a **basic existential axis** (values of Being) and a **pragmatic axis** (values of Doing), each comprising a positive and a negative term (Table 1).

The four poles are not independent categories but stand in logical relations of contradiction and complementarity: utopian and ludic values are complementary, as are practical and critical values, while utopian and critical, and practical and ludic, are contradictory.

Figure 1: Semiotic Square of Consumer Values



Source: Floch (1988).

Table 1: Floch’s semiotic square (Axis and Values)

	Pragmatic Axis (Doing)	Basic Axis of Being
Positive values	Practical — functionality, utility, use, performance	Utopian/Existential — authenticity, existential fulfilment, the experience of living
Negative values (negation of the opposite)	Critical — rational evaluation, know-how, attention to detail, value-for-money	Ludic/Pleasure Seeking — play, pleasure, aesthetics, rejection of instrumentality

Floch’s model has been widely applied in brand semiotics (Ashman & Patterson, 2026; Bobrie, 2018; Chevalier & Mazzalovo, 2004; Jardim, 2023; Laurino, 2026; Mazzalovo, 2012; Mick & Oswald, 2006; Oswald, 2020; Rossolatos, 2014, 2018, 2021, 2023; Semprini, 1992; Signori & Flint, 2020; Veg-Sala & Roux, 2014) and is particularly appropriate for the luxury context, in which brands continuously negotiate the tension between heritage and innovation, exclusivity and accessibility.

The two frameworks operate in sequence: the isotopy analysis, built on the identification of inherent and afferent semes, generates the semantic material, and the semiotic square then organizes it into a systemic representation of the brand values. The analytical procedure is described in full in Section 4.

3. Hermès and Fashion Films

Hermès is a French luxury house, whose core values are craftsmanship, elitism, tradition, know-how and quality. The Hermès brand communicates heritage and traditional values. In its fashion shows, the extravagant and the spectacular—which typically characterize fashion shows—give way to the natural and fluid (Chalevelaki, 2014).

Since 2010, Hermès has been presenting a series of films that embody a very different style to which we have become accustomed: humor, emotion, an offbeat and surreal vision are the features of this new communication strategy.

For example, *Les Mains* (2021, in English: *The Hands*) is a documentary film on the history of the House, which highlights its artisanal and traditional character. These are values that are already exploited in the brand’s communication. The cinematographic means, the classical music, the techniques of storytelling, and the silences of the protagonists transmit an emotion, a profound love for craftsmanship.

In the *Orange Box Observatory* (2014, original title: *Observatoire des Boîtes Orange*), Hermès creates surprise effects for the viewers: the famous Orange boxes come to life in a humorous staging. Luxury at Hermès thus becomes offbeat and playful.

The same playful effects are created in the film *Metamorphosis* (2014, original title: *Métamorphose*), where everything is transformed into something new, in a story full of surprising scenes.

The film, *Je suis un cheval* (2014, in English: *I am a horse*) demonstrates the original and daring spirit of the House. Unexpected values, such as passion, humor and paradox, enter a luxury house that seems discreet and inaccessible; actors mimic the horse, the emblematic animal of the House. This film, a sort of performative art, a mixture of dance and theatre, develops the contemporary aspect of the brand, promoted by the offbeat, humorous and poetic web-adapted brand content.

The fashion films of Hermès break and divert the codes of an “impeccable” luxury House by introducing laughter, surprise and a wide range of emotions.

This paper studies how the *journey of meaning* of *La Flânerie* is structured and how this new proposal of the House fits into its integral system of values.

4. Methodology: Semiotic Analysis of *La Flânerie* by Hermès

4.1 Case Selection

The analytical focus of this study, *La Flânerie* by Hermès (Hermès, 2015), is a fashion film produced for the Spring-Summer 2015 collection. The selection of this film as a single case study is motivated by two criteria. First, Hermès is one of the most prestigious heritage luxury brands: a house with over 180 years of history and a brand identity strongly anchored in codes of craftsmanship, exclusivity, and French savoir-faire. Second, the film’s formal richness, with its deliberate cinematic references (notably to Jacques Tati) and its use of music, makes it analytically productive from a semiotic standpoint. The study does not seek statistical generalizability; rather, following the logic of interpretative case study research (Yin, 2009), the aim is analytical depth and theoretical transferability.

4.2 Analytical Procedure

The analysis proceeds in two stages. The first phase involves a semiotic reading using Rastier’s interpretative semantics (1987, 1997). The unit of analysis is the film as a whole text, approached through repeated viewings. The analytical procedure involves four steps: (1) segmentation of the film into narrative and figurative sequences; (2) identification of the key signs (visual, audio, and narrative) that carry semantic weight; (3) extraction of the semes, and (4) identification of the film’s principal isotopies. As mentioned earlier, isotopies are the recurrent semic patterns that create semantic coherence across the text. The criterion for identifying an isotopy is the repetition and co-activation of the same seme or semic cluster across at least three distinct figurative or narrative elements in the film. This ensures that the pattern is textually grounded.

In the second phase, the isotopies and values identified in phase one are mapped onto Floch’s semiotic square of consumer values (2001, 2005). The four poles of the square (utopian, practical, critical, and ludic) serve as a classification grid that may organize the brand values activated in the film. The procedure involves assigning the

dominant isotopies to the most appropriate value pole, based on the semantic content of each isotopy. For instance, isotopies built around /experience/, /being/, and /existential fulfilment/ are mapped to the utopian axis; those built around /function/, /utility/, and /performance/ are mapped to the practical axis. The connection between the two frameworks is therefore sequential: the isotopy analysis (Phase 1) generates the semantic material; the semiotic square of consumer values (Phase 2) organizes this material into a systemic representation of the brand's value system. Where the film activates values from more than one quadrant, the analysis examines the relationship between those quadrants to identify the brand's overall value proposition.

5. Analysis

The aim of the analysis that follows is to recognize the brand's overall value orientation, identify the specific value reconfiguration that the film proposes, and locate that reconfiguration in relation to the established brand identity of Hermès. The semiotic square on which the isotopies are mapped, is used as a heuristic that reveals the internal logic and relational structure of the brand's communication, rather than a rigid classification device.

5.1 Analysis: Interpretative Semantics

The fashion film of Hermès, *La Flânerie* (*Stroll*, in English), (Spring-Summer 2015) was directed by Patrick Jean and the Lost Boys agency (DigitasLBi). With this film, Hermès takes us to a European city (Lisbon) to the rhythm of the cheerful and playful music of Jacques Tati's film *Mon Oncle* (1958). This airy and nonchalant stroll is led by the cult accessories of the House: silk scarf, umbrella, hat, Kelly bag, bracelets and loafers. The turtle, the emblematic mascot of slowness and the protagonist of the film, adds an offbeat touch to the joyful and playful film.

The analysis below examines how the attributes of the isotopies below interact and in particular which features are activated, and which are virtualized:

a) Film Isotopy

The opening format (*Hermès presents*), the narrative structure (storytelling, beginning and closure of the story) as well as the music activate the /film/ isotopy. The fashion film, thus, features the /artistic/ and /aestheticism/, inherent to /cinema/.

The music refers to Jacques Tati's Oscar-winning French film *Mon Oncle* (*My Uncle*, in English). Thus, the contextual afferent /excellence/ and /quality/, are propagated, as well as the contextual afferent /elegance/ and /chic/ in 'France' (activated by the French film). The universe of the 1950s (date of Tati's film) diffuses the contextual afferent /nostalgia/ and /past/.

b) Actorial Isotopy

On the actorial level, that consists of the main human and non-human figures/actors in the film, Hermès is metonymically represented by the products of the House: silk scarves, umbrellas, hats, Kelly bags, bracelets and loafers. Human figures are also presented metonymically: the back of the man, the feet, the legs, etc. The rhetorical game (metonymy) activates the /surprise/ and /playfulness/ in this film.

The turtle, in connection with the slow rhythm and immobility of men and women, activates the inherent /slowness/.

The afferent /pejorative/ in ‘turtle’ (/slowness/) and in ‘humans’ (/laziness/, /leisureliness) is virtualized; the /euphoria/ in ‘music’ and ‘hide and seek’ is propagated on ‘turtle’ and ‘humans’. Laziness and slowness are devoid of their negative character (socially afferent seme). Hermès invites the viewer to rediscover the art of leisureliness (luxury means in this context ‘taking one’s time’-le luxe c’est prendre son temps) and offers a /praise/ to slowness (actualized in context).

Hermès activates /dynamism/ within the objects through constant movement in the film. The House does not betray its values at all (work, productivity, etc.). Its own values coexist with the values revisited by *La Flânerie*.

c) Time Isotopy

The /past/ is activated in the ‘1950s’ (filming reference time), ‘music’, ‘statue’, and by contextual afferece the isotopy /tradition/ inherent to Hermès. The afferent /classic/ and /atemporal/ in ‘simple lines’ are also activated.

d) Spatial Isotopy

The spatial isotopy /urban/ is activated in the semes ‘honk’, ‘buildings’, ‘park’, ‘monuments’, ‘cafés’. The isotopy /European/ and by afferece /chic/, /elegance/ are propagated. The /universal-global/ is activated in ‘within’, ‘outside’, ‘up/down’ (movement of accessories).

The /natural/ is activated in ‘sky’, ‘water’ and coexists with /culture/ activated in ‘book’, ‘coffee’. The /euphoria/ is activated in both /nature/ and /culture/.

e) The Isotopies euphoria-playfulness

/Euphoria/ is also activated in ‘music’, ‘fluidity’, and ‘playfulness’. /Euphoria/ is propagated to the whole film and even virtualizes/neutralizes negative afferent semes (‘city noise’, ‘slowness’, etc).

The /playfulness/ is activated in ‘children’s voice’, ‘hide and seek’ (*the hat that hides the turtle*), the metonymy (*partial presence of body parts*), the (rhythmic) antitheses and the play of light. The /euphoria/ and /playfulness/ isotopies become central within the fashion film.

f) The Title of the Film (La Flânerie-The Stroll)

The title of the film *La Flânerie*, activates the isotopies /laziness/ and /nonchalance/. The isotopy /euphoria/ contextually connoted throughout the film is propagated and thus neutralizes the /pejorative/ in ‘Flânerie’ and ‘laziness’.

Hermès seems to redefine the nonchalance into an art of living, an *ethos* (Chalevelaki, 2010). Baudelaire’s (2018) definition of the term ‘Flâneur’: “To be away from home, and yet to feel at home everywhere; to see the world, to be at the center of the world and to remain hidden from the world” is reworked by Hermès with the semes ‘hidden’, or ‘inside-outside’, as discussed above. Hermès remains faithful to its core values of work (‘in perpetual motion’); it continues to exploit, to inaugurate...However, beyond its own values, Hermès positions itself as a form of symbolic rebellion, which questions the notions of work and productivity. The House symbolically legitimises the right to be a *flâneur*, the virtue of doing nothing.

g) Fashion-Luxury Isotopy

The /fashion/ isotopy is only activated in ‘the display window’ and ‘accessory’. What is interesting is the absence of models or representatives of the fashion world.

The /luxury/ isotopy is activated by /excellence/ in ‘Baudelaire’ (the title *La Flânerie* echoes the poetic figure of the Baudelairean *flâneur*) and ‘the Oscar-winning film,’ referenced through the music (Best Foreign Language Film, 1959). Rather than replacing its established luxury codes, Hermès here, proposes an alternative articulation of them. Luxury is reconfigured as the art of taking one’s time, living as a *flâneur*, and attending to the beauty of everyday life.

Following the semantic analysis, we can see that semes traditionally inherent to Hermès are neutralized and activated only through the /film/ isotopy. /Luxury/ that is mainly an inherent seme of the Parisian House is subordinated and is only re-activated through the intermediary of the semes linked to the *ethics* of *flânerie* (*strolling*) proposed by Hermès.

Similarly, the isotopies that are not inherent (/playfulness/ and /euphoria/) in the field of luxury (Anido Freire, 2014), nor in the house’s own values, are propagated through the film, both in the system of values of Hermès and of luxury in general. Thus, they acquire a central role in the construction of the system of meaning. Taken together, the isotopies identified in this phase reveal a coherent semiotic operation: Hermès does not abandon its heritage codes but strategically reconfigures them, virtualizing the negative afferent semes associated with slowness and nonchalance while actualising a new value cluster centred on joyful, nonchalant, and ethically inflected living. This reconfiguration positions the brand as a proposer of a way of being in the world.

The isotopies identified through the Rastier-informed reading serve as the semantic material for the second phase of analysis. Floch’s semiotic square of consumer values functions here as a second-order organisational model: rather than generating new interpretations, it maps the isotopies onto an axial structure that makes visible the overall value trajectory of the film and its strategic implications for the Hermès brand. The following section conducts this mapping.

5.2 Analysis Founded on The Semiotic Square of Consumer Values

Floch’s Semiotic Square of Consumer Values can be applied to explore the values of Hermès and their evolution through the fashion film *La Flânerie*. Traditionally, the values that the brand has been promoting in its traditional communication (in fashion shows and advertising) are the Critical, including the detail, technique, craftsmanship, and tradition of the House, as well as the Practical, focusing on the functionality of the garments, that are used to dress the body.

These established brand values are primarily located on the “pragmatic” axis (Practical and Critical values). As we have already seen in the interpretative semantic analysis, in the fashion film of Hermès, the surprise effects and the playful atmosphere activate the utopic/ludic values. The aesthetic/ludic values are also present in advertising posters (Hermès Summer 2012 Campaign: At the foot of The Olive Trees; Hermès Fall-Winter 2010 Campaign; Life as a Fairytale) where the photographic/aesthetic codes are highlighted. Artistic attributes provoke emotion and thus add sentimental depth.

In addition, the insertion of the filmic code into the universe of luxury adds an ethico-philosophical dimension that is distinctive within this particular fashion film. While Hermès' store architecture, runway presentations, and advertising campaigns also communicate value systems and aesthetic worldviews, *La Flânerie* goes further by proposing a meta-discourse on the world that is explicitly ethico-philosophical in character (socio-esthetic values; ethical values).

The fashion film shifts the trajectory of values from the pragmatic axis of use to the basic existential axis, which corresponds to the playful/utopian values (Table 2).

Table 2. Synthesis of the Isotopy Analysis to the Semiotic Square Mapping

Isotopy	Key textual / audiovisual cues	Activated / Virtualised semes	Floch square pole	Strategic interpretation
Film isotopy	Opening "Hermès presents"; narrative structure; Jacques Tati-inspired music	Activated: /artistic/, /aestheticism/, /nostalgia/, /quality/	Ludic / Utopian	Positions the brand within an artistic and cinematic register, elevating luxury into a cultural and aesthetic experience
Actorial isotopy	Accessories as metonymic actors; fragmented human bodies; turtle	Activated: /playfulness/, /slowness/, /euphoria/; Virtualised: /laziness/ (pejorative)	Ludic → Utopian	Re-signifies slowness as a positive value; introduces playfulness without negating heritage values of craftsmanship
Time isotopy	1950s references; music; statues	Activated: /past/, /tradition/, /atemporality/	Critical → Utopian	Connects heritage codes to a timeless experiential dimension rather than purely technical tradition

Spatial isotopy	Urban setting (cafés, monuments); natural elements (sky, water)	Activated: /urban/, /European/, /elegance/, /euphoria/	Ludic	Creates a harmonious coexistence of culture and nature, reinforcing experiential and aesthetic consumption
Euphoria / playfulness isotopies	Music, rhythm, children's voice, hide-and-seek motifs	Activated: /euphoria/, /play/, /lightness/; Virtualised: negative urban noise	Ludic	Central value shift: introduces pleasure and emotional engagement into the luxury value system
Title isotopy ("La Flânerie")	Reference to flâneur; narrative of strolling	Activated: /nonchalance/, /art of living/; Virtualised: /idleness/ (negative)	Utopian	Reframes luxury as an existential ethos ("taking one's time") rather than possession
Fashion / luxury isotopy	Accessories, display window, Baudelaire reference	Activated: /excellence/, /heritage/; partially backgrounded	Critical / Practical (repositioned to Ludic-Utopian)	Traditional luxury values are not removed but subordinated to a broader experiential and philosophical proposition

6. Conclusion: *La Flânerie* by Hermès and the Semiotic Architecture of Luxury Brand Communication

6.1 Summary of Findings

This paper examined how a fashion film can articulate the brand ethos of a luxury brand and can propose new forms of consumer-brand relationships. The semiotic analysis of Hermès' *La Flânerie* (2015), with Rastier's interpretative semantics and

Floch's semiotic square of consumer values, identified the following main isotopies: The film isotopy, actorial isotopy, time isotopy, spatial isotopy, the isotopies euphoria-playfulness, the title of the film (*La Flânerie*-The Stroll) and the Fashion/Luxury isotopy. These isotopies construct the brand's value system. The film virtualises the afferent semes linked with conventional luxury communication (solemnity, exclusivity, and elitism). In their place, it actualises values of playfulness, euphoria, and the "art of taking one's time." The result is a shift in the brand's value trajectory (Floch's semiotic square of consumer values), from the Pragmatic and Critical axes that are traditionally dominant in Hermès' communication, toward the Utopian and Ludic axes, without harming the continuity of the house's heritage codes.

These findings indicate that *La Flânerie* functions as a symbolic device. It enables the brand to redefine luxury itself: from an object of possession to an ethos of being, to the "art of slowness". In this context, the film establishes a new existential contract between brands and consumers.

6.2 Theoretical Implications

The study makes three contributions to theoretical literature. It combines Rastier's interpretative semantics with Floch's semiotic square of consumer values for the study of branded audiovisual content. While each framework has been applied independently in brand communication research, their combination offers a methodology that future researchers may adapt to the analysis of other fashion films, other genres, or other brand categories. The analytical procedure described in Section 4 is intended to be transparent and transferable, with adaptations to each application, although further application to other cases is needed to test its broader transferability.

The paper contributes to the theoretical understanding of fashion films as a communication genre. Existing literature has positioned fashion films at the intersection between advertising and art cinema (Uhlírova, 2013; Berry, 2012), emphasizing their promotional or aesthetic dimensions. The present analysis highlights the dynamics of fashion films to redefine luxury within the brand's universe.

The paper also contributes to the literature on brand heritage and luxury branding (Kapferer & Bastien, 2012; Dion & Borraz, 2015). The analysis of *La Flânerie* demonstrates how a heritage brand integrates new values onto existing semantic ones without destabilizing them. A broader applicability must be tested on further case studies.

6.3 Managerial Implications

While the findings are based on a single interpretative case, they carry implications that luxury brand managers may find useful to consider. First, the analysis defines fashion films as a distinct communication medium with specific semiotic properties. Brand managers may use fashion films as a semiotic device that may enhance or redefine luxury brand values.

Heritage luxury brands can use fashion films to engage with digitally native audiences without abandoning their foundational codes. The key mechanism, as the

analysis shows, is not the replacement of heritage values but their recontextualization. For practitioners, this means that brand renewal through fashion films is most effective when it works with the brand's existing semiotic capital.

The interpretative analysis of consumer values proposed by Floch's semiotic square of consumer values offers brand managers a practical diagnostic framework for auditing their brand's communication. The four value poles (utopian, practical, critical, and ludic) can be used to assess whether the brand's values are coherent across different media; whether specific formats are over-represented on particular axes, and whether strategic shifts are being communicated consistently. Fashion films may be particularly effective, but the shift must be coherent with the brand's positioning across all touchpoints.

6.4 Limitations and Future Research Directions

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. The most important one is that it is a single fashion film from a single brand, analyzed through a single interpretative semiotic approach. While the choice of *La Flânerie* as a case is theoretically and analytically justified, it does not permit general conclusions about fashion films as a genre, about Hermès' communication strategy, or about luxury branding more broadly. The interpretative nature of semiotic analysis also means that the readings offered here represent one perspective, among others.

Future research could extend the framework developed here in several directions. Comparative analyses of fashion films from multiple luxury brands would allow scholars to assess whether the findings of this paper may be a more general property of the genre. Longitudinal analyses of a single brand's fashion film output over time could illuminate how brands manage their semiotic identity across different markets and cultural contexts. Consumer response data would address how and under what conditions these values are appropriated by audiences. Finally, the methodological framework proposed here could be applied to other branded audiovisual genres, including brand documentaries, social media reels, and virtual fashion shows, contributing to a broader semiotic cartography of contemporary luxury brand communication.

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